

different countries and regions approach the key issues of war, peace and strategy from perspectives which are both quite distinctive and deeply rooted, reflecting their different geostrategic situations, resources, history, military experience and political beliefs. These factors profoundly influence how a country perceives, protects, and promotes its interests and values with respect to the threat or use of force.³³

Amplifying this by drawing on the work of anthropologist Clifford Geertz, Alastair Johnston defines strategic culture as:

an integrated 'system of symbols (e.g., argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors) which acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficiency of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious.'³⁴

Johnston's definition draws attention to two important elements that are not emphasized in the previous definitions. First, he indicates *where* strategic cultural elements are "lodged" -- in the symbol systems used by policy-makers in their debates and discussions. Second, he notes that a strategic culture is a form of power, that could be used to occlude other perspectives (on how security could be achieved, for example) or to preserve the institutional power of particular groups (such as the armed forces). Both of these elements are important in the cases below. It is also worth noting, however, that this understanding of culture can be used in either a nuanced or a crude way. As Johnston points out, "done well, the careful analysis of strategic culture could help policymakers establish more accurate and empathetic understandings of how different actors perceive the game being played...Done badly, [it] could reinforce stereotypes about the strategic predispositions of other states and close off policy alternatives."³⁵

Strategic culture has both a "societal" or domestic and an international or externally-oriented dimension. The societal aspect is concerned with historical experiences and attitudes that shape attitudes towards war, the impact of dominant social structures (such as class, caste, or ethnic divisions) on civil-military relations and military organizations, the role of the armed forces in society (large or small, well integrated or isolated), and the choice of strategic doctrines and the accompanying weapons systems. In some respects, this element of "strategic culture" is simply the historical and social dimension of security policies, and the use of the term "culture" only suggests that these influences cannot be reduced to crude "material interests" or rational calculations.³⁶

³³ Ball, "Strategic Culture," 44-45. See also Ken Booth, "The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed," in Carl Jacobsen, ed., *Strategic Power: USA/USSR* (New York: St. Martin's, 1990), 121, who argues that "The concept of strategic culture refers to a nation's traditions, values, attitudes, patterns of behaviour, habits, symbols, achievements and particular ways of adapting to the environment and solving problems with respect to the threat or use of force."

³⁴ Alastair Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," *International Security*, 19:4 (Spring 1995), 46.

³⁵ Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," 63-64.

³⁶ These points are made by Stephen Peter Rosen, in "Military Effectiveness: Why Society Matters," *International Security*, 19 (Spring 1995); 5-31, and in *Societies and Military Power*, 1-32. Regrettably, he does not address the implications of his argument for security doctrines and security-building policies.