Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies
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Culture Clash | Michael C. Desch

Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies

Cultural theories have long enjoyed a prominent place in the field of international security. Indeed, two waves have come and gone since the start of World War II, and we are now at the high watermark of a third.[1] Today's culturalists in national security studies are a heterogeneous lot, who bring a variety of theories to the table. However, virtually all new culturalists in security studies are united in their belief that realism, the dominant research program in international relations that emphasizes factors such as the material balance of power, is an overrated, if not bankrupt, body of theory, and that cultural theories, which look to ideational factors, do a much better job of explaining how the world works.

This article assesses this latest wave of cultural theories in security studies by focusing on some of its most prominent examples. There is no question that virtually all cultural theories tell us something about how states behave. The crucial question, however, is whether these new theories merely supplement realist theories or actually threaten to supplant them. I argue that when cultural theories are assessed using evidence from the real world, there is no reason to think that they will relegate realist theories to the dustbin of social

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1. In addition to Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), the main pieces in this literature are Peter J. Katzenstein and Noburo Okawara, "Japan's National Security: Structures, Norms, and Policies," International Security, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 84–118; Thomas U. Berger, "From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan's Culture of Anti-militarism," International Security, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 119–150; Jeffrey W. Legro, "Military Culture and Inadvertent Escalation in World War II," International Security, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1994), pp. 108–142; Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," International Security, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Spring 1995), pp. 32–64; Elizabeth Kier, "Culture and Military Doctrine: France between the Wars," International Security, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Spring 1995), pp. 65–93; Jeffrey W. Legro, Cooperation under Fire: Anglo-

science history. The best case that can be made for these new cultural theories is that they are sometimes useful as a supplement to realist theories.

The post–Cold War wave of culturalism in security studies is a broad research program with a wide range of research focuses (such as military doctrine, escalation, weapons acquisition, grand strategy, and foreign policy decision making), embracing a diverse range of epistemologies (from the avowedly positivistic to the explicitly antipositivistic) and utilizing a broad array of explanatory variables. Four strands of cultural theorizing dominate the current wave: *organizational, political, strategic,* and *global.* For example, Jeffrey Legro holds that militaries have different organizational cultures that will lead them to fight differently.[2] Elizabeth Kier argues that different domestic political cultures will adopt divergent means of controlling their militaries based on domestic political considerations, not external strategic concerns.[3] Similarly, Peter Katzenstein and Noburo Okawara, and Thomas Berger, maintain that domestic political attitudes toward the use of force vary significantly among states similarly situated in the international system.[4] Stephen Rosen argues that societies with different domestic social structures will produce different levels of military power.[5] Iain Johnston suggests that domestic strategic culture, rather than international systemic imperatives, best explains a state's grand strategy.[6] Martha Finnemore argues that global cultural norms,

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German Restraint during World War II (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995); Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995); Jeffrey W. Legro, "Culture and Preferences in the International Cooperation Two-Step," *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 90, No. 1 (March 1996), pp. 118–137; Peter J. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996); Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French Military Doctrine between the Wars* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997); and Richard Price, *The Chemical Weapons Taboo* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997).

Stephen Peter Rosen, "Military Effectiveness: Why Society Matters," *International Security,* Vol. 19, No. 4 (Spring 1995), pp. 23, 24, and his *Societies and Military Power: India and Its Armies* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 22–26, explicitly contrast his domestic structural approach with a cultural approach. I include him within the post–Cold War culturalist wave, however, because the domestic social structure he is most interested in, the Indian caste system, has largely ideational roots.

2. Legro, *Cooperation under Fire,* p. 1.
3. Elizabeth Kier, "Culture and French Military Doctrine before World War II," in Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security,* p. 187; and Kier, "Culture and Military Doctrine," p. 84.
4. Katzenstein and Okawara, "Japan's National Security," pp. 84–118; Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security;* and Berger, "From Sword to Chrysanthemum," pp. 119–150.
5. Rosen, "Military Effectiveness," pp. 5–32; and Rosen, *Societies and Military Power,* pp. viii–xi.
6. Johnston, *Cultural Realism,* pp. x, 247, 262–266; Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," p. 63; and Alistair Iain Johnston, "Cultural Realism and Maoist China," in Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security,* p. 257.

rather than domestic state interests, determine patterns of great power intervention.[7] Likewise, Richard Price and Nina Tannenwald claim that global cultural norms proscribing the use of particular weapons best account for why they are not used.[8] Robert Herman argues that the Soviet Union bowed out of the Cold War because it was attracted to the norms and culture of the West.[9] Thomas Risse-Kappen argues that alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) coalesce around *global* norms rather than responding to mutual threats.[10] In a similar vein, Michael Barnett maintains that common identity, rather than shared threat, best explains alliance patterns.[11] Finally, Dana Eyre and Mark Suchman argue that all states will acquire similar sorts of high-technology conventional weaponry, not because they need them, but because these weapons epitomize "stateness."[12]

These diverse arguments have a common thread: dissatisfaction with realist explanations for state behavior in the realm of national security. As Iain Johnston notes, "All [cultural approaches] take the realist edifice as target, and focus on cases where structural material notions of interest cannot explain a particular strategic choice."[13] Although it is obvious that cultural theories seek to challenge the realist research program, the key question is whether the new strategic culturalism supplants or supplements realist explanations.[14] Some of the new strategic culturalists take an uncompromising position that rejects realism as a first cut at explaining strategic behavior and maintains that material and structural variables are of "secondary importance."[15] Others concede that sometimes structural variables will trump culture, but that most

7. Martha Finnemore, "Constructing Norms of Humanitarian Intervention," in Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security*, p. 156.
8. Richard Price and Nina Tannenwald, "Norms and Deterrence: The Nuclear Weapons Taboo," in ibid., pp. 114–153.
9. Robert G. Herman, "Identity, Norms, and National Security: The Soviet Foreign Policy Revolution and the End of the Cold War," in ibid., pp. 271–316.
10. Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Collective Identity in a Democratic Community: The Case of NATO," in ibid., pp. 357–399.
11. Michael N. Barnett, "Identity and Alliances in the Middle East," in ibid., pp. 400–450.
12. Dana P. Eyre and Mark C. Suchman, "Status, Norms, and the Proliferation of Chemical Weapons: An Institutional Theory Approach," in ibid., pp. 79–113.
13. Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," p. 41. All the essays in Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security*, explicitly target realism.
14. The authors in the Katzenstein volume differ widely on this. See Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt, and Peter J. Katzenstein, "Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security," in Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security*, pp. 37, 68; Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro's, "Norms, Identity, and Their Limits: A Theoretical Reprise," in ibid., p. 496; and Katzenstein, "Conclusion: National Security in a Changing World," in ibid., pp. 507–508.
15. Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, p. 1.

of the time the reverse will be true.[16] All maintain that cultural variables are more than epiphenomena to material factors and often explain outcomes for which realism cannot account.[17] Because no proponent of realism thinks that realist theories explain everything,[18] there will be little argument about culture, or any other variables, supplementing realism. The major debate will concern whether cultural theories can supplant realist theories. To make the case that cultural theories should supplant existing theories, the new culturalists would have to demonstrate that their theories outperform realist theories in "hard cases" for cultural theories. As I show, however, most new culturalists do not employ such cases.

I begin this article by tracing the rise and fall of cultural theories in security studies. Next I discuss the challenges to testing the post–Cold War wave of cultural theories. I then show that this third wave cannot supplant realism. Before concluding, I suggest when and how the third wave might supplement realist theories in national security studies. I conclude with a qualified endorsement of the return to culture in national security studies.

Culture and National Security Studies

In this section I examine the ebb and flow of cultural theories in national security studies. Such theories have long been prominent in the field, but they have never become dominant. This may help explain why the third wave of cultural theories will not supplant realist theories.

THE WORLD WAR II WAVE

Much of the discussion of how to deal with the Axis powers during World War II was informed by cultural theorizing.[19] In the United States, the Foreign Morale Analysis Division of the Office of War Information employed a large

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16. Legro, *Cooperation under Fire*, p. 221.
17. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*; and Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein, "Norms, Identity, and Culture," p. 34.
18. Some of the best critiques of realism have come from within the paradigm itself. See, for example, Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994), pp. 72–108.
19. The classic examples are Basil Henry Liddell Hart, *The British Way in Warfare* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932); and Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, [1946] 1989). Other works on World War II in the strategic culture genre include Russell Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973); and Martin van Creveld, *Fighting Power: German and U.S. Army Performance, 1939–1945* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982).

number of leading cultural anthropologists, including Geoffrey Bateson, Ruth Benedict, Geoffrey Gorer, Clyde Kluckhohn, Alexander Leighton, and Margaret Mead, to produce "national character" studies of the Axis powers, especially Germany and Japan. Although its impact on the actual conduct of the war is debatable, it is clear that "national character" played an enormous role in public discourse concerning the nature of the enemy during World War II.[20]

This first wave of cultural theories receded soon after the end of the war largely as a result of the nuclear revolution. The development and deployment of absolute weapons by the United States and the Soviet Union led many to anticipate that this technology would encourage both superpowers to behave roughly similarly. Nuclear weapons were so destructive that they made cultural differences largely irrelevant. Instead, the nuclear revolution ushered in general theories of strategic behavior such as deterrence theory, inspired by the assumptions (homogeneous rational actors) and methodology (rational choice) of economics. Such rational-actor theories of strategic behavior dominated Cold War national security studies in the 1950s and early 1960s.[21]

THE COLD WAR WAVE

The failure of the Soviet Union to rest content once it had achieved nuclear parity and the U.S. defeat in the Vietnam War undermined many of these general theories of deterrence and coercion. The continuing Soviet nuclear buildup beyond what most agreed was a robust assured destruction capability caused many scholars to question the rational-actor assumptions of much of the general theorizing about the effects of nuclear weapons on statecraft.[22] The failure of U.S. efforts to prevent the collapse of a noncommunist regime in South Vietnam also seemed to undermine general theories of political and economic development and call into question rational-actor theories of limited war. As Colin Gray concluded: "Attempts to apply American deterrence logic to all national components in the nuclear arms race are bound to result in miscalculation if the distinctiveness of each component is not fully recognized. Similarly, American theories of limited war, escalation, counterinsurgency, and nation-building are unlikely to achieve the desired ends unless adequate at-

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20. For discussion of their specific theories and impact, see John Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), pp. 118–146.
21. For a useful overview, see Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 12–15.
22. Colin S. Gray, "What RAND Hath Wrought," *Foreign Policy*, No. 4 (Fall 1971), pp. 111–129.

tention is paid to the local contexts."[23] Gray's dissatisfaction with general theories of strategy that ignored differences in "local context" was widely shared among security analysts and led to a search for alternative theories of strategic behavior. Cultural theories were one obvious choice, and so they again attracted adherents in security studies.

The crest of this second wave came during the reintensified Cold War struggle with the Soviet Union in the late 1970s and early 1980s. A number of security specialists maintained that because the United States was culturally incapable of thinking and acting strategically, it was at a decisive disadvantage vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.[24] One current of Cold War cultural theorizing focused on the different organizational cultures of the American and Soviet militaries. According to Richard Pipes, "Current U.S. strategic theory was thus born of a marriage between the scientist and the accountant. The professional soldier was jilted."[25] In contrast, these analysts saw the Soviet military as Clausewitzian and operationally oriented.[26] Culturally oriented security specialists believed that these differences in the American and Soviet militaries' organizational cultures put the United States at a decisive disadvantage in waging the Cold War. Another important current of Cold War strategic cultural theorizing focused on the contrasting American and Soviet political cultures. Some saw the democratic United States as weak and indecisive because it had few traditions of prolonged war or subtle statecraft. Given that the United States was also a commercial society, they thought that it was incapable of successfully playing the game of high politics. Conversely, they viewed the Soviet Union as a highly cohesive authoritarian state, with a long tradition of warfare and deep involvement in great power diplomacy. Where the United States was a middle-class, commercial society, the Soviet Union was a peasant society with a dramatically different set of attitudes toward conflict and inter-

23. Ibid., p. 126.
24. See Richard Pipes, "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War," *Commentary*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (July 1977), pp. 21–34; Fritz W. Ermath, "Contrasts in American and Soviet Strategic Thought," *International Security*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Fall 1978), pp. 138–155; Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979); Colin S. Gray, "National Style in Strategy: The American Example," *International Security*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Fall 1981), pp. 21–47; Jean-François Revel, *How Democracies Perish* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984); and Jeane Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," *Commentary*, Vol. 68, No. 5 (November 1979), pp. 34–45; Carnes Lord, "American Strategic Culture," *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1985), pp. 269–294; and Frederick M. Downey and Steven Metz, "The American Political Culture and Strategic Planning," *Parameters*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (September 1988), pp. 34–42.
25. Pipes, "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War," pp. 24, 26. See also Lord, "American Strategic Culture," p. 280; and Gray, "National Style in Strategy," p. 24.
26. Ermath, "Contrasts in American and Soviet Strategic Thought," p. 155; and Pipes, "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War," pp. 25–26.

national relations. Critics seemed sure that these differences would give the Soviet Union the edge in the Cold War.[27]

Subsequent reassessments of the United States' failure in Vietnam and its clear victory in the Cold War demonstrate that these Cold War culturalist arguments were wrong. The U.S. loss in Vietnam became the wellspring of concern about the deficiencies of U.S. strategic culture.[28] A convincing case can be made, however, that the U.S. government and military accomplished their main goal of preserving a noncommunist government in South Vietnam from 1965 to 1973.[29] Moreover, to the extent that the United States failed in Vietnam, that failure had more to do with the insurmountable task of nation-building and the many deficiencies of our ally than with any American cultural short-comings.[30] If culture was such a critical explanation for the outcome of the Vietnam War, how does one explain the dramatically different combat performances of the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong compared with the South Vietnamese army? All were products of similar strategic and political cultures. Several years later, the Soviet Union, with its supposedly more effective strategic and political cultures, did no better in a similar sort of war in Afghanistan.[31] The nuclear revolution, a major technological change in the structure of the international system, ultimately had roughly equivalent effects on the behavior, if not the rhetoric, of both the United States and the Soviet Union.[32] Most damning for the Cold War wave, however, was the final outcome of the Cold War itself. Despite forecasts of doom by culturalists at the time,[33] the democratic, commercial, and non-Clausewitzian United States clearly won the Cold War,[34] and it did so with largely the same strategic and political cultures

27. Revel, *How Democracies Perish*.
28. Gray, "What RAND Hath Wrought," p. 122. For a later expression of similar sentiments, see Stephen Peter Rosen, "Vietnam and the American Theory of Limited War," *International Security*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Fall 1982), pp. 83–113.
29. Leslie Gelb with Richard K. Betts, *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1979).
30. On the nature of the task facing the United States in Vietnam, see Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Viking, 1983); and Neil Sheehan, *A Bright and Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1988).
31. Sarah Mendelson, "Internal Battles and External Wars: Politics, Learning, and the Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan," *World Politics*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (April 1993), pp. 327–360.
32. See Raymond L. Garthoff, *Deterrence and the Revolution in Soviet Military Doctrine* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1990); and Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989).
33. See the dire warnings of increased likelihood of war in Ermath, "Contrasts in American and Soviet Strategic Thought," pp. 139–140.
34. For a bold statement of this argument, see John Lewis Gaddis, "Hanging Tough Paid Off," *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (January/February 1989), pp. 11–14. For a more detailed discussion of realism and the end of the Cold War, see William C. Wohlforth, "Realism and the End of the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994/95), pp. 91–129.

that had "lost" Vietnam. It also handily won the Persian Gulf War.[35] One recent book, though sympathetic to the cultural approach, nonetheless shows how traditional theories of Soviet domestic politics, which relied heavily on cultural variables, led the vast majority of Sovietologists to miss the dramatic changes that were taking place right under their noses.[36] In short, the Cold War wave of cultural theorizing made predictions that largely turned out to be wrong.

THE POST–COLD WAR WAVE
The failure of the Cold War wave notwithstanding, the unexpected end of the Cold War sparked renewed interest in the search for cultural explanations for state behavior in the international system.[37] Peter Katzenstein begins his brief for a return to culture in national security studies with the assertion that "it is hard to deny that existing theories of international relations have woefully fallen short in explaining an important revolution in world politics."[38] Many scholars believed that the Cold War ended because of domestic changes in the Soviet Union such as internal economic collapse[39] or democratization.[40] Others claim that the end of the Cold War was literally brought about by "new thinking," the result of the spread of a new global culture conveyed through the peace movement, concerned natural scientists, or other epistemic communities.[41] Common to all of these explanations is a rejection of the realist view of international politics that posits an unrelenting competition among states for power and security.[42]

35. See Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993); and Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995).
36. See Nicolai Petro, *The Rebirth of Russian Democracy: An Interpretation of Political Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 1.
37. Katzenstein, "Conclusion," p. 499; see also the various essays in Richard Ned Lebow and Thomas Risse-Kappen, eds., *International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).
38. Katzenstein, "Preface," in Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security*, p. xi.
39. Valerie Bunce, "Domestic Reform and International Change: The Gorbachev Reforms in Historical Perspective," *International Organization*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (Winter 1993), pp. 107–138.
40. See, for example, Bruce M. Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post–Cold War World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 126–129.
41. Emanuel Adler, "Conclusion: Epistemic Communities, World Order, and the Creation of a Reflective Research Program," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Winter 1992), pp. 367–390; and Rey Koslowski and Friedrich V. Kratochwil, "Understanding Change in International Politics: The Soviet Empire's Demise and the International System," *International Organization*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Spring 1994), pp. 215–247.
42. Richard Ned Lebow, "The Long Peace, the End of the Cold War, and the Failure of Realism," in Lebow and Risse-Kappen, *International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War*, pp. 23–56.

The post–Cold War renaissance of interest in culture in security studies also reflects a more general resurgence of interest in cultural variables.[43] The glowing reviews of Robert Putnam's book on democracy and Italian political culture are testament to the renewed interest in, and acceptance of, culture among mainstream social scientists.[44] The revived legitimacy of cultural variables also dovetails with revived scholarly interest in ideas[45] and domestic politics,[46] and a renewed skepticism about general theories.[47] Culture is an ideational variable; these ideas are usually domestic; and they frequently emphasize the uniqueness within, rather than similarity across, cases. Finally, the return to culture in security studies is attractive to some scholars because culture is less wedded to positivism—"the view that all true knowledge is scientific"[48]—than other approaches to national security studies. There has been a growing dissatisfaction with positivism among a diverse array of scholars. Many critical theorists reject it out of hand.[49] There has also been a long tradition of skepti-

43. Evidence of growing popular interest in culture includes "Cultural Explanations: The Man in the Baghdad Café," *Economist*, November 9, 1996, pp. 23–26; and David Berreby, "Arrogance, Order, Amity, and Other National Traits," *New York Times*, May 26, 1996, Week in Review Section, pp. 1, 6.

44. Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993). For an example of a glowing review, see "Pro Bono Publico," *Economist*, February 6, 1993, p. 96.

45. See the various essays in Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993); and John Odell, *U.S. International Monetary Policy: Markets, Power, and Ideas as Sources of Change* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982). See also Mark M. Blyth, "'Any More Bright Ideas?' The Ideational Turn of Comparative Political Economy," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (January 1997), pp. 229–250.

46. See Joanne Gowa, "Anarchy, Egoism, and Third Images: The Evolution of Cooperation and International Relations," *International Organization*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Winter 1986), pp. 180–182; Stephen Haggard and Beth A. Simmons, "Theories of International Regimes," *International Organization*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (Summer 1987), pp. 513–517; Robert Jervis, "Realism, Game Theory, and Cooperation," *World Politics*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (April 1988), pp. 324–329; Robert Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Summer 1988), pp. 427–459; and Helen Milner, "International Theories of Cooperation among States," *World Politics*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (April 1992), pp. 466–496. All cited in Legro, *Cooperation under Fire*, p. 8, fn. 16.

47. For arguments against theoretical generalization, see Isaiah Berlin, "On Political Judgment," *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 43, No. 15 (October 3, 1996), pp. 26–31; and Albert O. Hirshman, "The Search for Paradigms as a Hindrance to Understanding," *World Politics*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (April 1970), pp. 329–343.

48. Ian Bullock, Oliver Stallybrass, and Stephen Trombley, eds., *The Harper Dictionary of Modern Thought*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), p. 669.

49. See, for example, Richard K. Ashley, "The Poverty of Neorealism," in Robert O. Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 255–300; Robert W. Cox, "Towards a Post-Hegemonic Conceptualization of World Order: Reflections on the Relevancy of Ibn Khaldun," in James N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel, eds., *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 135; Pauline Rosenau, "Once Again into the Fray: International Relations Confronts the Humanities,"

cism about the claims of modern social science—especially positivism—among intellectual conservatives.[50] How much will this return to culture help us understand post–Cold War strategic behavior?

Assessing the Post–Cold War Wave of Culturalism in Security Studies

We face three potential challenges to assessing the explanatory power of the third wave of culturalist theories in security studies. First, cultural variables are tricky to define and operationalize. Second, some cultural theorists believe that cultural variables make every case sui generis, and so their theories are not broadly applicable and testable across a number of cases. Finally, because culturalism is actually a cluster of theories—a research program—it does not make sense to assess culturalism per se; rather, we must test particular culturalist theories. Although these challenges make assessing cultural theories difficult, they do not present insurmountable obstacles to this endeavor.

The first challenge of testing cultural theories is that cultural variables are sometimes hard to clearly define and operationalize. This has been a long-standing concern about cultural theories in the social sciences. In the 1930s and 1940s, culture was a central variable in anthropology and psychology,[51] and in the late 1940s and early 1950s, it made its way into political science.[52] By the mid-1970s, however, culture had largely fallen into disrepute throughout most of the social sciences because political culture had come to be widely regarded as a "degenerate research program."[53] The main reason was that the term

Millennium, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Spring 1990), pp. 83–110; and Josef Lapid, "The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivist Era," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (September 1989), pp. 235–254.

50. See Leo Strauss's critical discussion of social science in Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 36–78; see also Hillail Gildin, "Introduction," in Gilden, ed., *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Ten Essays by Leo Strauss* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), pp. x–xvii.

51. Clyde Kluckhohn, "The Study of Culture," in Daniel Lerner and Harold Lasswell, eds., *The Policy Sciences: Recent Developments in Scope and Method* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1951), p. 86, calls culture the "master concept" of anthropology.

52. Nathan Leites, "Psycho-Cultural Hypotheses about Political Acts," *World Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (October 1948), pp. 102–119. On the seminal influence of Leites's and also Gabriel Almond's work in bringing culture into political science, see Carole Pateman, "Political Culture, Political Structure, and Political Change," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 1, Pt. 3 (July 1971), p. 293; and Lucien Pye, "Political Culture Revisited," *Political Psychology*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (September 1991), p. 489.

53. Key critical pieces are Alfred R. Lindesmith and Anselm L. Strauss, "A Critique of Culture-Personality Writings," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 15, No. 5 (October 1950), pp. 587–600; Alex Inkles and Daniel J. Levinson, "National Character: The Study of Modal Personality and Sociocultural Systems," in Gardner Lindsey, ed., *Handbook of Social Psychology*, Vol. 2, *Special Fields and*

"culture" had lost all conceptual clarity.[54] Culture went from being a central to a marginal variable mostly because cultural variables were difficult to define and operationalize.[55] Mary Douglas observed that "there was never such a fluffy notion at large in a self-styled scientific discipline, not since singing angels blew the planets across the medieval sky or ether filled the gaps in Newton's universe."[56]

Ambiguous definitions of culture, as Ronald Rogowski pointed out, make it very hard to formulate a testable theory using these variables: "There is a fundamental failing in the theory that makes definitions uncertain; uncertain definitions make for uncertainty about strategies and measures; and so long as measures remain uncertain, convincing tests of the theory are impossible. The problem lies with the theory. It may be possible to remedy it; but . . . it is hard to see how."[57] Definitions such as "collectively held ideas, beliefs, and norms" that cultural theorists commonly use are so broad and imprecise that they have proven difficult to operationalize.[58]

As with early cultural research in political science, some believe that the latest wave of culturalism in security studies has still not formulated a clear and widely accepted definition of culture.[59] Although all the contributors to *The Culture of National Security*, a collection of essays by some of the leading post–Cold War advocates of a return to culture in national security studies,

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Applications (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1954), pp. 977–1020; Pateman, "Political Culture," pp. 291–306; Ronald Rogowski, *Rational Legitimacy: A Theory of Political Support* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974); Brian Berry, *Sociologists, Economists, and Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); David J. Elkins and Richard E.B. Simeon, "A Cause in Search of Its Effect, or What Does Political Culture Explain?" *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (January 1979), pp. 127–145; Ole Elgström, "National Culture and International Negotiations," *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (September 1994), pp. 289–301; and Robert Brightman, "Forget Culture: Replacement, Transcendence, Relexification," *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (1995), pp. 509–546. For more sympathetic discussion of the problems with culture, see Gabriel A. Almond, "The Intellectual History of the Civic Culture Concept," in Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, eds., *The Civic Culture Revisited* (Newbury Park, N.J.: Sage Publications, 1980), pp. 1–35; Samuel P. Huntington, "The Goals of Development," in Samuel P. Huntington and Myron Weiner, eds., *Understanding Political Development: An Analytic Study* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1987), pp. 3–32; and Pye, "Political Culture Revisited," pp. 487–507.
54. Pateman, "Political Culture," p. 305; and David D. Laitin, "The Civic Culture at 30," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 89, No. 1 (March 1995), p. 168.
55. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Harper, 1974), pp. 4–5, notes that this problem extends back to Clyde Kluckhohn's classic *Mirror for Man* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1949).
56. Mary Douglas, "The Self-Completing Animal," *Times Literary Supplement*, August 8, 1975, p. 888.
57. Rogowski, *Rational Legitimacy*, p. 13.
58. Pateman, "Political Culture," p. 293, fn. 7.
59. This has been noted even by such sympathetic reviewers as Kowert and Legro, "Norms, Identity, and Their Limits," p. 483; and also by Daniel Philpott, "The Possibilities of Ideas," *Security Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Summer 1996), p. 192.

assert that ideas, not material factors, best account for particular outcomes, a consensus on the definition of culture remains elusive. Significantly different, and potentially contradictory, concepts such as organizational culture ("collectively held beliefs within a particular . . . organization"[60]) and global culture (universally embraced ideas and norms) huddle uneasily under the same culturalist umbrella. For instance, Dana Eyre and Mark Suchman's argument about the global cultural ideas of what constitutes statehood leading all states to adopt certain weapons, if applied to nuclear proliferation, might stand in conflict with an organizational cultural theory that would anticipate that the different organizational cultures of military organizations should lead them to adopt different types of military technology.

The definitional problem, however, is largely one of application rather than principle, because it is possible to clearly define and operationalize culture. A useful definition of culture emphasizes collectively held ideas that do not vary in the face of environmental or structural changes. These ideas should be particular to individual states, rather than held commonly across the international system. For example, "strategic culture," as Jack Snyder employs it, is "the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other."[61]

The second challenge to assessing cultural theories is that some new culturalists in security studies focus on the particulars of single cases, rather than on factors common to a number of cases, because they assume that each one is sui generis.[62] These sorts of cultural variables could make it hard to generalize because they often produce cases that challenge the "unit homogeneity assumption," which holds that cases have enough meaningful similarities to be comparable.[63] Cases employing these sorts of cultural variables can at best be "configurative-ideographic" studies that only establish the limits of comparative theories.[64] The core tenet of such a cultural approach is a rejection of

60. Kier, "Culture and French Military Doctrine before World War II," p. 203.
61. Jack L. Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*, RAND Report [R-2154-AF] (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, September 1977).
62. This might be because, as Peter Katzenstein told me, he is "not interested in theorizing per se but in solving puzzles." Personal correspondence, September 12, 1997. Huntington, "The Goals of Development," p. 27, notes that this can be a problem with cultural theories in general.
63. On this assumption, see Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 116.
64. Harry Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory in Political Science," in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science*, Vol. 7 (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), pp. 96–99;

external rationalism (which makes behavior predictable across cases).[65] If that were true, then these culturalists would have few, if any, systematic elements on which to build their theories. Without systematic variables, there is no prediction. Prediction, however, is central to the social scientific enterprise not only for theoretical reasons (we need theories to make predictions in order to test the theories),[66] but also for policy analysis (theories that do not make clear predictions are of little use to policymakers).[67]

The sui generis challenge raises a major issue that has thus far been neglected by some new culturalists in security studies. Clifford Geertz, at least, confronted this issue squarely and acknowledged that it is a profound problem: "The great natural variation of cultural forms is, of course, not only anthropology's great (and wasting) resource, but the ground of its deepest theoretical dilemma: How is such variation to be squared with the biological unity of the human species?"[68] Despite superficial differences, human beings share some fundamental similarities upon which the formulation of theories of human behavior ought to be possible at a general level. Many new culturalists in security studies have not adequately wrestled with the question of how much common human psychology, physiology, and physics lead to similar patterns of behavior.

The sui generis challenge ineluctably leads to the larger question of whether it is possible to have a "science" of culture.[69] Some scholars believe that culture is amenable to systematic study.[70] Others, like Geertz, are skeptical: "The analysis of [culture is]," he says, "not an experimental science in search of law

and Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (January 1980), p. 196.

65. Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein, "Norms, Identity, and Culture," p. 44.

66. King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, p. 63; Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory in Political Science," p. 88; and Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methodology for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, forthcoming), memo no. 1.

67. Alexander L. George, "Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison," in Paul Gordon Lauren, ed., *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy* (New York: Free Press, 1979), pp. 43–68; and George, *Bridging the Gap: Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1993).

68. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 22.

69. For a similar debate in the field of history, see E.H. Carr, *What Is History?* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), pp. 78–79.

70. David D. Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yoruba* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). See also Aaron Wildavsky, "Choosing Preferences By Constructing Institutions," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 81, No. 1 (March 1987), p. 5; and Otto Klineberg, "A Science of National Character," *Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (February 1944), p. 161.

but an interpretive one in search of meaning."[71] Geertz notes further that cultural theories fail to provide two of the hallmarks of science: cumulation and prediction.[72] He concludes that "anthropology . . . is a science whose progress is marked less by a perfection of consensus than by a refinement of debate. What gets better is the precision with which we vex each other."[73] Samuel Huntington, another long-standing proponent of culturalist theories, admits that "cultural explanations are . . . often imprecise or tautological or both, at the extreme coming down to a more sophisticated rendering of 'the French are like that.' On the other hand, cultural explanations are also unsatisfying for a social scientist because they run counter to the social scientist's proclivity to generalize."[74] Thus the compatibility of culture with a positivist approach to social science has always been questionable.[75] As David Laitin notes: "It is not some idea that 'culture does not matter' that has brought research on political culture to a standstill. Rather, the systematic study of culture within political science has been emasculated by the neopositivist tradition, which sets a central methodological requirement that a theory must have general laws that can [be] disconfirmed."[76]

Among the new culturalists in security studies are explicit modernists who believe that cultural variables are as amenable to social-scientific study as any of the other variables employed by social scientists.[77] There are also unapologetic antimodernists in the new culturalist camp. Richard Price and Nina Tannenwald, for example, maintain that their approach "does not view the world in terms of discretely existing independent variables whose independent effect on variance can be measured according to the logic of statistics."[78] Thus the new culturalism in security studies remains mired in the unresolved debate about whether there can be a science of culture between Geertz and Laitin, the

71. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 5. See also Clifford Geertz, "On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding," *American Scientist*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January/February 1975), p. 48; and David Berreby, "Clifford Geertz: Absolute Untruths," *New York Times Magazine*, April 9, 1995, pp. 44–45.
72. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 25–26.
73. Ibid., p. 29.
74. Huntington, "The Goals of Development," p. 23.
75. David Collier, "The Comparative Method: Two Decades of Change," in Dankwart A. Rustow and Kenneth Paul Erickson, eds., *Comparative Political Dynamics: Global Research Perspectives* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), p. 7, notes Harold Lasswell's claim that scientific analysis is "unavoidably comparative."
76. Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture*, p. 172.
77. Legro, "Culture and Preferences," p. 118.
78. Price and Tannenwald, "Norms and Deterrence," pp. 147–148; see also Price, *The Chemical Weapons Taboo*, p. 104.

preeminent antimodernist and modernist, respectively, in the general field of contemporary cultural studies.

The sui generis challenge does not, however, undermine the entire new culturalist research program in security studies. Cultural theories that may not be amenable to generalization across cases might still lead to generalization within cases across time. In other words, they may not offer general theories of all states' behavior but may suggest theories of a particular state's foreign policy behavior over time. This criticism also does not apply to arguments employing universal norms, global culture, or civilization. Huntington's "clash of civilizations," for example, is a general theory of state behavior, in this case alignment decisions, based on cultural identification.[79] Also, some generic political culture theories, such as Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's "civic culture," are applicable across a number of cases. However, most domestic political culture and strategic culture theories, and nearly all theories based on organizational culture, suffer from the sui generis problem. In consequence, most domestic cultural variables can explain only a limited range of behavior. However, given that this is not true of all of the new cultural theories in security studies, it certainly does not call into question the whole research program.

The final challenge to assessing the post–Cold War culturalism is that both culturalism and realism are research programs rather than concrete theories.[80] Research programs are clusters of theories that share the same core assumptions, but they might have different auxiliary assumptions, which could lead them to make very different predictions about the same case.[81] Conversely, theories from different research programs may make the same predictions about the same case. Thus, rather than pitting culturalism against realism, we should look at particular sets of theories that vary across two dimensions: domestic versus international and material versus ideational. These two dimensions produce the two-by-two diagram in Figure 1. Structural realism or

79. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).
80. For discussion of this, see Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," in Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, eds., *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 91–196. Colin Elman offers a useful discussion of the application of Lakatos to the new strategic culturalism in Elman, "Neocultural Progress? A Preliminary Discussion of Lakatos's Methodology of Scientific Research Programs," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., August 28–31, 1997.
81. See, for example, Michael C. Desch, "Why Realists Disagree about the Third World (And Why They Shouldn't)," *Security Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Spring 1996), pp. 358–384.

Figure 1. How Theories in National Security Differ.

	Domestic	International
Material	(1) Organizational theory and traditional realism	(2) Structural realism or neorealism
Ideational	(3) Organizational, political, and strategic culture	(4) Global culture and norms

NOTE: Colin Elman, in "Do Unto Others As They Would Do Unto You? The Internal and External Determinants of Military Practices," unpublished manuscript (Cambridge, Mass.: John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University, May 1996), p. 33, divides theories in a similar way.

neorealism (Box 2) is a general theory that uses the distribution of material capabilities in the international system to explain systemic outcomes such as alliance patterns.[82] Conversely, organizational theory (Box 1) looks to the particular material interests of organizations to explain strategic behavior such as the choice of a particular military doctrine.[83] Traditional realism (also Box 1) looks to other domestic factors such as human nature to explain international conflict. Organizational, political, and strategic cultural arguments (Box 3) employ domestic ideational variables to account for the type of grand strategy a state adopts or the particular military doctrine it embraces. Conversely, global cultural or international normative theories (Box 4) use international ideational variables to explain humanitarian intervention, the adoption of particular military technologies, or why states choose to ally.

While culturalist theories clearly challenge realist theories, both research programs can also contain theories that might challenge each other. For example, Barry Posen tests a structural realist theory of doctrinal innovation (balance-of-power theory) (Box 2) against organization theory (Box 1).[84] There are also major debates between structural (Box 2) and classical (Box 1) realists on

82. The seminal statement of this is Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979).
83. Important examples of such theorizing include Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decisionmaking and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984); and Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," in Steven E. Miller, ed., *Military Strategy and the Origins of the First World War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 88–107.
84. Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the Wars* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984).

a variety of issues.[85] With one notable exception,[86] however, the new strategic culturalists have been so preoccupied with their challenge to realism that they have largely ignored very important differences within the culturalist camp itself. For example, cultural theories in both Boxes 3 and 4 are included within the same research program, but they could just as easily serve as alternatives to each other as to theories in Boxes 1 and 2.

In addition to obscuring important differences within the culturalist research program, these dichotomies gloss over important similarities between some culturalist arguments and other noncultural theories. For example, although realists do not expect all states to have identical domestic structures or to exhibit the same international behavior, they do expect functional similarity among the great powers.[87] The problem is that this prediction is very similar to a global cultural prediction. The question, then, is what explains that similar behavior? Not only is it clear that the new culturalists in security studies are sidestepping important debates within the culturalist research program, but their predictions are sometimes hard to disentangle from those of realists.

The new culturalists in security studies also identify with the larger socio-logical challenge to materialist and rationalist theories.[88] The "sociological" versus "rationalist" distinction, however, obscures as much as it illuminates. To begin, it is misleading to juxtapose cultural theories with rational theories because many of the new strategic culturalist theories maintain that common

85. These debates are played out in Benjamin Frankel, ed., "Roots of Realism," *Security Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Winter 1995); and Frankel, ed. "Realism: Restatements and Renewal," *Security Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Spring 1996).

86. Johnston, "Cultural Realism in Maoist China," p. 228.

87. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 127–128, talks about "sameness" but appears to be referring to functional similarity. Most other realists endorse Waltz's basic argument that anarchy forces states to perform the same functions, but anticipate that they will do so in somewhat different ways as the result of variations in geographic position (land powers vs. sea powers) and the level of current technology. See, for example, Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise," *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 15–16, for an argument that great powers will perform the same general functions but may have different structures. Of realists, only João Resende-Santos, "Anarchy and the Emulation of Military Systems: Military Organization and Technology in South America, 1870–1914," *Security Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Spring 1996), pp. 193–260, predicts strict isomorphism.

88. Katzenstein, "Introduction," in Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security*, p. 4. This perspective grew out of work done in sociology examples that can be found in John W. Meyer and Michael T. Hannan, eds., *National Development and the World System: Educational, Economic, and Political Change, 1950–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Albert Bergesen, ed., *Studies of the Modern World System* (New York: Academic Press, 1980); and George M. Thomas, John W. Meyer, Francisco O. Ramirez, and John Boli, eds., *Institutional Structure: Constituting State, Society, and the Individual* (Newbury Park, N.J.: Sage, 1987).

ideas make certain behaviors "rational" by imposing costs and benefits in the same way that neorealists and organizational theorists think that material structures impose rationality. Moreover, if by "rationalist" one means a commitment to a modernist research epistemology such as positivism, framing the debate as between sociological and rationalist theories is not all that helpful either. The new strategic culturalists themselves differ significantly in their commitment to the tenets of modern social science.[89] Therefore, rather than testing culturalist versus realist, or sociological versus rationalist, research programs, I think it is more useful to pit culturalist theories against the evidence and against realist theories to ascertain just how much they really explain.[90]

Why Culture Cannot Supplant Realist Theories in National Security

The central problem with the new culturalism in security studies is that its theories, by themselves, do not provide much additional explanatory power beyond existing theories. The Cold War wave of cultural theorizing had the virtue of making clear empirical predictions that made it possible to test its theories against both real-world evidence and alternative theories. As we saw, the empirical track record of strategic cultural analysis during the Cold War was weak.

Although the post–Cold War wave of cultural theorizing has, for the most part, not yet been proven wrong, it will not supplant realist theories in national security studies because it has selected cases that do not provide crucial tests that enable us to distinguish which theories are better.[91] Instead of selecting "hard cases" for cultural theories, much of the new cultural literature in security studies relies on four other types of cases : (1) "most likely" cases for the culturalist theories; (2) cases that have the same outcomes as predicted by realist theories; (3) cases where the culturalist interpretations are disputable; and (4) cases in which it is too early to tell what the outcome will be.

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89. Iain Johnston's comments on an earlier draft of this article played an important role in clarifying for me the relationship between culturalism and rationalism. Kowert and Legro, "Norms, Identity, and Their Limits," also provide a useful discussion of rationalism and culturalism. See p. 457, fn. 11.
90. This is what Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," characterizes as a "three-cornered fight," p. 115.
91. On crucial tests, see Arthur L. Stinchcombe, *Constructing Social Theories* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1968), pp. 24–28.

MOST LIKELY CASES

The new culturalist arguments may be right in a least two instances, but they do not tell us much about whether culturalism can supplant realism. This is because they employ "most likely" cases for culturalist theories and "least likely" cases for the realist alternatives.[92] These cases are therefore poor tests because we would expect the culturalist theory to perform well. "If a theory stands up under a tougher test," argues Arthur Stinchcombe, "it becomes more credible than it is if it stands up when we have subjected it only to weak tests."[93]

For instance, Stephen Rosen's argument that different types of societies will produce different levels of military effectiveness is undoubtedly true for his Indian cases. Historically, Indian society was deeply divided, and this undermined India's military effectiveness. However, the value of this evidence for the larger question of whether domestic, ideational approaches are better than international, material approaches is minimal. Realists do not expect all states to have identical domestic structures. Rather, they expect functional similarity among the great powers but also different internal structures and external behaviors based on such things as geographic position and level of military technology. Thus realists would not expect India, or any other state that is not consistently a central player in global politics, to be as militarily effective as, or have similar domestic structures as, states that are central players.[94] In other words, given that India is a "most likely" case for culturalist theories, the fact that it passed that test tells us little about the more general superiority of cultural theories.

Similarly, Martha Finnemore argues that realists would anticipate intervention only when vital geopolitical interests are at stake, and the fact that there is much humanitarian intervention in places without much geopolitical value leads her to conclude that this is a puzzle for realism. This mischaracterizes

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92. On "most likely" and "least likely" cases, see Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory in Political Science," pp. 118–119.
93. Stinchcombe, *Constructing Social Theories*, p. 20.
94. The classic statement of this argument, which realists frequently cite, is Otto Hintze, "Military Organization and the Organization of the State," in Felix Gilbert, ed., *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 178–221. The reason I think that India faced a less challenging international security environment is that in one data set it had a yearly battle death average of 263 compared with a central actor like Prussia/Germany, which had 41,181. See J. David Singer and Melvin Small, *The Wages of War: 1816–1965: A Statistical Handbook* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1972), Table 11.2. Another source notes that India fought 95 wars, whereas the German states participated in 170. See George C. Kohn, *Dictionary of Wars* (New York: Facts on File, 1986), pp. 545–550.

the realist argument: realists recognize that states have a hierarchy of interests, security at the top, but then economic welfare, ideological, and humanitarian concerns in descending order.[95] Humanitarian intervention per se is not inconsistent with realism: only such intervention that undermines a state's security or economic interests is. As Finnemore concedes in her historical cases, "Humanitarian action was rarely taken when it jeopardized other stated goals or interests of a state."[96] Given that this is true of all of the contemporary cases she examines, they are "most likely" cases for culturalist theories. Neither Rosen nor Finnemore is wrong about their cases, and both have shed light on the questions of why states might not be able to generate much military power and why states intervene in place where they have few strategic interests, but neither has demonstrated the superiority of the culturalist approach.

INDISTINGUISHABLE CASES

The second class of cases that culturalists employ are those in which their theories and realist theories make similar or identical predictions. For example, Jeffrey Legro argues that the different strategic behaviors, in particular escalation decisions, of Germany, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and the United States during World War II were the result of their militaries' distinct organizational cultures. Few realists would agree with his assertion that this presents a puzzle for realism, because while realists would anticipate states to be functionally similar, they would also expect differently placed states to adopt different military strategies.[97] Therefore realists would not be surprised that Great Britain escalated the air war against Germany because until 1944 that was the only way it could inflict damage on its adversary.[98] Similarly, realists would expect that German strategy would be very different, tied much more closely to the ground war, as a result of Germany's geographical position and the advances it had made in armor and mechanized warfare technology.[99]

95. For a discussion of realism's hierarchy of state interests, see Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), p. 24.
96. Finnemore, "Constructing Norms," p. 168.
97. Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 87–88; Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, pp. 36, 61–62, 65–66; Joseph Grieco, *Cooperation among Nations: Europe, America, and Non-Tariff Barriers to Trade* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 39–40; and Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 97–99, 183–192. An extended discussion of this can be found in Colin Elman, "Responding to Military Practices: Convergence and Divergence in International Security," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, San Diego, California, April 16–20, 1996.
98. Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: Norton, 1995), p. 108.
99. For discussions of German blitzkrieg strategy, see John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 29–30, 32–33, 35–43; and Len Deighton, *Blitzkrieg: From the Rise of Hitler to the Fall of Dunkirk* (New York: HarperPaperbacks, 1994).

They would also anticipate that German air strategy would be very different from Britain's because tactical, rather than strategic, air power best complemented the blitzkrieg.[100] Early German escalation of the U-boat war also seems rational inasmuch as that was the only way for the Germans to strike at Great Britain.[101] In short, Legro's organizational cultural theory and realism make the same retrodictions for these cases.

Iain Johnston's argument that domestic strategic culture, rather than systemic pressures, best explains Ming Chinese grand strategy is more complicated. He insists that this realist strategic culture was the result of domestic, not international, factors because there was variation in external threats but consistency in strategic culture. There are two problems with this argument, however. First, Ming China consistently faced an anarchical international environment, and so there was always an external threat. Johnston admits that, "strictly speaking," the international environment China confronted was anarchical.[102] Second, Johnston himself shows, as realists would anticipate, that use of force by the Ming varied with changes in their military capabilities.[103] To make his case, Johnston needs cross-national cases of similarly positioned states behaving differently. He would also have to provide a strategic cultural account for instances of differently configured, but similarly positioned, states behaving similarly. Johnston's work not only calls into question an interpretation of a case frequently cited as an example of the importance of strategic culture, but his own argument is hard to disentangle from the realist alternative.[104]

Finally, Elizabeth Kier maintains that the French domestic political and military organizational cultures before World War II prevented the French from taking steps that might have avoided the catastrophic defeat of May 1940.[105] In her view, the French civilian leadership was more concerned with the domestic threat from the French military than with the international threat from Germany, and so they forced the military to take steps that, given France's particular military organizational culture, made it impossible for the country

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100. Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 70–71.
101. On the U-boat campaign, see Dan van der Vat, *The Atlantic Campaign: World War II's Great Struggle at Sea* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).
102. See Johnston, "Cultural Realism and Maoist China," p. 260.
103. Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, p. 250.
104. Johnston, "Cultural Realism and Maoist China," p. 264, explicitly eschews "critical tests."
105. Kier, *Imagining War*, pp. 56–88. Other studies that emphasize the links between domestic political conflict and the French defeat include Marc Bloch, *Strange Defeat: A Statement Written in 1940* (New York: Octagon Books, 1968), and Eugen Weber, *The Hollow Years: France in the 1930s* (New York: Norton, 1994), chap. 10.

to maintain the offensive military doctrine it had in the 1920s into the 1930s. Realists would argue, however, that changes in French military doctrine clearly reflected Europe's changing balance of power.[106] In 1920 France and Germany were almost even in population (39 million vs. 42.8 million), and France had a clear advantage in military manpower (350,000 vs. 100,000 standing troops).[107] Given these figures, it is not surprising that France had an offensive military doctrine. By 1928, however, France began to fall dramatically behind Germany not only in population (41 million vs. 55.4 million), but also in terms of industrial potential (if Britain in 1900 = 100, France = 82 vs. Germany = 158) and percentage of world manufacturing (6 percent vs. 11.6 percent). By 1937 the French had less than a third of German war-making potential (France had 4.2 percent and Germany had 14.4 percent of world war-making capability). In 1938 France fell even further behind in population (41.9 million vs. 68.5 million), industrial potential (74 vs. 228), and percentage of world manufacturing capability (4.4 percent vs. 12.7 percent).[108] By 1940 France was at a slight disadvantage in standing military forces (689,010 vs. 720,000),[109] but there was a huge gap in latent military power. Given this dramatic change in the international balance of power, and the difficulties France faced in securing reliable allies in the multipolar international system,[110] realists expected that France would embrace a defensive military doctrine by the 1930s.

As an aside, the reasons France made the fateful strategic decisions it did actually had little to do with the domestic political crisis of the Third Republic or even with its defensive military doctrine.[111] The key to the French defeat was that it adopted a war plan that put the bulk of its forces too far north in Belgium to blunt the German attack through the Ardennes. The French military leadership made a clear strategic blunder by overestimating the difficulty the Germans would have in advancing through the Ardennes; however, this mistake was not rooted in French political and military organizational cultures,

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106. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, pp. 67–98; and Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, pp. 115, 122–130, 235–239.
107. *The Statesman's Yearbook* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1920), pp. 840, 908.
108. All of these comparisons are drawn from Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), pp. 200–202, 332.
109. *The Statesman's Yearbook* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1940), p. 968.
110. Thomas Christensen and Jack Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Spring 1990), pp. 137–168.
111. For discussion of why France lost, see Robert J. Young, *In Command of France: French Foreign Policy and Military Planning, 1933–1940* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978); and Anthony Adamthwaite, *France and the Coming of the Second World War* (London: Frank Cass, 1977).

because it was also made by non-Frenchmen including the eminent British military writer Sir Basil Henry Liddell Hart and much of the German high command before February 1940.[112] In other words, not only can a realist theory account for changes in French military doctrine between the wars, but it provides a better explanation for the outcome of the Battle of France.

The same is true of other new culturalist theories in security studies. Dana Eyre and Mark Suchman concede that their data about the global patterns of arms acquisitions support realist predictions.[113] Michael Barnett's claim that "given the absence of an immediate threat . . . identity will factor into a state's choice of ally" is also consistent with realism.[114] In short, many of the new culturalists' interpretations and predictions about particular cases turn out to be indistinguishable from those of realists. Because these are not "crucial cases" that directly test realist and culturalist theories head-to-head, it is difficult to ascertain which are superior.

DISPUTABLE CASES

In a number of cases the new culturalists' interpretations differ dramatically from realist theories, but they are also highly debatable. For example, Richard Price and Nina Tannenwald argue that the "odium attached" to the use of chemical weapons largely accounts for their lack of use.[115] Without this normative proscription, they believe it likely that chemical weapons would have been widely used. "In the absence of the context established by this international norm and the thresholds set thereby," Price suggests, "World War II in all likelihood would have been a chemical war."[116] Despite general abhorrence of chemical weapons, mutual deterrence and their lack of military utility provide more convincing explanations for why they were not used more often. Specifically, chemical weapons were useful only against unprepared adversaries or civilians, it was relatively easy for prepared troops to defend against them, and they complicated offensive operations. These factors, rather than normative proscriptions, best explain why chemical weapons were not used in

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112. On this, see Don M. Alexander, "Repercussions of the Breda Variant," *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Spring 1974), p. 488; Deighton, *Blitzkrieg*, pp. 172–173; and Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, *Lost Victories: The War Memoirs of Hitler's Most Brilliant Generals* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1994), pp. 101–102, 126.
113. Eyre and Suchman, "Status, Norms, and the Proliferation of Conventional Weapons," pp. 97, 106–107.
114. Barnett, "Identity and Alliances in the Middle East," p. 410.
115. Price and Tannenwald, "Norms and Deterrence," p. 120.
116. Price, *The Chemical Weapons Taboo*, p. 100.

combat more extensively in World War II.[117] Furthermore, Price and Tannen-wald face the problem of explaining why norms of nonuse before World War I did not prevent massive use during the war or why norms prevented the Axis powers from using chemical warfare against Allied military forces, but did not prevent their use against unarmed civilians (the Jews) and troops without a retaliatory capability (the Chinese and the Ethiopians).[118] Norms against the use of chemical weapons existed in the interwar era, as they had before World War I, but these norms reflected, rather than shaped, a strategic reality determined largely by the utility (or lack thereof) of chemical weapons and by mutual deterrence. More recently, Iraq's use of chemical weapons against the Iranians during the Iran-Iraq War and unarmed Kurdish civilians, but not against the United States during the Persian Gulf War, is also most convincingly accounted for by deterrence and utility arguments. The Iranians and the Iraqi Kurds had no retaliatory capacity and scant chemical and biological warfare (CBW) defensive capability, and so Iraq's use of chemical weapons made some strategic sense. Conversely, the United States and its coalition allies had both robust CBW defensive capability, and a huge arsenal of weapons of mass destruction with which to retaliate, and so it made little strategic sense for the Iraqis to use CBW.[119]

Robert Herman's argument that the Cold War ended because the Soviets were attracted to Western norms and culture is plausible, but alternative explanations are even more compelling.[120] Some analysts attribute the changes in Soviet thinking primarily to the fact that the nuclear revolution made the world defense dominant; others argue that Soviet military fears of losing a high-technology arms race facilitated Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms.[121] Herman

117. John Ellis Van Courtland Moon, "Chemical Weapons and Deterrence: The World War II Experience," *International Security*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Spring 1984), pp. 3–35; Barton J. Bernstein, "Why We Didn't Use Poison Gas in World War II," *American Heritage*, Vol. 36, No. 5 (August/September 1995), pp. 40–45; and Frederic J. Brown, *Chemical Warfare: A Study in Restraint* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1968), p. 37.
118. Patrick E. Tyler, "Germ War, a Current World Threat, Is a Remembered Nightmare in China," *New York Times*, February 4, 1997, p. 6.
119. Atkinson, *Crusade*, p. 87
120. For a prescient geopolitical argument about the inevitable collapse of the Soviet Union, see Randall Collins, "Long-term Social Change and the Territorial Power of States," in Louis Kriesberg, ed., *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts, and Change*, vol. 1 (Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, 1978), pp. 1–34.
121. Kenneth A. Oye, "Explaining the End of the Cold War: Morphological and Behavioral Adaptations to the Nuclear Peace?" in Lebow and Risse-Kappen, *International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War*, pp. 57–84; Gaddis, "Hanging Tough Paid Off," pp. 11–14; and Michael C. Desch, "Why the Soviet Military Supported Gorbachev and Why the Russian Military Might Only Support Yeltsin for a Price," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (December 1993), pp. 455–489.

is also unable to account for subsequent Russian realpolitik behavior more in accord with the realist expectation of unrelenting great power competition.[122]

In a similar vein, Thomas Risse-Kappen portrays NATO as an alliance based on shared "republican liberalism," rather than one based on a common perception of threat.[123] The difficulty Risse-Kappen faces is to explain how illiberal states such as Greece and Turkey remained in the alliance. Common ideology or culture among the NATO states may have been coincidental, because many influential policymakers in the United States and other Western states had few qualms during the Cold War in allying with illiberal states in other areas of the world.[124] This, however, is not a puzzle for an alliance theory that anticipates alignment based on mutual interest rather than on common ideology.[125]

PREMATURE CASES

Finally, there are a few cases employed by the new culturalists in security studies where it is just too early to tell what the outcome will be. Thomas Berger, and Peter Katzenstein and Noburu Okawara, think that German and Japanese political cultures have changed irrevocably from militaristic to pacifistic. "Germany and Japan," Berger claims, "as a result of their historical experiences and the way in which those experiences were interpreted by domestic political actors, have developed beliefs and values that make them peculiarly reluctant to resort to the use of force."[126] There are, however, compelling international structural explanations for this change in German and Japanese political cultures: specifically, their defeat in World War II, Allied occupation, and the protective umbrella of the U.S. security guarantee. Therefore the real test of these cultural arguments will come in the future, especially if U.S. commitments to NATO and Japan wane. Berger ultimately concedes the realist argument that "Japan's anti-militarism in its present form could not survive both a weakening of its alliance with the United States and the emergence of a new regional security threat."[127] It is therefore too soon to tell

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122. Alexei K. Pushkov, "Russia and America: The Honeymoon's Over," *Foreign Policy*, No. 93 (Winter 1993/94), pp. 77–90; and Bruce D. Porter and Carol R. Saivetz, "The Once and Future Empire: Russia and the 'Near Abroad,'" *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Summer 1994), pp. 75–90.

123. Risse-Kappen, "Collective Identity in a Democratic Community: The Case of NATO," pp. 357–399.

124. Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," pp. 34–45.

125. Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987).

126. Berger, "Norms, Identity, and National Security in Germany and Japan," in Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security*, p. 318.

127. Berger, "From Sword to Chrysanthemum," quotation on p. 120; see also pp. 147–148.

whether Japanese and German political cultures have changed for good, but there are persuasive noncultural explanations for the cultural changes of the Cold War, and there is some evidence that Germany and Japan may revert to a more traditional great power strategic culture in the post–Cold War era. Ironically, some of these pessimistic views are also based on cultural variables.[128]

The new culturalists believe that they have chosen "hard cases" for their theories just because they focus on national security issues.[129] But what makes a case a "crucial test" and a "hard case" is (1) whether the competing theories make different predictions about its outcome, and (2) whether one theory should be expected to do better at predicting it than another. Issue area, by itself, does not make a case hard or easy. What does is whether the theory actually makes determinative predictions about the particular case. Although not as obviously wrong as the Cold War wave, the failure of the post–Cold War wave of strategic culture to choose "hard cases" for their theories does not inspire high confidence in some of its proponents' claims to supplant the realist research program.

How Culture Might Supplement Existing Theories in National Security

As a supplement to existing theories, cultural theories have at least three contributions to make. First, cultural variables may explain the lag between structural change and alterations in state behavior. Second, they may account for why some states behave irrationally and suffer the consequences of failing to adapt to the constraints of the international system. Finally, in structurally indeterminate situations, domestic variables such as culture may have a more independent impact.

Culturalist arguments can supplement existing theories by providing an explanation of the lag between structural change and alterations in state behavior.[130] For instance, during the Cold War both the United States and the

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128. See Jacob Heilbrun, "Germany's New Right," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 6 (November/December 1996), pp. 80–89; Alan Cowell, "Pro-Nazi Incidents in German Army Raise Alarm," *New York Times*, November 5, 1997, p. 4; "The Man Japan Wants to Forget," *Economist*, November 11, 1995, pp. 85–86; and Henry Scott Stokes, "Lost Samurai: The Withered Soul of Postwar Japan," *Harper's*, October 1985, pp. 55–63. A brilliant examination of the dark side of the Japanese postwar culture of pacifism is Ian Buruma, *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1994).
129. Katzenstein, "Introduction," and "Conclusion," pp. 11, 523.
130. Berger, "Norms, Identity, and National Security in Germany and Japan," p. 329, discusses how culture might cause lag effects. It is important to keep in mind that other noncultural factors might cause lag effects too.

Soviet Union were models of civilian control of the military.[131] With the end of the Cold War, evidence is accumulating that civilian control of the military in both of the former Cold War antagonists has weakened.[132] Brian Taylor offers a very convincing argument that residual norms of military subordination to civilian control have kept the Russian military from launching a coup or otherwise intervening more directly in Russian politics.[133] Taylor's organizational culture argument, however, has trouble accounting for the relative weakening of Russian civilian control of the military compared with the firm civilian control of the Soviet military during the Cold War that he documents.[134] As a supplement to existing theories, culture works well; but on its own, culture cannot supplant them.

Cultural variables may also explain why some states act contrary to the structural imperatives of the international system. Structure never directly determines outcomes; rather, it operates through a variety of mechanisms: socialization, emulation, and competition. Kenneth Waltz suggests that states are not forced to adopt any particular pattern of behavior by the international structure. Rather, observing that other states that conform their behavior to the structure of the international system do better in competition with other states, states will gradually learn to do so as well. Waltz succinctly summarizes his

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131. Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 194; Allan Millett, *The American Political System and Civilian Control of the Military: A Historical Perspective* (Columbus: Mershon Center, Ohio State University, April 1979), p. 38; and Condoleeza Rice, "The Party, the Military, and Decision Authority in the Soviet Union," *World Politics*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (October 1987), pp. 80–81.

132. I make this argument in detail in Michael C. Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming). For further evidence of recent changes in civilian control of the military in the United States and Russia, see Russell F. Weigley, "The American Military and the Principle of Civilian Control from McClellan to Powell," *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 57, No. 5 (Special Issue, October 1993), pp. 27–58; Andrew J. Bacevich, "Clinton's Military Problem—and Ours," *National Review*, December 13, 1993, pp. 36–40; Richard H. Kohn, "Out of Control: The Crisis in Civil-Military Relations," *National Interest*, No. 35 (Spring 1994), pp. 3–17; Richard H. Kohn "Upstarts In Uniform," *New York Times*, April 10, 1994, p. 19; Edward N. Luttwak, "Washington's Biggest Scandal," *Commentary*, Vol. 97, No. 5 (May 1994), pp. 29–33; Colonel Charles J. Dunlap, Jr., "Welcome to the Junta: The Erosion of Civilian Control of the U.S. Military," *Wake Forest Law Review*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Summer 1994), pp. 341–392; Mikhail Tsypkin, "Will the Military Rule Russia?" *Security Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Autumn 1992), pp. 38–73; Stephen Foye, "Post-Soviet Russia: Politics and the New Russian Army," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 33 (August 21, 1992), pp. 5–12; Thomas M. Nichols, *The Sacred Cause: Civil-Military Conflict over Soviet National Security, 1917–1992* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993); and Kimberly Martin Zisk, "Civil-Military Relations in the New Russia," *Occasional Paper* (Columbus: Mershon Center, Ohio State University, March 1993).

133. Brian D. Taylor, "Culture and Coups: The Norm of Civilian Supremacy," unpublished manuscript, John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University, February 1996.

134. Brian D. Taylor, "The Russian Military in Politics: Civilian Supremacy in Comparative and Historical Perspective," Ph.D. dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, September 1997, Table 1-5.

argument: "The theory explains why states similarly placed behave similarly despite their internal differences."[135] Realists such as Waltz expect that states in roughly similar structural positions should act similarly if they are to survive and prosper.[136] Kenneth Pollack makes a compelling case that Arab political culture undermines the ability of Arab armies to successfully conduct modern armored warfare.[137] However, given that the Arabs consistently suffered as a result of their inability to conduct armored warfare, this culturalist theory does not challenge realist arguments about the consequences of their failure to successfully emulate the dominant powers.[138] Only if the Arabs had consistently done well in armored warfare, despite their distinct domestic political culture, could culturalist theories plausibly claim to supplant realist theories by explaining both behavior and outcomes. Pollack's argument therefore supplements, but does not supplant, existing theories.

Finally, as Waltz suggests: "One must ask how and to what extent the structure of a realm accounts for outcomes."[139] Structure tends to establish parameters; actual outcomes are sometimes determined by other factors. This makes the competition between cultural and rationalist theories less sweeping but also more intense. In structurally indeterminate environments, culturalist and realist theories often make similar predictions about state behavior and international outcomes; thus the crucial cases for deciding between them will be in structurally determinate environments.

The major issue of contention will be how often structure is or is not determinate. Realists maintain that structure is frequently determinate, and so it makes sense to begin with it; culturalists argue that material structure is so often indeterminate that it makes sense to begin with other variables.[140] This

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135. Kenneth Waltz, "International Politics Is Not Foreign Policy," *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Autumn 1996), p. 54.
136. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 74, 124–128. At different points Waltz appears to base his prediction of behavioral isomorphism on three different, and perhaps mutually exclusive, types of argument. At various points he relies on an evolutionary selection mechanism, socialization to accepted international practice, and learning through rational assessment of structural constraints. Colin Elman, "Horses for Courses: Why Not Neo-Realist Theories of Foreign Policy?" *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Fall 1996), pp. 7–53, argues that although most scholars accept the rational assessment model as the dominant reading, the other strands continue to draw adherents.
137. See Kevin Pollack, "The Influence of Arab Culture on Arab Military Effectiveness," Ph.D. dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, February 1996.
138. Scott Sagan also makes this point in Sagan, "Culture, Strategy, and Selection in International Politics," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., August 28–31, 1997.
139. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 78.
140. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, p. 23; Kier, "Culture and French Military Doctrine before World War II," p. 190; Herman, "Identity, Norms, and National Security," p. 279;

issue is important inasmuch as realist theories are likely to accord significant weight to culture or any other type of variable when structure is indeterminate. In a determinate structural environment, where states have only one or at most a few satisfactory strategic choices, realist theories expect culture to serve mostly as a dependent or an intervening variable that usually reflects the structural environment, changing slowly enough to cause a lag between structural change and changes in state behavior. In indeterminate structural environments, where states have many optimal choices, realist theories ought to have little trouble according culture, or any other domestic variable, a greater independent role in explaining state behavior. In *Civilian Control of the Military*, I show how different combinations of domestic and international security threats produce more or less determinative structural environments. When a state faces either external or internal threats, structure is determinative; when it faces both, or neither, structure is indeterminate. In such an indeterminant threat environment, it is necessary to look to other variables to explain various types of strategic behavior. Culture and other domestic variables may take on greater independent explanatory power in these cases. The challenge for scholars interested in international relations and comparative politics is to determine when, under what conditions, and to what extent other structural environments—or other, nonstructural factors—affect outcomes.

Conclusions

The new cultural theories in security studies show some promise of supplementing realist theories by explaining lags between structural change and state behavior, accounting for deviant state behavior, and explaining behavior in structurally indeterminate environments. Thus there is no doubt that culture matters and that the return to thinking about cultural variables will make some contribution to our understanding of post–Cold War international security issues. For these and other reasons, the third wave of literature on strategic culture will be widely read and should stimulate much productive debate.

The problem is that some new culturalists in security studies, like many of the old culturalists in other fields,[141] claim too much for cultural explanations. By themselves, cultural variables do not provide much additional explanatory

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and Berger, "Norms, Identity, and National Security in Germany and Japan," p. 325. But elsewhere, Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, pp. 4–5, concedes that structure can sometimes be quite constraining.
141. See Elkins and Simeon, "A Cause in Search of Its Effect," p. 127.

power. The Cold War wave was largely discredited. The post–Cold War wave is not fully persuasive because it relies on cases that do not provide much evidence of its ability to supplant realism. In short, the new strategic culturalist theories will not supplant realist theories in national security studies because, by themselves, they have very limited explanatory power.

Many culturalists seem to recognize this and so they turn out, in the final analysis, to be ambivalent about how much independent explanatory power cultural variables have in security studies. Most new culturalists would agree with Jeffrey Legro that "cultures are . . . not mere weather vanes to environmental forces or strategic rationality."[142] Rather, they are often independent variables. But elsewhere Legro admits that "reality can be socially constructed, but only with available materials and within existing structures. . . . However, when the contradiction between external conditions and cultural tendencies becomes too great, culture will likely adapt."[143] On this point, many other new culturalists are equivocal: Elizabeth Kier, for example, concludes that "culture has (relative) causal autonomy."[144] Although everyone agrees that culture matters, the critical question is how much independent explanatory power it has. We can answer that question only when we have a clear sense of whether culture is often an independent causal variable (as most culturalists believe) or mostly an intervening or dependent variable (as realist theories would maintain).

The empirical track record of strategic culture suggests caution about how much of strategic behavior is explained exclusively by cultural variables. Therefore we should not abandon realist theories in favor of the new culturalism in security studies. Of course, when realist theories are found wanting, we should supplement them with new culturalist theories; however, this will turn out to be the case less often than the new culturalists suggest. In sum, while we should applaud the return to culture in security studies, we should not be swept away by this latest wave.

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142. Legro, "Military Culture and Inadvertent Escalation in World War II," p. 116.
143. Legro, *Cooperation under Fire*, p. 231. Also cf. p. 25.
144. Kier, "Culture and French Military Doctrine before World War II," p. 187.