

## Executive Summary

The multilateralization and regionalization of the security-building process has meant that the cross-cultural aspects of contemporary security dialogues have assumed a much more prominent place in policy debates. Cultural factors have been cited to explain persistent miscommunication and misperceptions on issues of war and peace, or the origins of (and different reactions to) various weapons taboos and the importance of ideas such as transparency and verification. Deeper cultural considerations have also been advanced to illustrate how security issues are framed (for example, a preference for hierarchical versus egalitarian regional security architectures). At the most general level, the clash of cultures or "civilizations" is sometimes invoked as the most important future challenge for global security.

But *exactly* what role cultural elements play in national and international security policies is not clear. Material or objective conflicts of interest are often (if not usually) the greatest obstacles to security-building. But beliefs and attitudes play a crucial role in both the exacerbation and resolution of these disagreements, and behind so-called "objective" *interests* lie culturally-informed sets of *ideas* that shape how states define and act upon these interests. Of course, it is difficult to demonstrate that cultural factors are responsible for a particular position or outcome, and cultural elements are always entangled with other factors operating simultaneously. Nevertheless, how decision makers define their security interests is undoubtedly derived from their collective historical/social/cultural experiences and understandings.

With these considerations in mind, the case studies in this report attempt to determine under what conditions and to what extent cultural factors make a difference in the elaboration and execution of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament (NACD) policies. They seek to clarify a concept of *security cultures* that draws upon the diplomatic, political, strategic and social elements that go into security policy-making. Thus culture, as it refers to NACD issues:

*consists of those enduring and widely-shared beliefs, traditions, attitudes, and symbols that inform the ways in which a state's/society's interests and values with respect to security, stability and peace are perceived, articulated and advanced by political actors and elites.*

The case studies cover a range of states and regions: the legacy of the East-West (or Western experience), Southeast Asia, China, India, Latin America, and the Middle East. Each examines a range of concrete issues and cases connected with NACD issues, and orientations towards security more generally. They examine (among other things):

- the role of culture "writ large" (historical, religious, communal or normative influences on orientations towards war and peace);
- the impact of the region's historical legacy of conflict, colonialism and/or state-building;
- orientations towards regional and multilateral relations, in particular unilateral or mutual concepts of security;
- specific cultural practices or styles of diplomacy and negotiation;
- the nature of civil-military relations and its impact on NACD issues; and
- societal attitudes towards authority (hierarchical versus egalitarian), violence, rule of law, and domestic conflict management.