
The RUSI Journal

ISSN: 0307-1847 (Print) 1744-0378 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rusi20

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**To cite this article:** Patrick Hinton (2020) Strategic Culture, The RUSI Journal, 165:4, 80-87, DOI: 10.1080/03071847.2020.1816736

**To link to this article:** https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2020.1816736

Published online: 06 Oct 2020.

# Strategic Culture
## In Defiance of a Structural World Order

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Patrick Hinton pits the concept of an international rules-based order against a more nuanced reality. Employing a framework based on strategic culture theory, this article argues that states behave in ways predicated on their history and lived experience. This must first be acknowledged before states' actions can be understood.

The coronavirus pandemic has added a complexity to global politics few could have foreseen. It is easy to forget the geopolitical challenges that dominated conversation before the arrival of the virus. Challenges appear in every corner, from an ebullient US president to an assertive China. Autocrats in Eastern Europe and a complex extrication of the UK from the EU muddy the water further. Intrastate warfare and migration crises abound. It seems that the world is a far cry from 'the framework of liberal political and economic rules, embodied in a network of international organizations and regulations, and shaped and enforced by the most powerful nations', that is said to have steered a fragile global community from 1945 through to today.[1] There is an apparent eagerness to claim that the world is moments from mayhem and the rules-based international order mentioned above is faltering. Indeed, the House of Lords Select Committee on International Relations claims 'the global balance of power is shifting and fragmenting in a way not experienced since the Second World War, undermining the rules-based international order'.[2]

Despite being a popular refrain, an international order whereby states put aside their differences and embraced cooperation was never as stable as so many claim.[3] It is crucial to embrace thinking which can offer more clarity. This provides a catalyst to look outside the orthodox explanations for the ebbs and flows in world politics – namely the dominant structural frameworks. One such approach is strategic culture theory. Its offerings are employed here to demonstrate the importance of a state's history and culture in its decision-making, and why the notion of a rules-based order does not hold weight. In so doing, the divergent nature of a state's foreign policies becomes apparent. Where other theories offer a harsh rigidity, strategic culture offers a flexible and pragmatic option. The ready popularity of publications such as *Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Tell You Everything You Need to Know About Global Politics* by Tim Marshall demonstrates the appeal of such an approach; rarely has world politics galvanised such broad interest.[4]

This article looks to arm readers with an appreciation for nuance within the national condition, which is often absent in other theoretical frameworks. The first section presents a history of strategic culture theory. This is followed by an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses before comparing it with neorealism, the dominant theory. The final section discusses where strategic culture might go next, and its significant utility to those trying to make sense of recent international

1. Chatham House, 'Challenges to the Rules-Based International Order', 2015, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/London%20Conference%202015%20-%20Background%20Papers.pdf>, accessed 5 November 2019.
2. House of Lords Select Committee on International Relations, 'UK Foreign Policy in a Shifting World Order', Fifth Report of Session 2017–19, HL Paper 250, 18 December 2018.
3. Malcolm Chalmers, 'Which Rules? Why There is No Single "Rules-Based International System"', *RUSI Occasional Papers* (April 2019).
4. Tim Marshall, *Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Tell You Everything You Need to Know About Global Politics* (London: Elliot and Thompson, 2015).


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Strategic culture theory encourages analysts to examine each country's domestic circumstances to more fully understand its international behaviour. *Courtesy of Thierry Mouny/Adobe Stock*

events. A continual thread will link the analysis of strategic culture to the current concern of a lapse in international order.

## Strategic Culture Theory

Strategic culture theory offers considerable value to the student of international affairs. Simply put, it looks to show that states approach strategic issues differently due to their own lived experiences.[5] The theory 'is based on the understanding that states are predisposed by their historical experiences, political systems and cultures to deal with security issues in a particular way'.[6] Wyn Rees and Richard J Aldrich note that strategic culture 'remains an ill-defined and under-used concept'.[7] This makes it of particular interest to the author as it is not considered a mainstream theory for the analysis of world politics, thus offering scope to raise awareness.

Curiosity in strategic culture is evident as early as the Second World War. Ashley J Tellis writes that during the conflict, 'the US government employed a large number of leading anthropologists to examine the "national character" of key Axis powers'.[8] Yet, it was not for another generation that the idea truly came into vogue as an academic school of thought. The contemporary legacy of strategic culture can be traced back to a group of American theorists writing at the height of the Cold War. Bernard Brodie, known for his involvement in the inception of nuclear deterrence theory, wrote that 'good strategy presumes good anthropology and sociology. Some of the greatest military blunders of all time have resulted from juvenile evaluations in this department'.[9] This stresses the importance of

5. Jack L Snyder, 'The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Options', R-2154-AF, RAND Corporation, September 1977, p. 7.
6. Wyn Rees and Richard J Aldrich, 'Contending Cultures of Counterterrorism: Transatlantic Divergence or Convergence?', *International Affairs* (Vol. 81, No. 5, 2005), p. 906.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Ashley J Tellis, 'Understanding Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific', in Ashley J Tellis, Alison Szalwinski and Michael Wills (eds), *Strategic Asia 2016–17* (Seattle, WA and Washington, DC: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2016), p. 12.
9. Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Co., 1973), p. 332.

DOI: 10.1080/03071847.2020.1816736

understanding the context in which one is operating, either militarily or politically, and articulates the notion that states are nuanced beings. A 1977 RAND Corporation report by Jack L Snyder is often cited as the bedrock of strategic culture theory. He argued in the case of the Soviet Union during the Cold War that: 'unique historical experiences, distinctive political and institutional relationships, and a preoccupation with strategic dilemmas different from those that have preoccupied the United States have combined to produce a unique mix of strategic beliefs'.[10]

As such, changes to strategy do not take place directly in response to events 'but indirectly, in a way mediated by pre-existing cultural beliefs'.[11] Snyder's focus was on the nuclear relationship between the two powers, and specifically the Soviets' apparent employment of a strategy to offset disparities between their capabilities. He cited as evidence: the conventional force imbalance in Europe; the overlap of the Soviet and European spheres of influence; the diffusion of urban centres in the USSR; and the lessons of the Second World War.[12] This thinking contradicts the idea that simple power relationships shape world politics.

Alastair Iain Johnston has described the development of strategic culture theory in terms of waves.[13] The first, with thinkers like Snyder and his work 'The Soviet Strategic Culture', focused on the bipolar relationship between the US and the Soviet Union, and why each appeared to be theorising about strategy in different ways.[14] The theory became a holistic explanation for why the US and USSR were adversaries. As Johnston warns, 'the literature assumes that strategic culture has a measurable effect on strategic choice, that it exists "out there", a monolithic, independent, and observable constraint on all actors' behaviour'.[15] The reality is more nuanced. While it is simple to offer criticism of an approach with hindsight, it was looking to answer the most pressing question of the time. The first wave of strategic culture thinking also suffered from a lack of rigour when determining the actual source of a state's strategic culture. Fleeting mentions of historical experience, previous conflicts and national interests weakened the arguments put forward.

The second wave took place in the 1980s. Here, it was recognised that there was a disconnect between a state's recognised culture and the behaviour it exhibited. Theorists started to posit that it is really the thinking of the hegemonic group in the state – the government or ruling elites – that defines what a state does.[16] There is not an overriding, ethereal process which causes a state's strategic culture to gestate. Johnston notes that 'strategic choice is constrained by these interests rather than by strategic culture'.[17] Bradley S Klein is the central figure associated with the second wave. He draws on the ideas of Antonio Gramsci and the development of hegemony to outline his thinking. For Gramsci, 'hegemony concerns the production of legitimacy, the co-optation of radical challenges to bourgeois dominance and the construction of culturally integrative networks'.[18] This introduces the idea that strategic culture is not a passive affair. Klein cites the importance of George Washington and Alexander Hamilton in the development of the Monroe Doctrine.[19] Moving towards the present, he employs the example of nuclear strategy. Using US Defense Secretary Robert McNamara as an illustration of his point, he writes that 'the terms of post-war American power projection were reduced to an insular, depoliticized, deracinated enterprise with its own technocratic nomenclature'.[20] This links to the idea that the unspeakable horrors of nuclear war became neat, clean phrases that the public would digest willingly. For this generation, 'nuclear war became a matter of sending messages, taking out targets of opportunity, exchanging cities, securing intra-war deterrence through escalation dominance and limiting collateral damage to acceptable levels – of 20 million dead'.[21] Exploring these gradations gave

10. Snyder, 'The Soviet Strategic Culture', p. 38.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 23–28.
13. Alastair Iain Johnston, 'Thinking About Strategic Culture', *International Security* (Vol. 19, No. 4, 1995), pp. 32–64.
14. Snyder, 'The Soviet Strategic Culture', pp. v–vi.
15. Johnston, 'Thinking About Strategic Culture', p. 34.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
18. Bradley S Klein, 'Hegemony and Strategic Culture: American Power Projection and Alliance Defence Politics', *Review of International Studies* (Vol. 14, No. 2, 1988), p. 134.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

strategic culture theory more coherence than it had previously enjoyed. It inherits more resonance today as the nuclear debate is reinvigorated by the lapsing of significant arms treaties.

The theory's third wave formed in the 1990s and chose its targets more sparingly, limiting itself to specific topics such as military or political culture. The wave's principal difference from previous iterations is its academic approach. As Tellis suggests, the third wave 'sought to be rigorous in [its] explanations and attempted to formulate and test hypotheses'.[22] It also looked to add detail in the origins of a state's strategic culture, something missing from the first wave. Areas of interest included 'whether and how the highest levels of national decision-making [were] themselves shaped by the transmitted patterns of meaning found in a country's written texts, oral traditions, or other forms of cultural inheritance'.[23] The literature takes aim at the realist discourse and 'focus[es] on cases where structural-materialist notions of interest cannot explain a particular strategic choice'.[24] Johnston further writes that 'the weight of historical experiences and historically-rooted strategic preferences tends to constrain responses to changes in the "objective" strategic environment, thus affecting strategic choices in unique ways'.[25] It can again be seen that bipolar considerations and subscriptions to a particular balance of power give way under this assessment.

Importantly, these sources appeared before the 9/11 terror attacks, which changed the face of security studies. There are some contemporary writings on strategic culture theory, but a survey of JSTOR and Google Scholar reveals a dearth of recent literature. Edward Lock is one academic who has broached the topic in this millennium.[26] He acknowledges the concepts pioneered by people such as Johnston in the 1980s and 1990s. However, he also identifies gaps which, he argues, need to be addressed. Lock notes the tension between Johnston's conception of strategic culture and the role played by individual agency in its development.[27] Indeed, '[k]ey here is the recognition that the strategic practices of security communities are carried out by groups of individuals and a process of group decision-making must be undertaken if those individuals are to act collectively'.[28] This adds to the depth of analysis allowed for by strategic culture theory. It embraces the influence on culture by agency. This is useful to keep in mind as this section concludes. It has presented a survey of the history of strategic culture, offering reasons why it is of interest to contemporary analysts of world politics. It also makes clear that a neat aligning of interests to form a stable world order is unlikely. The next section acknowledges the weaknesses of the theory.

## Its Weaknesses

The review of strategic culture literature above has drawn out some of its weaknesses. These are perhaps best formulated by the principal disagreement within the school. As with several frameworks within international relations, Johnston and Colin S Gray have epitomised the divergences in thinking and reflect opposing camps within this sub-literature. In so doing, they quite effectively outline where fault lines lie. One criticism is that culture is too all-encompassing.[29] As Gray writes, 'if everything we think and do has to be influenced by culture, and is in a vital sense a cultural manifestation, inter alia, there is no non-cultural space at all'.[30] He levels this criticism at Johnston for requiring 'a notion of strategic culture that is falsifiable or at least distinguishable from non-strategic culture variables'.[31] Trying to define culture in any meaningful and narrow sense requires a deft touch. One must be willing to move forward, accepting that there will be grey areas; strategic culture accepts a positivist mantle.

22. Tellis, 'Understanding Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific', p. 16.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
24. Johnston, 'Thinking About Strategic Culture', p. 41.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
26. Edward Lock, 'Refining Strategic Culture: Return of the Second Generation', *Review of International Studies* (Vol. 36, No. 3, 2010), pp. 685–708.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 693.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 700.
29. Colin S Gray, 'Out of the Wilderness: Prime Time for Strategic Culture', United States Nuclear Strategy Forum, October 2006, pp. 1–30, <http://www.nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/CSG-Strategic-culture-paper-Marheine-pub.pdf>, accessed 11 November 2019.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
31. Johnston, 'Thinking About Strategic Culture', p. 45.

Gray is also keen to articulate that while strategic culture is an important consideration in international relations and security studies, there are other significant areas. One of these is context. He writes that 'people will behave differently not only because they are culturally distinctive, but also because their circumstances will differ'.[32] The UK might have an inherent strategic culture influenced by the fact that it is an island state.[33] This has all manner of implications for security. However, it will not be the country's only consideration. Some security matters, such as urban counterterror measures, are unlikely to be influenced by island living.

Another difficulty is that strategic culture cannot be considered static. One cannot hope to produce a classification: *France acts in one way, Germany in another*. Analysis will only be able to offer a snapshot. As ever, time and space must be considered as important variables. With these main weaknesses acknowledged, strategic culture theory maintains weight. It helps to bridge the identified gap between domestic and international politics, which has caused difficulty in international relations. It acknowledges agency as well as the importance of structural matters. These advantages will be explored further in the section below.

## Its Strengths

Strategic culture theory has numerous strengths, some of which have already been discussed. It allows for nuance and ambiguity that other theories put aside. This gives it numerous strings on which to pull. Christoph O Meyer believes that one strength of strategic culture theory lies in its potential to forecast foreign policy decisions.[34] He writes that despite an element of change, a state's strategic culture is static enough to allow one to make judgements of future actions. In essence, 'strategic cultures are generally stable as they are tied to identity conceptions and narratives of a given community'.[35] This can help understanding of the motives of both friends and enemies. He goes on to note that 'the foreign policymaking system is not constantly fine-tuning policies according to new information or adjusting them immediately when evidence shows policies are not working as intended'.[36] Strategic cultures must be considered stable enough to employ practically, as well as to measure, for any investigation to be of use. If they were fluid, the concept would only be useful to the historian, rather than those considering its employment for analysis of current and future trends.

Strategic culture theory helps to bridge the identified gap between domestic and international politics, which has caused difficulty in international relations

Another advantage lies in strategic culture's highlighting of domestic realities where many believe strategies are genuinely formed. As John Mueller writes, 'the grand strategies of the major contestants [in the Cold War] and therefore the essential shape and history of that conflict were chiefly determined by differences in ideas and ideologies that emanate from domestic politics'.[37] Building on this point, Gray cites that 'a radical change in Soviet ideology in the mid- to late 1980s led to a no less radical change in Soviet foreign policy, even though the military capabilities of the United States registered no matching radical change in those years'.[38] Even if one is not willing to discount structural considerations entirely, and that is not to be encouraged, strategic culture offers explanations where theories such as neorealism cannot.

Gray also highlights the idea of self-reflection. If states rely on a structural explanation for actions, there would be no room for self-criticism. Indeed, 'we should perform far better, be more consistently successful, if we were able to look in the strategic

32. Gray, 'Out of the Wilderness', p. 19.
33. Amelia Hadfield, 'The EU and Strategic Culture: Virtual Identity Vs Uploaded Preferences', *Journal of Contemporary European Research* (Vol. 1, No. 1, 2005), p. 66.
34. Christoph O Meyer, 'The Purpose and Pitfalls of Constructivist Forecasting: Insights from Strategic Culture Research for the European Union's Evolution as a Military Power', *International Studies Quarterly* (Vol. 55, No. 3, 2011), pp. 669–90.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 677.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 677.
37. John Mueller, 'The Impact of Ideas on Grand Strategy', in Richard Rosecrance and Arthur A Stein (eds), *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy* (New York, NY: Ithaca, 1993), p. 48.
38. Colin S Gray, 'Strategic Culture as Context: The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back', *Review of International Studies* (Vol. 21, No. 1, 1999), p. 56.

mirror and see ourselves without significant distortion'.[39] To substantiate this, Gray pulls on the contrasting examples of Germany after the First World War and the US after the Vietnam War. Germany put together 57 separate study committees to analyse why it was defeated. The US made no such attempts after its defeat by the Viet Cong.[40] Turning this idea on its head is equally important. When looking at enemies, partners and potential allies, an understanding of cultural and historical realities will be revealing. States profess to do this but fail time and again. The best illustration here is the two decades from the end of the Cold War through to the coalition wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

> Strategic culture theory allows for nuance and ambiguity that other theories put aside

The 1990s encapsulated 'a technology-driven quest for a Revolution in Military Affairs'.[41] Beginning as a theory in the USSR, the US took on the idea looking to exploit its dominance in technology and information. US success in the first Gulf War and Kosovo gave the concept momentum. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq stopped it in its tracks, however.[42] It became apparent that despite the prevalence of precision aerial strikes, technology was not enough. US Army Major General Robert H Scales Jr coined the term 'culture-centric warfare' in a 2004 article.[43] This counters the idea that power is enough of a consideration in strategy. In a counterinsurgency, strategists 'need a better grasp of the relationship between how people fight and their traditions, identities, religion, collective memory, preconceptions, and sheer force of habit'.[44] Self-reflection is a primary strength of strategic culture theory, and the foreign affairs community should heed such advice. States rarely look introspectively, with the UK's exit from the EU showing how problematic it can be when executed poorly. These national differences are important for the purpose of this discussion for two key reasons. First, the ambiguities of states are crucial for the exponent of strategic culture theory. Second, it encourages those who accept the existence of a rules-based international order to note the nuances of the foreign policies of different states. There may be superficial similarities between foreign policies, but more in-depth analysis is required.

## Strategic Culture and Neorealism

To help place strategic culture within the wider canon of international relations, it is worth relating it to the discipline's dominant theory – neorealism. That strategic culture differs from state to state counters the thinking advanced by the neorealist school pioneered by those such as Kenneth Waltz.[45] Strategic culture theory 'fundamentally challenges structural explanations of choice that rely on ahistorical calculations of interests and capabilities'.[46] In contrast, neorealism argues that states' actions are primarily defined by a struggle for survival and determined by the anarchic structure of the international system, with little concern for nuance at the national level. This is the arena of the security dilemma, of balancing and of bandwagoning. This theoretical school has retained dominance through to today, often occupying the first chapter of international relations primers used in colleges and universities. G John Ikenberry and Daniel Deudney note 'Realist balance of power theory holds that Western institutions are the result of balancing to counter the Soviet threat, which provided the incentive for Western countries to cooperate'.[47] Strategic culture theory would challenge this, adding a more reflective attitude. Neorealism has stood firm as a theory for 40 years but only contents itself with a few core assumptions. As Waltz writes, neorealism

39. Gray, 'Out of the Wilderness', p. 17.
40. *Ibid.*
41. Patrick Porter, 'Good Anthropology, Bad History: The Cultural Turn in Studying War', *Parameters* (Vol. 37, No. 2, 2007), p. 47.
42. Anthony H Cordesman, 'The Real Revolution in Military Affairs', Commentary, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 5 August 2014, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/real-revolution-military-affairs>, accessed 11 November 2019.
43. Robert H Scales Jr, 'Culture-Centric Warfare', *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* (Vol. 130, No. 10, 2004), pp. 32–36.
44. Porter, 'Good Anthropology, Bad History', p. 47.
45. Kenneth N Waltz, 'Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory', *Journal of International Affairs* (Vol. 44, No. 1, 1990), pp. 21–37.
46. Johnston, 'Thinking About Strategic Culture', p. 63.
47. Daniel Deudney and G John Ikenberry, 'The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order', *Review of International Studies* (Vol. 25, No. 2, 1999), pp. 179–96.

focuses on 'a small number of big and important things'.[48] This has allowed it to navigate through crises such as the end of the Cold War. However, the subsequent three decades have brought complexities that could not have been foreseen by Waltz and his peers. This makes it even more critical to retain an interest in those theories which do not align with neorealism. It asserts that 'states can never be certain about the intentions of other states'.[49] Strategic culture theory disagrees, stressing an ability to judge states' objectives through the study of their history and ethos. This builds the case that the rules-based order which has been relied upon was not as stable as once considered. The idea will be substantiated further below.

Terrorism has been identified as one area with which neorealism struggles. Waltz writes that 'because terror is a weapon wielded by the weak, terrorists do not seriously threaten the security of states. States are therefore not compelled to band together to shift the balance of world power'.[50] The 15 years since the article's publication has seen international terrorism become a spectre for many states all over the world, and the claim made by Waltz is no longer accurate. States, and especially their citizens, are very aware of the dangers of terrorism. Attacks since 2001, and a rejuvenation after 2015, have put terrorism at the forefront of state concern. Examples of balancing are apparent; for example, a coalition of 68 states has been engaged in the battle against the Islamic State.[51] Security agencies check communications. These are then shared widely through a vast number of agreements facilitated by organisations such as the UN and the EU as well as bilateral arrangements.[52] This is a theme that will be revisited later. However, it is enough to state that space should be made for other theories such as strategic culture. A breadth of ideas allows for analytical gaps to be accounted for and allows for the inherent weaknesses of theories. They provide a useful check and balance. This is another area where neorealism's primacy is challenged by frameworks which allow for more ambiguity.

Despite neorealism's dominance, discussion about strategic culture has continued. In 1988, Joseph S Nye Jr and Sean M Lynn-Jones warned against the dominance of American thinking in security studies. They wrote that 'national styles of strategy may reflect cultural differences'.[53] This focuses on the distinction between international and domestic politics and the interplay between the two. Neorealism keeps these two areas apart. As Klein notes, this 'supposes a radical distinction between the rules of domestic society and the rules of international society'.[54] Strategic culture looks to undercut this belief. Importantly, though, strategic culture theory does not discount structural realities; it only looks to add to those considerations. It is possible to see a strengthening of the case that the period since the Second World War is better characterised as movements by states preoccupied with their pasts and internal mechanisms. Sometimes these might have aligned in such a way as to present the façade of a world order.

## Conclusions

As made clear throughout this article, the notion of a rules-based international order is under fire. Strategic culture theory helps explain why it does not provide a golden solution for cooperation and is perhaps being looked at through rose-tinted glasses. There are calls today for 'a contemporary equivalent to the postwar conferences that established the liberal international order'.[55] This indicates a misunderstanding of how global power has been exercised. The analysis above has shown that states have used their own lived experiences to shape their foreign policy since at least the Second World War.

48. Kenneth Waltz, 'Reflections on *Theory of International Politics*. A Response to My Critics', in Robert O Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 329.
49. John Mearsheimer, 'Structural Realism', in Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki and Steve Smith (eds), *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, 4th edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 53.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 353.
51. Tom O'Connor, 'Middle East Allies: 68 Nations Involved in Fighting ISIS Gather to Hear Trump Plan', *Newsweek*, 21 March 2017.
52. Wouter van Ballegooij and Piotr Bakowski, 'The Fight Against Terrorism: Cost of Non-Europe Report', PE 621.817, European Parliamentary Research Service, May 2018.
53. Joseph S Nye Jr and Sean M Lynn-Jones, 'International Security Studies: A Report of a Conference on the State of the Field', *International Security* (Vol. 12, No. 4, 1988), p. 14.
54. Klein, 'Hegemony and Strategic Culture', p. 134.
55. Adam Tooze, 'Everything You Know About Global Order Is Wrong', *Foreign Policy*, 30 January 2019.

*The Economist* 'sees a multipolar world forming but international institutions unprepared for this'.[56] Indeed, on the subject of a specific international order, problems lie in 'what the rules are and which rules are more important'.[57] In the absence of a multilateral rules-based order, progress might be made on building a more stable and collegiate international arena. Accepting that their culture defines states, care must be taken to understand and link such countries to others, embracing common ground. Progress on this front has already been made regarding counterterror, a crucial security topic. A transnational threat has seen states cooperate closely, although distinctions are still present. One example here might be the willingness of the British and French governments to employ soldiers in a domestic counterterror role, but a reluctance by the German authorities who emphasise it as a police matter.[58] The findings presented above are significant. A canon of relevant theory exists beneath the surface of popular foreign policy discourse. With strategic culture in mind, states must be prepared to negotiate with their peers, adversaries and non-state actors taking care to empathise with their position. Otherwise, conflict and bitter stalemates will persist.

The discussion above has demonstrated that the concept of strategic culture has manifest uses to those involved in the analysis of world politics and associated policy. Pitting the theory against contemporary concerns about the rules-based international order has shown its continuing relevance and utility. A history of strategic culture theory was followed by a discussion of its strengths and weaknesses, as well as a comparison with neorealism. A country's history and culture provide a crucial framework for decision-making. Even in the presence of the Bretton-Woods institutions, the EU and other establishments, states maintain a distinct character which is useful for students and policymakers. Some threats, such as terrorism, have led to states cooperating, but identities have been maintained. Influence can be noted from individuals, institutions, history and geography. The research presented here can be built on by employing strategic culture theory for specific problems, such as the coronavirus pandemic. The individual responses of states, alongside criticism of the World Health Organization, offer a useful case study of the subject discussed above. This would substantiate the case that states cannot act without looking through a prism shaped by their own experiences. This is crucial when making sense of world politics and looking to form strategies to enhance stability. ■

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This essay was the winner of the 2019 Trench Gascoigne Essay Prize. The Prize dates to 1874 and is awarded for original writing on contemporary issues relating to national and international defence and security. Recent winners have been published in the *RUSI Journal* to promote debate and encourage further research on salient issues in world affairs.

56. *The Economist*, 'Globalisation is Dead and We Need to Invent a New World Order', 28 June 2019.
57. Josh Leslie, 'The Problem with the Concept of a Rules-Based Global Order as Strategic Policy Guidance', *The Regionalist* (No. 2), Institute for Regional Security, p. 3.
58. Rémy Hémez, 'The French Army at a Crossroads', *Parameters* (Vol. 47, No. 1, 2017), p. 107; Ben Knight, 'Bundeswehr Joins Police for Anti-Terror Exercises', *Deutsche Welle*, 7 March 2017.