

Syndicate Room Discussion - DSS SRD 2 – 010930OCT25

STRATEGIC CULTURE

The Syndicate Room Discussion on Strategic Culture was a lively and productive session, with contributions from all participants. We began by sharing general impressions of the articles, which allowed each member to share their initial reactions and link them back to themes from earlier lectures. This opening set a collaborative tone and encouraged broad participation from the outset.

As we moved into the structured discussion of each article, the guiding questions proved effective in keeping the conversation focused and on track. The group explored the usefulness of strategic culture in explaining state behaviour, its strengths and limitations, and the extent to which it can help us understand decision-making in Russia. Colleagues contributed excellent insights, drawing on the readings by Hinton and RAND, with the former being easier to understand, according to consensus. Each article was connected not only to theory but also to real-world examples, which strengthened the analysis and ensured the discussion remained grounded in practical applications. Opportunities were given to go “off script”, which turned out to be highly beneficial.

A notable feature of the session was the sharing of personal experiences and professional perspectives. This was encouraged due to the high level of service provided by all in the syndicate. Several participants related the concepts of strategic culture to their own military or operational experiences, which added depth and grounded the theoretical material in real-world experience. These exchanges helped bring the abstract concepts to life and demonstrated the value of collaborative learning. Furthermore, there was an ongoing in-depth commentary by the Staff, which allowed us to listen to their perspective, and we appreciated that they provided positive feedback.

We concluded by discussing Ireland, which could have been an SRD in its own right. The discussion ended on a constructive note, with a sense that all key themes from the readings had been thoroughly explored and applied.

Overall, the session achieved its purpose: it was balanced, inclusive, and intellectually engaging, with every participant making valuable contributions and all major points from the preparatory work being addressed.