REVISITING STRATEGIC CULTURE: ITS ORIGINS, DEBATES, AND SHORTCOMINGS *

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Abstract

This article critically revisits the concept of strategic culture arguing that existing approaches to strategic culture focus on its explanatory power for states' strategic behaviour while neglecting its construction and reproduction. By tracing the evolution of the field across three generational perspectives, the study highlights the limits of treating strategic culture as either a historically given context or a mere instrument of elite legitimization. Instead, it proposes a shift toward understanding strategic culture as a dynamic and socially constructed framework shaped by narratives, identities, and historical experiences. The article's central argument is that exploring how strategic culture is formed and reproduced, not just what it explains, is the way forward to reinvigorate strategic culture studies. This reconceptualization enables a deeper understanding of the culture-behaviour nexus and offers a new research agenda that moves beyond determinism and instrumentalism. As such, the article calls for studying strategic culture as an object on its own right, capable of shaping preferences, norms, and state action across time.

Keywords: Strategic Culture, Strategic Behaviour, Constructivism, Identity and Narrative, Culture-Behaviour Nexus

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Stratejik Kültürü Yeniden Gözden Geçirmek: Kökenler, Tartışmaları ve Eksiklikler

Özet

Bu makale, stratejik kültür kavramını eleştirel bir şekilde yeniden ele almakta ve mevcut yaklaşımların, stratejik kültürün devletlerin stratejik davranışlarını açıklayıcı gücüne odaklanırken, bu kültürün nasıl inşa edildiğini ve yeniden üretildiğini ihmal ettiğini savunmaktadır. Alanın üç farklı kuşak perspektifi üzerinden gelişimini takip eden çalışma, stratejik kültürü ya tarihsel olarak verilmiş bir bağlam ya da elitlerin meşruiyet aracı olarak ele almanın sınırlılıklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Bunun yerine, stratejik kültürü anlatılar, kimlikler ve tarihsel deneyimlerle şekillenen dinamik ve toplumsal olarak inşa edilmiş bir çerçeve olarak anlamaya yönelik bir yön değişikliği önerilmektedir. Makalenin temel savı, stratejik kültürün sadece neyi açıkladığını değil, nasıl oluştuğunu ve yeniden üretildiğini incelemenin, stratejik kültür çalışmalarını canlandırmanın yolu olduğudur. Bu yeniden kavramsallaştırma, kültür-davranış ilişkisini daha derinlemesine anlamayı mümkün kılmakta ve determinizm ile araçsallığın ötesine geçen yeni bir araştırma gündemi sunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda makale, stratejik kültürün kendi başına bir inceleme nesnesi olarak ele alınmasını ve zaman içinde tercihler, normlar ve devlet eylemleri üzerinde etkili olabilme kapasitesinin araştırılmasını önermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Stratejik Kültür, Stratejik Davranış, İnşacılık, Kimlik ve Anlatı, Kültür-Davranış İlişkisi

Introduction

Strategic culture essentially refers to shared ideas, values, and choices concerning the ends and means to reach a state of security. As such, it aims to explain the ideational basis of states' strategic behaviour. Is there really a connection between strategic culture and strategic behaviour? If there is, does strategic culture determine behaviour or merely influence it? How can we verify the connection of any kind between strategic culture and strategic behaviour? Does strategic culture shape strategic behaviour or simply result from strategic behaviour? The literature on strategic culture has been evolving around these fundamental questions since it was named as such in 1977 by Snyder in his pioneering work, The Soviet Strategic Culture. Strategic culture is conventionally understood as consequential, focusing on its impact on strategic decisions. It is widely argued, for instance, that Russian aggression against Ukraine cannot be understood without taking Russian strategic culture into account, and that particularities of Russian strategic culture have prompted the Russian encroachment (Rumer & Sokolsky, 2020; Herd, 2022; Gotz & Staun, 2022). These may be convincingly argued, and even empirically confirmed. Yet, if there is such a connection between, for instance, Russian strategic culture and the invasion of Ukraine, and, thereby, strategic culture and strategic behaviour in general, further questions need to be considered to understand the constitution of strategic culture: Where does strategic culture come from? How is it constructed and reconstructed? What is the role of national identity, history, and narratives in the (re) construction of strategic culture?

This article argues that to expand the studies on strategic culture beyond its impact on strategic behaviour, such questions need to be addressed.

Mainstream approaches assume strategic culture to be given, natural, and out there (Snyder, 1977; Johnston, 1995; Gray, 1999), and, thus, their focus is fixated on the question of the effects of strategic culture on strategic choices and decisions rather than its (re)construction. In this sense, the concept of strategic culture has been utilised to explain state behaviour within a framework that goes beyond, but is not entirely at odds with, rationalist explanations. This is to say that strategic culture is presented as an intangible variable that restrains policymakers, yet at the same time provides them with a compass to navigate in the realm of foreign and security policy (Meyer, 2005; Adamsky, 2022). As such, the concept of strategic culture has been used to explain a wide range of issues from the Soviet nuclear policy to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative to the recent invasion of Ukraine by Russia (Farwa, 2018; German, 2020; Gotz & Staun, 2022). However, the mainstream approaches have tended to take strategic culture as a clear object and variable of explanation, the result being that it has been mainly preoccupied with the methodological question of how best to 'explain' the role strategic culture plays in strategic decisions. Such a position steered by a pragmatic quest to be more suitable to make sense of states' behaviour has led to taking strategic culture as pre-determined. Such a policy-oriented research focus started with an assumption that strategic culture is a result of an 'objective' history, geography, and identity, which practically closes a valuable debate

(i.e., an alternative research focus) about how such separate and dispersed elements turn into a set of ideas and beliefs (i.e., the prevailing strategic culture of a nation) that impact strategic decisions.

This approach, which focuses on the explanatory 'utility' of the concept, values strategic culture so long as it explains state behaviour on its own or as supplementary to rationalist accounts. It seems from this perspective that if there is no consequential connection between culture and behaviour, then strategic culture does not exist or is not worth studying. As a result, the emphasis on the explanatory power of strategic culture has overshadowed consideration of its constitution, characteristics, and (re) construction. Strategic culture is important for understanding state behaviour, and thus, the culture-behaviour nexus needs to be studied, yet this article argues that this cannot be the sole scope of strategic culture studies. Instead, understanding the constitution, characteristics, and reconstruction of strategic culture can expand our knowledge of strategic culture further and enhance its explanatory power and analytical value. This article, therefore, maintains that the excessive preoccupation with the impact of culture on behaviour has resulted in the overlooking of the reproduction processes and mechanisms of strategic culture, which appears unusual for a field that flourishes in the fertile ground of constructivist/cultural studies.

1. The Concept and Its Origins

Studies that now belong within the broader umbrella of strategic culture date back to ancient times with the recognition of cultural and historical experiences in shaping attitudes towards war and how to fight it (Tzu, 2002; McNeilly, 2015). The concept of strategic culture emerged essentially from an accumulation of a variety of anthropological and international relations research that attempted to make sense of state behaviour. In the modern era, Clausewitz re-surfaced culture and morals as a variable in understanding (military) strategy (1989). The first traces of what is now called strategic culture are seen in studies on 'ways of war' dating back to the 1930s (Sondhaus, 2006). The main argument of this approach was that the strategies of war utilized by nations cannot be excluded from their historical legacy and their culturally acceptable set of behaviour, suggesting that each people had a separate 'practice of war.' During the 1940s and 1950s, 'national character studies' took a step further and refused to solely focus on the military aspect of culture and ideas. Instead, they utilized socio-cultural data as a significant variable to grasp and even predict state behaviour in foreign policy (Zaman, 2009). The proponents of this approach, then, were convinced that nations were socialised in disparate settings and thus acquired unique innate characteristics. Especially focusing on explaining the ruthless foreign policy of National Socialist Germany and Imperial Japan, the national character studies drew connections between states` foreign policy decisions and the dominant socio-political culture at home (Desch, 1999).

Finally, following a report by Snyder (1977) on Soviet nuclear strategy during the Cold War, a broader multi-disciplinary approach known as 'strategic culture' emerged, which

which incorporated the academic use of cultural/ideational factors in explaining state behaviour concerning security and defence. Up until the end of the Cold War, scholars had largely dismissed non-material variables and ideational factors and heavily relied on a rigid 'rational choice theory' to analyse foreign policymaking. Snyder countered the rationalist position, arguing that states cannot be viewed as purely rational actors merely seeking to maximize interest. Unlike what the rational actor model would have predicted, as was evident from how the USA and the USSR approached nuclear proliferation during the height of the Cold War, different states in similar situations do not necessarily act similarly. Why would this be the case? The answer to this question was that patterns of habitual behaviour diverge across countries, and particular groups of elites in decision-making positions are socialised with different values, shared experiences, and taboos or traditions. Snyder highlighted the importance of considering how decision-makers in both the US and USSR are born into an overwhelmingly dissimilar or profoundly unique historical/organisational setting before coming up with foreign policy/security positions. Pointing out that "neither Soviet nor American strategists are culture-free, preconception-free game theorists" (1977: 5), he argued that states cannot be treated as fully rational actors opting for a predetermined calculable national interest but instead are bound to assess the same information subjectively through the lenses of their strategic culture.

Built on these ideas, from the early 1980s onwards, the realm of applicability of strategic culture was expanded. It was argued that strategic culture cannot be a mere variable among many in determining the decision-making process but rather a cornerstone that "provides the milieu within which strategy is debated" (Gray, 1981: 22). In this regard, Gray claimed that the notion of culture is ontologically inseparable from ideas/ideologies as well as behavioural traits, meaning that it is impossible to analyse either of them in a political context without anticipating strategic culture, eventually coming to a position to argue for the comprehensive impact of culture since decision makers cannot detach themselves from the influence of their cultural surroundings (Gray, 1981; Gray, 1999).

Thus, it has been asserted that different countries are bound to react differently even when confronted with identical situations because they acquire a culturally specific understanding of acceptable behaviour. In making sense of foreign policy behaviour, thus, the concept of strategic culture proposes to investigate broader cultural and ideational factors as "a state's behaviour is influenced not only by their physical capabilities and how they relate to the capabilities of other states but also by domestic, nonmaterial factors" (Tashev, 2020: 17). The end of the Cold War and the rise of constructivism have triggered a renewed and more systematic and theoretically driven interest in 'nonmaterial factors.' As Lapid put it 'culture', increasingly regarded as inseparable from creating shared ideas, expectations, and beliefs about appropriate behaviour, "staged a dramatic comeback in social theory" (1996: 3) as post-positivist studies linking culture, identity, and

foreign policy have proliferated (Wendt, 1995; Katzenstein, 1996; Lapid, 1996).

As a result, the rise of constructivism in search of alternative perspectives, coupled with the failure of rational-materialist theories in not only predicting but also explaining the rapidly changing world order, resulted in an unprecedented momentum of interest in strategic culture. While the scholars of strategic culture overwhelmingly viewed the traditional theories of IR "that emphasize factors such as the material balance of power, as overrated, if not bankrupt," (Desch, 1999: 141) what made them particularly attracted to constructivism was its utility in studying non-material factors including domestic politics and change in the international order. The criticism of neo-realism and neo-liberalism after the Cold War, especially in constructivist circles, has perhaps been best summarised by Katzenstein, who argued that "it is hard to deny that existing theories of international relations have woefully fallen short in explaining an important revolution in world politics" (1996: xi). For him, the lack of enthusiasm shown for domestic and ideational elements in international politics has proven to be a major drawback for rationalist theories (Katzenstein, 1996).

Theories of strategic culture, thus, challenge realism's description of actors, or more precisely, states, as 'black boxes' with objective material-based rationality determined by the anarchical international system within which they are interacting (Johnston, 1998; Meyer, 2005). While not rejecting rationality in foreign policy making, strategic culture studies assert that ideational/cultural factors are imperative in understanding how a state views its material interests. With their emphasis on cultural elements, historical legacies, identity formation, and domestic politics, strategic culture studies seem apt to utilize a constructivist reading of national strategy that prioritizes actors who are socialized into perceiving reality in a certain way (Katzenstein, 1996). Thus, influenced by the constructivist approach to international relations, strategic cultural perspective asserts that through a unique historical experience as well as the characteristics of the political elite, states acquire their own interpretation of reality which shapes how national interest is perceived and how it is pursued (Wendt, 1995; Weldes, 1996; Gray, 2007).

Hence, instead of the conventional game theory approach, where fully rational actors are believed to opt for the best material option, strategic culture views international relations to be organized along the lines of limited rationality, where states are not completely utilitarian but are prone to make decisions based on their constructed identity (Lock, 2017). Meyer describes this position, stating that:

"Actors do not start with a blank sheet, when they are faced with a problem or an opportunity to act, but draw on pre-existing and usually stable schemata, beliefs and ideas about the external world and deeply ingrained norms about appropriate behaviour" (2005: 527).

Similarly, Johnston maintains that an ahistorical and acultural framework inevitably misses out on key nuances in the decision-making process of people in the position of authority. Stating that the proponents

of strategic culture would overwhelmingly challenge a perspective that purposefully disregards non-material variables, Johnston suggests that particular sets of elites socialised in different strategic cultures will make different choices when placed in similar situations (1995: 3).

Thus, while the relevance of material factors is not to be denied, the basic constructivist argument is that an understanding of strategy through a rationalist ahistorical, acultural, and apolitical lens would be incomplete. Strategic decisions cannot be separated from the social, political, and cultural factors influencing decision-makers. Such an analytical perspective, thus, requires assessing the cultural infrastructure of states and the history of societies before determining their probable foreign policy behaviour. Studying foreign policy one must consider the country-specific ideological and cultural biases since "the decision-making process (...) is not an abstract construct based purely in the present moment" (Macmillan, 1995: 33). The underlying reason why decision-makers socialized in a different setting come up with slightly or completely disparate sets of responses even when responding to almost identical situations is due to non-material ideational considerations. The strategic cultural perspectives, thus, demonstrate that studying national strategy and security policy without taking historical and cultural elements, including larger domestic debates, into account, remains incomplete (Katzenstein, 1996; Gourevitch, 2002).

2. Contending Approaches to Strategic Culture

While scholars of strategic culture could promptly agree that the ahistorical, acultural, strictly positivist interpretation of international relations in general and strategic studies, in particular, is bound to be insufficient, there are disagreements on the extent to which it influences state behaviour, and how this influence should be studied. Hence, divergent opinions arise concerning whether strategic culture constitutes behaviour or behaviour shapes strategic culture. Disputes also extend to the issue of whether strategic culture should be studied as an independent variable or as a context. Is it the one and only influencer in strategic decisions, or one among many? Furthermore, is strategic culture to be investigated through the lens of a more traditional and falsifiable framework where certain aspects of rationalist theories are utilised or through the lens of a more unorthodox and ambitious framework where rationalist presuppositions of all sorts are rejected? Lastly, there is a question of whether strategic culture is a mere camouflage in the hands of the holders of political power to disguise their real agenda and establish a hegemony domestically and internationally.

These issues have been debated in what Johnston calls the "three generations of strategic studies" (1995). For the first generation, strategic culture is essentially an all-encompassing and unavoidable context that provides the acceptable behaviour of a specific security community. According to Meyer, policy makers "cannot extract themselves and their potential utilitarian

considerations from the cultural and social context in which they are embedded, and their actions will always reflect this context" (2005: 15). This implies that strategic culture inevitably influences foreign and security policy behaviour, and that it rejects any falsifiable methodological framework since each behaviour is ipso facto tied with culture. Being well-aware of what Scobell calls "a circular logic" (2014: 212), scholars of the first generation seem to be taking this trade-off to make research more predictable and policy oriented. In this regard, Bloomfield and Nossal claim that "because the human world is so inherently complex, it is simply not realistic to separate ideational factors from behaviour" (2007: 287). In short, for the first generation, strategic culture cannot be a mere variable among many in determining the decision-making process but "the milieu within which strategy is debated" (Gray, 1981: 22). In this, the notion of culture is ontologically inseparable from ideas/ideologies as well as behavioural traits because "all strategic behaviour is affected by humans who cannot help but be cultural agents" (Gray, 1999: 59).

There is an argument that "if strategic culture is said to be the product of nearly all explanatory variables, then there is little conceptual space for a non-strategic culture explanation of strategic choice" (Johnston, 1995: 37). That is, the first generation lacks methodological rigour and that has virtually left no room for non-cultural variables. Gray recognises that "a critic would be correct in observing that if strategic culture is everywhere, it is, in practicably researchable terms, nowhere" (1999: 52) since "trying to explain everything results in explaining nothing" (1999: 54). He also affirms that the scholars of the first generation including himself, in their attempt to revitalise non-material variables in international relations "may well have appeared both careless in our all too implicit causalities (connecting cultural preference and particular behaviour) and perilously tautological" (1999: 55). While accepting that he "may have seemed somewhat deterministic," still he maintains that "culture is behaviour, because those responsible for the behaviour necessarily are encultured as Germans, Britons, and so forth" (Gray, 1999: 55). Clearly, Gray sees agents, from individuals to organisations, as "encultured" entities and calls any effort to separate culture from behaviour "artificial" (1999: 59).

On the contrary, the key position of the third generation is to separate culture from behaviour. The scholars of the third generation "explicitly exclude behaviour as an element, thereby avoiding the tautological traps of the first generation" (Johnston, 1995: 43). They interpret culture not as an all-encompassing context but merely as an independent variable that has potential impacts upon foreign policy behaviour (the dependent variable). Johnston sees culture as "an ideational milieu which limits behavioural choices" (1995: 46) through subjective preconceptions of what is deemed to be appropriate and/or most rewarding. The main aim of the third generation is to bring sound methodological rigour to the studies of strategic culture. Johnston and other proponents of the third-generation view, reaching testable scientific conclusions,

curiously like rationalist research, are indispensable in establishing strategic culture as a credible sub-discipline of international relations (Johnston, 1995; Lapid, 1996). Therefore, the third generation upholds a Popperian understanding of theorising social science, arguing that studies of strategic culture should be "falsifiable, or at least distinguishable from non-strategic culture variables" (Johnston, 1995: 45).

In response to the attempt to craft a falsifiable, testable understanding of strategic culture, it is suggested that in so doing, strategic culture might be lost in a cloud of vagueness. Viewing strategic culture as a variable among many can potentially diminish the utility of strategic culture studies. (Bloomfield, 2012). Most criticisms directed towards the third generation have concerned their attempt to separate culture from behaviour for the sake of methodological vigour. According to Gray, the scholars of the third generation have theoretically separated those that are in practice intertwined. He posits that Johnston and his colleagues are conceptualising culture and behaviour no different than "a doctor who sees people as having entirely separable bodies and minds" (1999: 53).

In short, the first generation is criticised for being tautological by trying to explain too much (Johnston, 1995), and deterministic (Lock, 2010: 693), while the third generation is criticized for sacrificing the value and utility of the concept for its search for methodological rigour (Gray, 1999). However, both were critiqued for their negligence of the construction of strategic culture. For Lock, "one of the fundamental questions that have been overlooked by first and third generation scholars of strategic culture theory is that of how strategic culture is produced" (2010: 691). They have overlooked the reconstruction of strategic culture because they were too much preoccupied with the impact of culture on behaviour to prove the relevance of the concept in explaining foreign and security policy to challenge the rationalists.

In opposition to the first and the third generations of scholarship, the second generation underlines the need to expand the interest of strategic culture studies instead of being trapped in endless debates about whether strategic culture is cause or context, dependent or independent variable (Neumann & Heikka, 2005; Lock, 2010). Being largely sidelined by the mainstream, the second generation has gotten out of the box and raised critical questions about the utility and reconstruction of strategic culture, challenging the established assumptions of the mainstream. The advocates of the second generation represent an exceptional position by addressing not only the question of how strategic culture influences strategic action but also how strategic practice constitutes political communities and their identity. (Klein, 1988; Neumann & Heikka, 2005; Lock, 2010). This comes from an acknowledgement that social structures like the state, the security dilemma, deterrence, and peace are constructs that need to be explored within a broader cultural context (Klein, 1994). Their stand is that strategic culture and the identity of a strategic community are mutually constructed and that strategic culture not only explains but also justify strategic actions, producing consent and, hence, legitimacy and hegemony (Klein,

1998). That is, strategic culture is a resource that would provide the state with legitimacy to use violence against its internal and external enemies.

In this way, the second generation adopts a more critical or poststructuralist perspective, describing strategic culture as a tool for political hegemony (Klein, 1988). It questions what is defined as legitimate and what is not, and why and how the act of defining a threat turns into a political asset for the political elite. Thus, it introduces an instrumental component to strategic culture, pointing out the tendency of the political elite to invest in manufacturing threats to national security for self-serving purposes (Lock, 2010). Klein, in this context, argues that through strategic narratives of vilifying the other and victimising the self, the political elite in each society legitimises its hegemony over domestic and foreign opponents in a way that makes it seem "more nearly consensual than coercive" (1988: 134). Thus, for Klein, "to study strategic culture is to study the cultural hegemony of organized state violence" (1988: 136). As such, the second generation differs from the dominant approaches. What makes the second generation unique is its problematisation of how, why, and by whom strategic culture is reproduced (1988). It is argued that the mainstream studies have willingly or unwillingly ignored the fact that strategic culture itself is a construct and is constantly reproduced in accordance with the subjective interpretations of the political elite and their perceived interests (Libel, 2018).

As a result, scholars of the second generation draw attention to two key factors that influence the construction of strategic culture. The first is the combined influence of actors (such as individuals) and structures (such as international organisations) on the remaking of strategic culture. They typically follow the constructivist analysis of Giddens in which actors and structures cannot exist independently and then argue that the way they interact serves to reconstitute strategic culture. The second is the power of discourses concerning the self and the other on the reproduction of strategic culture in a way designed by political elites (Klein, 1990; Klein, 1994). The second generation claims that purposefully chosen discourses of self-identification and perception of the outside world shape strategic culture (Zaman, 2009; Libel, 2018). To sum up, the second generation interprets strategic culture as a tool for hegemony, but most crucially, it tries to make sense of how leaders or institutions, through a deliberative discourse, reconstitute the strategic culture of a given security community. In short, the second generation has shifted the focus to agency and practice, and to some limited extent, the reproduction of strategic culture.

Conclusion: Towards a New Research Agenda

While the first and the third generations have employed strategic culture solely to explain states' strategic behaviour and taken it as fixed, natural or historically given the second generation, preoccupied with explaining "the production of legitimacy" (Klein, 1988: 134) has regarded strategic culture as a mere discursive instrument, a "rhetorical tool" (Shaheen, 2023: 248). By focusing on how

strategic culture produces hegemony, the second generation has also missed exploring the dynamics, mechanisms, and processes of the reconstruction of strategic culture, not actually answering the question of what (re) constructs strategic culture. This means that the second generation, too, is not disengaged from the question of behaviour, the central preoccupation of the mainstream literature. Instead, it argues that there is a relational situation in states' practices in a way that practice (behaviour) reproduces culture (Klein, 1988; Neumann & Heikka, 2005; Lock, 2010). So, instead of explaining practice through culture, the second generation posits that culture is a product of practice, reversing the causality out of a conviction that the political elite leads practice to reproduce its hegemony. What strategic practice produces, as argued by the second generation, is not strategic culture but hegemony. Hence, such a reversal of the relationship between strategic culture and strategic practice discounts the capacity of strategic culture to generate norms, values, and preferences that may acculturate and bind political elites. Instrumentalization of strategic culture, thus, reduces the concept to a mere instrument of political elites, still obscuring the question of where it comes from and how it comes into existence. In this way, instrumentalization of strategic culture denies subjectivity to strategic culture. Viewing strategic culture only as a source of legitimization and a tool that is merely used by the political elite to camouflage their pursuit of power is effectively a denial of strategic culture as a separate social construction with any standing of its own. To explore the dynamics of making and remaking strategic culture, it should be taken as a social construct on its own that sets norms, values, and preferences.

Strategic culture is not given but socially constructed, and neither is it a mere instrument. Therefore, instead of being trapped in the culture-behaviour nexus, paying greater attention to the perpetual reproduction of strategic culture makes new theoretical openings possible. Such an approach that takes strategic culture as "an inherently dynamic structure" (Lock, 2010: 701) will contribute to a better understanding of the strategic culture and behaviour debate (i.e., its function and usage) by establishing the constituting components of strategic culture and its processes of (re)construction. How strategic culture is (re)constructed matters as it would expose what it does and explain why it does it. That is, without knowing how it is (re)constructed, it is hard to understand what it does.

In sum, this article has argued that strategic culture is not exclusively about its impact on strategic decisions. Strategic culture, as it is, may influence strategic decisions, but where does it come from? What is its constitution, and how is it composed? The answers to these questions provided by the pioneers of the discipline mostly point to the sources from which strategic culture is derived, such as history, geography, and national identity. However, there is no clear answer to the question of how these sources, for instance, history, turn into a shared set of ideas, beliefs, and preferences that guide strategic decisions. In this regard, it is argued that without answering this question of construction and reconstruction, studying strategic culture may

remain incomplete because focusing exclusively on the impact of strategic culture on states' behaviour is not studying strategic culture as an object of its own but its shadows as reflected in policy outcomes. Thus, it is necessary to critically engage and go beyond the so-called "three generations of strategic culture" studies.

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