Grand Strategy, Culture, and Strategic Choice: A Review

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The Canadian debate on security matters has rarely been discussed as a matter of grand strategy. Indeed, John Gellner once bluntly remarked that there is "no tradition of independent Canadian strategic thought," while Colin Gray would go even further with his memorable term "strategic theoretical parasitism" to describe Canada's penchant for relying on the strategic thinking of its erstwhile allies.[1] Others pessimistically conclude that "recourse to grand strategies" is largely "the prerogatives of the greater states."[2] Yet these views have also come under increasing challenge. For example, Andrew Richter and Sean Maloney provide a strong defence of Canada's military strategy in the early Cold War, though both authors remain less sanguine on the strategic acumen displayed by later governments.[3] Another prominent voice has been former Minister of National Defence David Pratt, who was less shy in describing

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[1] John Gellner, "Strategic Analysis in Canada," *International Journal* Vol. 33, no. 3 (1978): p. 497 and Colin Gray, "The Need for Independent Canadian Strategic Thought," *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, Vol. 1 (1971): p. 6.

[2] Daniel Madar and Denis Stairs, "Alone on Killers' Role: The Policy Analysis Group and the Department of External Affairs," *International Journal* Vol. 32 (1976-77): p. 730.

[3] Andrew Richter, *Avoiding Armageddon: Canadian Military Strategy and Nuclear Weapons, 1950-63* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002) and Sean Maloney, *Learning to Love the Bomb: Canada's Nuclear Weapons during the Cold War* (Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2007).

such behaviour as an example of grand strategy but remained in general agreement that Canada's once vigorous strategy had by the 1960s "appeared to wither on the vine."[4]

To be sure, there is a tendency with these accounts to only acknowledge a Canadian capacity for grand strategy on certain occasions – primarily during the Second World War and early Cold War, when the threats to our national security were clear and unambiguous. There are certainly exceptions to this trend. David Haglund readily acknowledged the consistent and long-term nature of Canada's grand strategy, as evident in Ottawa's long-standing interest in cooperative security and such historic and salient geostrategic metaphors as the "North Atlantic Triangle."[5] And a number of constructivist-inclined scholars arrive at a similar conclusion in their exploration of strategic culture as a key determinant underlying Canada's strategic behaviour.[6] Yet notwithstanding these exceptions, most accounts tend to describe a Canadian government that is in general much less well-versed in either strategic planning or strategic thought – one that tends to emphasize Canadian 'values' rather admit that the country can have something as "grubby" as "self-interested aims in foreign policy," to say nothing of grand strategy.[7] Indeed, despite the fact that many of our scholars have finally begun to pay attention to grand strategy and strategic culture, Canada's scholarly community still has some reflexive inclination to downplay such notions – even if perhaps fewer would now readily agree with the idea that grand strategy requires sufficient "human, industrial, and military resources" or that it "is only found on the side of the big battalions."[8]

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[4] David Pratt, "Is There Grand Strategy in Canadian Foreign Policy: Canadian Grand Strategy – Is There One?" *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* Vol. 10, no. 2 (Winter 2008): p. 5.

[5] David Haglund, "The North Atlantic Triangle Revisited: Canadian Grand Strategy at Century's End," *Contemporary Affairs* Vol. 4 (Toronto: Irwin Publishing Ltd, the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 2000).

[6] Justin Massie, "Making sense of Canada's "irrational" international security policy: A tale of three strategic cultures," *International Journal* Vol. 64, no. 3 (2009): pp. 625-645 and Stéphane Roussel and Jean-Christophe Boucher, "The Myth of the Pacific Society: Quebec's Contemporary Strategic Culture," *American Review of Canadian Studies* Vol. 38, no. 2 (2008): pp. 165-187.

[7] Haglund, *The North Atlantic Triangle Revisited*, p. 10.

[8] J. L. Granatstein, "Can Canada Have a Grand Strategy?" (Paper presented at the Grand Strategy Symposium, Canadian Forces College, Toronto, 6-7 April 2011), http://www.cdfai.org/PDF/Can%20Canada%20Have%20a%20Grand%20Strategy.pdf.

While Canada's foreign policy literature has become increasingly familiar with grand strategy, strategic culture, and other concepts related to matters of strategic choice, many accounts remain disparate in their analysis of these issues and modest in their capacity to generate further dialogue with the wider strategic studies literature. This might be a result of the small and somewhat insular nature of our scholarly community, especially compared to that of our much larger southern neighbour, as well as the fact that strategic studies remains a relatively neglected field of inquiry for this country. Equally, it might also arise from the theoretical limitations inherent in the Canadian foreign policy literature, which David Black and Heather Smith once said contained "significant inadequacies and lacunae" in terms of theoretical accumulation, refinement, and empirical testing – a problem that, despite some notable advances, observers have continued to point out.[9] It, therefore, is a good time to review the wider literature on grand strategy and strategic choice, to take stock of how Canadian scholars have so far dealt with such concepts, and to assess the possible value of this research for Canada's approach to strategic affairs. In undertaking such an analytical review, this paper will provide a useful addition to a Canadian foreign policy literature that, while not adverse to exploring such strategic issues, has been less successful in situating such research within the broader strategic debate.

The paper begins with a conceptual overview of grand strategy to provide a definition of the term that could be applied to middle powers like Canada. The second section examines possible explanations for a state's grand strategy, with specific emphasis on foreign policy and international relations theory. The last section provides an evaluation on the utility of (and conceptual and methodological challenges posed by) strategic culture and the paper concludes with some preliminary thought on how some of these challenges can be overcome.

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[9] David Black and Heather Smith, "Notable Exceptions: New and Arrested Directions in Canadian Foreign Policy Literature," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* Vol. 26, no. 4 (1993): p. 746. On the later point, see Brian Bow, "Paradigms and Paradoxes: Canadian Foreign Policy in Theory, Research and Practice," *International Journal* Vol. 65, no. 2 (2010): pp. 371-380.

Canada and Grand Strategy[10]

In the words of Carl von Clausewitz, "Strategy [is] the use of engagements for the object of the war."[11] This definition has survived remarkably well since the posthumous publication of *On War* in 1832. Colin Gray, for example, makes reference to "the use that is made of force and the threat of force for the ends of policy," while historian John Lewis Gaddis prefers to call it "the process by which ends are related to means, intensions to capabilities, objectives to resources."[12] Despite their slightly different wordings, the Clausewitzian distinction between tactical means and strategic ends remains at the core. True, as even Gray notes, Clausewitz brings forth an emphasis on military engagements that adds to its "operational" or "battlefield" flavour. Yet this concern with bridging tactical and/or operational means to political ends, even if the means are largely military and the ends primarily placed in the context of war, precludes the notion that the Prussian officer was wedded to operational or even tactical thinking.[13]

Signs of a "higher level" of strategy would be more fully spelled out by British military theorist Sir Basil Liddell Hart, who offered a broad conception of tactical or operational means that explicitly includes military *and* non-military instruments of power: "to co-ordinate and direct all the resources of a nation, or band of nations, towards the attainment of the political object of the war."[14] Of course, he was still largely concerned with political ends for the purpose of prosecuting a war and securing the subsequent peace. But by expanding the notion of means to include non-military instruments of power, Liddell Hart did an admirable job in advancing a "grand" perspective of strategy. As he concludes, grand strategy "should take into account of

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[10] Parts of this section will appear in David S. McDonough, "Introduction," in *Canada's National Security in the Post-9/11 World: Strategy, Interests, and Threats*, ed. David S. McDonough (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), forthcoming.

[11] Quoted in Colin Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 17.

[12] Ibid. and John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. viii.

[13] Gray, *Modern Strategy*, pp. 17, 104.

[14] Basil Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd Edition (New York: Signet/New American Library, 1974), pp. 335-336.

and apply the power of financial pressure, of diplomatic pressure, of commercial pressure, and, not least of ethical pressure, to weaken the opponent's will."[15]

Since that time, however, the idea of grand strategy has grown to incorporate a more holistic view of both tactical means *and* political ends. No longer is grand strategy limited to achieving political ends only in the immediate circumstances of war, but can include a much wider set of policy goals during times of both war and peace. "The crux of grand strategy lies in *policy*," notes Paul Kennedy, "that is, in the capacity of the nation's leaders to bring together all the elements, both military and non-military, for the preservation and enhancement of the nation's long-term (that is, in wartime *and* peacetime) best interests."[16] Whether one conceives of the relationship between military and non-military means and political policy ends as a "bridge," a "dialogue," or a "means-ends chain,"[17] grand strategy should not be mistaken for strictly military matters or limited to what Clausewitz calls the "grammar of war."

Yet there is the danger that the definition of grand strategy could be expanded too far. According to some scholars, discussions around grand strategy that includes all available instruments of a state in pursuit of all available political goals would have questionable utility, in so far as the subject would resemble the totality of a country's foreign relations.[18] One solution is to narrow what one includes in the "means" within the wider definitional rubric, in which grand strategy might be concerned with different political policy ends but would be solely focused on the role of military instruments in achieving such goals. Both Robert Art and John Mearsheimer, for example, are advocates of just such a narrow definition.[19]

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[15] Ibid., p. 336.

[16] Paul Kennedy, "Grand Strategies in War and Peace: Towards a Broader Definition," in *Grand Strategies in War and Peace*, ed. Paul Kennedy (Yale University Press, 1992), p. 5 (emphasis in original).

[17] Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p. 17; Colin Gray, "Inescapable Geography," in *Geopolitics, Geography and Strategy*, eds. Colin Gray and Geoffrey Sloan (London: Frank Cass, 1999), p. 169; and Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 13.

[18] Robert Art, "A Defensible Defense: America's Grand Strategy after the Cold War," *International Security* Vol. 15, no. 4 (1991): p. 7.

[19] Robert Art, *A Grand Strategy for America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 2; and John Mearsheimer, *Liddell Hart and the Weight of History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 17.

However, if limited to military instruments of power, grand strategy would begin to resemble nothing so much as military policy. After all, the instrument of military policy would logically be the armed forces, but there is nothing that dictates that the goals of such policy cannot be non-military in nature. This is especially true for a country like Canada, where the diplomatic rationale for its armed forces – as an "adjunct to various non-military techniques of statecraft"[20] – looms large. Indeed, such a narrow definition would be contrary not only to how scholars have generally used grand strategy but also to what certain military historians have termed "strategic policy" or "strategic foreign policy," which was coined in reference to great power behaviour in the pre-war period and in its usage remains virtually synonymous to grand strategy. For example, in his study of Great Britain's strategic policy in the 1920s, John Ferris refers to Whitehall's capacity "to coordinate in a rational fashion the diplomatic, financial and military elements of British strength in order to support its aims as a great power."[21] This broad conception of "means" is reiterated by Keith Neilson, who argues that debate over British strategic foreign policy – defined as "the use of economics, finance, military strength and foreign policy to pursue national goals" – was largely settled in the Defence Requirements Sub-Committee.[22]

A potentially more useful approach is to maintain a broad perspective on the "means" of grand strategy and balance this equation with more restricted political ends.[23] By accepting a narrow set of political ends, it has the benefit of both upholding the traditional meaning of grand strategy and maintaining an important distinction

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[20] James Eayrs, "Future Roles for the Armed Forces of Canada," *Behind the Headlines* Vol. 28, nos. 1-2 (1969): p. 5.

[21] John Ferris, *Men, Money and Diplomacy: The Evolution of British Strategic Policy, 1919-1926* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. xii.

[22] Keith Neilson, "The Defence Requirements Sub-Committee, British Strategic Foreign Policy, Neville Chamberlain and the Path to Appeasement," *English Historical Review* Vol. 118, no. 477 (2003): p. 652. Brian McKercher points to the approval of the expeditionary Field Force to show that the Sub-Committee prioritized continental affairs rather than the Far East, which was contrary to Neilson's view. He also adopted more traditional nomenclature in reference to British "grand strategy." See his "Deterrence and the European Balance of Power: The Field Force and British Grand Strategy, 1934–1938," *English Historical Review* Vol. 123, no. 500 (2008): pp. 98-131.

[23] In some respects, this is precisely what a grand strategy limited to military means implicitly seeks to achieve, as military power is not necessarily usable for all foreign policy ends. But by culling non-military instruments from the equation, this conception also loses a critical core of what made grand strategy unique; that different instruments of statecraft – military, diplomatic and economic – can be synergistically directed towards certain political ends.

from the wider concerns inherent in foreign policy. A good example can be found in the works of Colin Dueck, who argues that grand strategy is a "calculated relationship of ends and means" applied against one or more potential opponents under circumstances in which force might potentially be used. Dueck is also careful to not precipitately discard non-military instruments from this definition, but "only insofar as they are meant to serve the overall pursuit of national goals in the face of potential armed conflict with potential opponents."[24] Clearly, this would make it difficult to mistake grand strategy for foreign policy. The clear emphasis on an opponent also serves as a reminder that strategy, rather than operating in a vacuum, is played against another player who has the ability to react, respond, and potentially undue one's best laid plans, leading to what Edward Luttwak calls its "paradoxical logic."[25]

Grand strategy, as refined by Dueck, also places a strong emphasis on trying to reconcile political ends with *limited* means. Countries do not possess unlimited resources that can be placed at the disposal of policy-makers. Instead, officials must set goals and priorities in a domestic environment characterized by resource scarcity and political constraints.[26] If such a claim applies to the United States, it would be an even more apt description for a small country without the strategic reach and abundant resources of a great power. Instead of defining *grand* strategy in a narrowly material sense, one should instead remember that the crux of the term is actually on *strategy* or the need to match potentially limited means to political ends. David Haglund is indeed right to conclude that grand strategy is "a more urgent imperative for those states that are not bounteously endowed with the material attributes of power."[27]

In addition, it might be an overstatement to assume that only foreign policy concerns that involve conflict and the possible use of force can be considered "in the realm of strategic interaction."[28] For example, the use of force between Canada and the United States had largely become unthinkable for much of the twentieth century, notwithstanding military contingency planning by both countries in the interwar

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[24] Dueck, *Reluctant Crusader*, p. 10.

[25] See Edward Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

[26] Colin Dueck, *Reluctant Crusader: Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 10.

[27] Haglund, *The North Atlantic Triangle Revisited*, p. 7.

[28] Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, p. 10.

period.[29] Relations are now marked by a dizzying array of political, economic, diplomatic, military, and social/cultural linkages. But security is not simply a matter of direct military threat, nor does a security threat only arise as a consequence of an adversary or opponent – a powerful ally can just as easily be a source of genuine concern, and any consequent grand strategy must be prepared to adapt to its reactions and strategic moves.

This broad conception of security concerns lies at the heart of what has been termed the "defence against help" strategy. Introduced by Nils Ørvik in reference to Scandinavia and Canada, this strategy refers to instances where a small state feels threatened by a larger neighbour and therefore builds up its own military capabilities. But the small state, rather than fearing a traditional military threat from its neighbour, is concerned instead with the possibility of "unwanted" help from a larger neighbour that could endanger its sovereignty. This arises in cases where there is a situation of strategic interdependence, where security is indivisible but the smaller state lacks the capability to secure its side independently. In such a scenario, the larger state may be forced to buttress the security of its neighbour, whether unilaterally or by cooperation, in order to address its own security concerns.[30] The threat of unwanted help can range from a relatively benign encroachment on a state's territorial sovereignty to the unilateral provision of military "assistance." But whatever the case, it does seem clear that incorporating a broader view of security – which can encompass direct military threat, unwanted assistance, and the infringement of sovereignty – might prove analytically useful.

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[29] The United States formulated *Plan Red*, officially the Joint Army and Navy Basic War Plan – Red, for a hypothetical war with Great Britain during the interwar period. A central component of *Plan Red* was a pre-emptive invasion of Canada (Plan Crimson) to prevent British use of this territory, especially key military bases like Halifax that could be used to deploy British expeditionary reinforcements and for air attacks against American industrial targets. The Canadian army had meanwhile formulated its own contingency military plan, *Defence Scheme No. 1*, which called for a rapid invasion of the United States – though this plan erroneously assumed that Great Britain would send expeditionary land reinforcements to Canada, when in fact British strategic thinking had little such expectation. See Christopher Bell, "Thinking the Unthinkable: British and American Naval Strategies for an Anglo-American War, 1918-31," *International History Review* Vol. 19, no. 4 (1997): pp. 789-808.

[30] Nils Ørvik, "Defence Against Help – A Strategy for Small States?" *Survival* Vol. 15, no. 5 (1973):pp. 228-231; and "The Basic Issue in Canadian National Security: Defence Against Help, Defence to Help Others," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* Vol. 11, no. 1 (1981): pp. 8-15.

Such a perspective on grand strategy, where the political foreign policy ends are confined to matters of national security but not strictly limited to concerns of a direct military threat, is also not necessarily unknown to recent uses of the concept. For example, Barry Posen is keen to limit discussion of grand strategy to threats that could endanger state security, but he is also careful not to specify what exactly constitutes a security threat, which leaves room for a broader interpretation of security.[31] While keen to emphasize the role of military instruments in grand strategy, Robert Art also does an excellent job of specifying different priorities amongst national interests, and not all threats to these interests are posed by military force.[32]

Questions of national security, interests, and threats to those interests are all integral to actually understanding what constitutes grand strategy. To be sure, Canada has found it difficult to articulate security matters in terms of national interests, let alone grand strategy. Perhaps the best example can be found in the works of R. B. Byers, who coined the memorable term "capability-commitment gap" to criticize Canada's general malaise on security issues. There is perhaps no other term that so nicely encapsulates both the ends-means *dilemma* for Canada, and according to Byers, its ultimate failure to match capability with commitment. He advocated the development of a "security policy" as a means to rectify this strategic deficit. As Byers describes it, security policy is meant to serve as a "bridge" between defence policy and foreign policy, and encompasses "those political-strategic objectives and instruments which have been identified and established by the government as central to national security interests."[33] With its emphasis on a means-ends chain and political-strategic objectives, there can be little doubt that Byers was advocating the adoption of strategy – and grand strategy at that. A definitive account would not be completed by Byers himself, but the concept was refashioned as "international security policy" in a 1995 edited collection.[34]

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[31] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, pp. 13, 220.

[32] See Art, *A Grand Strategy for America*, Chp. 2. The notion that grand strategy should effectively identify a state's national interests can be seen in both Kennedy, "Grand Strategies in War and Peace," p. 5; and Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusion: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 13.

[33] R. B. Byers, *Canadian Security and Defence: the Legacy and the Challenges*, *Adelphi Paper* 214 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1986), p. 5.

[34] See David Dewitt and David Leyton-Brown, eds., *Canada's International Security Policy* (Scarborough, ON: Prentice Hall, 1995).

Since its publication, scholars have found themselves adopting the term international security policy, though more often as a description for Canadian strategic behaviour rather than a prescriptive or heuristic framework device to guide Canada's foreign and defence policies.

Consensus remained elusive as to the strategic content underlying Canadian initiatives on security matters. Some have detected some continuity underlying Canada's approach to international security, as evident in the "internationalist" behaviour pursued by successive post-war governments and the various policy-planning documents that have been released during this period.[35] Yet, most only accept that Canada has demonstrated strategic thinking and action on certain occasions early in the post-war period. As noted earlier, this perspective is readily apparent in the work of Andrew Richter, Sean Maloney, and David Pratt, which can be seen as the most recent examples of that durable narrative concerning Canada's "golden age" of diplomacy – a fact that Pratt himself clearly acknowledged in his reference to a "Golden Age of Canadian Grand Strategy."[36] Indeed, this view was also implicitly featured in accounts that focus on Canada's nuanced position and policies during the Korean and Indochina Wars, two foreign policy episodes that were exemplars of what was termed the country's "diplomacy of constraint."[37] Apart from this aforementioned golden age, most instead detect a notable shift towards a "narcissistic" or "sanctimonious" approach to strategic affairs.[38]

However, there are other scholars who are not only open to the idea of a Canadian grand strategy, but also argue that such strategic acumen is evident in much of Canada's overall behaviour. David Haglund, for example, identifies a Canadian grand strategy that can be best summarized as encompassing a North Atlantic Triangle

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[35] See William Hogg, "Plus ça Change: Continuity, Change and Culture in Canadian Foreign Policy White Papers," *International Journal* Vol. 59, no. 3 (2004): pp. 521-536.

[36] David Pratt, "Is There Grand Strategy in Canadian Foreign Policy: Historical and Theoretical Considerations," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* Vol. 10, no. 2 (Winter 2008): p. 10.

[37] Denis Stairs, *The Diplomacy of Constraint: Canada, the Korean War, and the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); and Douglas Ross, *In the Interests of Peace: Canada and Vietnam 1954-1973* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

[38] Kim Richard Nossal, "Right and wrong in foreign policy 40 years on: Realism and idealism in Canadian foreign policy," *International Journal* Vol. 62, no. 2 (2007): p. 273; and Douglas Ross, "Foreign policy challenges for Paul Martin: Canada's international security policy in an era of American hyperpower and continental vulnerability," *International Journal* Vol. 58, no. 4 (2003): p. 550.

and actualized in key historical and symbolic metaphors – such as the counterweight and the linchpin – that have served to guide policy-makers in Ottawa.[39] He has also been more prone to accept that these strategic principles have steadily underpinned Canadian behaviour over the years, even if he admits that there is a certain "modesty" that "becomes Canadian grand strategy" in more recent decades.[40] Importantly, even among observers who are less willing to countenance the idea that recent government policies could be so labelled, there has been continued effort to prescribe a greater degree of strategic thinking and planning to the Canadian policy process, in the hopes that it could once again be worthy of the term "grand strategy" – one can see this not only with David Pratt's emphasis on the benefits of grand strategy, but also in the writings of Don Macnamara and Ann Fitz-Gerald.[41]

Grand strategy can perhaps best be conceptualized as a means-end "chain" meant to efficiently safeguard national security, in which a state identifies those long-term political foreign policy goals and interests that can be broadly considered security-enhancing, ascertains the threats or challenges to those goals from both adversaries and allies, and utilizes the relevant resources, capabilities and instruments of statecraft (both military and non-military) – in conjunction with the relevant resources, capabilities and policies of allies[42] – for the achievement of these goals. Notably, this definition of grand strategy is not necessarily foreign from the Canadian debate on strategic affairs, even if there is a general preference to follow Byers' lead in using international security policy as the overarching description for the country's strategic behaviour.

While going some way to clarify the meaning of grand strategy, this definition would also benefit from greater methodological rigour by delineating how to best

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[39] See Haglund, *The North Atlantic Triangle Revisited*.

[40] David Haglund, "The NATO of its dreams: Canada and the co-operative security alliance" *International Journal* Vol. 52, no. 3 (Summer 1997): p. 481.

[41] See Pratt, "Canadian Grand Strategy – Is There One?" pp. 1-28; and Don Macnamara and Ann Fitz-Gerald, "A National Security Framework for Canada," *Policy Matters* Vol. 3, no. 10 (2002): pp. 1-27.

[42] Douglas Ross and Christopher Ross, "From 'Neo-Isolationism' to 'Imperial Liberalism': 'Grand Strategy Options' in the American International Security Debate and the Implications for Canada," in *The Dilemmas of American Strategic Primacy: Implications for the Future of Canadian-American Cooperation*, eds. David S. McDonough and Douglas Ross (Toronto: Royal Canadian Military Institute, 2005), p. 165. This point is also hinted at by Liddell Hart, who notes the need to take into account the coordination and direction of "all the resources of a nation, *or band of nations*." Hart, *Strategy*, p. 336 (emphasis added).

conceptualize this esoteric concept. On one hand, grand strategy can be used as an explanatory *concept* that helps shed light on foreign policy *practice*. It can be conceived in a causal fashion, in which grand strategy or strategic doctrine explains why a state undertook a particular action, or in a more heuristic manner that frames national interests and means-ends thinking. A good example is provided by Barry Posen and Andrew Ross' use of a four-fold typology of grand strategies, which added a degree of specificity on the appropriate global role for the United States but can be criticize for its largely untheoretical and heavily descriptive content, which essentially closes off other theoretical explanations for American behaviour.[43] The authors may provide a good descriptive understanding of a state's behaviour and point to different types of foreign policy principles that could guide strategic action, but they are much less successful at identifying the mechanism behind which how grand strategy can explain behaviour.[44] This notion of grand strategy as a heuristically prescriptive device is especially prominent in the Canadian context, as can be seen in the original intention of both Byers and Ørvik in their respective use of "security policy" and "defence against help."[45] More recently, it is also apparent with how Pratt defined grand strategy as an "intellectual construct" or "tool" capable of understanding a country's strategic interests and translating "those long term interests into long term public policy."[46]

On the other hand, one can approach grand strategy as the type of behaviour distinct from foreign policy that needs to be identified and explained. This can include explanations of first-order "strategic adjustments," which denotes major changes in a country's "overall strategic capabilities and commitments," as well as more modest "second-order" adjustments or fluctuations within a given state's grand strategy.[47]

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[43] This typology included neo-isolationism, cooperative security, selective engagement and primacy. See Barry Posen and Andrew Ross, "Competing Visions for US Grand Strategy," *International Security* Vol. 21, no. 3 (1996/97): pp. 5-53.

[44] For example, Posen and Ross label President Clinton's grand strategy as "selective (but cooperative) primacy," which might be a very good description of US foreign policy behaviour, but is lacking as an explanation for that behaviour. In the absence of more rigour, such a descriptive moniker can very quickly degenerate into a post hoc explanation that obscures more than it enlightens.

[45] On the latter, see Philippe Lagassé, "Nils Ørvik's 'defence against help': The descriptive appeal of a prescriptive strategy," *International Journal* Vol. 65, no. 2 (2010): pp. 463-474.

[46] Pratt, "Historical and Theoretical Considerations," p. 2.

[47] Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, pp. 12-13. First-order adjustment is exemplified by the American adoption of an overarching containment strategy directed at the Soviet Union, while second-order adjustments can

Clearly, grand strategy has certain characteristics that make it distinct from foreign policy. First, it has the contradiction of being narrower than foreign policy, with an interest-based formulation of "means" and "ends" that would eschew certain types of foreign policy concerns, and also including a wider array of policy instruments (both military and non-military) capable of connecting seemingly separate policies. Second, it also represents a more rare form of practice that – with its more stringent requirements for policy coherence, recognition of security threats, and an awareness of means and ends – not all countries are able to undertake or require. Third, there is also an implicit prescriptive element, given that a properly conceived grand strategy should, at least according to "realist" precepts that emphasize national interests and the effective use of a state's resources, also result in a more successful set of policies. However, by identifying grand strategy in behaviour rather than as part of a prescriptive toolkit, this conceptualization is also more open to the possibility that a country might behave strategically – without necessarily having an explicit strategic framework or benefiting from tightly coordinated strategic planning in its policy-making process. For example, as historian John Ferris concludes, Great Britain followed a strategic policy in the early 1920s that was derived "from the cumulative effect of a series of uncoordinated decisions" rather than a "first principles" approach that would explicitly define "a strategic policy on which to base all its subsequent decisions."[48]

It would simply be imprudent to simply dismiss grand strategy as being too conceptually broad for use in scholarship. Foreign policy is just as difficult to operationalize, and the same could very easily be said of the concept of power.[49] As long as sufficient attention is paid to questions of definition and identification, there is nothing inherently problematic – even for a middle power like Canada – about using a state's grand strategy as either a prescriptive tool or the object of analysis. If conceptualized in the latter sense, as a description for behaviour that has little preconceived notion as to its explanation, any number of theories designed to explain

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be found in the strategic-doctrinal shifts in administrations pursuing containment (e.g., Eisenhower's New Look, Kennedy's Flexible Response).

[48] Ferris, *Men, Money and Diplomacy*, pp. 11-12.

[49] This last point is found in David Haglund, "What good is strategic culture?" *International Journal* Vol. 59, no. 3 (2004): p. 490.

foreign policy may be used for this inquiry. This could help to minimize the potential that grand strategy may be mistaken for a post hoc explanation.

Explaining Strategic Choice – Part I: Setting the Stage

If grand strategy is indeed a term that could describe behaviour, the subsequent step should be to search for explanations for a state's strategic choice. This would help our understanding of why a state decided to pursue a particular grand strategy and what circumstances that could lead to first- or second-order strategic adjustments. Yet there is little agreement on the sources of strategic behaviour.

One approach is to place explanatory weight on the geopolitical environment, often defined in structural-material terms, as the key factor shaping a state's grand strategy. This position is most clearly articulated in what Kenneth Waltz has famously labelled as "third-image" or "structural" realism.[50] Structural realism posits an anarchical system marked by the risk of violent inter-state conflict. Security is scarce, competition rampant, and states must rely on their own material capabilities for survival. The logic of anarchy creates a "selection effect,"[51] based on a process of socialization and competition, that disciplines state behaviour to follow realist dictums (e.g., internal or external balancing) and leads to consequences for not following such prescriptions (e.g., lower survival rate). As a result, states become undifferentiated or alike in their respective functions, with the distribution of power being the only variable of any consequence. Anarchy and its many consequences – from self-help behaviour to balance of power dynamics – rather than the classical realist notion of *animus dominandi* become the central force guiding strategic behaviour.[52]

Patrick Lennox offers a useful extension of Waltz's approach, with particular applicability for a small country like Canada. He shows that the Canadian-American

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[50] For the seminal account of structural realism, see Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1979). First-image theories place the explanatory onus on human nature, while second-image theories are based largely on state-level factors. For more on the three "images," see Waltz, *Man, the State and War*.

[51] This term is used in Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 151.

[52] John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), p. 19.

relationship, marked by the disparity of material capabilities between the two countries, has elements of a hierarchical ordering principle. Structural specialization theory, as Lennox terms it, "proposes that hierarchical structures can and do form within the broader international anarchy, and that these structures have independent effects on the patterns of state behaviour."[53] Anarchy still exists, and may be especially acute when it involves matters of "high politics." But with the existence of hierarchy within anarchy, it becomes necessary to assess the interplay of both anarchical *and* hierarchical determinants of state behaviour. Hierarchy also reverses Waltz's dictum that states are functionally undifferentiated, as subordinate states are forced to adopt specialization in their foreign policy behaviour for survival. However, Lennox is much less convincing on the applicability of survival in the North American context, which weakens the strength of his structural specialization theory as an explanation for Canada's strategic behaviour.

To be sure, both Lennox and Waltz are also careful to distinguish their structural theories of international relations from a theory of foreign policy or grand strategy. Lennox makes clear that hierarchy is only a "permissive or generative cause of" state behaviour, in this case specialization of "system-ameliorating tasks unsuited to great powers."[54] And according to Waltz, structure can explain "big, important, and enduring patterns"[55] in international relations, but remains a more indeterminate explanation for actual state behaviour. Other non-structural, unit-level variables are required to explain state behaviour, as Waltz most clearly acknowledged early in his career: "So fundamental are man, the state, and the state system…that seldom does an analyst, however wedded to one image, entirely overlook the other two." [56] It is fair to say that this caveat continued to guide his later works, even if it was not so prominently displayed.

Yet this differentiation between a theory of international politics and a theory of foreign policy has not gone unchallenged. For example, according to some observers,

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[53] See Patrick Lennox, *At Home and Abroad: The Canada-US Relationship and Canada's Place in the World* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009), p. 5.

[54] Ibid., p. 11.

[55] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 58.

[56] Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, p. 160.

structural realism contains implicit behavioural assumptions, and this can and should be extended towards the formulation of foreign policy hypotheses.[57] James Fearon states that the very subject of what structural realism purports to explain "is and should be states' foreign policies and their consequences."[58] Colin Dueck meanwhile concludes that "structural realism both requires and implies a theory of state behaviour."[59] John Mearsheimer has perhaps offered the most forceful application of realism as a theory of foreign policy. Anarchy, according to Mearsheimer's "offensive realism," constitutes a far more insecure condition that forces states to "look for opportunities to gain power at the expense of rivals, and to take advantage of those situations when the benefits outweigh the costs."[60] As a result, grand strategies are designed to achieve hegemony.[61]

Yet offensive realism carries certain obvious limitations. It is self-consciously developed as a theory to explain *great power* behaviour. For countries like Canada that lack "hegemonic potential," behavioural expectations are dramatically different, with neither power maximization nor the more modest defensive balancing of Waltz's theory being a feasible strategic option. A more fundamental problem is its central theoretical premise that structural factors alone provide a sufficient explanation for strategic choice. Dueck calls this a "dubious theoretical assumption" and acknowledges that "domestic-level motives and intentions vary from state to state, and that such intentions often have a dramatic and independent impact upon foreign policy behaviour."[62] As Thomas Christensen argues, a neglected component to the realist literature is the potential requirement for a state to mobilize the public behind a grand strategy, which can result in particularly aggressive or ideological strategies.[63] Other scholars have emphasized the interplay between political groups and role of domestic political-

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[57] Colin Elman, "Horses for Courses: Why Not Neorealist Theories of Foreign Policy?" *Security Studies* 6 (1996): pp. 7-53.

[58] James Fearon, "Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy, and Theories of International Relations," *Annual Review of Political Science* Vol. 1, no. 1 (1998): p. 297.

[59] Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, p. 17.

[60] Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p. 21.

[61] Global pretensions of hegemony might eventually result, but this remains unlikely due to the "stopping power of water" and the absence of "clear-cut nuclear superiority." Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p. 145.

[62] Dueck, *Reluctant Crusader*, pp. 17, 18.

[63] Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

military culture to explain less aggressive policies.[64] Ultimately, domestic sources of grand strategy can constitute a wide range of different material and ideational factors, including domestic groups, social ideas, constitutional limitations, historical patterns of behaviour, and domestic political constraints.[65]

Realism is not necessarily adverse to or incapable of using domestic-level variables in its theoretical approach. "Classical realism" is concerned with identifying the bases of foreign policy and has traditionally been open to including domestic and ideational factors alongside that of power – whether John Hertz's advocacy of realist liberalism, E.H. Carr's acceptance of elements of idealism, or even Morgenthau's recognition on the moral limits of state behaviour.[66] Classical accounts may be ill-suited to explain international political outcomes, as their emphasis on domestic-level variables leads to descriptive and "reductionist" forms of explanation. Yet as Waltz himself acknowledges, theories of foreign policy are required to explain how "the units of a system will respond to...[structural and systemic] pressures and possibilities."[67]

Many current "neo-classical realist" scholars have chosen to synthesize the insight of classical and structural approaches to explain particular foreign policy action. The neo-classical approach, while accepting the paramount importance of structural-material influence, also incorporates domestic, cognitive, and ideational factors in its explanations of grand strategy.[68] Structure helps to shape the material contours of the wider geo-strategic environment, which pressures and encourages certain strategic choices. Domestic-level variables, in turn, better reflect the often complicated and

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[64] For example, see Richard Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007) and Thomas Berger, *Cultures of Anti-militarism: National Security in Germany and Japan* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1998).

[65] Richard Rosecrance and Arthur Stein, "Beyond Realism: The Study of Grand Strategy," in *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy*, eds. Richard Rosecrance and Arthur Stein (Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 5.

[66] Classical realist accounts often conceded the need to incorporate idealist elements. See John Hertz, *Political Realism and Political Idealism: A Study in Theories and Realities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951); E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of Onternational Relations*, 2nd Edition (London, Macmillan; New York, St. Martin's Press, 1962); and Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*.

[67] Kenneth Waltz, "Reductionist and Systemic Theories," in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 60.

[68] See Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51, 1 (1998): pp. 144-172.

constrained policy environment facing a state's political leaders in formulating and implementing any grand strategy. Not surprisingly, one can situate a number of scholarly explanations for grand strategy within this canon.[69]

Criticism of neo-classical realism has been particularly vocal from scholars eager to delineate the proper scope of realism in order to protect their own theoretical spheres of inquiry.[70] A particularly astute criticism is the failure of neo-classical realism to go beyond the confines of structural realist theory. Two Canadian observers, for instance, have noted that this theory only seeks to incorporate non-structural intervening factors in anomalous cases where there is a certain "lag" in systemic structural influence, which will ultimately have the "last word in determining the foreign policy of a state."[71] Others argue that neo-classical realism can be conceptualized as a natural and logical outgrowth of structural realism – a "theory of mistakes" that incorporates domestic variables to help explain why some state behaviour diverges from the structural ideal, even if it also entails definite limits on how a country's action can depart from realist predictions.[72]

Yet neo-classical realism, for all its faults, still provides at least good starting point for a theory of foreign policy that could help explain grand strategy. Much like its structural predecessor, the theory offers a rigorously scientific approach to theory-building. Unlike structural realism, it also provides a useful reminder on the need to maintain a more holistic ontological perspective of reality, one capable of understanding the interplay between the international and domestic, the material and the ideational. It is also better suited for detailed and highly specified explanatory accounts of state behaviour. True, it does have a tendency to rely foremost on structural explanations, with domestic and ideational factors largely relegated as supplemental or

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[69] See Colin Dueck's *Reluctant Crusader*, Chp. 1; Christopher Layne's *The Peace of Illusion*, Chp. 1; and Thomas Christensen's *Useful Adversaries*.

[70] See Jeffrey Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, "Is Anybody Still a Realist?" *International Security* Vol. 24, no. 2 (Fall 1999): pp. 5–55.

[71] David Haglund and Tudor Onea, "Sympathy for the Devil: Myths of Neoclassical Realism in Canadian Foreign Policy," *Canadian Foreign Policy* Vol. 14, no. 2 (2008): p. 59.

[72] Quoted in Brian Rathbun, "A Rose by Any Other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism," *Security Studies* Vol. 17, no. 2 (2008): p. 311. This at least raises the question of whether neo-classical realism, by incorporating other variables in order to explain away anomalies to structural realism, can be considered a "progressive" as opposed to "degenerative" theoretical turn – though Rathbun himself rejects such a conclusion.

residual variables to help explain behavioural anomalies. But it would still be premature to simply dismiss the theory as "structural realism in disguise."[73]

That being said, neo-classical realism could also benefit from being more open to the insights of other theoretical approaches, not all of which are necessarily wedded to structural or even material explanations. Social constructivism, for instance, is concerned with the ontological substance of reality and sees the social world being largely ideational and inter-subjective in nature. Many constructivists even accept that the social world has an "indeterminate" material element and have gone so far as to embrace a positivist epistemological lens. Alexander Wendt, for example, posits the existence of a material "corporate" identity for states, and remains an ardent proponent of a positivist "scientific realist" epistemology.[74] Others have adopted an "epistemological affinity with pragmatism" and an attendant "commitment to the idea of social science."[75] True, some constructivists have a certain affinity to "idealist" or normative theorizing and advocate greater dialogue with critical theory or postmodernism.[76] But as Theo Farrell warns, a more prudent approach might be to further engage in dialogue with classical and neo-classical realism.[77]

On the other hand, neo-classical realists should remember that classic and contemporary strategic thought has always been open non-material and non-structural factors. Carl von Clausewitz included five elements of strategy in his analysis, with the moral element – the "intellectual and psychological qualities and influences" affecting any engagement – being no less important than the others.[78] Michael Howard later identified four dimensions of strategy, and was not alone in placing a strong emphasis

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[73] Haglund and Onea, "Sympathy for the Devil," p. 59.

[74] See Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*.

[75] John Gerard Ruggie, "What makes the world hang together? Neo-utilitarianism and the social constructivist challenge," *International Organization* Vol. 52, no. 4 (1998): p. 881. Ruggie goes on to classify himself as an exemplar of "neo-classical constructivism," alongside Wendt's "naturalistic constructivism" and the "post-modern constructivism" of scholars like R.B.J. Walker.

[76] See Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit, "Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Theory and Constructivism," *European Journal of International Relations* Vol. 4, no. 3 (1998): pp. 259-261.

[77] See Theo Farrell, "Constructivist Security Studies: Portrait of a Research Program," *International Studies Review* Vol. 4, no. 1 (2002): pp. 49–72.

[78] Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p. 23. The other factors are physical, mathematical, geographical, and statistical.

on the social character of a nation.[79] As Bernard Brodie once quipped, "Whether with respect to arms control or otherwise, good strategy presumes good *anthropology* and *sociology*."[80] Perhaps most comprehensively, Colin Gray introduces 17 dimensions within a "whole house" of strategy, with this eclectic grouping including people, strategic culture, societal institutions, and domestic politics. As he concludes, the actual number of dimensions is immaterial as long as "everything of importance is properly corralled."[81]

To be sure, these strategists belong to the pre-behavioural methodological era, in which positivism, scientific accuracy, and parsimonious precision are not necessarily prioritized. In Gray's words, "Strategy does not yield to the scientific method."[82] Or as Hedley Bull would comment, "scientific rigour" in strategic studies "does less than justice to the classic tradition of strategic thinking."[83] Structural realists, in contrast, prefer parsimonious and easily measurable structural explanations as part of their commitment to the behavioural revolution. But as neo-classical realists and constructivists have shown, it is possible to adopt scientific methods and embrace a more holistic ontology. Neo-classical realists, notwithstanding some limitations, have ultimately been willing to incorporate domestic and ideational factors into their own analyses. Constructivism meanwhile represents a return to the classical approach and has done so on structural realism's own epistemological and methodological ground.

Despite some methodological shortcomings, it would be imprudent to discount the ontological parameters of the wider "classical" strategic tradition. Such an explanatory approach also nicely corresponds to the wider trend within international relations theory, which has moved away from simplistic parsimonious explanations towards a more holistic ontology. Clearly, there are benefits to being open to variety of structural-material, domestic, and ideational variables, as favoured by the classical

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[79] Michael Howard, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy," *Foreign Affairs* 57 (1979): pp. 976-986.

[80] Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p. 332 (emphasis added). The remaining factors included logistical, operational, and technological.

[81] Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p. 24. The seventeen dimensions include: people, society, culture, politics, economics, logistics, organization, military administration, information/intelligence, strategic theory/doctrine, technology, military operations, command, geography, friction, the adversary, and time.

[82] Colin Gray, "Out of the Wilderness: Prime-time for Strategic Culture," (paper prepared for the Defense Threat Reduction Agency's Advanced Systems and Concepts Office, 31 October 2006), p. 1.

[83] Hedley Bull, "Strategic Studies and Its Critics," *World Politics* Vol. 20, no. 4 (1968): p. 595.

realist approach, and to balance it with the scientific rigour of neo-classical realists and constructivists alike.

Explaining Strategic Choice – Part II: The Promise of Strategic Culture

Culture is identified by Colin Gray as one of his seventeen dimensions of strategy. If not quite contending for an "extraordinary" position within this grouping (as only politics, people, and time do so[84]), the importance of what has been termed "strategic culture" can be inferred by the frequency in which Gray and others have written on it. Strategists are also not alone in their scholarly interest of cultural matters. Culture may have been noticeably absent for much of the debate in international relations, but many within comparative politics have spent significant time and effort to understand the role of "political culture" – a concept that constitutes an important (albeit often unrecognized) conceptual predecessor to strategic culture.

One should also note that culture is no longer such a foreign concept within international relations or security studies. Constructivists, for example, have broadened the scope of the field with their inquiry into the ideational nature of reality and the particular national "identity" of state actors and its role in producing state action. They have also not been averse to using more anthropological or sociological terms like culture. One of their seminal edited collections was the aptly named *The Culture of National Security*,[85] which sought to inculcate greater attention to the cultural and institutional environments in security studies. Indeed, one of the contributors to this collection (Alastair Iain Johnston) would go on to adopt a rigorous and explicitly scientific explanatory method that reignited the current debate on strategic culture, though not in the manner that some traditionalists would necessarily approve.[86] Structural and neo-classical realists, if not quite embracing the independent explanatory power of cultural analysis, have at least conceded that culture is able to "supplement" if

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[84] See Gray, *Modern Strategy*, p. 43.

[85] Peter Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

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

not "supplant" realism.[87] Neo-classical realism, in particular, seems open to research collaboration with more positivist conceptions of strategic culture, especially "epiphenomenal" strategic culture where the goal is to illuminate the importance of cultural factors without necessarily supplanting material-structural conditions favoured by both neo-classical and structural realists.[88]

Strategic culture, with its historic lineage to political culture and a new following due to the "constructivist turn,"[89] provides a useful way to tease out some of the nuances of grand strategy. To be sure, one should be cautious when approaching such a contested concept, lest an inadequate attention to conceptual and definitional clarity leads to a theoretically misinformed account. But with classical strategists, constructivists, neo-classical realists, and even those in the US defence community interested in the concept,[90] there does seem to be good grounds for further exploring strategic culture as a possible research tool.

Strategic culture is formed from the old, often misused, and frequently ambiguous terms "strategic" and "culture," but remains a relatively recent addition in the annals of strategic studies. The actual term was first introduced by Jack Snyder, who in a 1977 report to the RAND Corporation argued that particularly *Soviet* strategic thinking may result in different strategic behaviour. In other words, Soviet strategic culture can be used to explain Moscow's general proclivity towards unilateral approaches to damage limitation, particularly its emphasis on "unrestrained counterforce strikes" and active and passive defences. This "Soviet Strategic Man" is the result of a *cultural* socialization process among its national strategic elite, the members of which acquire through instruction or imitation "ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior."[91] Culture helps to explain why this

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[87] See Michael Desch, "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies," *International Security* Vol. 23, no. 1 (1998): pp. 141-170.

[88] John Glenn, "Realism versus Strategic Culture: Competition and Collaboration?" *International Studies Review* Vol. 11, no. 3 (2009): pp. 523-551. The author goes on to identify four conceptions of strategic culture, with two (epiphenomenal and conventional constructivist) being suitable for significant research collaboration and the other two (post-structuralist and interpretivist) being more problematic.

[89] This phrase is from Jeffrey Checkel, "The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory," *World Politics* Vol. 50, no. 2 (1998): pp. 324-348.

[90] On the last point, see Gray, "Out of the Wilderness," pp. 5-6.

[91] Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Nuclear Options*, R-2154-AF (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1977), pp. 38, 8.

strategic approach tends to persist in spite of environment shifts, though Snyder later acknowledges that such a "vague" concept should only be used in the "last resort."[92]

Snyder's concept of strategic culture certainly broke new ground in both its acceptance of a cultural propensity towards nuclear weapons and the delineation that culture was particular to a small elite community. The notion that ostensibly neutral strategic concepts could be infused with ethnocentrism and a penchant for "mirror-imaging" was a newfound concern in the American strategic community, even if there were historical antecedents.[93] Michael Desch, in his useful critique of cultural approaches, points to the "national character studies" of Axis powers in the Second World War.[94] Even "national role conceptions,"[95] which were popular amongst foreign policy scholars in the 1970 and 1980s, has some resemblance to strategic culture, though being far more generalizable in content. One should also add the concept of political culture, which examined collective psychological "orientations" with cognitive, affective, and evaluative components and sought to challenge the formal legalism that had dominated political inquiry up until that point.[96]

The similarity between political culture and strategic culture goes beyond simple semantics. Strategic culture can very well be termed an ideational "orientation" towards narrow strategic matters, as opposed to broad political issues. And Snyder's emphasis on ideas and emotional disposition can potentially subsume political culture's cognitive, affective, and evaluative components. Moreover, political culture has also been criticized as being an overly vague and even ethnocentric concept that should only be used if structural and institutional explanations have been ruled out.[97] To be sure, there are differences between the two terms. Political culture has been conceived as an

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[92] Jack Snyder, "The Concept of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor," in *Strategic Power: USA/USSR*, ed. Carl Jacobsen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), p. 4.

[93] For more on mirror-imaging, see Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979).

[94] Desch, "Cultural Clash," pp. 144-145.

[95] K. J. Holsti, "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy," *International Studies Quarterly* Vol. 14, no. 3 (1970): pp. 233-309.

[96] See Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

[97] David Elkins and Richard Simeon, "A Cause in Search of Its Effects, or What Does Political Culture Explain," *Comparative Politics* Vol. 11, no. 2 (1979): pp. 127-145.

ideational element distinct from behaviour, while there is still debate whether strategic culture includes "patterns of behaviour" in its definition. But there is still good reason to consider strategic culture as the narrowly defined heir to the political culture – though some scholars like John Duffield apply the older concept to issue-areas that could be equally explained using strategic culture.[98]

Strategic culture has found particular favour amongst scholars sceptical about the promise of a parsimonious structural realism and eager to "move away from a search for universal strategic idioms and towards cultural and strategic relativist approaches."[99] The burgeoning literature on strategic culture is certainly a testament to the scholarly spark provided by Snyder's thoughtful piece, as is the vigorous debate on the nature of strategic culture that has been underway over the last few decades. Alastair Iain Johnston, a prominent if controversial proponent of strategic culture, has usefully identified three separate (if partially overlapping) generations of scholarship within the literature – though this division was introduced in the mid-1990s and does not take into account possible shifts in scholarship since that time.[100]

The first-generation shared Snyder's concern over nuclear matters, but sought to establish a more concrete relationship between strategic culture and nuclear weapons policy. Colin Gray understood strategic culture as constituting "modes of thought and action with respect to force," deriving from the "perception of the national historical experience, aspirations for self-characterization...and from all the many distinctively American experiences…that characterize an American citizen."[101] Gray's goal was to identify a particularly American "national style" on strategic nuclear matters, which was seen as being "astrategic" in nature. But his definition of strategic culture also differed from that of Snyder. For instance, he recognized that America's national style is

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[98] See John Duffield, "Political Culture and State Behavior: Why Germany Confounds Neorealism," *International Organization* Vol. 53, no. 3 (1999): pp. 765-803.

[99] Stuart Poore, "Strategic Culture," in *Neorealism Versus Strategic Culture*, eds. John Glenn, Darryl Howlett, and Stuart Poore (London: Ashgate, 2004), p. 45.

[100] See Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, Chp. 1. This three-fold division has been largely accepted by most other students of strategic culture. Michael Desch does, however, offer an alternative typology that divides cultural theorizing into three waves (Second World War, Cold War, and post-Cold War), and further divides it into specific issue-areas (organization, political, strategic, and global). See Desch, "Culture Clash," pp. 141-170.

[101] Colin Gray, "National Style in Strategy: The American Example," *International Security* Vol. 6, no. 2 (1981): p. 22.

rooted in an older historical tradition, involving its origins as a country, as opposed to Snyder's emphasis on recent Soviet history and civil-military relations. In addition, rather than putting emphasis on the culture of the national security elite, Gray posits that either "the public is a repository of strategic culture, or that the strategic decision makers and the public at large share a strategic culture."[102]

Gray was not alone in seeking to understand strategic culture within the first-generation context. Carnes Lord and David Jones, for instance, followed his lead in their own respective analyses of the American use of military force and Soviet strategic behaviour.[103] But Gray's work certainly embodied the general thrust of the first-generation, in so far as neither Lord nor Jones put forth different assumptions of what constitutes strategic culture – though Jones is more explicit in seeking to explain a broader array of actions beyond nuclear strategy.[104]

Strategic culture remains a broad umbrella concept within the first-generation, incorporating as it does geography, ideology, political culture, socio-economic standing, ethno-cultural make-up, and patterns of behaviour. However, Johnston has been quick to criticize this amorphous definition. As an aggregated set of variables, it is both difficult to disentangle and potentially unfalsifiable. And by including behaviour as an element of culture, it becomes potentially tautological as well.[105] He also criticizes the first-generation's inability to accept more than one strategic culture and its "sweepingly simple conclusion that there is one US strategic culture" that leads to only one type of behaviour.[106]

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[102] Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, p. 8.

[103] See Carnes Lord, "American Strategic Culture," *Comparative Strategy* Vol. 5, no. 3 (1985), pp. 269-293 and David Jones, "Soviet Strategic Culture," in *Strategic Power: USA/USSR*, ed. Carl Jacobsen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), pp. 35-49. Alastair Iain Johnston recognized both Lord and Jones as first-generation strategic culture scholars, and did an in-depth breakdown and critique of their respective works. See his *Cultural Realism*, pp. 8-11. Richard Pipes is an additional potential candidate within the first-generation, though Johnston only mentions but does not explicitly place him as part of his first-generation overview.

[104] See Jones, "Soviet Strategic Culture,"

[105] Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, pp. 12-14.

[106] Ibid., p. 8.

The second-generation of scholarship, which offered a highly critical and even Gramscian-based analysis of strategic culture, is perhaps most notable for emphasizing the potential instrumentality of culture. According to Bradley Klein, strategic culture is better viewed as a form of "cultural hegemony," whereby the American strategic elite propagates a declaratory nuclear doctrine based on mutually assured destruction (MAD) in order to culturally justify an operational "war-fighting" policy.[107] However, such scholars also embody the central problem of the second-generation approach – that elites can be socialized in and even be constrained by their own instrumentally disseminated strategic culture.

The third-generation emerged in the 1990s, and proved to be quite vigorous not only in their respective theoretical approaches, but also in their willingness to expand upon their predecessors.[108] For example, these scholars often opted against explicitly using strategic culture in their analysis. Instead, scholars tended to focus on more narrowly conceived and carefully operationalized cultural variables, often rooted in more recent historical experience than that offered by first-generation scholars, and without including behaviour as part of their definition of culture. The latter point is especially important, as culture can thereby be identified as having an independent and non-tautological *causal* impact on state behaviour. Elizabeth Kier, for example, examines the interplay between the beliefs of civilian elites and the military's organizational culture in the formulation of military doctrine.[109] Other scholars, heeding the warning of the second-generation on instrumental declaratory doctrines, are more explicit in illustrating that their dependent variable is indeed state behaviour rather than doctrine. Jeffrey Legro, for instance, looks at the respective cultures of military bureaucracies – their "collective philosophies of war fighting" – to help explain the varying levels of

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[107] Bradley Klein, "Hegemony and Strategic Culture: American Power Projection and Alliance Defence Politics," *Review of International Studies* Vol. 14, no. 2 (1988): pp. 133-148.

[108] This generation coincided with the constructivist challenge to realism in international relations. As Jeffrey Lantis notes, constructivism brought renewed attention to the question of "identity formation," which involved a number of elements inherent within strategic culture, including "organizational process, history, tradition, and culture." See Jeffrey Lantis, "Strategic Culture: From Clausewitz to Constructivism," *Strategic Insights* Vol. 4, no. 10 (2005): pp. 1-15.

[109] Elizabeth Kier, "Culture and Military Doctrine: France between the Wars," *International Security* Vol. 19, no. 4 (1995): pp. 65-93.

adversarial cooperation in the Second World War.[110] Thomas Berger meanwhile focuses on the anti-militarist political-military cultures of Germany and Japan to explain their own restrained post-war behaviour.[111]

Alastair Iain Johnston, while certainly fulsome in his praise towards the advances of the third-generation, also recognizes its conceptual and methodological weaknesses. For instance, the narrower and less historically grounded definitions of culture make it both closer in content to "belief-systems analysis" and more difficult to compare attendant research outcomes with first- and second-generation scholarship. The definition of culture itself suffers from an additional flaw – by only delimiting options for decision-makers, the third-generation requires other intervening cultural or non-cultural variables to explain actual decisions, which raises further questions on the extent to which individuals are socialized within the dominant cultural trend.[112] Johnston's own research seeks to fill these problematic gaps in third-generation scholarship. Not surprisingly, this involves a carefully delineated argument on the explanatory power of *strategic* culture, as opposed to the eclectic types of cultures examined in the third-generation, with the term strategic *culture* carrying far deeper historical roots more similar to the first-generation than the third. As such, it is certainly curious that Johnston is often grouped in the third-generation, when it is in fact perhaps closer to a *sui generis* example of a fourth-generation of scholarship.[113]

Johnston has clearly offered the most theoretically rigorous and methodologically precise definition of strategic culture, which consists of "an integrated system of symbols…that acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting grand strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in

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[110] Jeffrey Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint During World War II* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

[111] Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism*. Berger is not listed as a third-generation scholar by Johnston, as his research only appeared after Johnston introduced his typology, but his work does feature many similarities to third-generation research.

[112] Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, pp. 20-21.

[113] For example, Jeffrey Lantis refers to Johnston's book *Cultural Realism* as being "often cited as the quintessential third generation work on strategic culture," though he also notes that it contains "unconventional research approaches". Lantis, "Strategic Culture". In contrast, Stuart Poore has noted Johnston's identification of a third-generation of scholarship without necessarily placing Johnston within this grouping. See Poore, "Strategic Culture," pp. 57-62.

interstate political affairs."[114] This definition not only directly associates strategic culture with grand strategy behaviour, but also delineates strategic culture as constituting only ideational causal variables (e.g., a set of symbols). Johnston is also careful to specify "strategic-culture objects" such as texts, documents, doctrines, over which a scholar can perform content analysis to assess the grand strategy preferences embedded in these cultural artefacts.

Johnston's methodology, for all its admirable sophistication, has proven to be controversial. As he himself notes, content analysis of strategic-culture objects should begin "at the earliest point in history,"[115] which explains his unusual approach of focusing on the strategic culture and grand strategy of the Ming dynasty. The attendant difficulty and debatable relevance to the current policies of states likely explain why so few scholars have chosen to follow his lead. One can certainly concede that the separation between strategic culture and behaviour makes any notion of cultural causality far more robust. But it has also been vehemently questioned by a number of scholars eager to demonstrate that, while methodologically rigorous, Johnston's approach remains fundamentally problematic.

Colin Gray, for example, has criticized Johnston's methodological distinction between culture and behaviour as contradictory from both a standard linguistic perspective and more sophisticated sociological definitions. As he bluntly remarks, Johnston's approach "contains errors of a kind that... are apt to send followers into an intellectual wasteland."[116] Instead, Gray offers "strategic culture as context," in which culture is "both a shaping context for behaviour and itself as a constituent of that behaviour."[117] The mutually-constitutive relationship between strategic culture and behaviour does carry some methodological limitations. This fact is clearly recognized by Gray, who displays a remarkably interpretive strain in his argument for "understanding" rather than strictly "explaining" strategic behaviour through the

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[114] Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, p. 36.

[115] Ibid., p. 40

[116] See Gray, "Strategic Culture as Context," p. 51.

[117] Ibid., p. 50.

strategic cultural lens.[118] It is, however, precisely this interpretive understanding of methodology that Johnston questions in his rebuttal. Rather than accepting this divide between understanding and explaining, it is his contention that descriptive understanding entails an implicit explanation. As Johnston goes on to point out, any recognition that behaviour can be triggered by other factors – as Gray implicitly accepts – requires a methodology that can accept the possibility that culture does not matter.[119]

But despite the cogency of his response, this methodological and inter-generational debate between Johnston and Gray appears to have resulted in little actual conclusion. Johnston never did follow Snyder's example by issuing a *mea culpa* on the utility of strategic culture. But it is notable that his attention soon shifted to issues of institutions and social identity, which avoid some of the more troubling associations with behaviour that still bedevil cultural explanations.[120] And Gray appears to have sidestepped these methodological issues altogether and instead focused on guiding a number of studies commissioned by the US Defense Threat Reduction Agency to explore the applicability of strategic culture to WMD decision-making.[121] Rather than focusing either on theoretical content or a properly delineated methodology, this work essentially favours practical or policy-driven analysis of strategic culture. In that sense, they do share some similarity to other more tentative accounts that detail the possible construction of a transnational European strategic culture, which was explicitly called for in the 2003 European Union Security Strategy.[122] Yet this does not mean that there are no theoretically-informed accounts of strategic culture. For example, Jeffrey Lantis and Andrew Charlton have not only situated strategic culture more firmly within the constructivist literature, but also offered an explanatory model of cultural change that incorporates both the realist emphasis on geostrategic influence and the constructivist

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[118] The distinction between explanation and interpretation, which Gray and others invoke, is in reference to Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[119] Johnston, "Strategic cultures revisited," pp. 519-523.

[120] This point is raised in Christopher Twomey, "Lacunae in the Study of Culture in International Security," *Contemporary Security Policy* Vol. 29, no. 2 (2008): p. 348.

[121] See Gray, "Out of the Wilderness," p. 9. The Defence Threat Reduction Agency commissioned a number of essays to formulate a Comparative Strategic Culture Curriculum.

[122] See Adrian Hyde-Price, "European Security, Strategic Culture, and the Use of Force," *European Security* Vol. 13, no. 4 (2004): pp. 323-343.

use of discourse analysis.[123] Yet even this otherwise astute piece of writing refrains from directly grappling with some of the methodological issues raised by Gray and Johnston.

While largely sidestepped by many contemporary accounts of strategic culture, this debate has not necessarily been totally dormant. Stuart Poore sought to add another perspective by offering an even more fundamental rejection of positivism than Gray – an ideational and interpretivist perspective that accepts "context all the way down."[124] An alternative approach, largely advocated by Canadian scholars of strategic culture, seeks to bridge the gulf between Gray and Johnston. To do so, it adopts the concept of "explicative understanding," which accepts that the gulf between "understanding" or interpreting reality through use of description and scientifically "explaining" reality through notions of causality – embodied as it is by Gray and Johnston, respectively – as being overdrawn.[125] This approach recognizes that understanding is actually a "prerequisite" for causal explanations and acknowledges that social scientific explanations often consist "in such interpretations of the raw material of their research." Explanations are still possible in social scientific inquiry, but they are more contingent and "peculiar" in character.[126]

On one hand, this perspective is deeply sympathetic to Gray's criticism of Johnston's "overtly positivist" methodological approach. As Alan Bloomfield and Kim Richard Nossal note, the distinction between culture and behaviour is both "inconsistent" with ordinary definition of culture and fails to recognize the difficulty of separating "ideational factors from behaviour" in a world "so inherently complex."[127] Indeed, David Haglund describes the explicative potential of using strategic culture as context, which by "systemic understanding conveyed through interpretation" can help

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[123] Jeffrey Lantis and Andrew Charlton, "Continuity or Change: The Strategic Culture of Australia," *Comparative Strategy* Vol. 30, no. 4 (2011): pp. 291-315.

[124] Stuart Poore, "What is the context? A reply to the Gray-Johnston debate on strategic culture," *Review of International Studies* 29 (2003): p. 282.

[125] Haglund, "What good is strategic culture?" p. 489.

[126] George Henrik von Wright, *Explanation and Understanding* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), pp. 135, 134. The author rejects a sharp methodological and epistemological divide in the "explanation-understanding controversy," and instead posits that the central issue is the ontological character of their objects – whether the object is intentional or non-intentional.

[127] Alan Bloomfield and Kim Richard Nossal, "Towards an *Explicative Understanding* of Strategic Culture: The Cases of Australia and Canada," *Contemporary Security Policy* Vol. 28, no. 2 (2007): p. 287.

identify "things in foreign policy we might otherwise have missed."[128] On the other hand, there is recognition that more can be done than simply the interpretive description of strategic culture. As Haglund goes on to write, it is possible to conceive of culture not only as an interpretivist context that subsumes behavioural patterns, but also in a more strictly ideational cognitive or symbolic capacity, which would allow it to be applied in the causal manner greatly valued by positivists. [129] This might not entail forthright agreement on the particular methods offered by Johnston, but methodological disagreement does not necessarily entail a rejection of a positivist epistemology.

Canadian scholars have certainly been at the forefront of this effort to inculcate explicative understanding over the country's strategic culture, and many of their accounts have demonstrated an admirable degree of sophistication, whether by exploring Canada's regional cultures or by comparing the country's strategic culture with that of our strategic cousin Australia.[130] A good example is Justin Massie's examination of Canada's multiple cultures, which has the ambitious goal of further explicating the "causal path between state identity and strategic behaviour."[131] Yet even these accounts have more success as insightful descriptions of Canadian foreign policy, capable of providing insight on the nature and even perhaps motivation underlying Canada's policies without being entirely convincing as a causal explanation for it. Indeed, the strategic culture literature continues to have some limitations as a tool to garner scientifically valid explanatory inferences. As Christopher Twomey argues, strategic culture often lacks the specificity required for use as causal variables, pays insufficient attention on how policy-makers actually choose amongst multiple cultural inclinations, and by seeking to explain actual behaviour as opposed to preferences or interests, makes an intellectual leap from belief to behaviour with insufficient attention on the domestic policy process itself.[132] Ultimately, explicative understanding may be a worthwhile goal, but it cannot obscure the fact that analysis is often far more successful

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[128] Haglund, "What good is strategic culture?" p. 499.

[129] Ibid., pp. 499-500.

[130] See Roussel and Boucher, "The Myth of the Pacific Society," pp. 165-187 and Nossal and Bloomfield, "Towards an *Explicative Understanding*," pp. 286-307.

[131] Massie, "Making sense," p. 630.

[132] Twomey, "Lacunae in the Study of Culture," pp. 338-357.

at descriptive *understanding*, even as its promise of *explicative* explanation remains more a work in progress.

Conclusion

Grand strategy offers a promising analytical tool for scholars of Canadian foreign policy, whether as a heuristic device to make sense of a country's collection of foreign, defence, and security policies, or alternatively as a description for such strategic behaviour. There are certainly much to be commended with both approaches, though the latter use of grand strategy has the benefit of opening up the theoretical inquiry to different types of explanations – an especially important endeavour if one has the objective of going beyond descriptive or interpretive understanding to more positivist and explanatory research designs. And as this review goes on to illustrate, an explanation of grand strategy rooted in a holistic concept like strategic culture seems equally appropriate, especially given that it corresponds nicely to the holistic ontological approach being advocated, to varying degrees, by an eclectic group of neo-classical realists, constructivists, and classical strategists. Indeed, methodological qualms on the utility of strategic culture can be seen not as a reason to dismiss or ignore it, but rather as a *raison d'être* to better refine it with further research and analysis.

One possibility, raised by Twomey, is to identify more than one strategic culture at play in a country's polity. This would better reflect the "plethora of different national cultural themes that compete and interact throughout different elements of society,"[133] while also ensuring that culture is not tautologically reduced to the behaviour that it is meant to explain. Yet even this approach can easily degenerate into a taxonomy of different strategic cultures, which has certain conceptual and methodological limits as model of explanation. To avoid reifying descriptive categories, it might be useful to conceptualize and differentiate these cultures based on degree more than kind. This opens up the possibility that strategic culture would resemble something approaching a continuum – rather than a culturally-based typology – of varying strategic inclinations and patterns of behaviour. Of course, much depends on whether a country's strategic cultures are truly amenable to such a re-conceptualization, though Canada's cultural

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[133] Ibid., p. 350.

tendencies that range from continentalism with the United States to internationalism on either a trans-Atlantic or UN basis provides a possible hint at how such an approach could be applied.

In turn, this approach also requires further refinement to understand why one strategic culture (or set of inclinations and behaviour patterns), happens to be the dominant source of a country's grand strategy at a particular point in time. To do so, strategic culture could benefit from incorporating the insight of theories of foreign policy, which are designed to make sense of the domestic decision-making process and how different policies and behaviour actually emerge from this process. For example, bureaucratic politics offers a potentially useful way to show how organizational forms of culture might affect policy – in the Canadian case, between External Affairs and National Defence.[134] By applying cybernetic theory, one could alternatively illustrate how strategic culture becomes regularized as standing operational doctrines that the policy process selects and implements in accordance to a cybernetic pattern.[135] One can also turn to theories more associated with international relations such as constructivism, as shown by Lantis and Charlton's examination of elite framing and discourse.[136] Dialogue with explanatory theories, mid-range or otherwise, would add a greater degree of specificity to strategic culture that has often been lacking, all the while helping to fill in some of the blanks in how culture actually leads to grand strategy.

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[134] For example, see David Dewitt and Jeffrey Plante, "National Defence vs. Foreign Affairs: Culture Clash in Canada's International Security Policy?" *International Journal* Vol. 59, no. 3 (2004): pp. 579-595.

[135] See David S. McDonough, "Ambivalent Ally: Culture, Cybernetics, and the Evolution of Canadian Grand Strategy," (PhD diss., Dalhousie University, 2011).

[136] Lantis and Charlton, "Continuity or Change," pp. 291-315.