Strategic Culture and a State's Decision to Use Military Force: A Comparative Analysis of Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran

Citation

Cohen, Scott Allen. 2022. Strategic Culture and a State's Decision to Use Military Force: A Comparative Analysis of Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Master's thesis, Harvard University Division of Continuing Education.

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Strategic Culture and a State's Decision to Use Military Force: A Comparative

Analysis of Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Scott Allen Cohen

A Thesis in the Field of International Relations

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

November 2022

Abstract

Research into strategic culture of a state is not currently conducted using a systematic framework. Even those sources which purport to provide such a framework often provide little more than a guideline as to what information should be gathered. This limits the generalizability of the conclusions reached as well as the comparability of case studies. Strategic culture research is also plagued by a difference in understanding as to what strategic culture can do. For Gray, strategic culture provides the context within which decisions are made. For Johnston, strategic culture can serve as an independent variable and the state's use of force the dependent variable. For Johnston, though, the use of the term 'behavior' in most definitions creates a tautology as behavior cannot be included in both the independent and dependent variables. This thesis uses a case study approach to collect information on the strategic culture of Israel and Iran. Following Johnston, strategic culture is the independent variable and the decision to develop nuclear weapons is the dependent variable. The information is collected using a framework developed within the thesis. Although the strategic culture is different in Israel and Iran, both states chose to develop nuclear weapons. The difference in strategic culture, however, led to differences in how the states proceeded with their respective programs and consequently to differences in the responses of the international community. Strategic culture is not epiphenomenal to the determination of state interests but rather is a priori – it comes before the determination of state interest and while the decision to use force may be the same between states with different strategic cultures, those decisions are implemented and interpreted differently.

Author's Biographical Sketch

Scott A. Cohen served in the United States Navy from 1987 to 2007. He served aboard the submarine USS OKLAHOMA CITY (SSN 723), and the aircraft carriers USS THEODORE ROSSEVELT (CVN 71) and USS ENTERPRISE (CVN 65). His shore duty assignments included the Navy Ships Parts Control Center where here served as a Contracting Officer, the Naval Sea Systems Command as the Business Financial Manager for the LPD-17 amphibious shipbuilding program, the Naval Supply Systems Command as the Program Manager for the Navy's Advanced Traceability and Control Center and as Executive Officer to the Vice Commander. His final duty assignment was as Chief of Logistics for NATO's southern command, Joint Force Command, Naples, Italy. While serving in Italy, Scott deployed to Iraq to estimate the logistics requirements for the Iraqi Military Academy Rustamiyah. He was later assigned to the NATO Training Mission – Iraq (NTM-I) as a logistics trainer at the Iraqi Ministry of Defense, and as the Chief of Logistics for NATO in Iraq. Following retirement from the Navy in 2007, Scott remained in Iraq as the Financial Controller for NTM-I until the end of 2009. From 2010 to 2021, Scott served first with the NATO Airlift Management Agency and later with the NATO Support and Procurement Agency as an Internal Auditor and the Agency's Internal Controls Officer.

Scott received his Bachelor of Arts degree in International Relations from the University of Kentucky. He is currently a candidate for the Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies, concentrating in International Relations at Harvard University (2022).

Dedication

To my aunt, Evelyn Apter, whose love and guidance, and the occasional meal and a place to sleep, kept me motivated during difficult times. To my fiancée, Nataliya Havdyda, for being patient with me. I look forward to exploring the world, having long conversations on trains, coffee on Sundays, and learning about language and life.

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Acknowledgments

I am incredibly grateful to the following people for their guidance, knowledge, and support that have made this thesis possible. It is impossible to acknowledge everyone who contributed to my experience at Harvard including the professors who taught us and the other students from whom we learned and received support during difficult times. Dr. Christopher Ankersen taught us that everything we read and write is part of a larger conversation that academics have been having for generations. When I was studying by myself, alone, often at nights after work or on the weekends, Chris's words reminded me that I am part of a larger collaboration.

During the nearly two years that I worked with Dr. Doug Bond, I understood further what the subject of the thesis would be and with his support, the proposal was finished. Dr. Bond went beyond the duties of a Research Advisor and provided much needed encouragement and guidance throughout the thesis process.

Dr. George Soroka was at first my professor from whom I learned about international politics. What I remember most from that time was our discussions about the life of the mind and the encouragement to learn for the sake of learning. I was fortunate that Dr. Soroka agreed to be my thesis advisor. I will treasure our numerous conversations – some on campus, most by Zoom because of the pandemic, and some related to the thesis. He encouraged me to read widely and to delve into subjects that I would not have considered otherwise. Without his guidance, his humor, and his patience, this thesis would not have been finished.

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Chapter I.

Introduction to Research

Why do states choose to use force against other states or non-state actors? One explanation is that states must rely on power, exhibited either alone or in alliance with other states, to protect their interests. To the extent that cultural explanations are entertained, they are usually considered to be subordinate to the considerations of the state's use of power. They are also used to explain why a particular use of force failed to achieve its objective. The dominant theory, realism, holds that cultural explanations are, epiphenomenal to national security decision making.

Culture, however, exists prior to the determination of interests and the order in which states prefer those interests to be protected. This a priori position of culture requires that culture be considered when analyzing why states choose to use force.[1] This concept will be discussed and supported through the thesis. Not all cultures within a state play an equal role in the determination of national security policy. What we are concerned with are the values, norms, and attitudes of political elites – namely what has been termed "strategic culture." The question this thesis seeks to address is to understand the influence of strategic culture on a state's decision to use force.[2]

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[1] The a priori position of culture is addressed later in this thesis.

[2] Strategic culture is the independent variable, the use of force is the dependent variable, and the level of analysis is the state.

The definition of strategic culture is contested and is presented in the literature as the debate between Colin Gray and Alistair Johnston. The main point of contention is the use of the term 'behavior.' The thesis addresses the debate between the two and proposes a way to conceive of behavior that resolves the issue troubling Johnston, namely that behavior cannot be part of both the independent and dependent variables. Utilizing the literature on strategic culture, including theoretical articles as well as applied case studies, the thesis develops a framework to be used to assess a state's strategic culture. Single state case studies have been conducted without the use of a rubric to systematically collect data. The problem is one of comparability. Case studies conducted on different states may not collect the same data. The framework makes explicit what information was collected and where applicable, what information was unavailable. The lack of transparency in the vast majority of the existing case studies also limits the generalizability of conclusions about strategic culture.

Chapter II.

Literature Review

Before turning to the influence of strategic culture on the decision to use force, it

is important to consider the definition of the significant terms within the research

question, namely, strategic culture, the state, and the use of force

Strategic Culture

For purposes of this thesis, strategic culture is defined as:

> Strategic culture is the interaction among identity, values, norms, beliefs,
> and patterns of habitual behavior that members of a national strategic
> community have acquired through instruction or imitation. These variables
> shape collective identity and relationships to other societies and determine
> appropriate methods for achieving security objectives.[3]

The definition of strategic culture is adapted primarily from Johnson, DeGroot et

al., and Snyder. Johnson presents four key variables as comprising strategic culture:

Identity, Values, Norms, and Perceptive Lens. Johnson defines perceptive lens as beliefs,

but the other characteristics also frame how individuals view events and relations.

Therefore, beliefs is used instead of perceptive lens. DeGroot et al., using the same key

variables as Johnson, adds the means by which these are transmitted and the ends to

which strategic culture is employed with respect to policy. Because definitions may be

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[3] Jeannie L. Johnson, "Toward a Standard Methodological Approach," in *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*, ed. Jeannie L. Johnson, Kerry M. Kartchner, and Jeffrey A. Larsen (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009) and from Mikaela DeGroot et al., "Deconstructing Iranian Speech: A Strategic Culture Analysis," *Public Affairs*, Workshop in Public Affairs: International Issues, 860 (2008).

more or less useful depending on the reasons for which they are used, describing strategic

culture as shaping "relationships to other societies" in a comparative study of strategic

culture is useful. DeGroot et al. defines strategic culture as:

> [t]he interaction among identity, values, norms, and perceptive lenses that members of a national community have acquired through instruction or imitation. These variables shape collective identity and relationships to other societies and determine appropriate methods for achieving security objectives.[4]

Neither Johnson nor DeGroot et al. include behavior in the definition. Snyder's

definition of strategic culture, with which Gray concurs, is:

> Strategic culture can be defined as 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 with regard to nuclear strategy.[5]

There are three parts of Snyder's definition that are worth discussing. Snyder,

importantly, includes "patterns of habitual behavior" as part of the definition. He is not

referring to a single act but rather to acts that occur over a period of time.[6] From the time

Snyder coined the term "strategic culture" in his study illustrating why the United States

and the Soviet Union approach nuclear strategy differently, the contestation over the

definition of strategic culture is largely over whether behavior should be included. If

behavior is part of the definition of strategic culture, the independent variable, how could

strategic culture then be used to explain, determine, or predict the use of force?

Behavior, it is argued, cannot determine behavior. This apparent tautology, raised by

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[4] DeGroot et al., "Deconstructing Iranian Speech: A Strategic Culture Analysis, 4.

[5] Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*, R-2154-AF (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1977), 5.

[6] Strategic culture is not static but responds to patterns of behavior and to changes in domestic and international attitudes, beliefs, and norms. The issue of change and continuity in strategic culture will be discussed in the literature review.

Johnston,[7] will be addressed more fully later in this literature review. For now, it is important to note how past behavior influenced the attitudes and perceptions of the American leadership during the Cuban Missile Crisis in deciding what was to be done.

Snyder also specifies that it is the culture of the national strategic community that is the important when analyzing strategic culture. Other cultures are also important in obtaining a comprehensive view of a state's strategic culture, such as the international political system and domestic popular culture (to name two), but these are important to the extent they influence the national security elites.

The third part of the definition worth noting is the inclusion of the phrase "with regard to nuclear strategy." Which of the national security elites are considered relevant will be different depending on the specific issues at stake. The different actors will represent different cultures, or sub-cultures, within the larger strategic culture. The relationship between culture, strategic culture, and sub-cultures will be addressed in the literature review.

<div align="center">Level of Analysis: The State</div>

The state was chosen as the unit of analysis because of its centrality in the international system. In an anarchic system, it is the state that relies on self-help. International organizations established to maintain peace and promote economic development are organized around the state (e.g., the UN, NATO, the OSCE, the IMF and the OECD). Finally, it is at the state level where weapons are developed and the decision to use force is made.

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[7] Alistair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*, 75 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

The decision to use force and how that force may actually be employed may be made at the operational or tactical levels.[8] This thesis, however, is concerned with the decision to use force at the strategic level. This raises the question of who makes those decisions. The concept of a "state" is useful in international relations and international law where states are legal persons.[9] Even so, decisions are made by political, military, and bureaucratic elites. Elites may have been influenced by the public, by think tanks and academics, and by the legal system. In specific cases, the influence may be largely domestic, but will most likely include international influences as well.

In countries where there is civilian control of the military, that decision is often made by a political leader such as the President or Prime Minister in consultation with members of the military and other organizations responsible for intelligence gathering and diplomacy, as well as the legislative branch depending on the need for funding and consultation requirements. In authoritarian regimes, those whose input is sought may be similar though arguably drawn from a much narrower population.[10] Regime type matters for who is considered to be part of the elite and this thesis is concerned with the values, attitudes, and norms of those elites and how their culture, the strategic culture influences the decision to use force.

While the terms "democracy" and "autocracy" are best considered as ideals along a spectrum, the case studies include two countries, one that is broadly considered a

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[8] In the military, there is a concept called 'Commander's Intent.' The commander issues orders stating the objective but then leaves the decision to how to achieve that objective to a subordinate. In this way, the means used to achieve the objective are flexible and can be adapted to changing conditions.

[9] Roland Portmann, "The Recognition Conception," in *Legal Personality in International Law* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 80–125.

[10] Bruce Bueno De Mesquita and Alastair Smith, *The Dictator's Handbook: Why Bad Behavior Is Almost Always Good Politics* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2011).

democracy and one that is broadly considered an authoritarian regime. According to the

Economist Intelligence Unit's Report for 2021, Israel is a "flawed democracy" with an

overall rating of 7.97. By contrast, the United States is also a flawed democracy with an

overall rating of 7.85. Iran is categorized as an authoritarian regime with an overall

rating of 1.95.[11]

Use of Force

As stated in the research question, this thesis is concerned about the decision to

use force. What does the "use of force" mean? Use of force may be threatened or taken,

and broadly conceived, may include measures taken by the military, economic sanctions,

diplomatic pressure or a combination of these. The "use of force" may also include

weapons acquisition or development programs which have a strategic effect on other

states.

Military uses of force include militarized inter-state disputes which the Correlates

of War project defines as "instances of when one state threatened, displayed, or used

force against another."[12]   The war between the United States and Mexico from 1846-

1847 is an example of a militarized inter-state dispute. Intra-state wars, in contrast, are

civil wars fought "predominantly…within the recognized territory of a state," though

other states may participate or be affected. As the thesis is primarily concerned with the

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[11] Economist Intelligence Unit, "Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2021: The China Challenge" (London, UK: Economist Intelligence, 2022).

[12] Definitions and comprehensive datasets for these are available at www. https://correlatesofwar.org.

strategic culture of states, the "uses of force" will consider militarized inter-state disputes but will not be limited to the definition of war used by the Correlates of War project.[13]

The decision by a state to build nuclear weapons will have a significant effect on the international system. Regardless of its legality with respect to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the decision to become a nuclear state is likely to cause other states to perceive the action as threatening. This will occur regardless of whether the developing state considers the strategy to be offensive or defensive.[14] Therefore, the development of nuclear weapons is considered to be a "use of force." The topics will be discussed more in depth in the Methodology section and in the case studies themselves.

Iran has been portrayed as irrational – as rogue actors within the international system. Their behavior must be analyzed within the context of their culture – their history, attitudes, and traditions. Carmen Wunderlich argues persuasively that Iran is not necessarily norm breakers but norm entrepreneurs.[15] Understanding their behavior, and that of any state generally, requires an understanding of their culture, and as far as the decision to use force is concerned, its strategic culture. A cultural approach is not a rejection of realism or the assumption that states behave rationally. A cultural understanding of state behavior is the first step in understanding what advantage a state seeks in deciding to use military force. As Johnson et al. note:

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[13] The Correlates of War project bases its definition of war on a minimum number of casualties, namely, 1000 battle-deaths.

[14] Recommended readings on the security dilemma include John Herz, "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 2, no. 2 (1950): 157–80; Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): 167–214; Shipping Tang, The Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis. In: *A Theory of Security Strategy for Our Time* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[15] Carmen Wunderlich, *Rogue States as Norm Entrepreneurs: Black Sheep or Sheep in Wolves' Clothing?* (Springer, 2020).

A key tenet of the realism and its various sub-theories is that state actors behave rationally. Strategic culture seeks to amplify and contextualize this largely correct assumption. Most actors are, in fact, rational, but in order to project behavior on that premise, one must understand rationality within a cultural context.[16]

The answer to why states choose to use force against other states because it is in their interest to do so. But that begs the question, how do states determine what is in their interest? To argue that the primary interest of states in an anarchical system is power does not provide guidance as to how the state is to gain and maintain power.

Katzenstein notes "State interests do not exist to be 'discovered' by self-interested, rational actors.

> [m]uch of what distinguishes "rational" decisions from one society to another are value preferences. Values weighed by a rational actor in a cost/benefit analysis are often ideational as well as material and cannot be accurately assessed without a substantive knowledge of the actor's preferences. Strategic culture's mantra, therefore, emphasizes that this body of knowledge, complex and messy as it is to obtain, is a necessary pursuit.[17]

Realism has been the dominant theory since the end of World War II, but realists recognize the contribution of cultural factors, even if it is only to explain why states act in a way that is seemingly contrary to what is in a state's interest. Desch agrees with the notion that cultural theories can contribute to understanding state behavior, but he goes further and sees these theories as explanations merely supplementing realist theory. Desch asserts: "The best case that can be made for these new cultural theories [including

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[16] Jeannie L. Johnson, Kerry M. Kartchner, and Jeffrey A. Larsen, eds., "Introduction," in *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking* (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 6.

[17] Jeannie L. Johnson, Kerry M. Kartchner, and Jeffrey A. Larsen, eds., "Introduction," in *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking* , 7.

strategic culture] is that they are sometimes useful as a supplement to realist theories."[18] The role of strategic culture as a supplement is to fill gaps left by realism – it is a residual factor to be considered after realist explanations have been found wanting.

This thesis takes the position that realist and cultural theories, and here we are focusing on strategic culture, each offer insight into state behavior. In some cases, the explanations provided by one theory or the other stands in the foreground while the others stand in the background. Facts harnessed in support of realist theories tend to rely on numbers such as economic analyses or military hardware. On the other hand, norms, values and attitudes – the grist of cultural studies – is more interpretive. To interpret the effects of culture on national security decisionmakers, one needs to develop a thicker description of strategic culture and analyze the results in terms of specific policies or behaviors. Johnson et al. extend the notion of understanding rationality in the context of culture to an understanding what is acceptable behavior.

> … strategic culture fills a much-discussed gap in international relations
> theory. It accepts that most actors are likely rational, but insists that
> "rationality" must be understood within a cultural context. The study of
> strategic culture plays a critical role in understanding a regime's
> "tendencies." It draws flexible outlines around behavior considered
> acceptable, and preferable, and offers a sounder understanding of decision
> parameters.[19]

The preceding discussion supports the a priori position of culture in understanding state behavior. State's act rationally, in their own interests, and those interests are defined in context of the state's culture. Rather than see strategic culture as a residual

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[18] Michael C. Desch, "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies," *International Security* 23, no. 1 (1998): 141.

[19] Johnson, Kartchner, and Larsen, "Conclusion: Towards a Standard Methodology" in *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*, 244.

explanation that comes after realist or rationalist explanations are exhausted, it should be seen by realists as an initial starting point which provides the basis for realist assumptions. They provide the context for understanding state interests and attitudes, including those attitudes towards realist concepts. As explanations for state behavior, depending on the case, sometimes realism will come to the fore, sometimes cultural explanations will but this cannot be presumed beforehand without careful analysis.

<div align="center">Typology</div>

The two main approaches to understanding the relevant literature are chronological and generational.   Michael Desch starts with the development of cultural theories during World War II. The World War II wave was then followed by the Cold War wave and the post-Cold War wave.[20]   The second approach was offered by Johnston. His typology divides strategic culture into first, second, and third generations.[21] This thesis argues that the usefulness of either approach depends on the objective of the analysis.

In starting with World War II, Desch makes visible the research into behavioral analysis. Analyses were inter-disciplinary, and, as Desch notes, several leading anthropologists contributed to the development of "'national character studies of the Axis powers, especially Germany and Japan."[22] Strategic thinking during the Cold War

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[20] Desch, "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies," 142.

[21] Anand V. describes a fourth generation in "Revisiting the Discourse on Strategic Culture: An Assessment of the Conceptual Debates," *Strategic Analysis* 44, no. 3 (2020): 193–207 https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2020.1787684. The existence of a fourth generation is mentioned here though it has yet to be widely accepted in the literature.

[22] Desch, "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies," 145.

naturally focused on the Soviet Union. Cultural theories focused on Soviet

organizational capabilities, and it was during the Cold War that Snyder described how

different Soviet and American strategic cultures led to differences in attitudes towards

nuclear strategy. Snyder's study challenged the rational actor models and the application

of game theory to issues of conflict.[23] The end of the Cold War provided the space for

the resurgence of research into cultural theories and the idea that concepts such as power,

anarchy, and security are constructed through social interaction. Strategic culture also

experienced a resurgence following the end of the Cold War, primarily with the

publication of Johnston's book, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy

in Chinese History*.[24] Johnston's work reinvigorated the field, particularly as it applies to

the definition of strategic culture and to methodology. Johnston's work will be discussed

below.

Johnston's typology, as opposed to Desch's, is not strictly chronological through

the first, second, and third generations roughly equate to the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. Each

generation tended to focus on particular substantive or methodological issues. The first

generation analyzed the role of strategic culture in determining state behavior though

Snyder, in his 1977 work in which the term "strategic culture" was first introduced, shied

away from making such a claim. The second generation focused on the symbolic nature

of language and the contribution of discourse to shaping a state's strategic culture. The

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[23] Oliver G. Haywood, *Military Doctrine of Decision and the Von Neumann Theory of Games* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1951) is one of the earliest works applying game theory to military decision making. Haywood's 1951 work was followed by the 1954 article Military Doctrine and Game Theory, *Journal of the Operational Research Society of America*, 2(4), 365-385. Thomas C. Schelling, *Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1997) is the seminal work in this area.

[24] Alistair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*, 75 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

third generation, of which Johnston is a part, focused on methodological and definitional issues. The three generations are not entirely mutually exclusive nor are they necessarily progressive. The focus of the first generation was how differences in strategic culture can explain the different approaches of the United States and the Soviet Union to nuclear strategy.[25] The second and third generations focused on symbolic language. Johnston's book, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*, looked to Chinese symbolic language for the construction of strategic culture. This thesis provides another example of the non-mutual exclusivity of the three-generation typology. It accepts the first-generation inclusion of behavior of part of the definition and rejects the notion that research into strategic culture needs to be falsifiable. It does, however, accept the second generation's focus on symbolic language and the third generation's call to improve methodology by using a consistent framework which includes both cultural and non-cultural variables.

How useful, then, are Johnston's and Desch's typologies? Johnston's distinction between first, second, and third generations provides food for thought over definitions and methodology. Desch's typology reminds us that while Snyder coined the term "strategic culture" in 1977, the concept is built upon studies in behavioral analysis, Operational Code Analysis, and the ideas of political culture. In sum, both typologies are useful depending on the reason they are used. The relationship between culture, writ large, strategic culture, political culture and sub-cultures will be explored later in this thesis.

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[25] Alistair Iain Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," *International Security* 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995), 36.

Debate over the definition of strategic culture

The Gray-Johnston debate over the definition of strategic culture, and

consequently over methodology, has attracted much attention.[26] The first definition

provided was by Snyder, who coined the term "strategic culture" in his 1977 study.[27]

Gray accepted Snyder's definition. Johnston, on the other hand, argued for a definition of

strategic culture that excludes behavior. By including behavior as part of strategic

culture, it is methodologically impossible to test for the effects of strategic culture, the

independent variable, on behavior, the dependent or outcome variable. For Johnston, the

key to methodological rigor is the ability to test causality and falsifiability.

> To date, many of those who have explicitly used the term strategic culture
> have tended to define it in ways that make it unfalsifiable and untestable.
> Especially egregious in this regard is what could be called the first (and
> most influential) generation of studies in strategic culture. Definitionally,
> this literature subsumed both thought and action within the concept of
> strategic culture, leaving the mechanically deterministic implication that
> strategic thought led consistently to one type of behaviour. The literature
> also tended to include everything from technology to geography to
> ideology to past patterns of behaviour in an amorphous concept of
> strategic culture, even though those variables could stand as separate, even
> conflicting explanations for strategic choice. This left little conceptual
> space for non-strategic culture explanations of behaviour.[28]

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[26] Colin S. Gray, "Strategic Culture as Context: The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back," *Review of International Studies* 25 (1999): 49–69; Alistair Iain Johnston, "Strategic Culture Revisited: Reply to Colin Gray," *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 3 (July 1999): 519–23; Alistair Iain Johnston, "Cultural Realism and Strategy in Maoist China," in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter Katzenstein, 1996, 222n8; Stuart Poore, "What Is the Context: A Reply to the Gray-Johnston Debate on Strategic Culture," *Review of International Studies* 29, no. 2 (2003): 279–84; Anand V, "Revisiting the Discourse on Strategic Culture: An Assessment of the Conceptual Debates," *Strategic Analysis* 44, no. 3 (2020): 193–207, https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2020.1787684; Craig B. Greathouse, "Examining the Role and Methodology of Strategic Culture," Risk, Hazards & Crisis in *Public Policy* 1, no. 1 (2010): Article 5, https://doi.org/10.2202/1944-4079.1020.

[27] Strategic culture can be defined as 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 with regard to [the relevant national security issue].

[28] Alistair Iain Johnston, "Cultural Realism and Strategy in Maoist China," in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter Katzenstein, 1996.

Aside from noting that Gray supported Snyder's conception of strategic culture, the thesis has not yet explored Gray's arguments in depth.[29]

Strategic culture is influenced by behavior – of the elites, the military, the public, both domestically and internationally. Russia, for example, is paranoid that she will be invaded. One could look at this from a strictly realist perspective and argue that the prospect of invasion is why Russia, and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, was concerned with maintaining the Warsaw Pact Alliance, to balance against NATO. This much is true, but the attitude of Russia, and the Soviets before them, was conditioned by the past behavior of Napoleon and Hitler, to name two relatively recent examples who invaded the country and caused significant damage. Past behavior influences current attitudes and beliefs and shapes the perceptions in the minds of elites, the military, and the public. In short, past behavior shapes the strategic culture of a state.

Johnston's response to Gray emphasizes the over-determined nature of strategic culture. As state behavior occurs within a cultural context, culture can be used to explain everything. The implication is that if everything can be explained by culture, then methodologically, an independent variable which causes the behavior of the dependent variable cannot be precisely defined. Finally, Johnston then argues that including behavior as part of the definition of strategic culture creates a tautology as behavior is a component of both the independent and dependent variables.

> His [Gray's] approach is, at base, to say everything matters and everything is connected to everything else. I don't see why it clarifies things to say that an action is influenced by an amorphous cultural context that includes

among other things, the class of action itself. A tautology is a tautology, whether it is wrapped in some 'holistic' faux anti-positivism.[30]

Rather than it being a fatal flaw, however Johnston's criticism that everything matters is a reminder that we need to be careful as to how we operationalize strategic culture for a given state. Johnston demonstrated in his seminal study of Chinese strategic culture that it is possible to define what matters. This thesis accepts Gray's argument that behavior should be included in the definition of strategic culture and rejects Johnston's insistence on causality and falsifiability– concepts that do not have a place in international relations.[31] Empirical cases tell us what states have done in the past and provide a basis for the development of testable hypotheses. These hypotheses allow us to consider various factors which may cause future events, drawing upon both material and cultural factors.

Falsifiability, from a Popperian perspective, is not possible. Realism, the dominant theory in international relations, did not predict the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As a theory of international relations, it is still valuable in explaining why events may have occurred in the past or may happen in the future. The strength of realism, liberalism, and strategic culture is in their explanatory, not predictive power. Concerning strategic culture, Poore noted, "The Gray-Johnston debate illustrates the futility of thinking about strategic

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[30] Alistair Iain Johnston, "Strategic Culture Revisited: Reply to Colin Gray," R*eview of International Studies* 25, no. 3 (July 1999): 520.

[31] Johnston argues for a 'definition of strategic culture that is observable and falsifiable' in his 1995 article 'Thinking about Strategic Culture,' *International Security*, 19(4), 33.

culture in terms of causal explanations and falsifiable theory, whilst confirming the

potential of a contextual or constitutive framework."[32]

Moving away from the Gray-Johnston debate, other scholars have provided their

own definitions of strategic culture. The purpose of this thesis, in part, is to use an

operational definition of strategic culture (which includes behavior) to develop a

framework to analyze strategic culture and to apply that framework to case studies of

strategic culture. However, other definitions are also useful in understanding strategic

culture. The definition provided by DeGroot et al., presented earlier, states:

> Strategic culture is the interaction among identity, values, norms, and
> perceptive lenses that members of a national community have acquired
> through instruction or imitation. These variables shape collective identity
> and relationships to other societies and determine appropriate methods for
> achieving security objectives.[33]

This definition does not include behavior and therefore avoids the tautological

argument presented by Johnston. But the definition does note that strategic culture is

comprised of the interaction of "identity, values, norms, and perceptive lenses." The

concept of identity is an important factor in explaining state behavior. Identity arises

from a shared narrative of a state's founding, shared values (including religion as in the

cases of Iran and Israel), and geography. Though geography is often included in material

definitions of state power, it is also a part of strategic culture in that it shapes identity and

the attitudes of the public and consequently of those who make policy. The effect of

geography on strategic culture and the use of force is demonstrated by the history of the

U.S. in the early 19th century with the idea of Manifest Destiny and the expansion of the

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[32] Stuart Poore, "What Is the Context: A Reply to the Gray-Johnston Debate on Strategic Culture," *Review of International Studies* 29, no. 2 (2003): 279–84.

[33] DeGroot et al., "Deconstructing Iranian Speech: A Strategic Culture Analysis, 4.

state westward and in the late 19th century with the acceptance of the ideas of Alfred

Thayer Mahan and his argument that to great nations must have strong navies.[34]

Comparative Studies of Strategic Culture

Research on the influence of strategic culture on a state's decision to use force

has, for the most part, not been comparative. Single-state case studies have sought to

understand the strategic culture of a state and have then shown how that culture

determined, or at least influenced, that state's decision to use military force. This

approach has been necessitated by the lack of an agreed-upon framework with which to

define strategic culture. The result has been an understanding of strategic culture that is

not generalizable based on empirical data and therefore is unable to support more general

conclusions about strategic culture. The publication of Johnson et al.'s work, *Strategic*

Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally based Insights into Comparative

National Security Policymaking, is an excellent work and in the end, a framework is

proposed, its constituent parts pulled from the various studies included in the volume.

Single case studies on Russia, Israel, India, Iran, Syria, China, and North Korea are

included but the volume falls short of its promising title as it does not use the framework

developed to compare the strategic cultures of the states with another nor do they test the

framework developed to analyze the strategic culture of another state.

Biava, Drent, and Herd's framework is a valuable contribution to the literature,

but the analytical framework developed by them focuses on the strategic culture of the

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[34] The sailing of the Great White Fleet around the world under Theodore Roosevelt demonstrated the United States could project power far from its shores but it was also evidence that the United States was a great nation.

European Union.[35] This EU's emphasis on the acceptance of shared values and norms is necessary for the functioning of the organization but limits the generalizability of their analysis to individual states. Future research conducted at the supra-national level would benefit from their analysis. Despite their shortcomings in application or generalizability, the two studies mentioned were useful in developing the framework presented in this thesis. These frameworks and others are discussed further in the Methodology section of the thesis.

<div align="center">Change and Continuity</div>

Depending on the impact of behavior, that change can be evolutionary in response to behavior over a long period of time or quick in response to a shock. Once the strategic culture has been changed, it provides a different set of attitudes, beliefs, and conditioned emotional responses for decision makers who are making decisions regarding the use of force.

Past behavior provides feedback to the current strategic culture. But that does not allow mean that strategic culture will change or that one can determine or predict future behavior. The United States lost in Vietnam, and in 1975, the North Vietnamese Army, supported by the Soviets and China, rolled into Saigon. America lost its longest war till then, but the strategic culture of the United States still favored a policy of containment, continuation of the Cold War, and military intervention to protect its interests. By the 1980s, the United States was beginning to develop the Strategic Defense Initiative, dealt

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[35] Alessia Biava, Margriet Drent, and Graeme P Herd, "Characterizing the European Union's Strategic Culture: An Analytical Framework," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49, no. 6 (November 2011): 1227–48, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2011.02195.x.

with revolutionaries in Nicaragua and El Salvador, invaded Grenada and Panama, and funded the Haitian Army and the Haitian National Intelligence Service to overthrow the government there. These examples show the United States was active politically and militarily in the Western Hemisphere, long considered her sphere since the Monroe Doctrine of 1823.

The loss in Vietnam many have influenced strategic culture in the short-term. It may have made the United States reticent to fight in distant conflicts as it had almost continuously since 1941. Policy makers passed legislation restricting the power of the president to commit troops. But the policy of containment continued, and the United States turned its attention to the Central and Latin America for a time. In sum, Vietnam may have caused a minor change in the attitudes and beliefs of the elites, the military, and the public, but not enough to change the strategic culture with respect to intervention in the Western Hemisphere. The Monroe Doctrine, one of the foundational documents of the United States, was formative in establishing the strategic culture of the United States[36] and provided the justification for future political and military behavior. This discussion on change and continuity supports the idea that a state's current strategic culture is shaped in part by history – by past behavior.

The discussion on the debate over the definition of strategic culture and change and continuity in strategic culture leads one to side with Gray and Snyder and others who support the inclusion of behavior in the definition. I am also sympathetic to Johnston's concern that including behavior in the definition does not allow researchers to determine

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[36] The United State did not turn its attention to Central and South America only after the loss in Vietnam. Additional examples can be provided of U.S. intervention in the region including its intervention in the Dominican Republic in the 1920s (in which the author's grandfather participated as a young Marine), its role in the coup d'etat in Guatemala in 1954 and the 1973 overthrow of President Allende in Chile.

whether and to what degree behavior, as part of the independent variable, influences

behavior in the dependent variable.   The question then is how to reconcile the apparent

tautology.

Behavior at a given point in time can influence future behavior. Behavior may

change future material conditions faced by decision-makers such as those faced by the

military in war. Behavior may change tactics at the operational level as seen by the

current Russian withdrawal from the areas around Kyiv and troop redeployment to

eastern Ukraine. Behavior at a given point in time may also change the strategic

decisions of statemen. This is most evident following the appeasement of Nazi Germany

prior to World War II which socialized generations of policymakers to not make the same

mistake in the future. The impact of behavior at the strategic level was more recently

seen in President Clinton's reluctance to respond militarily in Rwanda following the

events in Somalia, and the subsequent desire to intervene in Bosnia and Kosovo given the

failure to do so in Rwanda.

Behavior changes not only the material conditions faced in the future, but it may

affect the psychology of the decision makers as well. The desire to not repeat the

mistakes of the past can be a strong motivating factor for acting differently in the future.

How decision makers frame the present and the decisions they face plays an important

role in how they analyze the policy options that are available. By using history as a

guide, and drawing analogies to the present, decision makers draw conclusions how to

behave based on the past. The desire or motivation not to repeat the mistakes of the past,

or the use of language to frame the past in a way that justifies action based on analogous

reasoning are ways in which decision makers are socialized and learn. I short, past

behavior provides a richer context – it may change the strategic culture of a national strategic community in subtle ways or more dramatically depending on the salience of the event. As the culture changes, decisions concerning national security, including the decision whether to use force or not, will be based on new sets of assumptions, motivations, and perceptions.

If we accept the argument that past behavior can influence future behavior through changes in the culture of those responsible for national security decisions, then past behavior is a part of the strategic culture and should be included in the definition of strategic culture.[37] Contrary to Johnson, then, the inclusion of behavior in the definition of strategic culture – as part of the independent variable – is not tautological.[38]

Relationship between Culture, Strategic Culture, and Sub-Cultures

The culture of a state provides the context within which strategic culture, political culture and other subcultures exist and operate.[39] The various cultures are not wholly separate and may overlap as individuals may be members of several groups. Strategic

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[37] The influence of past behavior on future decisions is an application of the Bayesian model and could be modeled formally. I am not sure that such a model, however, could be developed beyond a theoretical level as there would be insufficient data upon which to develop an accurate model.

[38] Behavior at T0 influences the strategic culture which may affect behavior at T1. Behavior at T1, likewise, may affect behavior at T2. This creates a feedback loop – a mechanism through which the national security decision makers may consider over time whether their actions achieved the desired objectives.

[39] While this thesis does not address the distinctions between state and nation, we should note that even within a single nation, there may be several subcultures, each with distinct political traditions and notions of security. Tim Neguth observes: "Cultural definitions of nationhood also risk submerging the heterogeneity of values, customs, habits, and traditions that characterizes most national communities (putative or otherwise). For example, there are significant differences between the history, dialects, political cultures, or culinary traditions of Piedmont, Emilia-Romagna, and Calabria (see, for example, Capatti & Montanari, 2003; Maidan & Parry, 1997; Putnam, 1993)." *Nationalism and Popular Culture* (2020). (London, UK: Routledge), 2-3.

culture, for example, is related to political culture. The strength of that relationship depends upon how close the decision makers are that make policy and those whose decide on national security issues. The closeness, in turn, depends on the nature of the regime and on organizational factors. The measure of closeness may be considered along a spectrum. In authoritarian states in which the political and military decisions reside within a small group of elites or possibly even one individual, there is a high degree of closeness. In democracies, where political and military decisions ae made through the input of a larger group, the level of closeness would be less.[40]

Strategic culture includes the political and military elites and the public to the extent they can influence national security strategy. Gray notes that "The concept of strategic culture is a direct descendant of the concept of political culture."[41] This implies, however, that strategic culture has replaced political culture. It would be better to conceive of political culture as part of strategic culture to the extent that it influences decisions on national strategy. Political culture also exists outside of strategic culture when it concerns itself with other issues.

In addition to strategic culture and political culture, one must consider the impact of military culture on the decision to use force and how that force should be utilized. For Dina Adamsky, strategic culture is defined at the level of the military.

> Many scholars adopt a definition of strategic culture as shared beliefs and behaviours among militaries – derived from common experiences and historical narratives – that shape identities, influence relationships and

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[40] Even in democracies, however, the number of people who make the final decisions on political and military issues is still relatively small. The main difference between authoritarian states and democratic ones is that the electorate is a factor in the latter.

[41] Gray, "Comparative Strategic Culture," 27.

affect the manner in which armed forces define and achieve their security objectives.[42]

For the purpose of this thesis, military culture is located primarily within the sphere of strategic culture. While it is true that the armed forces do define their security objectives, as Adamsky observed, they do so to achieve political objectives.[43] The discussion of the military, thus far, has considered it to be a single organization. Organizationally, the military is presented at the top level by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Each of the services, however, has its own culture and approach to preparing for and waging war.[44] The budget battles over which leg of the nuclear triad should receive priority for funding – Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) owned and operated by the U.S. Air Force or ballistic missile submarines owned and operated by the U.S. Navy – illustrates the fact that the military consists of several organizations.[45]

To understand the military, then, one must understand its various organizational sub-cultures. The same can be said at the strategic level as well as attitudes about the use of force may differ between the State Department and the Department of Defense. The

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[42] Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

[43] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

[44] Carl H. Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

[45] Sub-cultures exist within each of the military branches as well. Within the Navy, for example, the Surface Warfare and Submarine Communities represent different interests and within the Surface Warfare community, there is a distinction between those who serve on cruisers and destroyers and those who serve on amphibious ships. The author was part of the budget battles between these communities as decisions were being made whether to outfit the LPD-17 class amphibious ships with a Vertical Launch System.

National Security Council may have another view, the intelligence community another[46] and the White House yet another one still.

The preceding discussion on culture, strategic culture, sub-cultures, and organizational culture is based on different conceptions by the actors as to who they are. Culture, in the state context, asks who are we as a state? and in many cases where the state and the nation are co-extensive, who are we as a nation? What does it mean to be American or Chinese? Samuel Huntington reminds us: "Identity requires differentiation"[47] so we must ask how these states different differentiate themselves from others. Israeli and Iranian identity will be addressed in the case studies.

Identity is a part of culture of a state and of a nation. Applied to the subject of this thesis, identity is an attribute of strategic culture and of the elites who decide national security. Thus, the research question requires us to examine the identity of the strategic culture and how that leads to conflict and the use of force. Identity is a source of competition and conflict with those one perceives as the enemy.

Research into Strategic Culture: A Quantitative Analysis

Numerous works on strategic culture have been published since Jack Snyder introduced the concept in 1977. Writing of the 1990s, Jeffrey Lantis noted that strategic

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[46] The intelligence community is not one organization but can be broken down into its constituent parts, each with its own agenda and perhaps budget (e.g., the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the Central Intelligence Agency, the intelligence offices within the military branches, the National Reconnaissance Office, the Department of State.)

[47] Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We: The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 26.

culture had been "rediscovered" and tied the rise to the "rise of constructivism."[48] Colin

Gray, in 1999, described strategic culture as "the startling familiar yet strangely under-

explored notion of strategic culture."[49] Eight years later, Gray wrote: "After decades

wandering in the wilderness, the few scholars who wrote about strategic culture have

recently been joined by, so it seems, just about everyone else."[50] In 2009, Johnson et al.

discussed the "current interest in reviving strategic culture as a field of study."[51]

Interest in the concept has seemed to wax and wane over time as it was

"rediscovered" in the 1990s yet needed to be revived by 2009. It seems that comments

regarding the interest in strategic culture were made based on the authors' impression of

the state of research into strategic culture as there is no evidence or statistics in the

literature, however, to support a conclusion of the subject's rise or decline. The figure

below is an attempt to illustrate academic interest in the subject.

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[48] Jeffrey S. Lantis, "Strategic Culture: From Clausewitz to Constructivism in *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction; Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*, ed. Jeannie L. Johnson, Kerry M. Kartchner, and Jeffrey A. Larsen (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 36.

[49] Gray, "Strategic Culture as Context: The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back," 51.

[50] Gray, "Out of the Wilderness: Prime Time for Strategic Culture," 2.

[51] Johnson, Kartchner, and Larsen, "Introduction," *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*," 5.

Figure 1: Frequency of Strategic Culture in IR Research (1977-2021) [52]
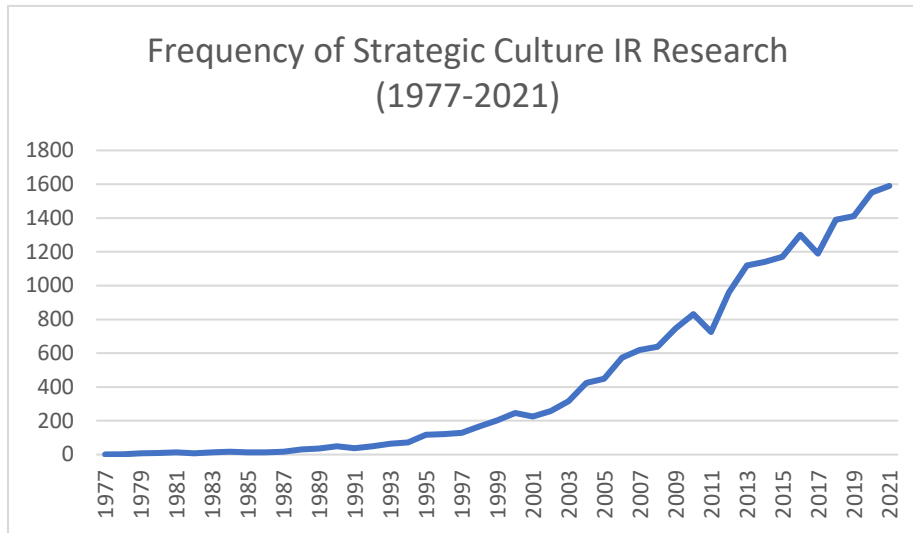
In 1977, the only work returned by Google Scholar was Snyder's work on Soviet strategic culture. The following year there were two. The numbers slowly increased and through the 1980s, the vast majority concerned the Soviet Union and nuclear strategy. There was a steady increase in the number of works published on strategic culture, many dealing with theory and engaging in the debate between Gray and Johnston but we also see the beginning of studies analyzing the strategic culture of particular states. As the data indicate, there was an increase in the amount of research into strategic culture at the beginning of the 21st century. Johnson et al. note the reason why.

> At least three factors underlie the current interest in reviving strategic culture as a field of study: the inadequacy of traditional analytical approaches, the shock of 9/11, and calls to develop and establish new frameworks to guide policymaking in the post-Cold War and post-9/11 security environments.[53]

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[52] The information was compiled using Google Scholar. The search term entered was 'Strategic Culture' and International Relations and data were collected year by year from 1977 to 2021.

[53] Johnson, Kartchner, and Larsen, "Introduction," *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*," 5.

The data also argue against the waxing and waning of scholarly research over the 40-plus years from the time RAND published Snyder's study in 1977. From 1977-2021, the number of works published declined six times, but never two years consecutively.[54] Interest in strategic culture as it relates to international relations has been growing steadily for the last 30 years and claims of its periodic demise seem to be overstated.[55]

Given the extensive literature on the subject, the reader might ask what this thesis hopes to add. This thesis hopes to:

(1)   Provide a quantitative overview of the amount of research conducted on strategic culture. Although the research on the subject has been extensive, none has attempted to quantify how many works have been written over time. This will help decide which of the various claims about strategic culture is correct: it is an idea whose time has passed or, conversely, that it forms the core of cultural study research in international relations.

(2)   Use the research conducted on strategic culture theory and the case studies to develop a framework that can be used by researchers in the future. Each case study has implicitly or explicitly defined the factors used to develop and analyze strategic culture. The factors differ from one research to another, however, and without a standard

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[54]The six times the number of published works declined was: 1981 to 1982 (14 to 8); 1984 to 1985 (17 to 14); 1990 to 1991 (50 to 38); 2000 to 2001 (from 247 to 225); 2010 to 2011 (from 832 to 726); and from 2016 to 2017 (from 1,300 t0 1,190). The year following a decline in works published saw a rise in five of six cases. The only exception was in 1986 where the number stayed constant from 1985 (14 works). It should be noted that Google Scholar returned 15 works for 1981, not 14 as noted above. However, I deleted one of the works, In the Name of God, by S. Mohammad. Though one of the keywords is strategic culture, the text is written in Arabic and I could not confirm that the subject matter was applicable. Deleting the one work does not change any of the conclusions reached.

[55] The growth in the strategic culture literature after 9/11 is evident in the data from 2003 on. This is to be expected given the time needed to analyze what happened and because of the time required to publish books or articles in peer-reviewed journals.

framework, at least one that can be referred to and adapted as necessary, it is difficult to compare and evaluate studies conducted by different researchers on the same political entity (i.e., international organization, state, or non-state actor).

(3)   Use the framework to add to the literature describing the strategic cultures of Israel and Iran.

(4)   Provide a possible resolution to the Gray-Johnston debate on the definition of strategic culture.

Chapter III.

Methodology and Framework

This thesis develops a framework to assess a state's strategic culture and then applies that framework to specific uses of force within a case study approach.[56] The national strategic cultures examined in the case studies are Iran and Israel. The framework developed within this thesis is provided below.

`   Table 1: Thesis Strategic Culture Framework

Sources	Strategic Culture	Culture
Domestic Political Texts	Identity	Political culture
International Texts (treaties, agreements, alliances)	Values	Organizational Culture
Historical Texts	Norms	Military Culture
Historical Timeline	Beliefs	Popular Culture
Ethnographic Studies[57]	Patterns of Behavior	National Character
Regime Type		
International System Structure		
Technology		
Geography		
Film, art, cartoons, TV, social media		
History		
Historical analogy		
Experience with colonialism		
Speeches, oral statements		

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[56] This study is similar to the one used by Johnson et al. (2009). Their study includes several case studies of national strategic cultures (i.e., U.S., Russia, India, Iran, Syria, North Korea, and Al Qaeda).

[57] These may be important as evidence of culture within specific groups but is only important for purposes of the thesis to the extent that these groups can then influence national security elites.

To understand why the framework includes the elements depicted above, it is

necessary to first discuss the earlier frameworks on which this framework is based. I will

then return to a discussion of the thesis framework.

Earlier frameworks

The framework developed above was built upon earlier efforts. These include

Snyder (1977),[58] Johnston (1995),[59] Johnson et al. (2009),[60] and Biava et al. (2011).[61] In

some cases, the authors developed an analytical framework; in other instances, the

authors provided an outline in which variables were identified which a researcher should

consider in assessing strategic culture.

Snyder begins his analysis of Soviet strategic thought by enumerating those

ideational and material factors that are unique to the Soviet Union. These are:

> (1) the preponderance of conventional forces the Soviet Union has
> generally enjoyed in regions it is heavily committed to defend; (2)
> historical legacies, especially from World War II; (3) Marxist-Leninist
> modes of analyzing the strategic balance and the world 'correlation of
> forces'; (4) the Soviet technical and economic base, especially its
> inferiority to that of its primary strategic competitor; (5) the 'high politics'
> of leadership succession and resource allocation, broadly defined; and (6)

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[58] Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*.

[59] Johnston, Cultural Realism: *Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*.

[60] Johnson, Kartchner, and Larsen, *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*.

[61] Biava, Drent, and Herd, "Characterizing the European Union's Strategic Culture: An Analytical Framework."

the 'low politics' of bureaucratic and professional interests and the effect of institutional arrangements on problem formulation and policy output.[62]

When analyzing Snyder's approach and determining its applicability to other case studies, it should be remembered that the goal of his study was to analyze Soviet strategic culture with respect to a specific issue, namely nuclear strategy, and to understand why Soviet decisions are different from those of the United States. Snyder's framework, however, can still inform the development of further studies that are not focused on the Soviet Union or nuclear strategy. In short, Snyder's framework is generalizable.

Some considerations in applying Snyder's framework to other studies include whether the study is about the strategic culture of one state generally or is it a comparative analysis. Snyder's study is clearly comparative, Johnston's study of China is not. This thesis uses the framework first to build a case study of the selected state, then applies the understanding of strategic culture to a particular use of force, and then compares the strategic culture of the state with respect to the use of force with another state (within the conflict dyad). Therefore, while the case studies within the thesis are different from Snyder's and the uses force are not limited to nuclear strategy, this thesis largely follows the methodology of Snyder. Therefore, each of the points raised by Snyder will be addressed further below. Where this thesis differs is in the explicit description of strategic cultural variables.

Snyder begins with "the preponderance of conventional forces the Soviet Union has generally enjoyed in regions it is heavily committed to defend." The structure and

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[62] Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*, 8.

strength of the military forces is essentially a material variable.[63]   But as discussed

earlier, it is necessary to include both material and ideational variables within a

framework so that an evaluation can be made about which shows greater explanatory

power in a given situation. The force structure of a state may also be in response to

geography – whether a state is landlocked or has access to the seas and it may be in

response to the force structure of the enemy.

Snyder's second factor is "historical legacies." Given his focus on analyzing

strategic culture with respect to nuclear strategy, one can understand his focus on events

after World War II. He does not, however, exclude documents or events from before the

war. In fact, it would be necessary to include foundational texts (e.g., documents,

speeches) of the Soviet Union and perhaps go further back to the invasion of French

forces under Napoleon to explain Russia's sense that it needs to expand its borders to

provide for security. The issue of needing to go further back in time than what seems

initially to be a logical cut-off date was discussed earlier in the thesis under Time Periods.

Snyder's third factor, "Marxist-Leninist modes of analyzing the strategic balance

and the world 'correlation of forces'" focuses the analysis on how a particular form of

government views the strategic balance given the force structure of other states in the

international system. For the purpose of this thesis, it is important to consider regime

type and determine if that has any effect on its views of national security issues separate

from any conflicts it may have with another state. A question this thesis will want to

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[63] In addition to its being a material variable, military structure and strength can provide clues as to the attitudes and beliefs of the elites over time, especially when one considers the investment and length of time it may take to build a military with a capital-intensive force structure.

address then is whether the Islamic Republic in Iran per se leads it to view strategic issues in a particular way?

The fourth factor, the Soviet technical and economic base, is another material factor which describes the Soviet's current ability and its future ability to support a particular national security strategy. This is easily generalizable although how a state feels with respect to another, may or may not be based on an objective evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. The state may not accurately assess the reaction of the international community to its actions, or the enemy may fight effectively using asymmetric forces or they may have the political will to fight an extended war whereas the more powerful state does not. An example of the first is Iraq in 1988. By the end of its war with Iran, Iraq had the fourth largest army in the world. This may have been a factor in Saddam Hussein's decision to invade Kuwait in 1990 but Iraq perhaps did not foresee that it would soon be facing a U.S.-led coalition and Hussein was forced to withdraw by the United States by April 1991. Examples of the latter include the U.S. experience in Vietnam and the Soviet Union's experience in Afghanistan.

Leadership succession and resource allocation, Snyder's fifth factor, refers to regime type and the necessity of a regime to allocate resources broadly or to a narrow, select group of people to stay in power. Leaders in a democracy generally rely on a broad base of support to remain in power and so provide more public goods than authoritarian regimes which may rely on a much smaller group of elites to ensure they remain in power. Therefore, the incentive is to allocate resources to the elites.[64] Leadership

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[64] De Mesquita and Smith, *The Dictator's Handbook: Why Bad Behavior Is Almost Always Good Politics*.

succession and resource allocation is in part dependent on regime type, reflecting the

culture and expectation the people have of participation in government decision-making.

Snyder's final factor, "the 'low politics' of bureaucratic and professional interests

and the effect of institutional arrangements on problem formulation and policy output"

ties directly to organizational culture and to both the formal and informal institutions

within a state. Both are important elements of culture generally and strategic culture

specifically. As this thesis is primarily concerned with strategic culture at the political

level, organizational culture and institutions are important to the extent they affect the

political elites responsible for national security decision-making.

It has been shown that Snyder's framework, designed for a specific purpose, can

be generalized and adapted to the needs of this thesis. However, since 1977 when RAND

issued Snyder's report, much work has been done on strategic culture, what it is and

frameworks that can be used to analyze it. This thesis is built upon that work as well. In

their study of strategic culture, Johnson et al. explore the influence of strategic culture in

several states.[65] Based on these case studies, Johnson then developed a framework for

future research in strategic culture.

> Our final effort in this volume is to provide those engaged in security
> studies a practical framework for pursuing strategic culture research. The
> framework presented here is an outcome of lessons learned throughout the
> case study process, and the practical priorities emphasized by those who
> do the real work of national security.[66]

The methodology in this thesis is similar to Johnson's. Based on several case

studies, an analytical framework was developed to guide strategic culture research. The

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[65] Listed in footnote 1.

[66] Johnson, Kartchner, and Larsen, "Conclusion," in *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking,*" 242.

two primary differences are: 1) the framework that was developed here was then applied

to other cases. This allows for a test of the framework to determine if the framework

needs to be changed[67] ; and 2) in addition to prior case studies, research in other areas,

most notably international relations (IR) theory, has been used to develop the framework.

While the framework itself is agnostic with respect to a specific IR theory, it can be used

by researchers to better understand the relationship between realism, liberalism, and

constructivism. Additionally, the framework and the cases studies developed using the

framework can be used illuminate those conditions under which ideational or material

factors have better explanatory value. In any given situation, both are present – but one

or the other may be in the foreground and the other in the background.

Given the significant number of variables that could be incorporated into a

strategic culture framework, Johnson notes that

> The aim of a parsimonious research model must be to narrow the world of
> variables to those that are most likely to have an effect on security policy,
> or are sufficient to understanding the pivotal components of a foreign
> society's cost benefit analysis.[68]

The four broad categories that Johnson uses are Identity, Values, Norms, and

Perceptive Lens. This thesis follows the same logic that it is necessary to group variables

into broad categories. The categories are useful starting points but by themselves, they

are too vague to provide a standard methodology for future researchers. Starting with the

first concept, Johnson defines Identity as "a nation-state's view of itself, comprising the

traits of its national character, its intended regional and global roles, and its perceptions

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[67] The case studies used to develop the framework in the thesis are different than the case studies built using the framework. This issue will be revisited in the introduction to the case studies.

[68] Johnson, Kartchner, and Larsen, "Conclusion," in *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*," 245.

of its eventual destiny."[69] Johnson explains why identity is important to an understanding

strategic culture. But the many constituents of identity need to be made explicit if Identity

is to be a useful part of a framework. If the purpose of a framework is to provide a guide

to researchers for improving consistency and replicability, then more is needed to be

known about what constitutes identity and to include those explicitly in the framework.[70]

　　With respect to values, Johnson asks "what sorts of goods -- both material and

immaterial – does this society value more highly than others?"[71] Johnson provides a

wide range of examples of "goods – both material and immaterial" that are valued across

a variety of societies. These include the value Navajo Indians place on "corn pollen, the

sacred number 4 and their reputation as indispensable code talkers during World War II";

national resources which may be valued in addition to their economic potential (e.g.,

citing Friedman, she discusses the value placed by Israeli Jews on the West Bank);[72]

freedom of the press and freedom of expression, and the value the French put on "the

purity and international prominence of their language." Understanding what is valued,

one then can make an assessment as to how much it is valued.[73]

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[69] Johnson, Kartchner, and Larsen, "Conclusion," in *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*, 245.

[70] Researchers may decide that a particular variable is unimportant and therefore does not need to be covered within a particular case study. By using a standard strategic culture framework and making that framework known to the reader, which variables were included, and which were consciously excluded can be communicated. Researchers may also decide that the framework included herein should be modified. The framework is a starting point, and it is expected that it will be modified and improved upon. The point is that whatever framework is used, it should be made explicit and included in the case study. The reader can then evaluate the conclusions reached by the author.

[71] Johnson, Kartchner, and Larsen, "Conclusion," in *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*, 247.

[72] Thomas L. Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1995).

[73] Johnson observes that "Value assessments must be understood with a healthy degree of accuracy in order to craft effective security policy ad shape public diplomacy messages in ways that resonate with target audiences.". Johnson, Kartchner, and Larsen, "Conclusion," in *Strategic Culture and*

In describing what is valued by different societies, Johnson does not state where one might find the sources of values. Perhaps it is not possible to come up with a definitive list of sources but given the examples she provides, one can begin to come up with a list of potential sources. Ethnographic studies may illuminate values that are widely held by the people, official documents such as a constitution, statements made by politicians, and surveys. Another source of what is valued by the state or certain sectors within the state is to look at what has caused conflict. In describing the Western value of freedom of the press and expression, she did not refer to a document like the U.S. Constitution but rather to the printing of cartoons depicting Muhammad in an unflattering light. The value placed by Muslims on the sacred image of Muhammad is illustrated through the same example.[74] One could discern the values placed by Americans on individual liberty in the debates over the ratification of the Constitution and the inclusion of a Bill of Rights.

The third broad category is Norms. Johnson's brief definition of Norms is "accepted and expected modes of behavior." Norms can be found within treaties and public statements,[75] and by observing patterns of behavior. To the extent that behavior reflects the values of the actors, there will be an overlap between norms and values.

Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking, 247. She also acknowledges that certain values may be assessed as "non-negotiable" or "low priority." I agree that an understanding of the relative ranking of preferences is important, particularly when a decision or policy calls for a trade-off between values. The ranking of values on a spectrum from low priority to non-negotiable may not yield an assessment with a "healthy degree of accuracy." Understanding the relative ranking of values may be the best we can hope for.

[74] The printing of cartoons by the Danish press is a non-trivial example of how popular culture can influence the attitudes and perceptions of people in one nation vis-à-vis another. While popular culture may influence strategic elites directly, it is more likely that the effect will be indirect as popular culture may change the attitudes and perceptions of the culture in which the elites have been socialized.

[75] Following Biava et al.

Thus, norms can refer to "both a set of practices, and also the world of beliefs that inform those practices."[76] The mixing of beliefs and practices, observed Johnson, "is a bit problematic definitionally" and recalls the debate between Johnston and Gray over the inclusion of behavior within the definition of strategic culture. For the purpose of this thesis, norms define both values and behaviors or as Johnson stated, "modes of behavior." Following events in Rwanda and Bosnia in the 1990s, the international community began to accept collective responsibility to protect groups against genocide. The norm, R2P, reflected a value placed on life and later, an expectation of state action. R2P encouraged NATO action in Kosovo. Just over a decade later, the willingness to protect was lacking in Syria. Kosovo and Syria demonstrate that the existence of a norm is insufficient to predict state behavior. Concerning the importance of norms, Legro posed the following question: "On the one hand, we are pointed to the centrality of international norms; on the other, we are cautioned that norms are inconsequential. How do we make sense of these divergent claims?"[77]

Legro's answer is that it is necessary to understand norm strength.[78] Norm strength refers to how clearly the norms specify what is allowed or not allowed, how long the norms have been in existence and their resilience to challenge, and how "widely accepted the rules are in diplomatic discussions and treaties (that is, the degree of intersubjective agreement)." The stronger the norms are, those that are more specific, are

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[76] Johnson, Kartchner, and Larsen, "Conclusion," in Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking, 249.

[77] Jeffrey W. Legro, "Which Norms Matter? Revisiting the 'Failure' of Internationalism," *International Organization* 51, no. 1 (Winter 1997), 31.

[78] Legro, "Which Norms Matter? Revisiting the 'Failure' of Internationalism," 31-63.

more durable, and have a higher degree of acceptance will be more salient."[79]   Norms are

an important part of a state's strategic culture, but their salience does not reside primarily

in 'diplomatic discussions and treaties' but in the acceptance by the national security

elites who will make the decisions on the use of force. Specificity, durability, and

agreement or concordance as described by Legro are factors that will influence the

national security community. The stronger the norm, the greater the likelihood that the

elite, either as individuals or as part of a larger organizational culture, will have been

socialized to accept the norm as a given and will influence their decision whether to use

force or not. The foregoing discussion is meant to caution the academic or analyst who is

considering whether to consider a norm for inclusion in the framework as an element of a

state's strategic culture.

Perceptive Lens, Johnson's final category, is defined as "Beliefs (true or

misinformed) and experiences or the lack of experience that color the way the world is

viewed."[80] As described by Johnston, behavior is based on the perception of reality.[81]

While this thesis concurs with Johnson, the category subsumes several different ideas

which should be made explicit in the framework. Beliefs or perceptions are certainly one

component. National myths are another. Borrowing from Yuen Foong Khong's book,

Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965,

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[79] Legro, "Which Norms Matter? Revisiting the 'Failure' of Internationalism," 33-34.

[80] Johnson, Kartchner, and Larsen, "Conclusion," in *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*, 252.

[81] For Johnston, "culture either presents decision-makers with limited range of options or it acts as a lens that alters the appearance and efficacy of different choices." Alistair Iain Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," *International Security* 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995): 42.

historical analogies define current events in terms of the past.[82] Thus, historical analogies

can provide evidence of perceptions held by strategic elites.

The four broad categories: Identity, Values, Norms, and Perceptive Lens are

important factors to consider and are not mutually exclusive. Most cultural variables

overlap – values which govern patterns of behavior may become norms. Johnson's

framework is useful as she goes beyond the narrow historical and textual sources used by

Johnston and Biava et al. The use of history, however, should be emphasized. Historical

experience affects Identity, Values, Norms, and the Perceptive Lenses of national security

decision makers.

Johnston describes his approach to understanding strategic culture and its effect

on choices. Eager to avoid what he considers to be the mistakes from the first and second

generation of strategic culture research, he notes:

> The first step, then, in the study of strategic culture is to learn from past
> mistakes, to construct a more rigorous concept of strategic culture that
> specifies what the scope and content of strategic culture is and what it is
> not, the objects of analysis, the historical periods from these are drawn,
> and the methods for deriving strategic culture from these objects. Then it
> is necessary to explicate a research strategy that can credibly measure the
> effects of strategic culture on the process of making strategic choices.[83]

The concept of strategic culture, its definition, and the historical periods from

which the objects of analysis were drawn were provided earlier in this thesis. What

concerns us here are the objects of analysis themselves. It is these objects which will

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[82] Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decision of 1965* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992). Khong's description of what tasks historical analogies perform can be applied to strategic culture. This will be further addressed in thesis when discussing how history should be used as a factor in defining a state's strategic culture.

[83] Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*, 30

included in the framework. The research strategy will be the development of case studies using the information collected from the objects of analysis.

> Johnston's concern with the objects of analysis stem from the significant number of variables that one could include. It is important therefore to address the variables at the level of analysis desired in the case studies. For Johnston, the objects of analysis could include the writings, debates, thoughts, and words of strategists, military leaders, and "national security elites," however defined, or weapons designs and deployments, war plans, images of war and peace portrayed in its various media, military ceremonies, even war literature. The amount of strategic-cultural artifacts could be overwhelming even when looking at a brief historical period.[84]

Despite his concern, the single object of analysis put forward by Johnston consists of a content analysis of the Seven Military Classics. From these texts, Johnston characterized the strategic culture of China as comprising two distinct strategic cultures, one symbolic, and the other based on realpolitik. Additionally, the beliefs of the people can be derived from the texts. Using a text such as Seven Military Classics, formative documents in Chinese history, allows for identification of the source of strategic culture and allows for replication of the study by other researchers.

Having discussed Snyder, Johnson, and Johnston's frameworks, this thesis turns to the analytical framework developed by Biava et al. As noted earlier, Biava et al. recognized the importance of such a framework to serve as a "stable reference point" for research into comparative strategic cultures. This thesis concurs with Biava et al., but first uses the analytical framework to develop single state case studies and then uses the information collected to compare the strategic cultures of conflict dyads with respect to the use of force.

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[84] Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*, 39.

Biava et al. present their framework within An Indicative Analytical Framework. The framework includes various treaties and national statements of goals or action plans. The advantage to this method is there is a clear basis for understanding the origins of policy, the threats against which the policy is intended to act, the capabilities to be developed and the institutions responsible for executing the policy (e.g., developing capabilities or maintaining operational control in the event of the use of force).[85] The analytical framework concludes with the norms the treaties and national statements are expected to uphold and finally, the key military and civilian operations[86] that are connected with the treaties, etc. The listing of norms explains in part the strategic culture of the European Union.

Because this thesis focuses on individual nation-states, it will be necessary to first identify the relevant treaties and national statements that the nation-state has agreed to and from there, identify the norms to which it is, at least publicly, giving its support.[87] One must also be careful in using official texts, especially those meant for public consumption (e.g., constitutions or the signing of international treaties) as these may serve other purposes such as propaganda.

The significant number of artifacts, or ideational variables, can be overwhelming. It is possible to narrow the number by deciding what level of analysis is important even if one is limiting the study to a specific state or number of states. This thesis focuses on national security elites at the political level but includes other variables to the extent they

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[86] The inclusion of key military and civilian operations links the strategic and operational levels. This thesis is concerned with the political and military strategic levels, operational levels will not be included.

[87] One must recognize that treaties and public statements may be symbolic and may not actually contribute to the decision whether to use force or not.

influence this level. This requires detailed knowledge of the political entity to be analyzed.[88]

The research presented in this thesis strives to be part of the third generation in its methodological rigor, the broad conception of ideational variables to be included in the framework and in its choice of specific dependent variables. The choice of specific dependent variables can inform the framework and expand on the variables that needs to be considered. The framework can be expanded but it should not be limited in its development to only what is deemed necessary by the choice of dependent variable. Limiting the framework early on risks losing information that may prove valuable later on. If a variable is considered unnecessary, data related to that variable need not be collected but then that should be made explicit to the reader.

The following chart summarizes the various frameworks discussed above. And on which the thesis strategic culture framework was based in part.

Table 2: Summary of Earlier Strategic Culture Frameworks

Biava et al.	A. Johnston	J. Johnson	Snyder
EU Textual Analysis[89]	Historical Texts	Identity	Unique aspects of Soviet strategic position
		Values	Historical legacies
		Norms	Marxist-Leninist Modes
		Perceptive Lens	Technological and economic base

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[88] It is also possible to narrow the level of analysis by redefining the independent variable. Instead of using "strategic culture," one could choose an element thereof. Johnston notes the use of "images of war and peace portrayed in various media." If one were studying images of nuclear war in the United States during the Cold War, one could study Dr. Strangelove, Fail-Safe, or The Day After. The researcher would then be cautioned to choose a dependent variable which is likely to be affected. The decision whether or not to use force may not be as valid a dependent variable but films may have an impact on the public's attitude towards the development of nuclear weapons.

[89] Includes treaties (e.g., Treaty of Lisbon), EU Goals, Action Plans and White Papers. Using textual analyses of various documents, the norms that are supported by the documents can be identified.

			High politics – succession/resource allocation
			Low politics – bureaucratic interests, professional interests, institutional arrangements

Thesis Strategic Culture Framework

The variables included in a framework should be sufficient to allow the researcher to: 1) identity the cultural variables applicable to the appropriate level of analysis, in this case, the state; 2) identify the variables from other levels of analysis that bear on the state's decision-making process (for example, the international system may impose constraints on the state and on national security elites); and 3) identify those material variables which factor into a state's decision-making process. This allows the researcher to assess whether ideational variables were more or less important than material variables when considering a particular decision whether to use force.

This thesis accepts that the types of texts considered by Biava et al and by Johnston are important. The task then is to identify which texts. For Biava et al., the texts selected were those which expressed norms related to security decision-making, identified threats to the EU, addressed building capabilities, and identified the relevant institutions [organizations]required to act. As this thesis is concerned with the states identified in the case studies, the EU will not be considered. The types of texts to be analyzed, likewise, will be those produced within the state or agreed to by the state as in the case of international treaties. To generalize Biava et al., therefore, this thesis will refer to Analysis of Domestic Political Texts and International Texts. The number of texts

in this category could be significant. The task therefore is to identify those texts which express or support norms related to the use of force. At this point, the researcher can stop narrowing the texts under consideration if the goal is to write about the influence of these texts on a state's decision to use force generally. This thesis focuses on specific uses of force for each of the states in the case studies. Therefore, the texts to be analyzed will be limited to those specific uses.

Johnston's framework relies on the use of historical texts. While this can seem overwhelming at first, Johnston also provides a methodology for systematically selecting texts. The methodology calls for the researcher to use texts that go as far back as possible in the state's history and then using a longitudinal approach, select texts from various points in history to confirm whether the ideational variables identified in earlier texts continue to be present. The texts themselves may require other texts to raise issues related to norms, values, and identity. Reading the U.S. Constitution alone, for example, does not bring to light the debates between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists and the importance placed by the latter on the protection of individual liberties from encroachment by the state.

Events are also important in shaping identity, norms, values, and patterns of behavior. The more traumatic the event, the greater the expected change in culture. Events also indicate when certain texts may have been written which could be interpreted to provide evidence of the change in culture – notably strategic culture if the change is among the national security elites. To make explicit the events that the researcher considered in the analysis of strategic culture, the framework should be accompanied by a timeline.

Johnston criticizes the second generation of research for including a significant

number of variables that could, by themselves explain decisions made at the strategic

level:

> Technology, geography, organizational culture and traditions, historical strategic practices, political culture, national character, political psychology, ideology, and even international system structure were all considered relevant inputs into this amorphous strategic culture.[90]

This thesis proffers a framework that is more inclusive than that used by Johnston.

The key to limiting the variables to that considered "strategic cultural" is to understand

the origin and the effect of the variable on the attitudes, beliefs, and norms of the national

security elites and those that do not. Technology itself may be an indicator of power but

to the extent that the technology was developed for the purpose of prestige, then it is

relevant as a cultural variable. Given the choice of case studies, three of the four states

have developed or are developed nuclear weapons. The inclusion of technology, either as

a cultural variable, or as a material factor to consider in explaining a state's decision to

use force is important. Having technology serve as both a cultural and material variable

places a burden on the researcher to explain what the different conceptions are and how

each may have influenced a particular strategic choice. It may be that both are important

to a decision.

Geography may give a state an advantage in a conflict with another state, but to

the extent that geography influences the attitudes, values, and beliefs of the national

security elites, then it is also a cultural variable. Geography also plays a major role in the

identity of the people as they attach meaning to place and it may shape the identity of a

state to the extent that it influences the development of technology and strategy. The

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[90] Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," 37.

importance placed by Jewish settlers on the areas of Judea and Samaria which, in turn, influences the state's decision to build settlements and to use force to protect those settlers is an example of the first. Following the advice of Mahan, the desire of the United States to be a great nation at the close of the 19th century, led to the building of a Navy which elevated the United States to a maritime power. The geographical position of the United States, the desire to protect trade and to project power led to the creation of a national identity, in part based on that maritime strength.

Organizational culture and political culture can, as was shown earlier in the thesis, affect strategic culture provided the impact is on those who make the decisions to use force. To the extent the military is involved in decisions of whether a state should use force, the organizational culture of the military is relevant. If the studies of military culture focus on how military power should be used in an operational theater of war, then no, organizational culture as expressed in preferences for fighting a war, may not be relevant.[91] The key is whether the organizational culture or political culture is directly involved in the state's decision to use force or indirectly involved in influencing those who make the decisions. In sum, deciding on the level of analysis is determinative in deciding what is relevant and what is not. This applies to inclusion of the international system structure as well.

If strategic culture provides, at least in part, the domestic environment or context in which strategic decisions are made, the international system structure also provides the environment or context for those decisions as well. Understanding the strategic cultures

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[91] Two excellent studies on military culture are Elizabeth Kier, "Culture and Military Doctrine: France Between the Wars," *International Security* 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995): 65–93; and Jeffrey W. Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint During the Second World War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

of Egypt and Israel is a good starting point in understanding why the states chose to fight

in 1956, 1967, and 1973. But any analysis would be incomplete without an

understanding of the impact of the Cold War and the relationship between the Soviet

Union and Egypt and between the United States and Israel.

The definition of strategic culture provided at the beginning of the thesis provides

guidance as to what should be included in the framework.

> Strategic culture is the interaction among identity, values, norms, beliefs,
> and patterns of behavior that members of a national community have
> acquired through instruction or imitation. These variables shape collective
> identity and relationships to other societies and determine appropriate
> methods for achieving security objectives.[92]

By definition then, we are looking for ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and

patterns of habitual behavior. In some cases, the topics which scholars have defined as

strategic cultural variables are sources of strategic culture, not the variables themselves.

For example, the historical, political, and legal documents relied on by Johnston and by

Biava et al. are sources in which strategic culture can be identified.

The framework developed within this thesis separates sources of strategic culture

from the elements of strategic culture itself. The reason for doing so is to allow the

researcher to trace the element of strategic culture to its origin. Identifying the sources of

norms, separate from the norms themselves, also allows researchers to evaluate the norm

strength by examining its specificity in the historical documents, its durability, and the

formal acceptance of the norm. For example, the norm against the use of chemical

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[92] This definition was adapted primarily from Johnson, Kartchner, and Larsen, *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*, and DeGroot et al., *Deconstructing Iranian Speech: A Strategic Culture Analysis*.

weapons in warfare is a generally accepted by the international community.[93] The norm

can be traced to the Chemical Weapons Convention.[94] The Convention is not the norm

but potentially evidence of a norm at the time it entered into force or the willingness of

states to create such a norm.

The preceding discussion of the various frameworks on which the thesis

framework is based and the thesis framework itself provides the reader with an

understanding of the how the thesis framework was constructed. The next section

extends the discussion of methodology.

Strategic Culture as the Independent Variable

The main challenge in analyzing strategic culture is that it is an overarching

concept. The numerous definitions in the literature provide a wide array of terms which

may explain state behavior to some extent.[95] Johnston (1995) notes that "the concept of

strategic culture is viewed as an amalgam of a wide-range of (potentially competing)

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[93] The general acceptance of the norm is evidenced by the widespread condemnation by the international community when the norm is breached as it was in Syria or potentially breached as suspected in Mariupol, Ukraine in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine War.

[94] The convention is officially known as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction. One could look further back in time for other sources which support the Chemical Warfare Convention, and which have served to create an environment against the use of such weapons. Earlier sources include the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention and the 1925 Geneva Protocol which banned the use of chemical and biological weapons.

[95] Strategic culture is an overarching concept which incorporates many variables including achievements, assumptions, attitudes, beliefs, (shared) habits, ideas, identity, modes of behavior, patterns of behavior, patterns of habitual behavior, modes of thought and action, norms, conditioned emotional responses, accepted narratives, symbols, traditions, and values. This list was adapted from Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 1979); Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*; Johnson, Kartchner, and Larsen, "Introduction," *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*, 5; Theo Farrell, "Strategic Culture and American Empire," *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 25, no. 2 (Summer-Fall 2005), 3.

variables or inputs."[96] From a methodological standpoint, how does one weigh the impact of assumptions versus attitudes, versus behavior, versus beliefs, et cetera?[97] One cannot state with certainty which of the many variables led to a particular behavior.[98] It was therefore necessary to narrow the terms to be included in the concept of strategic culture.[99] This was accomplished by referring to the literature and developing a definition of strategic culture which can then be applied to the case studies.

Therefore, strategic culture will be analyzed as an overarching concept, but the concept will be supported inductively by gathering information on the component variables. The definition of strategic culture provided earlier will guide which variables will be considered. For example, depending on which side a researcher takes in the Gray-Johnston debate, behavior may be included or excluded from consideration in constructing the independent variable.

Variables may be grouped into broad categories which are useful for understanding how they relate to each other or to a part of the case study. For example, variables related to history, geography, and the military may be organized as such or they may be organized to support a conclusion regarding the outcome variable.[100] This

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[96] Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," 33fn2.

[97] In constructing a multivariable regression analysis on the impact of each variable on the dependent variable, the assignment of coefficients would necessarily be arbitrary.

[98] This is especially problematic if the analysis of strategic culture is not done with respect to a particular outcome variable. The elites whose culture is to be analyzed, the organization within the national security apparatus, and which elements of the public at large may all be different depending on the use of force to be studied. The role of strategic culture is highly contextual.

[99] As a reminder, the terms in the thesis framework for strategic culture are Identity, Values, Norms, Beliefs, and Patterns of Behavior.

[100] The influence of maritime power on the strategic culture of the United States can be assessed using history and the role of the Navy in the Spanish-American War, the building of the Great White Fleet to demonstrate American power, the effect of Germany's declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare in

approach allows the researcher to build a framework that makes explicit the variables used to develop the subsequent case study. It also allows for comparison between the impact of cultural variables and material factors on the dependent variable. The strategic culture framework will only provide information necessary to assess ideational variables with respect to the dependent variable, but it ignores alternate explanations. Therefore, a complete framework needs to include material factors as well. The researcher can then interpret the information gathered to assess whether ideational variables, taken as a whole, provide a better explanation for a state's behavior than material factors. This assessment needs to be conducted, not with respect to the state alone, but in consideration of the behavior to be studied as the outcome variable.

While the state is the primary focus of the thesis, it is not the only one. The sources of strategic culture include domestic factors within the state and international factors. Domestic sources are, of course, the attitudes and beliefs of the elites within the government, to include both political and military leaders. Domestic sources of strategic culture also include the organizations responsible for developing strategies and implementing decisions. Domestic sources also include the public at large to the extent that the public influences the elites. One can think of the public's attitudes toward U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the impact this had on the political leadership. The international system may also be a source of a state's strategic culture. This may arise in

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World War I, and the bombing of Pearl Harbor in World War II. Geography has played a role as well with the United States historic reliance on the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans for protection. And the size of the fleet and the resources used to build such a fleet indicate its importance within the United States' overall military strategy – apart from documents such as the National Security Strategy and National Military Strategy.

the state's relationship with one or more states,[101] the regional system and the state's role within the region,[102] or within international institutions such as the United Nations.

This thesis relies on a framework to collect information on strategic cultural and material variables primarily at the state level but considers the role of the public and the international level. In short, strategic culture at the state level reflects domestic and international sources and as shown above, will likely vary depending on the outcome variable to be studied. That information will then be used to build a case study on why a particular state did or did not use force. The use of force, for its part is also a broad category which covers many uses of the instruments of power available to a state. These instruments include the use of the military across a broad spectrum to include combat on one hand or humanitarian action on the other. The use of force may also include economic sanctions or diplomatic pressure to convince another state to act or to deter them from acting.[103]

For the purpose of this thesis, the decisions by Israel, and Iran to use force will be considered. The uses of force to be considered is the development of nuclear

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[101] This will be further explained below in the section on the Choice of States. N.B. the interaction of states as part of a conflict dyad.

[102] One can think of the hegemonic role of the US in Western Hemisphere or Iran's desire to be the hegemon in the Middle East or the role the state may play in regional institutions (e.g., the Baghdad Pact, NATO, the EU, and the OAS).

[103] Just as strategic culture may be analyzed at various levels, so may use of force. The three levels associated with force are tactical, operational, and strategic. Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations, defines the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war. The strategic level is the level of war at which a nation, individually or as a group of nations, determines national or multinational strategic security objectives and guidance, then develops and uses national resources to achieve those objectives.[1] The operational level of war is the level of war at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to achieve strategic objectives within theaters or other operational areas.[2] The tactical level of war is the level of war at which battles and engagements are planned and executed to achieve military objectives assigned to tactical units or task forces.[3]As this thesis is primarily concerned with the strategic culture of the elites with responsibility or significant input into a state's national strategic policy, the strategic level of the use of force is the most applicable.

weapons.[104]   The next section will address the reasons for selecting these states and these instances of the use of force.

Case Study Approach and the Choice of States

The information gathered through the use of the framework will be written as a case study, one for each state reflecting the state level of analysis and one for each pair reflecting the dyadic level of analysis. While case studies are a common method for analyzing strategic culture at the state level, it has both disadvantages and advantages. The case study may reflect the author's biases; it may represent a subjective analysis of the state, or it may reflect the author's preconceptions of the state's role in the international system. The advantage of using the framework to underpin the case study is to make explicit what information the author is relying on for the analysis. The framework also serves to improve the replicability of case studies performed by different researchers or it can be used as a point of departure should the researcher use a different definition or different variables to be analyzed. The states to be analyzed using the framework and the case study approach are Israel and Iran.

The framework was developed using the strategic culture literature and case studies other than those on Israel and Iran.[105] This is to prevent the framework from including only that data relevant to the case studies included in the thesis. It should also be noted here that the choice of case studies was done without considering the dependent

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[104] The uses of force will be addressed with those states where applicable.

[105] Originally, the thesis also considered the cases of North Korea and South Korea. Therefore, the framework was developed without reference to prior case studies conducted on these two. Due to time constraints, North Korea and South Korea were deleted as a case study in the thesis but they will be discussed as a subject for future research.

variable, namely the use of force. To do so might bias the analysis as the only states in which strategic culture is analyzed are those which have used force as described.[106] Conclusions based on the methodology used herein must necessarily be limited given the number of cases used. This limitation will be discussed later in the thesis as a topic for future research.

The identity of a state contributes to the expectations of how the state is supposed to act in a given situation. That is, identity serves to define the role of the state. Identity, as discussed earlier, is built in part from historical experience and through its interaction with other states. State identity, therefore, is constructed over time and in relation to other states. The choice of studies on their own. But they were also selected because they identify who they are, in part, by how their interaction with the other. The case studies include two groups of states that are conflict dyads. The framework thus allows the researcher to consider the state as the level of analysis and to also consider the state-pairs or the dyadic level of analysis.[107]

The two states within a dyad are not independent of each other. Changes that affect one country within the dyad may affect the other, including changes that are internal to the state. An example is the change in leadership which may presage future changes in national security policy. From a statistical standpoint, dyadic analysis presents a methodological issue of independence. Carlson et al. note:

> Standard analytic techniques do not account for the fact that dyads are not generally independent of one another. That is, when dyads share a

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[106] Barbara Geddes, "How the Cases Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics," *Political Analysis* 2 (1990): 131–50.

[107] D. Scott Bennett and Allan C. Stam, *The Behavioral Origins of War* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2004) discusses the variables associated with analysis of behavior with respect to war at the state and dyadic levels.

constituent member (e.g., a common country), they may be statistically dependent, or "clustered."[108]

This thesis does not claim independence between the cases. Rather, it is precisely the effect that the countries have upon each other that is of interest. Analysis of the United States and the Soviet Union regarding deterrence and escalation rely on the strategic interaction of the two states. Therefore, dyadic clustering is not a methodological problem.

Israel perceives a threat from the Iranian development of nuclear weapons. Iran, possibly because it fears Israeli intervention or at a minimum interference, has made public what it considers to be targets within Israel. The front cover of December 15, 2021, edition of the Tehran Times declared that "Threat and pressure do not work on Iran."[109] That was printed next to a map showing the potential targets of Iranian missiles within Israel. On the one hand, it highlights how Iran can strike Israel. On the other, the fact that the story was printed in the Jerusalem Post shows that the threat is known by all Israelis.

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[108] Jacob Carlson, Trevor Incerti, and P.M. Aronow (September 9, 2021). "Dyadic Clustering in International Relations" http://deepai.org/publication/dyadic-clustering-in-international-relations. Accessed on December 18, 2021.

[109] Tehran Times, December 15, 2021, 1 reported by Tzvi Joffre, Jerusalem Post, 'One wrong move': Tehran Times reveals Iran's targets in Israel," December 15, 2021. Available at https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/tehran-times-publishes-targets-iran-will-attack-in-israel-688785. Accessed on December 16, 2021.

Figure 2: Iranian Missile Threat to Israel

Iran's sponsorship of Hezbollah in Lebanon and their development of fast boats with which to threaten ships in the Persian Gulf are additional reasons why Iran, as a state, and as one half of the conflict dyad was chosen. The rationale for choosing Israel is a mirror image: it wants to eliminate Iran as a potential nuclear threat, and it wants to counter Iran's support of Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Alternative choices for the case studies were considered. Hamas was considered as the conflict between Israel and Hamas has been more frequent than that between Israel and Iran. The decision not to include Hamas, instead of Iran, was made 1) to keep the analysis at the state level (though it is recognized that strategic culture applies to non-state actors as well); and 2) while the actual use of force has been more frequent between Israel and Hamas, Iran poses a greater existential threat. Another option considered was to include Russia and Ukraine. Recent events with the build-up of Russian troops along the border, the summit between presidents Biden and Putin, and the involvement of

NATO make an analysis of the strategic culture of those two interesting. However, it was thought that the inclusion of Russia would skew the analysis as an historical view of Russia would necessarily include the strategic culture of the Soviet Union, a former great power. Iran and Israel differ in size but are middle powers within the international system. Additionally, each has experience with colonialism or domination by a Western power and were affected by the Cold War.

Prior to statehood, Israel, then referred to as Palestine, was part of the British Mandate of Palestine and Transjordan. The Mandate was issued by the League of Nations and was in effect for Palestine from September 1923, though civil administration of Palestine began 3 years earlier in July 1920. During the 1960s and 1970s, Israel was affected by the Cold War conflict as the United States supported Israel while the Soviet Union provided significant support to Egypt.

While Iran was never a colony or part of a mandate under Western control, their experience with Britain over oil rights and their experience as a battleground during the Anglo-Persian invasion of 1941. The role of the United States in the overthrow of Premier Mosaddeq and the reinstatement of the Shah followed the logic of the Cold War as the United States sought to ensure a pro-Western ally.

Finally, the choice of the states to be included allows for an analysis of whether regime-type matters. As addressed earlier, this thesis takes the approach that regime-type matters. One would expect that the strategic cultures of democracies are more alike, perhaps accounting for part of the reason why democracies do not fight. The assignment of the term "democracy" or "autocracy" lies along a spectrum with both those terms considered ideals. For the purpose of this thesis, Israel is considered democracies while

Iran is considered to be an authoritarian state. The case selection, therefore, allows for a comparison of strategic cultures within middle power state dyads, by regime-type within the Middle East and subject to colonialism or domination by other powers.[110]

Time periods

Snyder observes in his discussion of methodology in his seminal 1977 study by noting that "Ideally, it would be useful to expand our context to include the whole period of the development of Soviet strategic thought."[111] While Snyder continues by describing the need to collect information concerning "Soviet forces and doctrine" and "factors unique to the Soviet experience," it is necessary to begin one's analysis further back in time. The Russian Revolution introduced a different form of government from that which existed under the Tsars, but the attitudes and beliefs of the Soviets, and here we can speak primarily of the Russians, was formed by the threat of invasion and through actual conflict. Not only the culture of the Soviets generally was shaped by historical events by the culture – the attitudes and beliefs – of the individual leaders was shaped by history as well. Just as a study of strategic culture of the Soviet Union cannot start in 1922, the same logic applies to the states included in the case studies.

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[110] Alternative choices for the case studies were considered. Hamas was considered as the conflict between Israel and Hamas has been more frequent than that between Israel and Iran. The decision not to include Hamas, instead of Iran, was made 1) to keep the analysis at the state level though it is recognized that strategic culture applies to non-state actors as well; and 2) while the actual use of force has been more frequent between Israel and Hamas, Iraq poses a greater existential threat. Another option considered was to include Russia and Ukraine. Recent events with the build-up of Russian troops along the border, the summit between presidents Biden and Putin, and the involvement of NATO make an analysis of the strategic culture of those two interesting. However, it was thought that the inclusion of Russia would skew the analysis as an historical view of Russia would necessarily include the strategic culture of the Soviet Union, a former great power.

[111] Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*, 8.

A convenient starting point for the analysis of strategic culture is when each state became a state. Israel declared statehood in May 1948. The Islamic Republic of Iran became a state in 1979 following the Iranian Revolution. The analysis of strategic culture needs to begin earlier, however, at a time when the political and military leaders of the state were being socialized. Therefore, one needs to look at the significant events or documents that occurred within the lifetime of the political and military leaders at the time of statehood. For example, Israeli leaders were profoundly affected by the recent experience of the Holocaust and before that, the issuance of the Balfour Declaration in 1917.

> The starting point for the analysis of strategic culture, therefore, needs to begin before statehood. Exactly when cannot be determined in advance of understanding the impact of the past on the political and military leaders of a state. The ending point is less important for the analysis of strategic culture – strategic culture does change over time albeit slowly unless there is a traumatic shock to the state.[112]

The ending point is more significant with respect to the dependent variable as examples of the use of force that occur after the cut-off point will not be included. From a practical standpoint, it is necessary to establish an endpoint so that the cases can be adequately researched. An event that has occurred very recently may not be adequately explored in the literature or time may be needed to properly understand what happened. Additionally, the pandemic has profoundly affected many states and disrupted their contact and interruption with other states. For these reasons, the ending point is defined as 2020.

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[112] Jeffrey S. Lantis, "Strategic Culture and National Security Policy." *International Studies Review* 4, no. 3 (2002): 87–113.

Theory-Building or Testing

Besides the Gray-Johnston debate over the inclusion of behavior within the definition of strategic culture, another area of contention within the field is which cultural or realist theories best explain state behavior. Desch, for example, stresses the relationship as one of competition. The "key question" he notes "is whether the new strategic culturalism supplants or supplements realist explanations."[113]

This thesis argues that neither one -- realist or cultural explanations – necessarily explain state behavior better all the time. Rather, one must analyze specific state behavior to assess whether one or the other has better explanatory power in that instance.[114] To borrow an analogy from photography, in each instance, the researcher must determine what is to be in the foreground and what is in the background. The use of a framework to define the strategic culture of a state allows the researcher to determine which variables best explain state behavior.[115]

By understanding the variables, both ideational and material, that lead to a state behaving in a particular way, it may be possible to give empirical support to one international relations theory or another. The strategic cultural approach taken by this thesis, relying on the development of a framework, is agnostic with respect to whether material or cultural factors have better explanatory power. The use of an inductive

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[113] Desch, "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies," 143.

[114] This does not contradict the a priori role of culture is determining a state's preferences. The order in which a state orders its choices and determines costs and benefits of its actions are first culturally determined. The a priori role of culture was addressed more fully earlier in the thesis.

[115] It is likely that a researcher approaching the subject from a particular theoretical perspective may place more weight on those variables which support their position. By making explicit the variables that the researcher relied upon, however, may highlight those instances where the weaknesses in the researcher's arguments lie.

approach such as an explicit framework, along with the case studies, therefore, may allow for theory-building or testing.

In using the framework across several different case studies, researchers may come to find that certain variables always factor into state behavior or that others never do. Understanding the conditions in which this occurs through the case studies may allow researchers to better refine theory, narrow generalizations, and make better predictions of state behavior. While this thesis does not have any pretensions of resolving the Gray-Johnston debate, the knowledge gained through the consistent development of the framework and its application to specific states and uses of force may allow the discussion over the definition of strategic culture to be supported by empirical evidence. In addition to using a case study approach supported by a framework, Operational Code Analysis may be useful in understanding strategic culture.

Operational Code Analysis as a method of understanding a state's beliefs and subsequently norms.[116] It derives from the work of Nathan Leites, in particular, The Operational Code of the Politburo.[117] Writing about Leites' work, George provides an explanation that is close to the definition of strategic culture though the methods of analysis are different. George observed:

> A closer examination of what Leites had in mind indicates that he was referring to a set of general beliefs about fundamental issues of history and

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[116] Operational Code Analysis analyzes the content of an individual's writing or speech. As the public speeches of political leaders are usually widely available, the content analysis is conducted on these. The terms within a speech are analyzed (e.g., what terms are used and their frequency) and the results are then interpreted.

[117] Nathan Leites, *The Operational Code of the Politburo*, The RAND Series (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1951). It is interesting that both Operational Code Analysis and the term 'strategic culture' come from works about the Soviet Union. This is evidence of the influence of the Cold War but neither Operational Code Analysis nor strategic culture rely on the Cold War for their validity. The two are useful tools and concepts and it is incumbent on contemporary scholars to apply these outside the bounds of the Cold War.

central questions of politics as these bear, in turn on problems of action.
The actor's beliefs and premises that Leites singled out have a relationship
to decision-making that is looser and more subtle than the term
'operational code' implies. They serve, as it were, as a prism that
influences the actor's perceptions and diagnoses of the flow of political
events, his definitions and estimates of particular situations.[118]

Operational code, like strategic culture, is not intended to be a mechanistic

algorithm. It is an algorithm that influences perceptions. George. continued: "These

beliefs also provide norms, standards, and guidelines that influence the actor's choice of

strategy and tactics, his structuring and weighing of alternative courses of action.[119]

Before the realist determines a course of action among alternatives, they must have

defined the situation which is, in turn, dependent on beliefs. In this respect, the

discussion about Operational Code Analysis supports the a priori nature of belief and

perception – and of strategic culture.

Where strategic culture primarily looks at the beliefs on a broad level, e.g., the

executive branch, the legislature, or national security elites, Operational Code Analysis

looks at the beliefs of individual decision-makers.[120]   This approach may provide a more

refined look at what individual elites think is important. The significance of this approach

is more or less important depending on concentration of power within one individual.

Thus, Operational Code Analysis may be more indicative of beliefs that will lead to

particular policies in authoritarian regimes. That is not meant to imply that individuals in

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[118] Alexander L. George, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of
Political Leaders and Decision-Making," *International Studies Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (June 1969): 191.

[119] George, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and
Decision-Making," 191.

[120] The importance of analysis at the individual level is discussed in Mark Schafer and Stephen G.
Walker, "Operational Code Analysis at a Distance: The Verbs in Context System of Content Analysis.","" in
Beliefs and Leadership in *World Politics*, Advances in Foreign Policy Analysis (New York, NY: Palgrave
Macmillan, 2006), 25–51.

democracies are less important, but rather that their ability to translate thought into action

needs to be mediated through more organizations, each with their own culture.[121]

Before leaving the discussion of theory testing, it is necessary to address

Johnston's application of falsification. For Johnston, the rigorous methodology that he

employs requires that is "empirically testable"[122] and falsifiable.[123] Given the nature of

cultural analysis, the use of the case study approach is appropriate to developing a thick

understanding of a state's strategic culture and the sub-cultures. King, Keohane, and

Verba note that "many subjects of interest to social scientists cannot be meaningfully

formulated in ways that permit statistical testing of hypotheses with quantitative data."[124]

Strategic culture can be more or less important than material factors for a particular

decision, but the evidence is to be understood inductively, not on the basis of statistical

analysis. One of the themes of Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in

Qualitative Research is that the difference between quantitative and qualitative research

is one of style, but both are served by applying the same underlying logic of inference.

> Qualitative research, in contrast [to quantitative research], covers a wide
> range of approaches, but by definition, none of these approaches relies on
> numerical measurements. Such work has tended to focus on one or a small
> number of cases, to use intensive interviews or depth analysis of historical
> materials, to be discursive in method, and to be concerned with a rounded
> or comprehensive account of some event or unit.[125]

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[121] A counterargument to this is that even in democracies where power is more diffuse than in authoritarian regimes, in wartime, the power to use force generally concentrates in fewer individuals.

[122] Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*, 32.

[123] Johnston's definition of strategic culture excludes "behavior" in order to allow hypotheses which relate strategic culture and behavior to be falsifiable.

[124] Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 6.

[125] King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, 4.

There are several approaches to the study of strategic culture including

Operational Code Analysis discussed above. And it includes the case study approach

based on a framework as evidenced by the work of Johnson et al., Johnston, and Biava et

al., which will be addressed later in this section. The framework proposed by this thesis

and then applied to the case studies of Iran and Israel follows in this tradition. In sum,

this thesis does not hold that the research question in this thesis needs to be falsifiable in

the Popperian sense.[126] It does need to be based on evidence that is explicitly defined and

is available to other researchers so that its conclusions may be analyzed and the study

replicated if so desired.

Sui Generis

It may be argued that what is learned about strategic culture in one state is not

generalizable to other states. Culture, and therefore, strategic culture, as the argument

goes, is unique to each state. Each state has its own history and geographical position.

The people have different attitudes and values, shaped in part by history and geography,

movements of populations through a territory, and by religion.[127] While the specific

characteristics of each state are unique, the labels that we use to identify those

characteristics are the same. We can describe the history of a state and the influence of

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[126] A critique of Popper's concept of falsification on epistemological and methodological grounds is provided by Adolf Grunbaum, "Is Falsifiability the Touchstone of Scientific Rationality? Karl Popper Versus Inductivism," in *Collected Works, Volume I: Scientific Rationality, the Human Condition, and 20th Century Cosmologies*. (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2013), https://oxford-universitypressscholarship-com.

[127] The influence of religion on a state's decision to use force may be thought to have only existed during the Crusades or only applies to those states which are fundamentalist or extreme. The influence of religion on the founding of the United States and its continuing influence on U.S policy should be manifest in shaping the destiny of the state during the 19th century and its crusades for democracy or against fascism in World Wars I and II, and against Communism during the Cold War.

geography. For example, the United States is a maritime power. Great Britain, Portugal, and Spain were similarly described in the past.

We can discuss whether one state is democratic or another authoritarian, understanding that those labels are ideals that lie along a spectrum. The experience of states with colonialism may have been as the colonizer or colonized (or both) at different times in their history. Israel describes itself as a Jewish State, Iraq as an Islamic Republic. Thus, while states may indeed be unique, that does not prevent us from identifying the cultural variables of the state and then assessing what impact those might have on their foreign policy and, in the case of this thesis, on their decision whether to use force or not.

It may not be possible to generalize across all states, but that does not invalidate the need to understand how a state's strategic culture contributes to the decision to use force. The concept of democratic peace provides a well-known example of a generalization applied to a particular regime type, despite the fact that all democratic states have their own histories, attitudes, values, behaviors, geographies – in other words, their own cultures, and therefore, their own strategic cultures as well. \

Chapter IV.

Case Studies

Strategic Culture of Israel

Sources	Strategic Culture	Culture
Domestic Political Texts	Identity	Political culture
International Texts (treaties, agreements, alliances)	Values	Organizational Culture
Historical Texts	Norms	Military Culture
Historical Timeline	Beliefs	Popular Culture
Ethnographic Studies[128]	Patterns of Behavior	National Character
Regime Type		
International System Structure		
Technology		
Geography		
Film, art, cartoons, TV, social media		
History		
Historical analogy		
Experience with colonialism		
Speeches, oral statements		

Reprint of Table 1: Thesis Strategic Culture Framework[129]

     The strategic culture of Israel is inextricably tied to its history and geography –

and because of the latter, to the states and non-state actors that have declared Israel to be

the enemy. While Israel became a state in 1948, the events that shaped Israel's culture

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[128] These may be important as evidence of culture within specific groups but is only important for purposes of the thesis to the extent that these groups can then influence national security elites.

[129] Reprinted as a reminder of the framework being used to develop the case studies.

occurred long before. In the Jewish rebellion against the Romans from AD 66 to AD 70,

a group of zealots encamped in the mountain fortress of Masada chose suicide over

capture by the Romans.[130] Gregory Giles, in his discussion of Israeli strategic culture,

refers to Masada as "legend" and "myth" that is part of the "indoctrination" of Israeli

Defense Force (IDF) soldiers.[131]

Whether one believes what happened on Masada is true or legend, it is a story that

has become part of the founding myth of the state and continues to exert a strong

influence over the Jewish people to this day. Various combat units of the IDF, including

the Nahal Brigade,[132] climb Masada, learn of its history, and vow to never let Masada

fall again. One should not discount the importance of ritual in motivating behavior. The

story of the Jews' exile and enslavement in Egypt is recounted every year. "Each year,

on Passover, virtually all of Israel's Jewish population recites the warning that 'in every

generation they have risen up against us to annihilate us.' A centuries-old ritual this may

be, but for much of Israel it strongly resonates with modern-day realities."[133] The use of

historical analogy is a powerful motivating force. Masada is a reminder of the sacrifice

made by those opposing the Romans. The Holocaust is another reminder of the sacrifice

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[130] What we know of the Jewish rebellion against the Romans come from the writing of Josephus, a rebel leader who switched allegiance to the Roman side after he was captured. See Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War*, ed. Betty Radice and E. Mary Smallwood, Revised (London, UK: Penguin, 1984).

[131] Gregory F. Giles, "Continuity and Change in Israel's Strategic Culture," in *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*, ed. Jeannie L. Johnson, Kerry M. Kartchner, and Jeffrey A. Larsen (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 98.

[132] It is during this ceremony that soldiers of the Brigade receive their green berets, a signal that they are a member of an elite branch. During the time Moshe Dayan was the Chief of the Israeli Defense Force, that members of the Israeli Armored Corps would hold a similar ceremony on Masada following completion of their basic training.

[133] Charles D. Freilich, *Zion's Dilemmas: How Israel Makes National Security Policy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 13.

made by the victims of Nazi Germany and like Masada, there is a similar reminder that it should never happen again.

These historical events are brought to mind and influence policy. Recall from the discussion earlier about the use of historical analogy that such analogies can provide evidence of strategic culture. Charles Freilich, a former Israeli deputy national security adviser, applies the use of historical analogy to the Israeli strategic culture. He wrote "a 'Masada Complex,' or 'Holocaust Syndrome,' continues to color the perceptions of both leaders and public alike. Public statements, even by native-born leaders, such as Premier Netanyahu, are replete with references to the Holocaust." In addition to events such as Masada and the Holocaust,[134] the Israeli experience with Zionism and with British colonialism continues to shape its perceptions and behavior.

The end of the British Mandate over Palestine allowed for the proclamation of an independent state of Israel. That proclamation did not arise out of a vacuum but was shaped by the writing of Zionists, historical texts including the Balfour Declaration of 1917, and the document establishing the British Mandate following World War I. Zionism or the idea of a Jewish homeland is most often associated with Theodore Herzl. Several decades prior to the First Zionist Congress in 1897, however, religious leaders such as Rabbi Yehudah Alkalai, had already begun to call for redemption, for the establishment of a Jewish homeland and for the right of all Jews to return to the Holy Land.[135] The basis for the Jews to return to the Land of Israel was based on history and

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[134] Freilich, *Zion's Dilemmas: How Israel Makes National Security Policy*, 13.

[135] There were several other writers including Rabbi Kalischer and Moses Hess. Their writings are included in Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997).

the connection that the Jewish people had (and continue to have) with the land. The

Balfour Declaration provided a public statement of support for the establishment of the

Jewish state and in the Council of the League of Nations document establishing the

British mandate over Palestine, the support for the establishment of a Jewish state is

reiterated. Interestingly, Lord Balfour suggested wording for the Preamble that would

recognize the historical connection of the Jews to the land.[136] That change was not,

however, incorporated in the final version.

In identifying the elements of strategic culture, historical texts include the

writings of Josephus in the first century AD, the philosophical writings of rabbinical

scholars and political leaders in the 19th century, as well as documents such as the

Balfour Declaration and the international agreement issued by the Council of the League

of Nations establishing the British Mandate. The land of Israel to which the Jewish

people have a special connection, does not exist only in historical documents and ideas

about the restoration of the of Israel before the Roman and Babylonian conquests. The

strategic culture of those responsible for deciding on matters of national security are

strongly influenced by the geography of the state.

David Ben-Gurion, before concluding the speech establishing the state of Israel

declared:

> WE EXTEND our hand to all neighbouring states and their peoples in an
> offer of peace and good neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish
> bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people

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[136] "Whereas recognition has thereby [i.e., by the Treaty of Sèvres] been given to the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine, and to the grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country." In Doreen Ingrams, *Palestine Papers: 1972-1922: Seeds of Conflict* (New York, NY: George Brazillier, 1972).

settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.[137]

The same day that Israel declared her independence, the neighboring states of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia (who sent forces to fight under an Egyptian command) invaded Israel. That the neighboring countries invaded Israel is a fact. What is debated is whether Israel had the right to declare independence following United Nations Resolution 181 calling for the partition of Palestine.[138]   As we are examining the sources of Israeli strategic culture, we can conclude that the Israelis thought they were justified in declaring independence and shortly after, were fighting a war for their existence. Israel fought three wars against her neighbors in the three decades to follow. The 1956 war was fought over Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal and the 1967 war lasted only six days because of Israel's pre-emptive strike against Egypt.[139] The Arab-Israeli War of 1973, otherwise known as the Yom Kippur War, was started by Egypt and Syria. Israel faced an existential challenge. Israel has little to no strategic depth. Unlike Russia during the Napoleonic Wars or in World War II, Israel cannot continually retreat and wait for the enemy to withdraw.

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[137] David Ben-Gurion, "The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel" (*Official Gazette of Israel*, May 14, 1948), https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/about/pages/declaration.aspx.

[138] For a further discussion of UN Resolution 181, see United Nations, "The Origins and Evolution of the Palestine Problem: Part II (1947-1977)," The Question of Palestine, accessed May 7, 2002, https://www.un.org/unispal/history2/origins-and-evolution-of-the-palestine-problem/part-ii-1947-1977.

[139] The term "pre-emptive" in this case marks the strike as one conducted against an enemy that posed an imminent threat. The term "preventive" is applied to a strike or to a war against an enemy that poses a potential threat at some undefined time in the future. I maintain that the Six-Day War was a pre-emptive war. See Ralph DeFalco III, "Ethics, Intelligence, and Preemptive and Preventive Actions," *International Journal of Intelligence Ethics* 1, no. 1 (2010): 78. DeFalco argued that the Six-Day War was one of the "clearest" examples one could find of a preemptive attack. Ersun Kurtulus argued against concluding the strike was pre-emptive and as evidence, cites the fact that Israel launched a first strike. See Ersun N. Kurtulus, "The Notion of a 'Pre-Emptive War:' The Six Day War Revisited," *Middle East Journal* 61, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 220–38. The fact that a state conducts a first strike against an imminent threat, however, supports the notion of pre-emption.

Almost all Israeli military commentators and students of Israeli strategy have commented on the formative impact of the country's small size and long, thin shape on military thinking. The absence of strategic depth, particularly in the east and north, and the tremendous relative length of the borders plagued Israel's strategy. Israel's population, industry, and military infrastructure are heavily concentrated and within easy reach from the borders.[140]

The RAND study recognized that the issue with Israel's strategic depth would only get worse with the return of the Sinai to Egypt. Since then, Israel has also withdrawn from Gaza, enabling Hamas to attack Israel more easily. The changing geographic landscape has made Israel more vulnerable to attack should Egypt renege on the Camp David Accords. The implications of the Arab Spring and the consequent political turmoil are still not fully realized. This increases the uncertainty and therefore the risks facing Israel. In addition to geographical constraints, changes in demography also increase the risk to Israel; perhaps not directly, but changes in the population and the composition of that population also result in changes between the state and the expectations of its citizenry.

With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1990-1991, the number of Jewish immigrants to Israel increased significantly. Gregory Giles related the change in population to changes in the culture, identity, and the expectation that all Israelis will serve in the military. "The influx of 800,000 Russian immigrants following the demise of the Soviet Union," Giles observed, "posed a major challenge to the absorption, assimilation, and preservation of national identity."[141] The military was simply not able to absorb all the

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[140] Yoav Ben-Horin and Barry Posen, *Israel's Strategic Doctrine*, R-2845-NA (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1981).

[141] Giles, "Continuity and Change in Israel's Strategic Culture," 102.

new immigrants.[142] Giles noted further that the change in population occurred as Israelis,

particularly Ashkenazi Jews who were the previous dominant ethnic group, saw service

in the military as less desirable. It was this latter change, according to Giles, that

convinced Prime Minister Rabin "to reach a political settlement with the Palestinian

Liberation Organization at Oslo."[143]

The sources of strategic culture, identified in the framework and explored in this

section as it pertains to Israel, serve to identify Israeli identity, norms, values, and beliefs.

Masada in the first century demonstrated the lengths to which the Jewish rebels were

willing to go to protect their land from the Romans. The Holocaust led to the immediate

need to have a homeland where Jews could feel safe and so the Jewish State of Israel was

founded. The section of Ben-Gurion's speech in which he declared Israel to be a

sovereign state, free of the British Mandate, makes clear that Israel is a Jewish State:

> Accordingly we, members of the people's council, representatives of the
> Jewish community of Eretz Israel and of the Zionist movement, are here
> assembled on the day of the termination of the British mandate over Eretz
> Israel and, by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of
> the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, hereby declare the
> establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz Israel, to be known as the State of
> Israel.[144]

The establishment of the State of Israel was tightly connected to the identity of

Israel as a Jewish state. The norms, values, and beliefs of those who make decisions

regarding national security follow from this identity. The strategic culture of Israel is

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[142] It is interesting to note that nearly one million Soviet Jews emigrated to Israel following the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the 1974 Trade Act. The question arises why the culture of Israel changed following the arrival of Russian immigrants in 1991 and not in the 1970s.

[143] Giles, "Continuity and Change in Israel's Strategic Culture," 102.

[144] David Ben-Gurion, "The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel" (Official Gazette of Israel, May 14, 1948), https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/about/pages/declaration.aspx.

defensive but because of a lack of strategic depth, will take pre-emptive action as it did in 1967 against Egypt or preventive action as it did in 1981 with the bombing of the Osirak nuclear facility in Iraq.[145]

Strategic culture is the starting point for understanding the interests of the state, but it is not determinative. For example, understanding the concepts of Redemption and Zionism might lead political leaders to refuse to trade land for peace and to promote the building of settlements in the West Bank and to oppose the withdrawal of soldiers from the Gaza Strip. The same understanding of a Jewish State might favor opposite policies, reasoning that a smaller, but more secure state, is a better option. Understanding the culture provides one with the vocabulary to discuss options but does not determine how the elite will decide among those options. This case study also demonstrates that strategic culture does not conflict with realism.

Israel needs to defend itself just as any other sovereign state needs to in an anarchic world. The United States has been a reliable ally since the state's founding, but Israel must still develop the means to fight its own wars. It has developed an advanced aerospace and electronics industry and is a major exporter of arms. The export of arms brings Israel more than revenue, it also builds closer ties between it and other countries. Ties between nations are important to Israel as can be attested to by its participation in the United Nations despite the significant number of resolutions adopted in the General Assembly condemning Israel. The approach taken by Israel has resulted over time in closer ties, not just with Egypt, but with other nations such as the United Arab Emirates.

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[145] DeFalco III, "Ethics, Intelligence, and Preemptive and Preventive Actions," 86-91.

In short, Israel has done what Giles suggests are its two options: "to develop its internal sources of power or to seek strong allies."[146]

Before turning to the discussion of the dependent variable, namely, the use of force, it is necessary to discuss whether the strategic culture of Israel has remained constant over time or if there have been any significant changes. As noted earlier and supported by Lantis, strategic culture does not change unless there has been a traumatic event. In the case of Israel, one can certainly point to the attack by its neighbors in May 1948 as a traumatic event, as well as the Arab-Israeli War of 1973 when the attack came on the morning of the most holy of holidays when the Israeli were in synagogue. Ben-Ephraim makes the case that Israeli strategic culture has changed significantly from the time prior to Israel becoming a state.[147] Ben-Ephraim argues that Israel is 'offensive oriented" and that its strategic culture is aggressive. Without any strategic depth, Ben-Ephraim posits, Israel needs to act quickly and to take the fight to the enemy. Given that Israel's strategic culture is aggressive now where it was not before 1948, this is evidence that Israel's strategic culture has changed over time and in response to a traumatic event.

Ben-Ephraim's interpretation of Israel's strategic culture relies on the faulty premise that Israel's strategic culture is offensive oriented and aggressive. It is true that Israel lacks strategic depth. The state, however, took pre-emptive action such as the 1967 strike on the Egyptian Air Force in response to an imminent threat. Even the 1982 invasion of Lebanon was defensive in nature, as the Palestinian Liberation Organization

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[146] Giles, "Continuity and Change in Israel's Strategic Culture," 110.

[147] Shaiel Ben-Ephraim, "From Strategic Narrative to Strategic Culture: Labor Zionism and the Roots of Israeli Strategic Culture," *Comparative Strategy* 39, no. 2 (2020), 145–61, https://doi.org/10.1080/01495933.2020.1718988.

was shelling northern Israel.[148] Ben-Ephraim bases his argument on a second faulty

premise, namely, that the approach to the use of force prior to 1948 was 'relatively

benign.'[149]

It is a fact that Israel's national security elite, including its political and military

leaders were socialized into the strategic culture of Israel as it existed under the British

Mandate with the Labor Zionist movement in the lead. What they would have learned

then was the necessity to use force to convince the British that the costs of maintaining

the Mandate were too high and to leave. The tactics used by the Irgun and the Stern

Gang[150] included assassination and the bombing of the King David Hotel where the

British administration was housed. Depending on one's point of view, then, the use of

force was defensive though it is hard to conclude that it was relatively benign. Despite

the traumatic events from which one might conclude that Israel's strategic culture

changed over time, it is closer to the truth that Israel's strategic culture remained

relatively constant. One reason is that the Israeli political leaders of the 1970s through the

1990s were socialized at a time where the use of force was necessary to protect the

Jewish community as the British seemed unwilling to actively do so and to force the

British out of Palestine.

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[148] Whether Israel should have invaded Lebanon in 1982 is not the issue. The issue is whether Israel's actions were offensive and in line with a changed strategic culture from before statehood.

[149]Ben-Ephraim, "From Strategic Narrative to Strategic Culture: Labor Zionism and the Roots of Israeli Strategic Culture," 145.

[150] The Irgun and the Stern Gang (also referred to as Lehi) wee Zionist militant groups that operated outside the control of the Palmach, the Jewish military group founded and trained by the British at the end of the 1930s. The Irgun and the Stern Gang included among its membership, Ariel Sharon, Menachem Begin, and Yitzhak Shamir.

The strategic culture of Israel remained relatively constant over time despite the significant number of changes in the government. Israel's political system of proportional representation comes with a low threshold required to occupy a seat in the Knesset. Israel is a democracy but the openness of its political system contrasts with the secrecy with which it is able to develop and build nuclear weapons. From an organizational perspective, the small number of national security decision-makers within the Israeli system, a shared background in the military, and the generally informal nature of decision-making allowed Israel to maintain the secret. The public was complicit in the need to keep the nuclear project a secret lest state security "be compromised by a public discourse on the subject."[151] While Israel has developed such a capability in secret, it would not act as a deterrent force if its existence were kept a total secret. Thus, Israel has maintained a careful balance between open acknowledging the existence and strength of its nuclear arsenal and hinting that Israel is capable of defending itself against the overwhelming conventional force of its neighbors[152]. "Here, Israel has managed to achieve what has been described as a 'nuclear opacity' – the ability to influence others nation's perceptions in the absence of official acknowledgement of nuclear weapons possession and with only circumstantial evidence that such weapons exist."[153]

During the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq hit Israel a number of times with missiles, none of which were nuclear. Whether this was because of Israel's deterrent capability or an unwillingness of Saddam Hussein to use nuclear weapons is uncertain. Such is the nature

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[151] Giles, "Continuity and Change in Israel's Strategic Culture," 111.

[152] The reliance on nuclear weapons to defend the nation in the face of overwhelming conventional strength of one's enemies should be familiar to students of U.S. nuclear strategy in the 1950ss and the policy of massive retaliation.

[153] Giles, "Continuity and Change in Israel's Strategic Culture," 111.

of a nuclear deterrent – the absence of a nuclear attack is not proof that it was because of

the threat of retaliation that was the deciding factor. The Islamic Republic of Iran is

currently building its nuclear capability though not with the nuclear opacity employed by

Israel. The next section describes the strategic culture of Iran, using the framework as a

guide as it was used above.

Strategic Culture of Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) dates from the 1979 revolution which brought

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini out of exile and into power. The revolution ended the

monarchy and established an authoritarian regime – a traumatic event to be sure and one

that could be expected to change the strategic culture of the state. The search for

strategic culture begins with the historical documentation. For the purpose of this thesis,

the historical evidence for the strategic culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran need

extend back in time to the Persian Empire. Rather, the socialization of the leaders of the

IRI began in the time following World War I.[154] The history of Iran prior to that is

important to the extent that it created in the minds of the people the idea that the Persia

was a great country and its civilization one of the most important in the world. It was an

ancient civilization that pre-dated Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome. Fast forward to the

early 20th century.

Iran was not a colony in the same sense as Israel was. British control of Israel,

Palestine at the time, was decided by the Council of the League of Nations; that is, by

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[154] Ayatollah Khomeini was born in 1900. He would have been a young man at the time World War I ended and so it is reasonable to select that event as the start of the socialization of those who were in power following the 1979 revolution.

international agreement. British power in Iran was determined initially not through international agreement but rather by the ownership of oil rights by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. At the end of World War I, with Russia weakened by the war and the Bolshevik Revolution, the British gained control over Iran through the 1919 Anglo-Persian Agreement.[155] "Under its provisions the British assumed control over Iran's army, treasury, transport system, and communications network. To secure their new power, they imposed martial law and began ruling by fiat."[156] Iran was no longer a sovereign nation, but British rule stoked a feeling of nationalistic pride throughout the nation. The Anglo-Soviet Invasion of 1941 forced the abdication of Shah Reza Pahlavi who was succeeded by his son, Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. The nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company under Prime Minister Mossadegh eventually led to a CIA-funded coup which at first forced the Shah to flee Iran. He eventually returned to Iran, forced the resignation of Mossadegh, and resumed power. The agreement with the British, the loss of sovereignty and exploitation of Iran's oil, the deposition of the Shah in 1941 and the forced removal of Mossadegh were formative events in the lives of those who rose to power in 1979.

When the 1979 revolution occurred, the dominant characteristic was its emphasis on Islam as the source of law. Instead of looking at the history of Iran from the end of World War I and concluding that nationalism, resentment towards the Shah who owed his position to an externally funded coup, deposing a Prime Minister who was deeply

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[155] Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 39.

[156] Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, 39.

nationalistic, and a Shah who increasingly became more dictatorial following the coup that brought him to power.

> In the years that followed [the coup], Mohammed Reza Shah became increasingly isolated and dictatorial. He crushed dissent by whatever means necessary and spent huge amounts of money on weaponry -- $10 billion in the United States alone between 1972 and 1976.[157]

An evaluation of the strategic culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran based on the nature of the revolution and the imposition of Sharia law misses the importance of nationalism and an antipathy towards the United States, which funded the coup that deposed Mossadegh and allowed the Shah to become more dictatorial. Islam was important to Ruhollah Khomeini, but one wonders whether he used Islam as a tool to support his authority as opposed to Islam as a basis for national security policy. The decisions that were made following the revolution appear to support the idea of "Islam as the basis of authority" interpretation. This will be discussed further in depth later in the thesis.

Returning to the strategic culture framework, the next areas to be considered are the domestic and international texts. The international agreements between Anglo-Persian Oil Company and Iran and the Anglo-Persian Agreement itself were discussed earlier as were the sales agreements which allowed Iran to purchase weapons from the United States. Ayatollah Khomeini's speech after assuming power promised the people a brighter future in which the state would provide for many of their needs and a move away from the corruption of the Shah's regime. Although the Ayatollah and his successor, Ali Khamanei, have not delivered on these promises, their position seems to be secure while the same cannot be said of the numerous presidents that have served under them.

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[157] Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, 196.

The Economist Intelligence Unit categorized the Islamic Republic of Iran as an authoritarian regime, scoring 0.00 on electoral process and a 3.33 on political participation. The notion of regime type is best understood as lying on a spectrum, the categorization of an authoritarian state needs to be tempered as there are elements of governance within Iran in which the people can express their opinion, specifically the executive and legislature, these bodies and the judiciary are overseen by the Supreme Leader, the Ayatollah. Thus, in the fields of national security decision-making, it is the beliefs of the Ayatollah which matter most.[158]

In the international system, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been positioning itself as the leading regional hegemonic power. It is 90 percent Shi'a – a fact which serves to explain, at least in part, its support of the Assad regime in Syria and its opposition to Saddam Hussein. The leadership of the Shi'a community in the Middle East provides the rationale for an increased political and military presence in the region. Eisenstadt noted the religious contribution to what makes the Islamic Republic to be irrational and undeterrable.

> Because Shiite religious doctrine is central to the official ideology of the Islamic Republic and exalts the suffering and martyrdom of the faithful, Iran is sometimes portrayed as an irrational, 'undeterrable' state with a high pain threshold, driven by the absolute imperatives of religion, rather than by the pragmatic concerns of statecraft.[159]

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[158]Given the importance of the Ayatollah in decision making, it is not surprising that a number of works exploring the Operational Code Analysis of the Ayatollah specifically or Iran generally. See Mark Schafer and Akan Malici, "An Operational Code Analysis of Foreign Policy Roles in US-Iran Strategic Dyads," in *Operational Code Analysis and Foreign Policy Roles: Crossing Simon's Bridge*, ed. Mark Schafer and Stephen G. Walker (New York, NY: Routledge, 2021) and Austin A Backus, *The Operational Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran and a Tailored Approach* (Springfield, Missouri, Missouri State University, 2013).

[159] Michael Eisenstadt, *The Strategic Culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Operational and Policy Implications*, MES Monographs, No. 1 (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University, 2011), 1.

Eisenstadt describes a state that acts irrationally, namely the "unnecessary prolongation of the war in Iraq in pursuit if the overthrow of Saddam Hussein" and its continued support for Hizballah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.[160] Eisenstadt's overreliance on Islam as a causal explanation for the IRI's policies ignores the history of the state, its desire to demonstrate its sovereignty, and a desire to be the regional hegemonic power. These realist goals arise from the strategic culture of the state and the socialization of the leadership following World War I. Strategic culture did not usurp realism, nor did it provide a supplementary understanding of the Islamic Republic's behavior. Rather, it was the strategic culture which defined the interests on which the policies were based. This is additional evidence of the a priori nature of strategic culture.

The war against Iraq, its support for the Syrian government, and its support for terrorist groups in Lebanon can be viewed through the prism of Islam. However, it is more accurate to conclude that the Islamic Republic is using its support elsewhere to increase its own power as a regional hegemon. Even the support for non-state actors such as Hizballah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad is useful to the IRI as it is able to counter Israel via a proxy. Its desire and ability to be a regional hegemon is closely tied to its geography. It borders Iraq, is very close to Syria, and borders Turkey. In the east, it borders Afghanistan and Pakistan, and—notably--during the Cold War, it bordered the Soviet Union. Thus, Iran is in a pivotal geopolitical position with the ability to influence events throughout the Middle East. Iran also has a 1,100-mile border to the south with the Persian Gulf (also referred to as the Arabian Gulf). It is this position astride the Strait of Hormuz, a major sea route and chokepoint, which brought Iran into conflict with the

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[160] Eisenstadt, *The Strategic Culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Operational and Policy Implications*, 1-2.

United States in 1987.[161]   Geography, in summary, allows the Islamic Republic to exercise its power to become the regional hegemon, oppose Israel, and influence events in Afghanistan.[162]

The use of historical analogy, as discussed, is an indicator of strategic culture – it reveals what information has been received and potential scenarios or alternatives for dealing with a situation. Putin's use of the word 'Nazi' to describe Ukrainians is wrong but it evokes within Russia a feeling that the war against Ukraine, like the war against Germany, is justified. For Iran's leaders, the war against Iraq in the 1980s evokes similar emotions and so reference to the war by political leaders is common.[163]

Unlike Israel in which there is significant political participation throughout society in which the government, civil society, and the military have a voice in national security decision making, in the Islamic Republic, the decisions are made at the top and those made by other groups are overseen by the Supreme Leader. Thus, it is difficult to write about subcultures within the Islamic Republic, or organizational cultures which influence national security decision making. It is worth noting that the relative isolation of the Ayatollahs from public criticism allows them the freedom to negotiate agreements and to make decisions about the use of force without worrying about their own base of power. The primary use of force by the Islamic Republic has been the coercive force associated with the development of nuclear weapons.

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[161]In 1987, during the Iran-Iraq War, an Iraqi jet fired two Exocet missiles at the USS Stark (FFG 31) nearly sinking her.

[162] Iran also shares the issue of Kurdish sovereignty with Iraq, Syria, and Turkey though not to the extent of the others.

[163] The only sources I have found to support this statement are blogs. The use of historical analogy by Iranian leaders could be a subject for future research. One could also examine more narrowly the use of the Iran-Iraq War in historical analogy by the IRI's leaders.

The development of nuclear weapons by the Islamic Republic is not surprising given its desire for hegemonic power, and the perception that the United States is an existential threat to the regime in a manner similar to Libya and Iraq. A focus on realist explanations might conclude that the IRI's development of nuclear weapons is for security and to balance Israel.

The IRI's possession of nuclear weapons, or Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in broader terms, is more problematic than Israel's, however, because of the potential for the proliferation of nuclear weapons or fissile material to other states or non-state actors that it is supporting. The IRI's possession of WMD is also more problematic because of its strident rhetoric towards Israel, and the refusal to recognize Israel's right to exist. Israel built its nuclear program in the desert in secret and the fact that it possessed nuclear weapons was always left ambiguous. The culture in the Islamic Republic, on the other hand, is one in which threats against Israel and the United States play well to the domestic audience but raise concerns that the possession of nuclear weapons will cause greater instability in the region.

Concerns about the Islamic Republic's nuclear program prompted President George W. Bush to urge other nations to stop Iran from obtaining the knowledge to build nuclear weapons.[164] It is too late to prevent the proliferation of that knowledge and the Islamic Republic appears to be close to developing a nuclear weapon. Israeli action to eliminate Iran's potential, at least in the short term as it did at Osirak, is not possible

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[164]Matt Spetalnick, "Bush: Threat of World War III if Iran goes Nuclear," *Yahoo News*, October 18, 2007, http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20071017/ts_nm/iran_bush_de cited in Willis Stanley, "Iranian Strategic Culture and Its Persian Origins," in *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking*, ed. Jeannie L. Johnson, Kerry M. Kartchner, and Jeffrey A. Larsen (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

given the different locations of Iran's program. In 2010, a computer virus called Stuxnet

contaminated over fifteen different sites in Iran, destroying nearly 1000 centrifuges

required to make fissile material. There has been speculation that the United States and

Israel were responsible for the Stuxnet attack, but it is still speculation.

The latest effort to slow the Islamic Republic's nuclear program has been the

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), an agreement reached in July 2015 by the

P5 + 1 – the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus the

European Union. During the Trump Administration, the United States withdrew from the

JCPOA. Under the Biden Administration, the United States is considering rejoining the

JCPOA. It is outside the scope of this thesis to conclude on whether the JCPOA as

negotiated or potentially as it is modified should the United States rejoin the agreement.

What is interesting is the seeming willingness of the Islamic Republic to remain engaged

with the larger international community. From a realist perspective, the Islamic Republic

is trying to increase its power by building alliances. A liberal interpretation might be that

the Islamic Republic understands that increasing cooperation with international

organizations provides IRI with some benefits, one of which is the potential for the

reduction or elimination of sanctions against Iran. A more cynical perspective, and one

that aligns with Eisenstadt's thoughts on the IRI's strategic culture[165] is that there is no

downside to negotiations with other states – talk is cheap – and until the JCPOA is

modified, the IRI is relatively free to continue its nuclear program while maintaining the

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[165] In addition to the uncertainty and ambiguity inherent in the IRI's strategic culture, Eisenstadt wrote: "Iran's strategic culture is characterized by numerous contradictions and paradoxes. One should not seek consistency where none exists." Eisenstadt, *The Strategic Culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Operational and Policy Implications*, 1.

façade that it is cooperating with other states and adhering to the Nuclear Non-

Proliferation Treat

Realism, liberalism, and strategic culture each have a role to play in interpreting the behavior of the IRI. Concepts of deterrence – precluding a regime-changing attack on the state, regional hegemony and cooperation with international organizations belong in the first two categories. Strategic culture reaches further back and provides an a priori explanation for why the Islamic Republic considers it to be within its interest to continue development of a nuclear program.

Chapter V.

Discussion and Conclusion

This thesis examined the importance of understanding strategic culture and developing a framework within which to gather information useful for analyzing strategic culture. Several single country case studies have been developed without the use of such a framework and the strategic culture literature has been greatly improved by such contributions. The deficiency of such an approach, however, is apparent when an attempt is made to compare the strategic cultures of more than one state. Without a systematic framework, it is not possible to match the factors contributing to each state's strategic culture. The need to match characteristics becomes particularly apparent when one is concerned with two states within a conflict dyad.

This thesis used a systematic framework that can be used to better understand the strategic cultures of Iran and Israel and to be better able to compare them.[166] Both states are similar in that they are relatively new within the international community, yet they can both look back upon ancient civilizations to provide a sense of continuity with the distant past. Both states were governed by Britain at roughly the same time. The British Mandate over Palestine lasted from 1922 to 1948 though the British maintained administrative offices in Palestine as early as 1919. Their rule over Iran lasted from the end of World War I until the reinstatement of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi after the

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[166] The case study in which the term 'strategic culture' was first used was a comparative analysis of the United States and the Soviet Union and how that affected their attitudes toward nuclear weapons. While single case studies are useful to better understand a particular country, for the purpose of developing foreign policy, a comparative analysis is better suited.

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dismissal of Prime Minister Mossadegh.[167] Despite the presence of the British

government in Palestine, once the British left and the Israeli's declared independence, it

could be argued that Israel was more sovereign than Iran. The framework, with its

emphasis on history and historical documentation, allows for a deeper understanding of

the effect of colonialism on the two states. Given Iran's ties to ancient Persia and the rise

of nationalism in the 1930s, the imposition of rule by the British, the overthrown of

Mossadegh by the CIA, and the continued support of the Shah, must have seemed

particularly grating.

Israel has faced an existential challenge to its existence since its founding in 1948.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has not been under the same threat though events in Iraq

and Libya might seem to be a precursor to what could happen in Iran.   The development

of nuclear weapons was Israel's response to the existential threat and the ambiguity

surrounding the development limited the ability of other states to denounce Israel for

violating the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The development of a nuclear capability

in Iran has not been quiet but this was to allow Iran to achieve other foreign policy goals,

namely, regional hegemony in the Middle East and leadership of the Shi'a community.

Iran is an Islamic State, Israel is a Jewish State. The Islamic Republic of Iran has

incorporated many aspects of Sharia law into its own laws while many of the laws related

to commerce, transportation, and family law are determined by the Orthodox community.

Having written that, the Islamic Republic of Iran is a theocracy while Israel is a secular

democracy. The difference in the degree of control over the lives of the people living in

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[167] The ending date of British colonialism in Iran is a bit more problematic as it was not the British government which ruled but a corporation (i.e., the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, British Petroleum, and even the Iranian Oil Company after nationalization. For purposes of this thesis, the ending date is the reinstatement of the Shah.

those states is significant. The difference to outsiders is also significant. The Islamic Republic's support for terrorism in Lebanon and Gaza, and the experience of the West with the bombing of the Marine Barracks in Beirut only four years after the takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Teheran, the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York, 9/11, the war in Iraq and Afghanistan –it appears to the West that they have been under near constant threat from Islamic extremists for many years. Eisenstadt's conclusion that Iran is irrational and undeterrable because of its reliance on Shiite ideology is a mistake one can make when the analysis is based on perception. The use of a systematic framework will not eliminate conclusions such as these, but it can help to ensure that the relevant data is available when drawing the conclusions.

The values of the two states are different as are the norms, particularly those concerning adherence to international law. An in-depth look at this difference was outside the scope of this thesis but can be observed in how the two states developed nuclear weapons. Israel's ambiguity towards its development kept up the appearance that Israel was conforming to international law while Iran's development openly flouted the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and drew the ire of many in the international community with their refusal to allow inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to enter the facilities.

Finally, Iran has a firm grasp on their identity as a state. The same could have been said of Israel at its founding but not any longer. The Basic Law of Israel is that Israel is a Jewish state and those Jews living in the Diaspora have the right to return. The idea of a Jewish State is important for Israelis given the persecution of the Jewish people, with the pogroms in Russia, and more recently with the Holocaust. The identity of Israel

as a Jewish State is difficult to reconcile with the idea that Israel is also a democracy. With a growing Arabic population within the borders of the state, how can Israel continue to give preferential treatment to one group over another – particularly when that group may at some point in the future become a minority? The culture of Israel has already witnessed changes over the last 30 years or so. The influx of Russian Jews and the change in perception among the Ashkenazi population concerning the need for military service has already changed how Israel recruits. It may have also led to Prime Minister Rabin signing the Oslo Accords as discussed earlier.

In conclusion, the framework enabled a more comprehensive understanding of the strategic culture in each country and allowed for a more systematic comparison of the two states. The decision to focus on the development of nuclear weapons as the dependent variable was made due to time constraints. The thesis also limited the discussion to one conflict dyad – Iran and Israel. Initially, it was envisioned that North Korea and South Korea would also be considered. Thus, to improve the utility of the framework across a number of states, additional case studies should be conducted, using the idea of the conflict dyad as the basis for selecting the cases. To better understand the contribution that strategic culture has to understanding and predicting state behavior, it is also important to select other examples of the use of force (e.g., counterterrorism and adherence to international law such as the law of the sea). Finally, it is important to include states which chose not to use a particular type of force although they may have had the opportunity to do so. While North Korea chose to develop nuclear weapons, South Korea did not. Was there something in the South Korean strategic culture which

stopped them from developing a nuclear weapons program or was the decision made because of the promise of extended deterrence by the United States?[168]

Strategic culture may change slowly over time, but the time period considered by this thesis is likely too short to witness any such changes. Strategic culture may also change as a result of a traumatic event, but the example of Israel shows that even with multiple traumatic events such as wars in 1948 and 1973, strategic culture may not change. If we consider strategic culture in evolutionary terms, there may not be a need for strategic culture to change if the state survived.

The goals for the thesis were largely achieved. The thesis provided a quantitative overview of the amount of research conducted on strategic culture; a framework that can be used by researchers in the future; and the case studies both confirmed the utility of the framework and hopefully added to the literature on Israel and Iran. While the framework overall was useful, the section of the framework dealing with strategic sub-cultures was not. This was likely because of the closed nature of national security decision making in Israel and Iran and the focus of the thesis on the strategic level. Further research on other countries in which participation in national security decision making is broader or on the impact of the operational level of military strategy on grand strategy would likely be able to use that part of the framework.

The final goal was to provide a possible resolution to the Gray-Johnston debate on the definition of strategic culture. While it would be presumptuous to think that a thesis

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[168] Ukraine provides an example of a state that gave up its nuclear weapons on the understanding that the United States, the United Kingdom, and Russia would guarantee its security. Will the current situation in Ukraine be a traumatic event for other states that are contemplating developing nuclear weapons? This, of course raises the question of whether traumatic events that change strategic culture need to occur within a state or can the trauma be caused by being witness to events in another state?

could resolve a longstanding dispute over the definition of what strategic culture is, this thesis does offer a way forward out of the tautological wilderness. Recall Johnston's objection to the inclusion of behavior within the definition of strategic culture. It is true that a particular behavior cannot be part of both the independent and dependent variable. If one considers a pattern of behavior within the independent variable and a specific behavior as part of the dependent, that is one solution that is offered in the literature.

This thesis also developed the idea that specific behavioral events occurring at different times could also influence strategic culture and affect the state's behavior (pattern of behavior) in the future which could then lead to another specific behavior. The inclusion of behavior is not tautological and perhaps more importantly shows how behavior can provide feedback to the strategic culture. The feedback may result in a change to the strategic culture, or it may confirm that the strategic culture was fit for purpose. Thus, the inclusion of behavior provides a mechanism by which strategic culture can change in response to behavior.

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