Strategic Culture--How It Affects Strategic "Outputs"

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Subject Area – Strategic Issues

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Strategic Culture--How It Affects Strategic "Outputs"

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Thesis: The strategic culture of a country's "strategic community" will affect that community's strategic "outputs" (defense policy, strategy, etc.).

Discussion: The concept of strategic culture has been defined in various ways at both the strategic and operational levels. Throughout the literature, three common elements of strategic culture have emerged: 1) strategic culture provides a value system in the context of strategic decision making; 2) this value system is held by a specific community; and 3) the "outputs" (security policy, doctrine, etc.) of this community are affected by strategic culture. The sources of a particular community's strategic culture include geography, history, the worldview of the regime (religion, ideology, culture), economic factors, and the organization of government and military institutions.

Analysis of U.S. strategy reveals a uniquely American strategic culture. This strategic culture has resulted in three discernible consequences for U.S. strategy: 1) U.S. strategists have fostered a strong problem-solving ethic; 2) it is the tendency for defense policy makers to seek refuge in technology; and 3) an absence of strategic thinking by U.S. strategists. U.S. strategic "outputs" (National Security Strategy, Service doctrine, National Military Strategy, etc.) *generally* reflect the characteristics of the American strategic culture as described in this study. Consequently, this study affirms that strategic culture is a valid concept.

Recommendations: To ensure that strategic culture is a viable analytical tool, a logical framework must be used. I suggest the following:

1. Identify the strategic community that is affected by the strategic culture (e.g. the NCA, dictator, military planners, etc.).

2. Analyze the sources of the strategic culture (geography, history, worldview of the regime, economy, organization of the government and military).

3. Identify the characteristics of the strategic culture (e.g. Russia's paranoia about being invaded by a European neighbor).

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4. Identify the consequences of the strategic culture and the impact that they will have on the strategic outputs (e.g. Germany's tendency to focus on operations and tactics instead of strategy).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

"Therefore I say: Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril."[1]

Sun Tzu

The ultimate aim of this study is to contribute something useful to the American pursuit of the above quoted maxim, specifically "knowing ourselves." In his study of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Graham Allison asserts that foreign policy analysts have historically understood strategic decision making from a rational actor perspective. He offers two other models for consideration--the organizational process and government (bureaucratic) politics models.[2] However, he concludes his study by suggesting that further research must be conducted on how such factors as religion, geography, national character, style, resources, etc. affect these models of government behavior. That is what I hope to accomplish. Perhaps, an understanding of strategic culture will give American planners and policymakers insight on their own biases and open their eyes to the possibility that other strategic communities view world affairs in distinctly "non-American" terms.

A. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Although strategic culture could be used to discuss both "knowing the enemy" and "knowing yourself," this study will focus on the latter. My purpose is not to create some new and improved definition of the term, but instead to test some hypotheses that can be derived from commonly accepted definitions and assumptions. In order to do this, I will

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[1] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (Samuel B. Griffith, trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 84.

[2] Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), 256.

view the "outputs" of American strategy through the lens of "American strategic culture." My assumption is that if there is in fact a uniquely American strategic culture, then the American "strategic community" and its "outputs" are affected by the strategic culture. Knowing our strategic biases and preferences (if they exist) is useful for any strategic planner, policy maker, or advisor.

B. ORGANIZATION AND APPROACH

This study will consist of five chapters. Chapter 2 will develop the concept of strategic culture by surveying the literature, defining the concept, and discussing its importance. Chapter 3 will attempt to define a uniquely American strategic culture that is verifiable by developing strategic culture hypotheses that can be compared to strategic "outputs." Chapter 4 will analyze national strategy documents and Service doctrine in light of the hypotheses developed in Chapter 3. Finally, chapter 5 will conclude by reviewing the findings, commenting on the usefulness of strategic culture as an analytical tool, and making recommendations for its future use.

II. THE CONCEPT OF STRATEGIC CULTURE

To begin this discussion of strategic culture, an explication of the concept in general is in order. I will do this by surveying some of the works that have tried to explain the concept and its relevance to strategic studies. From there, I will synthesize some of the major themes that are present throughout the literature and then draw some conclusions that are relevant to this particular study.

A. DEFINING THE CONCEPT

A good starting place is to survey many of the definitions that have been offered for the term "strategic culture." It appears that the phrase was coined by Jack Snyder in his 1977 RAND Corporation study that addressed limited nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union. "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."[3] In this study, Snyder was trying to show how differently Soviet and American strategists thought about limited nuclear war. Since he was examining the Soviet Union specifically, he posited that there was a unique "Soviet style" in dealing with strategic issues that was derived from a Soviet "strategic culture." In using the term "culture", he wanted to convey that this Soviet style was more permanent than mere policy and that it affected all strategic decisions. He took pains to explain that strategic culture did not predetermine strategic decision making, but pointed out that ". . . new problems are not assessed objectively. Rather, they are seen through

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[3]Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*, R-2154-AF (Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corp., Sep 1977), 8.

the perceptual lens provided by the strategic culture."[4] Ironically, as others seized upon

this concept and began to build on it, Snyder practically abandoned its usefulness calling

cultural analysis "an explanation of last resort."[5] He further explained that when he

spoke of "culture" in his famous RAND study, he was not using the term in its strict

sense--he had sociology rather than anthropology in mind. Nevertheless, others have

adopted the concept (with the correct meaning of culture in mind) and have conducted

some very useful historical analysis.

In his book, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, Ken Booth highlighted the need for

cultural awareness in the realm of strategic studies and decision making. He argues

convincingly that ethnocentrism is endemic throughout the theory and practice of strategy.

"Strategic theories have their roots in philosophies of war which are invariably

ethnocentric . . . National strategies are the immediate descendants of philosophies of

war."[6] He points out many dangers of ethnocentrism in the pursuit of strategy to include:

1) the tendency to perceive events exclusively in terms of one's own interest; 2) a tendency

to project one's own culture onto another when predicting how they will respond to an

event (mirror-imaging); and 3) a lack of empathy with foreigners that leads to an inability

to understand another's ambitions and how threatened another may feel by one's own

ambitions. He rounds out his argument suggesting that better strategy requires that

ethnocentrism and a lack of curiosity about others be replaced by sophisticated realism

and strategic relativism.[7] It is with this perspective that Booth defends the usefulness of

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[4]Snyder, *Soviet Strategic Culture,* v.

[5]Jack Snyder, "The Concept of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor," in *Strategic Power: USA/USSR,* ed. Carl G. Jacobsen (London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1990), 4.

[6]Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1979), 73.

[7]Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism,* 181.

strategic culture as a concept. "Understanding strategic culture is a fundamental part of 'knowing thine enemy', one of the most basic principles of war. It contributes to an appreciation of another nation's behavior in its own terms, and this is the starting point of understanding."[8] Booth also provides a definition of strategic culture that is useful for this analysis. "The concept of strategic culture refers to a nation's traditions, values, attitudes, patterns of behavior, habits, symbols, achievements and particular ways of adapting to the environment and solving problems with respect to the threat or use of force."[9] Booth's definition draws from Snyder's original construct, but expands it beyond the realm of nuclear strategy. He points out that the concept addresses the "unhistorical" mistakes of the rational actor (political science) model in strategic analysis. "Historians, interested in unique happenings rather than model-building, are more comfortable with the possibility of variable and possibly idiosyncratic explanations like culture."[10]

Others who have contributed significantly to the development of strategic culture as a viable concept include Colin Gray, Carnes Lord, Yitzhak Klein, and Alistair Iain Johnston.[11] Colin Gray, whose work will be referenced extensively in Chapter 3, concurs

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[8]Ken Booth, "The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed," in *Strategic Power: USA/USSR,* ed. Carl G. Jacobsen (London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1990), 125.

[9]Booth, "The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed," 121.

[10]Booth, "The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed," 124.

[11]In his article, "Thinking About Strategic Culture," *International Security 19*, no. 4 (Spring 1995): 46., Alastair I. Johnston surveys what he identifies as three generations of thought on strategic culture. He finds them all unsatisfactory and offers a new approach to the concept. In doing so, he purportedly provides a definition that is observable, falsifiable, and that identifies objects and methods of analysis: "Strategic culture is an integrated system of symbols (e.g. argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors) which acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious."

with the definition of strategic culture offered by Ken Booth.[12] Carnes Lord and Yitzhak

Klein have developed definitions that place more emphasis on the operational use of force.

For example, Klein defines strategic culture as "the set of attitudes and beliefs held within

a military establishment concerning the political objective of war and the most effective

strategy and operational method of achieving it."[13] Lord's definition is very similar.

To conclude this discussion on defining strategic culture, I would like to offer a

final definition and highlight elements of strategic culture that are common throughout

the literature. In his Master's Thesis entitled, *In the Mind's Eye: Cultural Influence in*

Defense Analysis and Strategic Planning, Lieutenant Commander Christopher B. Chace,

U.S. Navy, provides an excellent definition of strategic culture that captures most of its

important elements as found in the literature:

> Strategic culture serves as a value-system that provides the assumptions,
> beliefs, and attitudes that members of a group hold about the use of force
> as an instrument of policy in international relations. As a result, the
> strategic culture guides and circumscribes specific facets of a nation's
> security behavior. In particular, a nation's security policies and military
> strategies (the 'outputs') are believed to be a function of the strategic
> culture.[14]

Most of the works that have developed the concept of strategic culture would affirm the

following themes: 1) strategic culture provides a value system in the context of strategic

decision making; 2) this value system is held by a specific community; and 3) the

"outputs" (security policy, doctrine, etc.) of this community are affected by strategic

culture (see Table 1 below).

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[12]Colin Gray, *Weapons Don't Make War: Policy, Strategy, and Military Technology* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 192.

[13]Yitzhak Klein, "A Theory of Strategic Culture," *Comparative Strategy* 10 (1991): 5.

[14]LCDR Christopher B. Chace, USN, *In the Mind's Eye: Cultural Influence in Defense Analysis and Strategic Planning,* Master's Thesis (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, June 1990), 36.

Table 1--Strategic Culture Themes

	VALUE SYSTEM	COMMUNITY	OUTPUTS
Snyder	Yes	National Strategic Community	Nuclear Strategy
Booth/Gray	Yes	Nation	Proper Use of Force
Lord/Klein	Yes	Military Establishment	Military Strategy/Operational Methods

These themes will be explored more fully in chapters 4 and 5. Next, this analysis will explore the origins of strategic culture.

B. SOURCES OF STRATEGIC CULTURE

Although he does not specifically use the term "strategic culture," Williamson Murray delineates factors that influence the formulation and outcome of national strategies (i. e. strategic culture as defined above)--geography; history; the worldview of the regime (religion, ideology, culture); economic factors; and the organization of government and military institutions.[15] Carnes Lord specifies a slightly different list--the geopolitical setting; international relationships; political culture and ideology; military culture (military traditions, history, and education); civil-military relationships and bureaucratic organization; and weaponry and military technology.[16] Colin Gray, in *War, Peace and Victory*, simplifies this theme by stating that strategy is affected by culture, geography, and history. In defining culture, Gray gives it a strategic twist. "Culture refers to the socially transmitted habits of mind, traditions, and preferred methods of operations that are more or less specific to a particular geographically based security community."[17] In part, he claims that strategic culture is the result of the lessons which a society decides its

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[15]Mark Grimsley and Williamson Murray, "Introduction: On Strategy," in *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War,* eds. A. Bernstein, M. Knox, and W. Murray (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1-2.

[16]Carnes Lord, "American Strategic Culture," *Comparative Strategy: An International Journal* 5, no. 3 (1985): 272.

[17]Colin Gray, *War, Peace, and Victory: Strategy and Statecraft for the Next Century* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 45.

unfolding history should teach. Yitzhak Klein argues that trying to develop a general list that delineates the sources of strategic culture is a futile exercise, because "every strategic culture is unique, and has unique sources."[18] Nevertheless, I will examine Murray's taxonomy to provide insight on possible sources of a community's strategic culture.

The geography (size and location) of a country heavily influences how it will perceive external threats and formulate responses to them. Throughout its history, Russia's size, weather, and terrain have enabled her to adopt defensive strategies that trade space for time. Israel, on the other hand, does not have this luxury. Great Britain, an island nation, has been able to preserve her security by maintaining a strong navy and a relatively small land army. France, a continental power with potential enemies on its border, would be imprudent to follow Great Britain's strategy.

The historical experience of a nation often illustrates the relative advantages or disadvantages of its geography. This historical experience has a profound effect on strategic formulation. Russia's geographic ability to trade land for time would remain but theory if she hadn't been invaded on a number of occasions by aggressive European neighbors. The former Soviet Union's desire for buffer states is a manifestation of her memory. Israel's seizure of the Golan Heights was conducted with the history of Syrian aggression in the region in mind.

Religion, ideology, and culture make up the worldview of a nation's regime. These factors affect the strategic biases of the regime and are often central in its motives. The ideology that ignited a class struggle in France motivated and guided Napoleon's strategy as he sought the conquest of Europe. Hitler's quest for *Lebensraum* (guided by his Aryan philosophy) prompted his invasion of Russia. The influence of a regime's worldview can

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[18]Klein, 5.

be much more subtle. In secular, non-ideological America, Wilsonian idealism prompted the United States to fight "a war to end all wars" and make the world safe for democracy.

Economic factors can be decisive when developing a strategy. The economic strength of the U.S. during World War I and especially World War II tipped the balance in favor of the Allies. Recent Russian revelations that her near term strategy would be focused on her nuclear arsenal so that she can divert money from defense spending to strengthen her economy hearken back to the defense philosophy of the U.S. in the 1950's.

Finally, the organization of government and military institutions has a profound effect on the formulation of strategy and the application of force. The U.S. Defense Establishment with its principle of civilian control has produced a large military and civilian bureaucracy in which decision making and formulation is done by consensus rather than edict. The German General Staff, on the other hand, produced an efficient system that had the propensity to develop a strategy of its own, separated from the constraints (and concerns) of the civilian policy makers.

C. THE IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC CULTURE

Why should one study strategic culture at all? First, understanding the effects of strategic culture helps erode the impact of ethnocentrism on strategic formulation and calculation. Our tendency to mirror-image will be replaced with a curiosity about the enemy's world view, goals, and perceived threats. It will enable us to truly know our enemy. Second and related to the first, the concept highlights the importance of history, prompting us to ask the right questions about motivations, self-image, and behavioral patterns of ourselves and others. Third, it gives us insight about the interaction between domestic politics and the external security environment. The value-system of the strategic community affects the formulation of security policy which is carried out in the external security environment. Strategic culture helps us define that value-system and identify the

relevant community that holds it. Finally, and most pertinent to this study, understanding the concept of strategic culture promotes self-awareness, alerting us to the dangers of inertia ("that's the way we've always done it") and group-think in policy development and decision making. To sum up, Ken Booth's warning applies:

> As long as the politico-cultural dimension is neglected, analysts will continue to develop theories that do not fit the facts, use words which do not fit the behavior they are suppose to describe, and propose policies which will make more sense in a seminar room than in the world outside.[19]

D. CONCLUSIONS

When considering the literature on strategic culture, the difference of opinion among the authors can be as important as the commonality. The three common themes of strategic culture that emerged in section A of this chapter (value system, relevant community that holds the value system, and strategic "outputs") as they relate to U.S. strategic culture will be developed and tested in the remainder of this study. The differences will also be tested. The construct of strategic culture as espoused by Gray and Booth is appropriate for testing validity of the concept on a national strategic level (e.g. "outputs" such as the National Security Strategy). The formulation of Lord and Klein can be tested by analyzing the "outputs" associated with operationalizing strategy (e. g. Service doctrine). Up to now, we have dealt in generalities. Our next task is to identify a uniquely American strategic culture that can be tested for validity.

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[19]Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism,* 136.

III. AMERICAN STRATEGIC CULTURE

The Americans, as a race, are the foremost mechanics in the world. America, as a nation, has the greatest ability for mass production of machines. It therefore behooves us to devise methods of war which exploit our inherent superiority. We must fight the war by machines on the ground, and in the air, to the maximum of our ability, particularly in view of the fact that the two races left which we may have to fight are both poor mechanics but have ample manpower. While we have ample manpower, it is too valuable to be thrown away.[20]

George S. Patton, *War as I Knew It*

A cursory overview of American strategic history would suggest that America's strategic culture is evolving rather than fixed. This does not conflict with the concept as presented here. One's history impacts the strategic culture over time and the new lessons learned slowly change it. A maturing (or degrading) ideology, a change in economic power, and new bureaucracies all affect the strategic culture. In this chapter, I will survey the historical development of American strategy, as well as examine the roots, features, and consequences of U.S. strategic culture.[21] After developing the concept of a uniquely American strategic culture, I will form hypotheses that will enable me to test the influence of American strategic culture on strategic "outputs."

A. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF AMERICAN STRATEGY

When the United States of America was a new country, the uniqueness of the American experience had a profound affect on its strategic formulation and calculation.

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[20]George S. Patton, Jr., *War As I Knew It* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1947), 366.

[21]Colin S. Gray, "U.S. Strategic Culture: Implications for Defense Technology," in *Defense Technology,* eds. Asa A. Clark IV and John F. Lilley (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1989), 31-45 provides the categories used in this section for defining a uniquely American strategic culture. For a dissenting opinion, see Ken Booth, "American Strategy: The Myths Revisited," in *American Thinking About Peace and War* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1978), 1-36. In this essay, Booth attempts to debunk the concept of the "American Strategic Man" and concludes that Americans are much better at strategy than some would leave the reader to believe.

America's political culture shaped its strategic culture. State's rights, parochialism, and a distrust of centralized power all had their effects. One result was that Federal military preparedness was undermined because there were no provisions for a large standing army or centralized planning. State militias were the mainstay of U.S. military power. The tradition of volunteer citizen-soldiers rather than a professional military was established early. Concern for individual rights made military discipline contrary to the American way of life. Civilian control of the military was unquestioned. Essentially, there was a built-in bias against an efficient, centralized military.

Our first President, George Washington, advised the young nation to steer clear of foreign entanglements and permanent alliances, thereby establishing an early tradition of isolationism. The War of 1812 illustrated the lack of cooperation among military leaders and the lack of a mechanism to integrate the forces. After the war, the U.S. military concentrated on westward expansion and the inevitable conflict with the American Indians.

The Civil War signaled a shift in the political culture that also affected the strategic culture. The integrity of the Union became a higher ideal than state's rights (decided by the victors of the war). As a result, power shifted from the states to the Federal Government. This period also illustrated the decisive effect of mobilizing the economic and military power of the U.S. during time of conflict. Additionally, it highlighted an endemic feature of the U.S. war machine that would manifest itself in the future--a pattern of mobilizing quickly for war, conducting the war, and then quickly demobilizing upon the cessation of hostilities.

The next major period that would have a serious impact on U.S. strategy was the interwar period between the First and Second World Wars and the conduct of the Second World War itself. It was during World War II that Wilsonian ideals about collective security, mistrust of colonialism, and engagement began to take root in tangible ways.

The U.S. not only wanted an "unconditional surrender," but also to recreate our enemies (and allies) in our own image (e.g. The Marshall Plan and FDR's criticism of British colonialism). "MacArthur's startling words at the Japanese surrender, 'it is for us, both victors and vanquished, to rise to that higher dignity which alone befits the sacred purposes we are about to serve,' pointed directly toward the reconstruction and rehabilitation that followed."[22] American insistence on unconditional surrender lead to two dominant operational patterns: 1) a preference for massing a vast array of men and machines; and 2) a predilection for direct and violent assault.

The post World War II/Cold War period saw some major shifts in strategic thinking. This is the era in which the modern-day defense establishment was primarily formed. The predominant changes during this period include: 1) a high level of defense effort during "peacetime" was considered normal after North Korea invaded South Korea and subsequent Chinese intervention; 2) In 1947, 1958, and 1986, the executive reorganized itself favoring centralized civilian control over armed forces and/or centralized control by CJCS over military strategy, force planning, budget requests, and advice to civilian superiors; 3) the influx of civilians into the defense establishment; 4) Congress became more involved in military strategy by soliciting "expert" testimony contrary to the position of the President;[23] and 5) the rise of the Soviet Union and the preeminence of both country's nuclear arsenals, theories of containment, deterrence, and compellence dominated strategic thinking. America's propensity for cyclic defense expenditures and the parochialism of the individual services (despite attempts to alleviate this in the Goldwater-

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[22]Eliot A. Cohen, "The Strategy of Innocence? The United States, 1920-1945," in *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War,* eds. A. Bernstein, M. Knox, and W. Murray (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 454.

[23]Colin S. Gray, "Strategy in the Nuclear Age: The United States, 1945-1991," in *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War,* eds. A. Bernstein, M. Knox, and W. Murray (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 585.

Nichols legislation) remained during this period. It is against this backdrop of American strategic history that our discussion of the roots of U.S. strategic culture will be developed.

B. ROOTS OF U.S. STRATEGIC CULTURE

Colin Gray has done the most to advance the theory of a uniquely American strategic culture. In his article entitled, "U.S. Strategic Culture: Implications for Defense Technology," he provides categories for the roots of American strategic culture that capture most of what others say on the subject. They include geography and history, the frontier tradition, a tradition of military success, abundant resources, liberal idealism, and the U.S. defense policy-making process and civilian control.[24]

U.S. geography and the associated history of conflict are common themes in the literature. The U.S. is an insular power that has been blessed with two oceans and weak neighbors. Military preparedness has not always been a priority, because the U.S. could neglect her security and still survive. The founders of this country wanted to escape the "evils" of the Old World that included religious oppression and European style power politics. Not only did they want to escape, they wanted to remain separate.

The tradition of an expanding frontier forced the U.S. Army to focus on logistics management and engineering services required for travel over long distances. Since there was an abundance of land on the frontier and very few people to clear and traverse it, a premium was placed on labor saving machines. The hard life of the frontiersmen caused them to espouse simple, tough, and pragmatic values. Finally, the success that they achieved in expanding the American frontier engendered optimism and a sense that America was special.

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[24]Gray, "U.S. Strategic Culture: Implications for Defense Technology," 31-45.

The tradition of U.S. military success and bravery on the battlefield has been confused with military skill and American virtue. Gray points out that our effectiveness in warfighting has not always been that stellar. This is tied to the next root of U.S. strategic culture--abundant resources. Historically, the U.S. uses brute force (supported by abundant logistics resources) and attrition to achieve victories, not military skill.

Perhaps the U.S. tradition of liberal idealism is the most prevalent feature of the American strategic culture. Henry Kissinger argues (no matter how violently one disagrees) that U.S. foreign policy is essentially shaped by Wilsonian idealism. "For three generations, critics have savaged Wilson's analysis and conclusions; and yet, in all this time, Wilson's principles have remained the bedrock of American foreign policy thinking."[25] The strategic culture follows the political culture. This mindset argues that peace is the natural condition of mankind and that war is the product of evil people. Of course, war can properly be used to thwart (utterly defeat) the evil doers in their purpose. The U.S. is a uniquely just society incapable of failure when true to its values. Peace is inevitable to those who act upon their own enlightened self-interest. This ideology also espouses individual rights and the sanctity of human life. Finally, it delineates proper grounds for using force: 1) the cause must be just; 2) the enemy must be evil; 3) victory must be definable and rapidly attainable; and 4) use of force must be demonstrably mandatory, and not merely expedient.[26]

The defense policy-making process prompted by civilian control and American distrust of the military profession is the final root of U.S. strategic culture to consider. When commenting on the American defense establishment, Carnes Lord remarked that "the preoccupation with technology and with the defense budget process which continues

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[25]Henry A. Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 52.

[26]Gray, "U.S. Strategic Culture: Implications for Defense Technology," 34.

to dominate discussion of military issues today, clearly reflects in a very large part the long-standing preeminence within the defense establishment of an essentially civilian perspective."[27]

C. FEATURES OF U.S. STRATEGIC CULTURE

The features of U.S. strategic culture naturally flow from its roots. The unique American circumstances, history, ideology and form of government all play a part in the way the U.S. has developed strategy and used force in the external security environment. This section will address what American strategic culture looks like as national policy is being carried out. Some major characteristics emerge.

First, American strategic culture has displayed an indifference to history in developing strategy and solving problems. The U.S. has never been enamored with the "good old days," but instead has looked forward to the possibilities to come. History, especially that of power politics in Europe, was something to escape not live over again. Furthermore, history was irrelevant because the U.S. was a very special country that had no historical precedent. The experience on the frontier, in which pragmatic solutions to new problems were being developed every day, was not limited by history. The U.S. was in the business of doing things that had never been done before. Perhaps this unhistorical tendency was the primary cause of Churchill's disagreement with Roosevelt on how to treat their Soviet ally as the Second World War came to a close.

Second, the U.S. has exhibited an indifference to cultural diversity. This stems from a certain arrogance that developed because of the American tradition of success. It was our "Manifest Destiny" to spread across the vast North American continent and introduce our way of life to the "heathens." American theories, ideas, and thoughts were

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[27]Lord, 286.

not just different, they were also right. This gave Americans little empathy for foreign attitudes or customs. This indifference to other cultures lead to ethnocentrism with all of the problems it creates in the realm of strategy--primarily "mirror-imaging."

Third, the U.S. has practiced insularity in regards to commitments. This a primarily a function of geography. Americans have always assumed that wars would be fought overseas. For the most part, this has been a good assumption. In the tradition of Great Britain, the U.S. has had the luxury of choosing how it will participate in a conflict. This has given American decision makers the ability to escalate and de-escalate in times of crises at will. As a result, the U.S. is not inclined to prepare seriously for the actual conduct of war. A history of success in military endeavors has bolstered this mindset. Our participation in both world wars proves this point very well. In both wars, the U.S. had the ability to choose its participation (since no adversary was directly affecting her borders), mobilize in peaceful conditions, belatedly enter the war, and, in the case of World War I, return to isolationism.

Fourth, Americans have shown a disinclination to use force, especially when it is to maintain parity in balance of power politics. This tendency stems from the liberal idealism that has grasped the American psyche.

> As Henry Kissinger came to lament, Americans do not think geopolitically and they tend to be unwilling to sacrifice their nearest and dearest for the balance of power or for international equilibrium--even if U.S. security rests on the preservation, or restoration, of such a balance or equilibrium. This is not acceptable language in the U.S. political culture.[28]

The U.S. thinks of war as a failure of politics, not, as Clausewitz would assert, a continuation of them. As a result, limited (political) war is generally distasteful to Americans. Use of force must be portrayed as a crusade for values. For example,

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[28]Colin S. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Press, 1986), 47.

according to President Bush, the Gulf War was fought to liberate Kuwait, not check the power of Sadam Hussein and maintain parity and stability in the Middle East.

Finally, U.S. strategic culture is characterized by optimism and idealism about progress in human affairs. Americans are prone to personalize international relations and apply standards of individual moral behavior to nation-states. Americans also expect relations between countries to get better. In the Cold War, this trait caused U.S. policy makers to rely more on arms control (with the idea that relations with the Soviet Union would inevitably get better) than a viable military strategy to maintain U.S. security. Conversely, an uncompromising competitor (such as the Soviet Union) creates great pessimism. This has caused cycles of undue pessimism and optimism among policy makers (e.g. "the Soviet Union is an evil empire" and "we can now enjoy the peace dividend") that have lead to periods of over-preparedness and under-preparedness. As Colin Gray remarked, "a United States true to its indigenous political culture could swing from global guardian of order to self-defined virtuous (though well-armed) recluse and still remain firmly within the American tradition."[29]

D. CONSEQUENCES OF U.S. STRATEGIC CULTURE

After reviewing the roots and characteristics of American strategic culture, it naturally follows that the consequences of this culture must be explored. This section will explore three manifestations of the American strategic culture.

First, *U.S. strategists have fostered a strong problem-solving ethic*. This result has its roots in American ingenuity and problem-solving developed on America's frontier and in her factories. Americans do not like to leave problems unresolved. Solutions that require patience and perseverance are not the American way. Instead, U.S. policy makers

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[29]Colin S. Gray, *The Geopolitics of Super Power* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 65.

are impatient--they want quick, identifiable solutions (like a deadline for U.S. withdrawal from Bosnia) that produce nearly instantaneous results. Americans want defense policy that is unambiguous and certain. That is why the lack of a major enemy (in most American's eyes) has resulted in tenuous times for contemporary defense policy makers. Problems are usually solved by creating programs to be managed by the defense bureaucracy. The problem-solving ethic also affects the way we fight wars.

> The Americans were analytic. They approached warfare as they approached any other large enterprise; breaking it down to its essentials, cutting out what was superfluous, defining tasks and roles and training each man as if he was about to take an individual part in some complicated industrial process. Indeed, the American system for basic training resembled a conveyor belt with soldiers instead of motor cars coming out of the end.[30]

Second, *it is the tendency for defense policy makers to seek refuge in technology*. This consequence of American strategic culture has its roots in the development of labor saving machines on the frontier and the ideals of the worth of the individual and sanctity of human (American) life. Americans proved to be masters of logistics in war. This enabled U.S. military commanders to overwhelm the enemy with superior firepower and mass. An intolerance for high U.S. casualties lead to distinctly American operational patterns in war. The American approach called for "a reliance on overwhelming the enemy through the massed application of firepower, and on seizing strategic objectives through the accumulation of tactical victories achieved in a cautious advance on a broad front."[31] Of course, this approach relied heavily on firepower, technology, and logistics and had the aim of avoiding risk ("Save lives not ammunition"). The focus of technology has been to develop weapons that require fewer people to be placed in harm's way.

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[30]Cohen, 464.

[31]Lord, 279.

The final, ironic consequence of the American strategic culture is an *absence of strategic thinking*. Colin Gray offers some reasons for this phenomenon. First, the belief that "good" causes tend to triumph and that America only fights for "good" causes. Second, the belief that America can achieve anything that it sets its mind to in earnest. Third, the illusion of American omnipotence. Fourth, the ability to mobilize sufficient military power to overwhelm any enemy. These attitudes did not encourage the development of a long term strategic vision.[32] Because of its problem-solving ethic, Americans are more comfortable managing large defense programs rather than dealing with operational issues. A related result is that the U.S. is better at "war planning" (i.e. planning the deployment of the force, sustaining the force, etc.) than strategy. The nuclear age has had a large impact on this aspect of American strategic culture. During this time, civilian intellectuals and systems analysts became the chief strategists in the U.S. "The 1960's saw, for the first time, the domination of defense planning by civilian defense intellectuals who, by and large, had a managerial, or defense-analytical, rather than a strategic orientation."[33] Finally, due to over-optimistic assumptions about U.S./Soviet relations, arms control was the centerpiece of U.S. strategy.

E. HYPOTHESES FOR TESTING A UNIQUELY AMERICAN STRATEGIC CULTURE

Now that a uniquely American strategic culture has been defined, this study will focus on testing its validity. U.S. strategic culture (as defined above) provides a value system for the national strategic community (the National Command Authorities, civilian and military policymakers, and military planners) which has a long-term affect on strategic

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[32]Colin S. Gray, "National Style in Strategy: The American Example," *International Journal* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1981): 27.

[33]Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style,* 49.

"outputs" (the National Security Strategy, National Military Strategy, Service doctrine, etc.). I have developed several hypotheses about the effects that the American Strategic Culture (as defined above) would have on strategic "outputs."[34] I will compare these hypotheses with the *National Security Strategy* (February 1996 and May 1997), the *National Military Strategy* (1997), foundational Service doctrine, the *Quadrennial Defense Review* (May 1997), and *Joint Vision 2010*.[35] The hypotheses include:

1. U.S. strategy will espouse the superiority of American ideals and solutions, and the desire to spread them to other nations.

2. U.S. strategy will employ language that portrays use of force as a measure of last resort used only in pursuit of American values.

3. U.S. strategy will convey optimism about progress in relations between countries.

4. U.S. strategy will emphasize flexibility in engaging and disengaging from conflict.

5. U.S. policy will emphasize capabilities and programs rather than an operational strategy.

6. Military doctrine and concept statements will reflect a heavy reliance on technology.

7. U.S. policy will convey intolerance of high U.S. casualties in war.

8. Military doctrine will reflect operational methods that emphasize a heavy reliance on logistics and firepower and a propensity to avoid risk.

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[34]LT. David A. Welch, USN, *Sources of Contemporary Russian Foreign Policy,* Master's Thesis (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, December 1994), used a similar methodology to test the impact of strategic culture on Russian foreign policy. I decided to use the methodology for this study after reading Welch's thesis.

[35]I recognize that by limiting my analysis to the documents cited above, I am only considering the "official" strategic outputs of the U.S. "Actual" strategic outputs (such as a decision to commit U.S. forces) are affected by political factors, resource constraints, and new opportunities. As a result, the "actual" strategic outputs may not reflect "official" strategic outputs.

I will determine whether or not the strategic "outputs" affirm or deny each hypotheses.

IV. TESTING THE HYPOTHESES

A. HYPOTHESIS #1--*U.S. strategy will espouse the superiority of American ideals and solutions, and the desire to spread them to other nations.*

This hypothesis, which stems from the characteristic of U.S. strategic culture that American theories, ideas, and thoughts are superior, is ***affirmed*** in almost all of the strategic "outputs" that were examined. One of the core objectives in *A National Security Strategy for a New Century (May 1997)* is to promote democracy abroad. This assumes that the American form of government is the preferred one throughout the world. Later in the document, promotion of democracy is encouraged by a new American "building" program. "*Our responsibility is to build the world of tomorrow* by embarking on a period of construction--one based on current realities but enduring American values and interests."[36] The superiority of American leadership is touted throughout the National Security Strategy and the National Military Strategy. "America has an unparalleled record of international leadership. Through our leadership comes rewards. The more America leads, the more willing others are to share the risks and responsibilities of forging our futures."[37]

Implied throughout is the idea that the world will not act without U.S. leadership. The National Military Strategy discusses another venue of America's superior leadership--military to military contacts. Through these contacts, U.S. soldiers teach other nations about the superiority of American civil-military relations. Furthermore, these contacts encourage other nations to solve problems through negotiation and compromise rather that aggression and intimidation. Finally, the U.S. is heralded as the security partner of choice.

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[36]The White House, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century,* May 1997, i.

[37]White House, iii.

Former adversaries now cooperate with us across a range of security issues, and many countries view the United States as the security partner of choice. Our core values of representative democracy and market economics are embraced in many parts of the world, creating new possibilities for enduring peace, prosperity, and cooperation among nations.[38]

B. HYPOTHESIS #2--*U.S. strategy will employ language that portrays use of force as a measure of last resort used only in pursuit of American values.*

This hypothesis is rooted in the American disinclination to use force. One of the implications of this characteristic of American strategic culture is that limited war is contrary to the American psyche. The U.S. is certainly willing to use force, but only when the conflict is portrayed as a crusade for values that Americans hold dear. The strategic "outputs" surveyed ***affirmed*** this hypothesis, ***but not absolutely***, possibly signaling a shift in U.S. attitudes about limited war. The national strategy documents and U.S. Army doctrine (FM 100-5) cited the standard formulation for use of force: "Should deterrence fail, however, the United States will defend itself, its allies and partners with all means necessary."[39] The national security documents further clarify that force will be used when "compelling" national interests are at stake (liberal idealism gained a victory with the inclusion of "humanitarian interests" in the list of compelling national interests).

Another affirmation of this hypothesis is the common theme that crises must be solved quickly. "We will endeavor to commit decisive force to ensure that we achieve the objectives established by the NCA and conclude hostilities in the shortest time possible and on terms favorable to the United States."[40] However, almost all of the documents

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[38]Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), *National Military Strategy of the United States of America,* September 1997, 8.

[39]White House, 13.

[40]CJCS, *NMS,* 12.

leave the door open for limited war options. One of the elements of the National Military Strategy is to respond to the *full spectrum of crises*. That certainly implies limited war. Furthermore, even though Americans have normally seen war as a failure of politics, each of the doctrinal publications surveyed clearly affirmed Clausewitz's famous dictum. For example, Marine Corps' doctrine states that "war is an extension of both policy and politics with the addition of military force."[41]

C. HYPOTHESIS #3--*U.S. strategy will convey optimism about progress in relations between countries.*

This hypothesis is derived from the characteristic of American optimism about progress in human affairs and is ***clearly affirmed*** in the national strategy documents. The integrated regional approaches of the National Security Strategy provide numerous examples. In regards to Europe, it states that the "objective is to complete the construction of a truly integrated, democratic and secure Europe, with a democratic Russia as a full participant."[42] When addressing the ethnic hatred and aggressive nationalism unleashed after the Cold War in much of Eastern Europe, a note of optimism is sounded. "Already, the prospect of joining or rejoining the Western democratic family has dampened the forces of nationalism and strengthened the forces of democracy and reform in many countries of the region."[43] Turning to Asia, the prospect of democracy taking root and improved human rights policies is promoted. Responding to critics who say that some Asian countries may not be culturally suited for democracy, the National

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[41]Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1, *Warfighting* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, June 1997), 23.

[42]White House, 21.

[43]White House, 23.

Security Strategy sounds a hopeful note. "The democratic aspirations and achievements of Asian peoples themselves prove these arguments incorrect. We will continue to support those aspirations and to promote respect for human rights in all nations."[44] Of course, the controversial Middle East Peace Process must be addressed. "An historic transformation has taken place in the political landscape of the Middle East: peace agreements are taking hold, requiring concerted implementation efforts."[45] Finally, the National Military Strategy has high expectations for improved relations with countries that have not historically been friendly with the U.S. through military assistance and military exchanges.

D. HYPOTHESIS #4--*U.S. strategy will emphasize flexibility in engaging and disengaging from conflict.*

This hypothesis comes from American insularity with regards to commitments. Although not directly stated, it is ***implied*** in the strategic documents. The first principle that emerges is selective response to crises. "Our resources are finite, however, so we must be selective in our responses, focusing on challenges that most directly affect our interests and engaging where we can make the most difference."[46] Secondly, the principle of judicious use of force applies. "Military force should be used judiciously and decisively. Military missions must be clearly stated, with achievable military objectives that support national political aims."[47] The implication is that force will not be committed otherwise. Thirdly, the American people are a decisive factor on this point. In describing the

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[44]White House, 25.

[45]White House, 26.

[46]White House, 9.

[47]CJCS, *NMS,* 12.

American view of war, FM 100-5 states that "the American people . . . reserve the right to reconsider their support."[48] Finally, the operational concept of focused logistics in Joint Vision 2010, implies the ability for U.S. forces to engage and disengage on short notice. "Focused logistics will enable joint forces of the future to be more mobile, versatile, and projectable from anywhere in the world."[49] The Marine Corps' future employment concept, Operational Maneuver from the Sea (OMFTS), is a good example of this mindset. OMFTS emphasizes sea-based logistics, command and control, and fires, as well as ship-to-objective maneuver (with no beachhead required). These factors preclude the need for a large build-up ashore in amphibious operations, thereby requiring an agile (possibly insular) force.

E. HYPOTHESIS #5--*U.S. policy will emphasize capabilities and programs rather than an operational strategy.*

America's problem solving ethic and absence of strategic thinking give rise to this hypothesis. The large bureaucracy and programs orientation of the U.S. Defense Establishment intuitively leads one to affirm this hypothesis. However, this conclusion is *not generally supported* by the strategic outputs. Nevertheless, there is an emphasis on "capabilities" in most of the documents.

> Critical to our nation's ability to shape the international environment and respond to the full spectrum of crises--today and tomorrow--are technologies, capabilities and requirements to enable to the continued worldwide application of U.S. national power.[50]

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[48]Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, June 1993), 1-3.

[49]Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), *Joint Vision 2010*, 24.

[50]White House, 13.

The Quadrennial Defense Review is primarily focused on exploiting unharnessed "capabilities" (such as the Revolution in Military Affairs and the Revolution in Business Affairs) and managing weapons programs. However, all of the strategy documents espouse the strategy of *Shape, Respond, Prepare Now*. The National Security Strategy even promotes a strategic vision.

> In general, we seek a world in which no critical region is dominated by a power hostile to the United States and regions of greatest importance to the U.S. are stable and at peace. We seek a climate where the global economy and open trade are growing, where democratic norms and respect for human rights are increasingly accepted and where terrorism, drug trafficking and international crime do not undermine stability and peaceful relations . . .[51]

Furthermore, the Services' renewed emphasis on the operational art in doctrine implies a greater operational/strategic focus.

H. HYPOTHESIS #6--*Military doctrine and concept statements will reflect a heavy reliance on technology.*

This hypothesis stems from the American problem-solving ethic and the propensity to seek refuge in technology. It is ***affirmed*** throughout the strategic documents. FM 100-5 reflects typical military attitudes about technology.

> Doctrine should reflect new technology and its potential for the future, as well as its effects on Army operations. The U.S. has a major strength in technology. When fielded and incorporated into doctrine, technology affords a significant advantage to soldiers--one that enables the employment of overwhelming and decisive combat power while minimizing risk to the force.[52]

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[51]White House, 5.

[52]FM 100-5, 1-2.

This hypothesis reflects the intent of Joint Vision 2010 very well. "JV 2010 rests on the foundations of *information superiority* and *technological innovation.*"[53] It also emphasizes the effect that technology has historically had on U.S. forces in the past. "Technologically superior equipment has been *critical to the success of our forces* in combat."[54]

F. HYPOTHESIS #7--*U.S. policy will convey intolerance of high U.S. casualties in war.*

The genesis of this hypothesis is in the American tradition of liberal idealism--the worth of the individual and the sanctity of human (especially American) life. It is ***unambiguously affirmed*** throughout the strategic documents. This principle is tied to the expectations of the American people. "One final consideration regards the central role the American people rightfully play in how the United States wields its power abroad: the United States cannot long sustain a commitment without the support of the public."[55] FM 100-5 adds that "the American people expect decisive victory and abhor unnecessary casualties."[56] This has prompted a heavy emphasis on force protection in Service doctrine, national strategy documents, and future operational concept statements. "The American people will continue to expect us to win in any engagement, but they will also expect us to be more efficient in protecting lives and resources while accomplishing the mission successfully."[57]

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[53]CJCS, *NMS,* 17.

[54]CJCS, *JV 2010,* 7.

[55]White House, 10.

[56]FM 100-5, 1-3.

[57]CJCS, *JV 2010,* 8.

G. HYPOTHESIS #8--*Military doctrine will reflect operational methods that emphasize a heavy reliance on logistics and massed firepower and a propensity to avoid risk.*

America's sensitivity to casualties, propensity to seek refuge in technology, and absence of strategic thinking prompted this hypothesis. Additionally, it is a corollary to hypothesis #7. Ironically, the recent strategic "outputs" ***do not affirm it***. First, the emphasis of firepower is now precision rather than mass.

> Precision engagement will consist of a system of systems that enables our forces to locate the objective or target, provide responsive command and control, generate the desired effect, assess our level of success, and retain the flexibility to reengage with precision when required.[58]

Second, all of the services have consciously distanced themselves from attrition warfare in their doctrine. The Marine Corps illustrates this prolifically.

> The Marine Corps concept for winning under these conditions is a warfighting doctrine based on rapid, flexible and opportunistic maneuver . . .Maneuver warfare is a warfighting philosophy that seeks to shatter the enemy's cohesion through a variety of rapid, focused, and unexpected actions which create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which the enemy cannot cope.[59]

Finally, there is emphasis in all of the Services on the operational art. "The ability to see deep translated into recognition of the need to fight deep--a reality fully achieved after the publication of the Army's revised AirLand Battle doctrine in 1986, which emphasized operational art."[60]

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[58]CJCS, *JV 2010,* 21.

[59]MCDP 1, 72-73.

[60]FM 100-5, v.

V. CONCLUSION

A. REVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

The hypotheses of chapter 4 were developed after considering the features and consequences of U.S. strategic culture as defined in chapter 3. Although the hypotheses were generally supported by the strategic outputs examined, I would like to highlight some important caveats and conflicts. First, hypothesis #1 (*U.S. strategy will espouse the superiority of American ideals and solutions, and the desire to spread them to other nations*) has two elements that are not equally valid. That U.S. strategic culture consistently espouses the superiority of American ideals and solutions is easily supportable. However, the assertion that the strategic outputs will express the desire to spread these ideals to other nations is more likely a reflection of the opportunities opened by the end of the Cold War.

Second, hypothesis #2 primarily reflects the theory that the U.S. has an aversion to limited (more political) war. Some have suggested that America is a maritime power (that should follow a peripheral or indirect strategy) that historically acts like a continental power (opting for a direct or decisive strategy). The strategic outputs examined indicate at least a theoretical shift in U.S. thinking on limited war.

Third, hypotheses #5, #6, and #8 are closely related and may be summarily comprehended by a single hypothesis which states that U.S. strategic outputs will reflect a heavy reliance on technology. However, I elected to keep them separate since each hypothesis reflected a different nuance of the theme and issued from a different characteristic of the American strategic culture.

Finally, a propensity to avoid risk (which is included in hypothesis #8) seems to naturally follow from hypothesis #7 (*U.S. policy will convey intolerance of high U.S. casualties in war).* However, hypothesis #7 is supported while hypothesis #8 is not. The

implication is that there may be a disconnect between theoretical and actual warfighting.

There has been a definite shift in military doctrine from attrition warfare (which is a

cautious, firepower intensive approach) to maneuver warfare (which emphasizes bold,

opportunistic maneuver). At the same time, in the wake of the Khobar Towers incident,

there is a greater emphasis on force protection. Consequently, a failure to balance force

protection with prudent risk taking that is required in maneuver warfare will prevent U.S.

forces from "walking our talk" when we go to combat. The strategic outputs indicate that

this is a very real possibility.

B. USEFULNESS OF STRATEGIC CULTURE AS AN ANALYTICAL TOOL

This study has been more illustrative than exhaustive. The evidence used has

been purposely limited. Nevertheless, it has shown that strategic culture is definable and

testable. More importantly, this study indicates that strategic culture significantly affects

strategic outputs. Therefore, strategic culture is an important variable to consider when

assessing the enemy and yourself. Knowing the characteristics and consequences of the

enemy's strategic culture will help leaders and planners to assess centers of gravity and

critical vulnerabilities. Knowing our own strategic culture will help us to protect friendly

vulnerabilities, identify inconsistencies in our doctrine, policy, and strategy, and

implement solutions to our problems.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that strategic culture is a viable analytical tool, a logical framework

must be used. I suggest the following:

1. Identify the strategic community that is affected by the strategic culture (e.g.
the NCA, dictator, military planners, etc.).

2. Analyze the sources of the strategic culture (geography, history, worldview of
the regime, economy, organization of the government and military).

3. Identify the characteristics of the strategic culture (e.g. Russia's paranoia about being invaded by a European neighbor).

4. Identify the consequences of the strategic culture and the impact that they will have on the strategic outputs (e.g. Germany's tendency to focus on operations and tactics instead of strategy).

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