

proliferation could act as a convenient shield for arms buildups and weapons proliferation.<sup>13</sup> Thus analysts must always be sensitive to the realities of power politics that are at work in the various multilateral non-proliferation and arms control dialogues.

## Different "Cultures" of International Relations: Diplomatic, Political and Strategic

### Culture Writ Large

Definitions of "culture" are not hard to find. Perhaps the most broad, which I will call "culture writ large" treats it as "relatively stable patterns of behaviour, actions and customs," or as "the outward expression of a unifying and consistent vision brought by a particular community to its confrontation with such core issues as the origins of the cosmos, the harsh unpredictability of the natural environment, the nature of society, and humankind's place in the order of things."<sup>14</sup> Culture writ large doubtless exists, but as Raymond Cohen points out, any simple definition of it can be misleading and not useful. What is more important is to emphasize that a "culture" is a quality of groups not of individuals (and that individuals may be a member of different "cultures" simultaneously), that it is acquired by people through socialization, and that each culture is a "unique complex of attributes" that changes and evolves over time.<sup>15</sup> Hence one must try (as the authors of the case studies below do) to go beyond the broad invocation of a "Islamic" or "Confucian" idea of the world, or an Asian practice of "consensus-building" or "macho" culture of honour in Latin America, to show how such ideas and practices could manifest themselves in particular arenas of international relations and security policy.

Culture writ large is, however, also not a particularly useful tool with which to approach our problem, since international relations is not some sort of unmediated interaction of different cultures, randomly encountering and clashing with each other.<sup>16</sup> Instead, it is made up of encounters of individuals, groups and states, brought together in cooperation or conflict, over particular issues or problems. Given this, it makes sense to specify more precisely which groups are engaged in an encounter, what role (if any) their socialization might play, and what sets of cultural attributes are relevant for the particular encounter. Simplistic notions of culture as a bundle of attributes or customs (eg. all Japanese avoid social conflict; one should never refuse refreshments in Nigeria; Indians are defensive with respect to the West) may provide grist for a "how-to" handbook to avoid diplomatic or social incidents, but they tend to be banal (or contradictory), neglect the ability of individuals to move "fluently" among different cultures (and to

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<sup>13</sup> On the way in which the Asian values debate on human rights might be seen in this light, see the response by South Korean dissident, Kim Dae Jung, "Is Culture Destiny?" *Foreign Affairs*, 73:6 (Nov./Dec. 1994), 189-194; Christopher Lingle, "The Propaganda Way," *Foreign Affairs*, 74:3 (May/June 1995), 193-196; Aryeh Neier, "Asia's Unacceptable Standard," *Foreign Policy*, 92 (Autumn 1993), 43-51.

<sup>14</sup> The first definition is from Robert A. Rubinstein, "Cultural Aspects of Peacekeeping: Notes on the Substance of Symbols," *Millennium*, 22:3 (Winter 1993), 550; the second from Cohen, *Negotiating Across Cultures*, 8.

<sup>15</sup> Cohen, *Negotiating Across Cultures*, 8-9.

<sup>16</sup> Although for one statement that veers towards this view, see Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations."