COMPARATIVE STRATEGIC CULTURES
SYLLABUS

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OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

This syllabus is intended to introduce the concept of strategic culture to upper division undergraduates seeking to deepen their understanding of international relations and security studies, and broaden their theoretical and methodological tool sets. Our objective is to provide the instructor with theoretical background on the concept of strategic culture as well as a framework for comparing case studies in this field. We do this through the use of comparative cases that examine a common international security phenomenon: a state’s (and one non-state actor) decisions to acquire, proliferate, or use a weapon of mass destruction.

Our purpose is to advance strategic culture analysis as a tool for understanding (and even forecasting) the foreign policy of other actors and of constructing successful foreign policy of our own. Practical applications of strategic culture include:

- better understanding of the foreign lenses through which our policy moves will be viewed
- more effective deterrence, because we understand what the other culture values and can better leverage their cost/benefit ratio
- stronger cooperative relationships with allies
- increased accuracy in the interpretation of intelligence collected abroad
- insight that will allow for the creation of counter-narrative strategies aimed at weakening an adversary’s propaganda campaign
- more successful assimilation of immigrants
- a stronger understanding of the repercussions of our foreign policy moves
- illumination of our own cultural values
- enhancement of predictive/forecasting capability

I. DEFINING STRATEGIC CULTURE

Lesson 1

Objectives: Defining the boundaries of Strategic Culture as a distinct concept

- from political culture
- from popular culture
- from political psychology

Definition: Strategic Culture is that set of shared beliefs, assumptions, and modes of behavior, derived from common experiences and accepted narratives (both oral and written), that shape collective identity and relationships to other groups, and which determine appropriate ends and means for achieving security objectives.
**Required Readings:**


**Additional Reading:**


Colin S. Gray, Modern Strategy (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1994), chapters 1, 5, 6


II. STRATEGIC CULTURE AND IR THEORY

Lesson 2

Objective: To examine the relationship between assumptions underpinning the Strategic Culture concept and other major theoretical constructs. Strategic Culture aims to supplement, rather than displace major theoretical constructs such as Realism, Neo-Realism and Constructivism.

Required Readings:


Additional Reading:


III. FRAMEWORK AND METHODS

Lesson 3

The following essays introduce a conceptual framework useful for researching and organizing ideas using a strategic culture perspective and provides a range of research methods employed by experts in the field. The Additional Readings offer an array of methodological practices from anthropology, social science, and other related fields.
Required Readings:


Additional Reading:

Peter Hays Gries, China’s New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy (Philip E. Lilienthal Books, 2004)
Theo Farrell, The Norms of War: Cultural Beliefs and Modern Conflict (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005)
Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Small Places, Large Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology (Pluto Press, 2001)
Roger M. Keesing and Andrew Strathern, Cultural Anthropology: A Contemporary Perspective (Wadsworth, 1997)
IV. APPLYING STRATEGIC CULTURE
Lessons 4-11

The case studies selected revolve around a similar theme -- security decisions concerning weapons of mass destruction (WMD). We have selected case studies which examine decision processes involved in acquiring, using, and/or proliferating WMD, as well as decisions to adhere to, or ignore international norms.

A primer to familiarize students with basic concepts concerning weapons of mass destruction is provided here, followed by an essay examining the utility of strategic culture when examining WMD security issues. We recommend spending one lesson on an introduction to weapons of mass destruction before turning to the case studies.

Required Readings:


Additional Reading:


George Perkovich, India’s Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999)


Class Discussion: Questions Raised by Strategic Culture

Ten case studies were commissioned for this project, each dealing with a regime that has sought to acquire, has acquired, and/or has proliferated weapons of mass destruction. Authors were asked to compile a strategic culture profile of each of these countries (and al Qaeda), and determine the utility of strategic culture analysis in understanding their decisions. The full title and commissioned author of each of those case studies is:
We propose a study of these cases using the following discussion questions. The questions are designed to facilitate an examination of strategic culture as a field of study through the detailed profiles and interesting analyses presented by the authors. The instructor is offered a discussion topic and one or more corresponding case studies. Note that several of the case studies are listed under multiple questions. Select the case studies per question as best suits the needs of your course. Additional reading material and media references for each country may be found in the following section.

1. How is state identity formed? Which factors are primary influences? How does this affect security policy?

   Recommended Case Studies: China – Christopher Twomey
                           Syria – Murhaf Jouejati
                           Israel – Gregory Giles
                           United States – Thomas Mahnken

   Readings addressing this topic:
   Ken Booth, Strategy and Ethnocentrism (Holmes & Meier, 1979)
   Victoria Tin-bor Hui, War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe (Cambridge University Press, 2005)


2. How do values become policy? Can significant gaps exist between policy that is aspired to, and policy that is actuated?

Recommended Case Studies:  
China – Christopher Twomey  
United States – Thomas Mahnken  
Russia – Fritz Ermarth  
Israel – Gregory Giles

*Readings addressing this topic:*

Andrew Kuchins, “From Values to True Dialogue” *The Moscow Times*, 22 June 2005


3. To what extent do global norms impact domestic strategic culture?

Recommended Case Studies:  
Iran – Willis Stanley  
India – Rodney Jones  
Pakistan – Peter Lavoy

*Readings addressing this topic:*


4. **How static/dynamic is strategic culture? What causes change? How quickly can strategic culture shift in a crisis?**

Recommended Case Studies:  China – Christopher Twomey  
Russia – Fritz Ermarth  
United States – Thomas Mahnken  
Israel – Gregory Giles

*Readings addressing this topic:*

5. **To what extent can leaders leverage and/or manipulate strategic culture for their own ends?**

Recommended Case Studies:  North Korea – Joseph Bermudez  
Pakistan – Peter Lavoy

*Readings addressing this topic:*
Can the strategic culture analytical framework be applied to non-state actors?

Recommended Case Study: Al Qaeda – Mark Long

Readings addressing this topic:
Colonel CE Callwell, Small Wars: Their Theory and Practice (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996 – reprint of 1905 work.)
Robert G. Harkavy and Stephanie G. Neuman, Warfare and the Third World, (New Your: Palgrave 2001)
T.E. Lawrence, The Seven Pillars of Wisdom (Paris: 1926)
Marc Sagemen, Understanding Terror Networks (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004)
Elijah Poole, Tactics of the Crescent Moon

Additional Discussion Questions:

Does each culture develop its own way of war?

How does one discern the “keepers” or “stewards” of a particular strategic culture?
Are they persons? Or institutions? How is the socialization process perpetuated?

To what extent does geography determine strategic culture?
How do the market forces of globalization affect strategic culture? Are there emerging non-Western perspectives that might counter the power of globalization?

Is the strategic culture in question relatively homogenous, or factionalized? If disparate groups are competing for the ability to direct security policy, how might one determine which viewpoint will be most relevant?

Can significant portions of strategic culture be innovated? Taught from the top levels of government down, and internalized?

How might intelligence and diplomatic processes be improved to unearth accurate data on strategic culture?

If we assume that there are three levels of analysis in studying a country’s strategic culture—our own, our adversaries, and our allies—do we tend to overlook our allies?

V. THE FUTURE OF STRATEGIC CULTURE
Lesson 11

After an examination of strategic culture analysis in action, students may be engaged in a discussion concerning the future of strategic culture as a field of study, its strengths, its methodological challenges, and potential utility in both academia and policy. Darryl Howlett starts this discussion with the following essay:

Required Reading:


VI. COURSE WRAP-UP AND CRITIQUE
Lesson 12
ADDITIONAL READING/MEDIA REFERENCES
Organized by Country

THE UNITED STATES


ISRAEL


Ben-Dor, Charles, “War & Peace: Jewish Tradition and the Conduct of War,” Israeli Defense


“Code of Conduct Against Terrorists,” Wikipedia,


“Former Iranian President Rafsanjani on Using a Nuclear Bomb Against Israel,” Middle East Media Research Institute, Special Dispatch, no. 325, January 3, 2002,
http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Area=iran&ID=SP32502


Israeli Defense Forces website: http://www1.idf.il/DOVER/site/mainpage.asp?sl=EN&id=32


IRAN


NORTH KOREA

Bermudez Jr., Joseph S. *SIGINT, EW and EIW in the Korean People’s Army: An Overview of Development and Organization.* This paper was prepared for presentation at the APCSS conference *Bytes and Bullets: Impact of IT Revolution on War and Peace in Korea,* 8-10 October 2002, Honolulu, Hawaii.
Hodge, Homer T. “North Korea’s Military Strategy,” *Parameters,* Spring 2003, pp. 68-81


**Movies**


**Additional Reading**


“DPRK ‘Manufactured Nuclear Weapons,’ To ‘Suspend’ 6-Way Talks for ‘Indefinite Period’,” Korean Central Broadcasting System, 10 February 2005, as cited in FBIS.


Park, Han S. *North Korea: The Politics of Unconventional Wisdom* (Boulder Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2002).


**INDIA**

Akbar, M. J., *India, the Siege Within: Challenges to a Nation’s Unity* (New Delhi: Rolli, 2003).


Rashed uz Zaman, “India’s Strategic Culture,” in unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Reading University, 2006


**CHINA**

*Sources that address strategic cultural in Chinese security policy at the broadest level:*

Burles, Mark, and Abram N. Shulsky. *Patterns in China's Use of Force: Evidence from History and Doctrinal Writings* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2000), MR-1160-AF.


*Sources that explicitly address strategic cultural themes in Chinese policy at the tactical or operational level:*


*Sources that implicitly address strategic cultural themes in Chinese security policy:*

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Mosher, Steven W. *Hegemon: China's Plan to Dominate Asia and the World.* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000).


*Sources that emphasize the role of Communist ideology in shaping Chinese security policy:*


*Sources that explicitly refute cultural explanations:*


*Sources on Chinese WMD that incorporate at least some element of cultural factors:*


**RUSSIA**

Compiler's Note: The period 1914-45 is not represented here because it is richly summarized and sourced in Sokolovskiy


Golts, Aleksandr, *Eleven Lost Years*, I. V. Zakharov Publishing, Moscow, 2004 [In Russian; the only English translation of this book known to the compiler of this syllabus is from the US Government's Open Source Center, formerly FBIS].

Herspring, Dale, *The Kremlin and the High Command*, (forthcoming)

National Intelligence Estimate, 11-4-1978 *Soviet Power in the Global Arena* (available in CIA declassified archives.)


"Pundits Discern Putin's National Strategy Based on Excerpts From Speeches", *Moskovskiye Novosti*, June 14, 2006, Article compiled by Dmitriy Andreyev and


Zabrodina, Yekaterina [In Russian; English translation available from archives of Johnson’s Russia List or from OSC/FBIS]

**SYRIA**

*Foreign Policy*


*Weapons of Mass Destruction*


*Films*

“The Syrian Bride,” a film by Eran Riklis, Neue Impuls Film, 2004

“Lawrence of Arabia,” starring Peter O’Toole, Omar Sharif, Alec Guinness, Anthony Quinn, released in the US on 16 December, 1962
PAKISTAN

Jones, Owen Bennett, *Pakistan: The Eye of the Storm* (Yale University Press, 2002).

AL QAIDA

There is very little available that specifically employs a strategic culture to understanding al-Qaida, on any level. This bibliography, therefore, is suggestive of critical readings that will aid in such an approach.

The best site for reading (in English) statements of radical organizations, to include those of al-Qaida is [http://www.memri.org/index.html](http://www.memri.org/index.html) See especially “jihad and terrorism studies project” under “Subjects.”

Another excellent resource is the Combating Terrorism Center at the United States Military Academy. Their site is [http://www.ctc.usma.edu/](http://www.ctc.usma.edu/) They have recently declassified documents that have been captured by U.S. forces, as well as major studies available on-line.


Arab and Muslim Attitudes
Several organizations have done (and continue to do) major studies of attitudes across the Arab and Islamic worlds, to include Gallup, Pew, and Zogby.


Secondary materials

Long, Jerry M. *Saddam’s War of Words.* 2004. Examines ways Saddam’s message found a receptive audience by exploiting elements of Arab culture and Islam, elements which al-Qaeda now seeks to exploit.

Sageman, Marc. *Understanding Terror Networks.* 2004. Sageman is a psychiatrist who also holds a Ph.D. in polisci and who has done the most comprehensive work-up the Islamic radical’s psyche.


**Articles**