Research Project: Culture and Violent Political Action

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Abstract

Understanding the relationship between norms, culture and power is a challenging task, given the prolific and complex nature of these terms. Norms inform the way we think, behave and react, and by their internalization (or rejection), we generate our culture, through a process of socialization. Culture informs our social psyche; our hopes, mores, aspirations, fears and dreams; these find expression in art, music, entertainment, literature, politics and more. Power is the ability to get others to do what we wish, through a variety of means. At the state level (hard power), these means include military and economic channels. But are there different forms of power (soft power) based on different means? Can culture provide a source from which a different kind of power can be developed? That a relationship between norms, culture and power exists is apparent; how this relationship works is the subject of this study.

Résumé

Il est difficile de comprendre le lien qui unit les normes, la culture et le pouvoir, étant donné la nature vaste et complexe de ces termes. Les normes orientent la manière dont nous pensons, nous comportons et réagissons. Ainsi, lorsque nous les intériorisons ou les rejetons, notre culture se crée par un processus de socialisation. La culture développe notre psyché sociale, c'est-à-dire nos espérances, nos mœurs, nos aspirations, nos peurs et nos rêves. Nous exprimons ces notions dans l'art, la musique, le divertissement, la littérature, la politique, etc. Le pouvoir, quant à lui, est la capacité d'inciter les autres à faire ce que nous souhaitons par divers moyens. Au niveau étatique (pouvoir coercitif), les moyens employés sont souvent de nature militaire ou économique. Toutefois, existerait-il d'autres formes de pouvoir (pouvoir persuasif) qui feraient appel à d'autres moyens? La culture peut-elle générer un autre type de pouvoir? Puisqu'il apparaît qu'il existe bel et bien un lien entre les normes, la culture et le pouvoir, la présente étude vise à élucider la façon dont ce lien fonctionne.

Executive summary

Research Project: Culture and Violent Political Action:

George Heng; DRDC Toronto CR 2011-043; Defence R&D Canada – Toronto; April 2011.

Understanding the relationship between norms, culture and power is a challenging task, given the prolific and complex nature of these terms. Norms inform the way we think, behave and react, and by their internalization (or rejection), we generate our culture, through a process of socialization. Culture informs our social psyche; our hopes, mores, aspirations, fears and dreams; these find expression in art, music, entertainment, literature, politics and more. Power is the ability to get others to do what we wish, through a variety of means. At the state level (hard power), these means include military and economic channels. But are there different forms of power (soft power) based on different means? Can culture provide a source from which a different kind of power can be developed? That a relationship between norms, culture and power exists is apparent; how this relationship works is the subject of this study.

To address this inquiry, we studied monographs from several areas – sociology, anthropology, psychology, cultural theory and political science. The interdisciplinary approach was necessitated by the topic. Some of the theories and analytical approaches that proved to be useful in developing this report included: Evolutionary theory, terror management theory, mortality salience, Huntington's clash of civilizations, Nye's soft power theory, Booth's ethnocentrism and strategy, and Haas' epistemic communities.

The research supports the argument that there is a close connection between norms, culture and power. The precise manner in which this comes to pass is the subject of further study and theoretical modeling. However, based on the research, a few key insights have emerged:

a. The structure of a society's language and the process of communication is vital in understanding its culture. Many contexts, traditions and practices may seem otherwise alien, and possibly intimidating. Without communication, culture (and by extension, political power) cannot exist. Subsequently, the development of social networking and other media channels are fundamental to the growth of culture.

b. Foreign cultures may have intellectual and learning traditions (cognitive practices too) vastly different from our own. An understanding of these traditions allows us to understand the thinking behind those cultures.

c. Culture is used a means to manage the terror we experience when faced with our mortality.

d. When we speak of "culture," we must realize that the term no longer refers to a community that is geographically bounded or even ethnically homogenous. Transnational cultures are very much alive and thriving.

e. Evolutionary theory provides a framework of tools with which we can better understand norms and culture. Its foundation may not be empirical, but its theoretical approach is nonetheless useful.

f. The concepts of soft power and smart power may redefine how we view culture and political power in general. More emphasis and resources should be channelled towards developing soft power's "core currencies."

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Projet de recherche : La culture et le pouvoir politique axés sur la violence

George Heng; RDDC Toronto CR CR 2011-043; R & D pour la défense Canada – Toronto; Avril 2011.

Il est difficile de comprendre le lien qui unit les normes, la culture et le pouvoir, étant donné la nature vaste et complexe de ces termes. Les normes orientent la manière dont nous pensons, nous comportons et réagissons. Ainsi, lorsque nous les intériorisons ou les rejetons, notre culture se crée par un processus de socialisation. La culture développe notre psyché sociale, c'est-à-dire nos espérances, nos mœurs, nos aspirations, nos peurs et nos rêves. Nous exprimons ces notions dans l'art, la musique, le divertissement, la littérature, la politique, etc. Le pouvoir, quant à lui, est la capacité d'inciter les autres à faire ce que nous souhaitons par divers moyens. Au niveau étatique (pouvoir coercitif), les moyens employés sont souvent de nature militaire ou économique. Toutefois, existerait-il d'autres formes de pouvoir (pouvoir persuasif) qui feraient appel à d'autres moyens? La culture peut-elle générer un autre type de pouvoir? Puisqu'il apparaît qu'il existe bel et bien un lien entre les normes, la culture et le pouvoir, la présente étude vise à élucider la façon dont ce lien fonctionne.

Aux fins de l'étude, nous avons consulté des monographies de sociologie, d'anthropologie, de psychologie, de théorie culturelle et de science politique. Pour ce travail, il a fallu employer une approche interdisciplinaire. Parmi les théories et les méthodes analytiques qui se sont avérées utiles pour la rédaction du présent rapport, soulignons celles-ci : la théorie de l'évolution, la théorie de la gestion de la terreur, la conscience de la mort, le Choc des civilisations de Huntington, la théorie du pouvoir persuasif de Nye, la stratégie et l'ethnocentrisme de Booth, et les communautés épistémiques de Haas.

La recherche indique qu'il existe un lien étroit entre les normes, la culture et le pouvoir. La détermination de la nature précise de ce lien exigerait cependant l'exécution d'une étude plus poussée ainsi que l'élaboration d'un modèle théorique. Néanmoins, la recherche nous a permis d'établir les constats suivants :

a. Pour comprendre la culture d'une société donnée, il est essentiel de connaître la structure de sa langue et de son processus de communication. Sans cela, beaucoup de contextes, de traditions et d'activités peuvent sembler étranges, voire intimidants. Sans la communication, la culture (et, par extension, le pouvoir politique) ne peut exister. Ensuite, le développement de réseaux sociaux et d'autres voies de communication ont une importance fondamentale dans la croissance de la culture.

b. Certaines cultures étrangères ont des traditions intellectuelles et pédagogiques très différentes des nôtres. La connaissance de ces traditions nous permet de mieux comprendre la pensée qui se cache derrière ces cultures.

c. La culture nous aide à gérer la terreur que nous ressentons lorsque nous sommes confrontés à l'inéluctabilité de notre propre mort.

d. Lorsque nous évoquons le mot « culture », nous devons réaliser que ce terme ne se limite plus à désigner une communauté délimitée géographiquement ou ethniquement homogène. Il existe des cultures transnationales bel et bien vivantes et prospères.

e. La théorie de l'évolution fournit un cadre qui nous permet de mieux comprendre les normes et la culture. Bien que sa fondation ne soit pas empirique, son approche théorique n'en demeure pas moins utile.

f. Les concepts associés au pouvoir persuasif et intelligent pourraient redéfinir la façon dont nous envisageons la culture et le pouvoir politique en général. Il serait bon d'investir davantage d'efforts et de ressources dans l'élaboration de principes fondamentaux du pouvoir persuasif.

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1   Introduction

We live in a world dominated by military and economic might. Irrespective of the systems of governance involved (from liberal democracies to autocracies and all variations in-between), nation states primarily devote themselves to being strong from a military or economic standpoint (or both). However, what if there were another mode of national "strength," hitherto overlooked, or untapped; a "social strength," which is as pervasive as it is influential? What if culture is more than the mere sum total of our national social consciousness but also shapes our thinking, behaviour and relations with other peoples in subtle ways not hitherto considered? And what if culture could be harnessed or exploited as a source of power?

The original scope of the inquiry is essentially threefold: first, to address the issue of how individual motivation becomes widely shared and transmitted at the cultural level; second, to examine how culture works to produce and bound political behaviour; and third, to assess the role and importance of cultural organization as a political tool.

Before we can delve into the inquiry proper, we must first appropriately frame the study and identify the terms that require further clarification. Certain assumptions may have to be made in the process. To begin with, when we speak of "the sharing and transmission of individual motivation at the cultural level," we are actually discussing how social norms are generated, shaped and shared.

As political behaviour or action may be seen as an extension or representation of power, in a study of how culture "works to produce and bound political behaviour," and its subsequent role and importance as a political tool, we are in essence examining how culture may effect and affect power (in particular violent political action). It is thus pertinent to determine if and how norms, culture and power interact and intersect, and the types of relationships they may share.

1.1 Objective and research question

Consequently, the objective of this study is to examine and determine the nature of the relationship between norms, culture and power. However, as culture permeates all facets of society, and provides "tools, habits and assumptions that pervasively influence human thought and behaviour" (Tweed and Lehman, 2002, 89), the primacy of culture shall be emphasized. Given its fundamental role in this inquiry and its potential relationship with violent political action, we can thus formulate the research question: How can culture be exploited to effect and affect political power?

Some of the secondary objectives that this report hopes to address include:

- How norms are developed and transmitted
- The nature of culture

- The endogenous and exogenous elements that can affect the relationship between norms, culture and power (in the context of violent political action)

This report shall be organized in the following manner: first, we examine some definitions of key terms; this is followed by sections examining the concepts of norms, culture and power. Within these sections, we further examine social elements or phenomena that may impinge on these three poles. Finally, we discuss the significance of these findings, suggest potential implications from policy and military perspectives, as well as areas of possible future study.

1.2 Some definitions

From an epistemological standpoint, it would thus be worthwhile to specify what we mean when we say "norm," "culture," and "power" which can exist in several iterations. For the purposes of this study however, it is pointless to be embroiled in theoretical and controversial arguments surrounding the terms; rather, the objective here is to ontologically ascertain or derive working definitions of these wide and potentially elusive concepts, and proceed with the inquiry at hand.

Norms for example, have been in the past very loosely defined although much reference has been made to them. To shed some light in this area, some scholars have attempted to classify or suggest a typology of norms (Gibbs, 1965, 586); while such exercises are beyond the scope of our inquiry, it is worth gaining a clearer understanding of what norms are, how they work, and their relationship to culture.

Simply put, norms are rules or standards that govern our conduct, in the social situations in which we participate. It is a societal expectation, a standard to which we are expected to conform whether we actually do so or not (Bierstedt, 1963, 222). Norms are blueprints for behaviour, setting limits within which individuals may seek alternate ways to achieve their goals. Norms are based on cultural values, which are justified by moral standards, reasoning, or aesthetic judgment (Broom & Selznick, 1963, 68). However, one may argue that the opposite is also true, that cultural values are as much based on norms. While there is no definitive or "correct" answer in examining this relationship, the point to note is that a level of complementarity and symbiosis exists between culture and norms, and how the one may perpetuate the other.

What of culture? Such a nebulous term requires that we pay some attention to defining its boundaries and limits. For our purposes, culture can be thought of as the totality of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought. It is the set of inherited beliefs, attitudes and moral strictures that a people use to distinguish outsiders, to understand themselves and to communicate with each other (Munger, 2006, 134). We teach culture to our children, or they learn it by tacit and perhaps unconscious exposure over time. But it makes sense to think of culture as an inheritance, or legacy from the past (Munger, 2006, 134).

It also pays to be specific. Culture, like every social phenomenon must be examined within its context as well; for example, when we speak of "culture," are we referring to a specific geographical location? From the definitions above, it would not appear so, and yet we often think of culture as nationally bounded (American culture, Swiss culture and so forth). What of Diasporas and other iterations of culture that transcend national boundaries? Do we instinctively assume that cultures are always "internally homogenous and externally distinctive" (Hermans, 1998, 1117)? What about sub-cultures that exist amongst non-state actors like hacker or programmer communities? Would transnational cultures exhibit the same behaviours and predispositions as the nationally bounded ones? Indeed, the idea of diaspora is "attractive in the sense that it offers a progressive possibility for a non-essentialized self, and can break the supposed fixed relationship between place and identity" (Carter, 2005, 54). The geographical aspect and notions of national identity are distinctions worth examining. For the purposes of this inquiry, when the term "culture" is used, we refer to the conventional understanding of the word, that it is geographically bounded, although unspecified.

Power, which has several different iterations itself, is somewhat more tangible as a concept. While it may have various manifestations, power is broadly understood as the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcomes one wants (Nye, 2004, 2). For our purposes, this report shall adopt the framework of related terms popularized by Nye – hard (military, economic), soft (attractive power), and smart power (the ability to effectively deploy both) – to frame the nature of the discussion.

Based on the above working definitions, we can begin to explore the nature of the relationship that exists between norms, culture and power. It would be unrealistic to assume that social phenomena can develop in a vacuum; however, the symbiotic nature of the social elements being studied suggests that they may be complementary and perpetuate one another. Accordingly, a cyclical relationship can be tentatively juxtaposed in the following relational diagram:

Figure 1: The relationship between norms, culture and power

When normative behaviours of individuals in a society are generated, developed and transmitted, their outcomes shape the culture they reside in, which in turn can effect and affect political power. This subsequently influences the society and its environment, thereby conditioning and

constraining individuals' behaviour along certain trajectories, and initiates the cycle once again, albeit with different results per cycle due to the multitude of variables that may shape behaviour. What is interesting is that the clockwise movement in the relational triangle is not mutually exclusive; a counter-clockwise movement could as easily apply – norms create, shape and develop power, which in turn influences culture, which subsequently creates the environment where future norms are generated and redefined. Whichever direction the relational diagram flows, there appears to be an implied relationship between the three poles, one that will hopefully become clearer as this study progresses.

If we admit the above schema and diagram, then it would be logical to assume that any endogenous or exogenous force or element that can affect the proposed model is relevant to the study and should at least be identified if not examined. This would help determine the limits and extent of the power that is created by culture. It would also help determine the social critical nodes – from a security perspective – that may warrant further study.

1.3   A brief overview

A snapshot of the literature review conducted reveals the following, which shall be examined in greater detail in the corresponding sections. With regard to norms, for example, it has been suggested that the phenomenon of localization can affect global norm transmission and internalization in certain circumstances (Acharya, 2004, 241). As such, it is conceivable that regional groups or communities may modify imported norms before they are integrated into the former's belief systems or institutions. This is important simply because norms can be a significant factor in how they shape culture, and consequently, shape power.

Some studies suggest that through the use of storytelling, communities can become empowered enough to challenge existing dominant social structures or institutions (Williams et al, 2003, 36). In effect, the storytelling process enables groups to experience cultural transitions, and move from one social state to another (i.e., disempowered to empowered). Would such a schema be relevant, say, to the recruitment and conversion of civilians into armed militants in terrorist or extremist groups? Through the telling of stories, and the creation of a history, a group or community's right to exist and code of conduct can be legitimized. The creation of such a mythology can enable groups to validate seemingly unthinkable actions; indeed, some groups may use culture itself as a justification for violence (Schiller, 2001, 2).

The co-evolution of the ecological and symbolic environment may be germane to the development of intellectual traditions, and thus cultural paradigms, schemas or worldviews, as other scholars suggest (Lehman et al, 2004, 695). If this supposition is empirically sound, then there may be correlations between where a culture originates and the way it thinks and behaves. This in turn, has significant consequences from a strategic or security studies perspective, and in particular, when performing threat assessment.

Are some cultures more predisposed towards certain behaviours? Would this help explain the complex relations and balance of power between say, China and the United States? Several studies claim that an East Asian as opposed to a Western European learning mindset exists; a "Confucian vs. Socratic learning tradition" (Tweed & Lehman, 2002, 89). Tweed and Lehman (2002, 89-99) further provide a comprehensive overview of the literature that supports this thesis: that a distinct and unique learning (intellectual) tradition exists within East Asian and Western cultures. This is significant simply because it suggests that learning traditions embedded within other cultures may similarly exist. If so, can we better understand the predispositions towards violence (as a learned behaviour) by studying the culture in question more closely, and attempting to discern the learning and intellectual tradition that resides within?

What about individuals who straddle two or more cultures? Evidence suggests that bicultural individuals can switch the cultural frame within which they operate depending on cues in the situation (Hong et al, 2000, 710), in effect rendering them more adaptive and "chameleon-like" in cultural and social environments. This is noteworthy given the ancestral mix and heritage that most individuals possess in our globalized world. If specific people are identified as security threats, bicultural or multicultural individuals may need to be assessed or profiled based on a different set of rules or criteria, as they may be more psychologically and socially adaptive.

Other studies suggest that religion may be used as a "cultural strategy" to mobilize individuals or members of certain at-risk groups (Wood, 1999, 308) – we have seen multiple historical and current examples of this in our world. A better understanding of these strategies may shed light on how the effects of religious-based groups can be countered. Ultimately, the role of culture may take centre stage in the development and deployment of "smart power" (Wilson, 2008, 115) as opposed to "soft power" or "attractive power" (Nye, 2004, 6) – since conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have demonstrated that hard power alone cannot get the job done, or "win the war."

What is the significance of these theories to our inquiry? To recapitulate, based on the preceding review, it is reasonable to suggest that a relationship between the three poles of our study – norms, culture and power (political action) – exists; as such, in the construction of a theoretical model of culture and power, an examination of the social elements that disrupt or enhance these poles is germane.

Given the enormity of the task, this study may not be able to create the model itself, but may be able to lay the foundation for its development, suggest directions in which to proceed, as well as highlight further questions that would require answering. The following sections shall examine in greater detail some of these social elements, and how they may interact with one another. Visually, the task can be represented by a modification to the earlier relational diagram. Note that social elements as a variable may circulate, change or evolve over time; effectively, this means that different elements may affect norms, culture and power differently at different stages in a society's history.
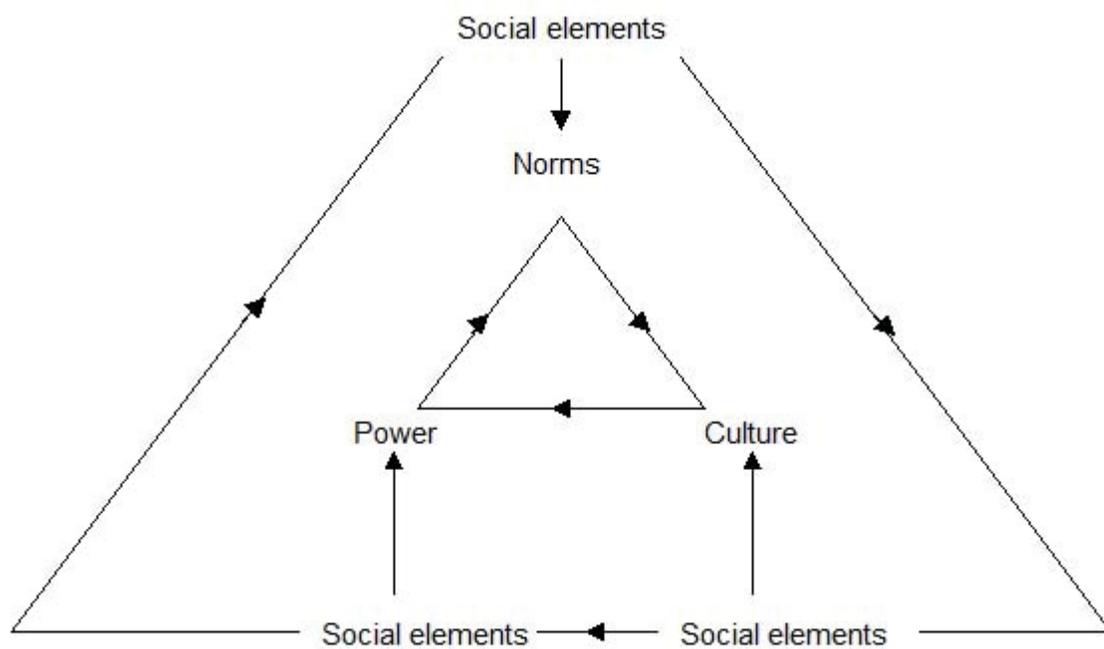
Figure 2: Mapping the inquiry

2   Norms

In several areas of scholarship – international relations, sociology and psychology, to name a few – the study of norms is extensive, and yet the concept of norms remains somewhat elusive. In its most tangible sense, a norm can be codified into our legal system as a law; in its most ephemeral form, it is a representation of our social (and moral) consciousness.

Norms capture our attention and imagination for several reasons: (1) They are predominantly intangible – norms are social constructs; (2) they are for the most part, unspoken – while they may be discussed between say a parent and a child, the discussions are seldom systemic, organized or on a large scale; (3) they perpetuate, and persist through time – although they may change or evolve – and (4) they influence the way we behave, think, and perceive our environments. It can be argued that the sum total of the reasons why we do and don't act is a result of the norms that we abide by or do not. Norms can be intuitively understood (e.g. how a room quietens down when the instructor begins to speak), and yet can be difficult to analyze, comprehend or predict.

2.1 What are norms?

A norm is a specific type of behaviour, but over and above all, there have to be certain conditions present for the behaviour to be considered a norm. A norm in the generic sense involves: "(1) a collective evaluation of behaviour in terms of what it ought to be; (2) a collective expectation as to what behaviour will be; and/or (3) particular reactions to behaviour, including attempts to apply sanctions or otherwise induce a particular kind of conduct" (Gibbs, 1965, 589). Consequently, norms are ordinarily thought of as rules specifying actions regarded by a group as proper – prescriptive norms – or improper –proscriptive norms (Bendor & Swistak, 2001, 1509).

If we were to explore this train of thought a little further, we can think of a social norm as:

> A rule which, over a period of time, proves binding on the overt behaviour of each individual in an aggregate of two or more individuals. It is marked by the following characteristics: (1) being a rule, it has content known to at least one member of the social aggregate. (2) Being a binding rule, it regulates the behaviour of any given individual in the social aggregate by virtue of (a) his having internalized the rule; (b) external sanction in support of the rule applied to him by one or more of the other individuals in the social aggregate; (c) external sanctions in support of the rule applied to him by an authority outside the social aggregate; or any combination of these circumstances.

(Dohrenwend, 1959, 470).

For the purposes of this discussion, we assume that norms are "behavioural rules backed by sanctions" and they are considered rational and necessary to stabilize behaviour in groups and institutions (Bendor & Swistak, 2001, 1494).

2.2 Why are norms important?

As suggested by Bendor & Swistak, norms – despite being taken for granted in day-to-day living – play a crucial role in stabilizing and ordering our society. If one could imagine a world where norms did not exist, there would be complete and utter chaos.

Beyond human subsistence levels, however, norms also act in subtle and pervasive ways. For example, it has been proposed that attitudes change not so much through persuasive appeals from others or even from direct experience as from perceptions about the beliefs of important in-group members. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to consider the possibility that stereotypes and prejudice are the result, at least in good part, of perceptions of in-group norms (Sechrist & Stangor, 2001, 645). Simply put, perceived consensus influences behaviour and judgments because it influences the cognitive accessibility of attitudes (Sechrist & Stangor, 2001, 651). Park clarifies this relationship:

> An individual's attitudes toward a behaviour are personal because they are internally generated, based only on the individual's beliefs about potential outcomes of a certain behaviour and his/her evaluation of the behavioural outcomes. An individual's subjective norms are social in that they are based on information external to him/her (i.e. available only from people who surround an individual) and the individual's perceived social pressure to engage in a behaviour (Park, 2000, 163).

What would a world without prejudice look like? The significance of this argument is that we can possibly influence perception and by extension, prejudice and stereotyping, if we can influence the consensus level within the in-group, i.e. "if stereotypes persist in large part because people look to others to provide these beliefs and if people assume that their stereotypes and prejudices are consensually shared by others, then there is also a potential for undermining prejudice through the presentation of consensus feedback that dispels these potentially erroneous beliefs" (Sechrist & Stangor, 2001, 651).

The trajectory of this thought appears to validate the tactic of disrupting groups (and beliefs) by breaking or interfering with the consensus amongst prominent in-group members. Irrespective of how research into norms is applied in the field, we cannot marginalize or underestimate its role or significance in influencing human behaviour.

2.3 How do norms come to exist?

While there are many schools of thought in this area; one, however, stands out. Evolutionary theory is a recurrent theme in international relations. This theory posits that there are correlations between the way humans have evolved and the way we behave, even to the extent that our institutions, forms of governance, and political decisions are somehow, directly or indirectly, influenced by our biology.

The reasoning here is by analogy, and the relationship between genes and norms works on three levels:

> First, genes and norms have similar functions as the instructional units directing the behaviour of their respective organisms. Second, genes and norms are transmitted from one individual to another through similar processes of inheritance. Third, norms, like genes, are 'contested' – that is, they are in competition with other norms that carry incompatible instructions…both are subject to the forces of natural selection, and their prevalence in a population waxes and wanes over time. (Florini, 1996, 367)

Moreover, the entity being instructed could be an individual, a state or whatever other social grouping is most useful for purposes of analysis (Florini, 1996, 374).

While the theme of genetics and evolution recurs in the section on culture, we should note that, although there may be some correlations in the argument, reasoning by analogy should be, as a general rule, approached with caution. The takeaway here is not whether evolutionary theory as an approach to understanding norms and culture is sound, but rather, how the approach can shed light (or provide the tools) to expand our knowledge in our areas of interest, and in that regard, evolutionary theory can be useful.

2.4 How are norms internalized, and how do they spread?

For our purposes, we will define internalization as a "commitment to a norm or standard, such that the actor would be expected to commit energy to its defense and maintenance even when external supports or pressures are not available" (Campbell, 1964, 396). Indeed, the process of committing to a norm or standard also comes with a corresponding obligation to act accordingly or suffer guilt. (Campbell, 1964, 392). Ultimately, a norm is said to be internalized when "it is part of the person, not regarded objectively or understood or felt as a rule, but simply as part of himself, automatically expressed in behaviour" (Davis, 1949, 55).

Norms may not always be internalized completely, however. In studying how regional institutions may modify international norms before adopting them, Acharya describes how the process of localization works: it is the "active construction (through discourse, framing, grafting and cultural selection) of foreign ideas by local actors, which results in the former developing significant congruence with local beliefs and practices" (Acharya, 2004, 245). The process may be thought

of as actively evolving transnational norms to "build congruence with local beliefs and practices" (Acharya, 2004, 241). Some norms may be adopted and internalized more quickly, compared to others; this would depend on the level of social resonance present in the imported norms: "Norm diffusion is more rapid when a systemic norm resonates with historically constructed domestic norms" (Checkel, 1999, 87).

In advancing the evolutionary argument once again, Florini considers how norms may be transmitted and perpetuated in society:

> Human behaviour, unlike the behaviour of animals, is largely culturally rather than genetically determined. Since culture is transmitted from one generation to the next just as genes are, culture can evolve in a way broadly similar to genetic evolution. Because humans acquire norms socially from one another as well as through direct experience, humans can pass phenotypic traits of behaviour directly from individual to individual far more readily than do other animals. These behavioural traits can spread throughout a human population just as genetic traits do, but far more quickly. (Florini, 1996, 367)

Essentially, norms have evolved because they are more successful at "replicating themselves than other patterns of behaviour" (Sugden, 1989, 97). These replication processes are realized via incentives that induce members of a group to favour norms over other kinds of rules that do not encode norms. Individuals will support a norm whenever it gives them higher utility to do so (Bendor & Swistak, 2001, 1497). This utilitarian and realist perspective appears to complement the "consensus theory" mentioned earlier, and vice-versa.

If we attempt to establish a theoretical framework of norms to measure its strength – and obtain an idea of effectiveness – three criteria can be used, as proposed by Legro: specificity, durability and concordance. "Specificity refers to how well the guidelines for restraints and use are defined and understood; durability denotes how long the rules have been in effect and how they weather challenges to their prohibitions, and concordance refers to how widely accepted the rules are" (Legro, 1997, 34-35).

When considering the transmission and diffusion of norms, we should also be aware of the possible role that "norm entrepreneurs" may play. Be they individuals or institutions, norm entrepreneurs can advance their own agendas by actively promoting, spreading or evolving existing norms through the lobbying of groups, governments, or policy-makers. The detailed examination of norm entrepreneurs, however, is beyond the scope of this inquiry.

3   Culture

The Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1998) defines culture as "the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group." Thirty years ago, most sociologists viewed culture as a seamless web, unitary and internally coherent across groups and situations. By contrast, recent work depicts culture as fragmented across groups and inconsistent across its manifestations. The view of culture as values that suffuse other aspects of belief, intention, and collective life has succumbed to one of culture as complex rule-like structures that constitute resources that can be put to strategic use (DiMaggio, 1997, 264-265).

What do we understand by culture? How does it persist through time, and what affects it? There exist several perspectives on culture, some of which are worth briefly reviewing:

> Culture promotes, encourages, and sustains ways of being, and in turn, these then seem natural and ubiquitous. This makes clear the pitfalls of interpreting any given culturally based practice without first considering its relation to the cultural context. Nothing transpires in a cultural vacuum (Lehman et al, 2004, 704).

> In an increasingly interconnected world society, the conception of independent, coherent, and stable cultures becomes increasingly irrelevant. Processes of globalization are drawing people from different cultural origins into close relationships, for example, in…the increasing flow of migrations, the growth of diasporas, the emergence of internet communities, and the establishment of global institutions (e.g. the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations)

> (Hermans & Kempen, 1998, 1111).

Culture permeates every facet of society, and yet, like norms, can remain conceptually elusive. It is "that collection of pots and pans, bits and pieces, that we all have: that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired" as a member of society (Tylor in Hutnyk, 2006, 351). Virtually every definition of culture suggests that it represents a "coalescence of discrete behavioural norms and cognitions shared by individuals within some definable population that are distinct from those shared within other populations" (Lehman et al, 2004, 690). Human societies produce culture – that much is clear – and various aspects of the cultures produced can differ from society to society, although some aspects may remain the same.

Some scholars even use the term "culture" interchangeably with "civilization": "Civilization and culture both refer to the overall way of life of a people, and a civilization is a culture writ large. They both involve the values, norms, institutions, and modes of thinking to which successive generations in a given society have attached primary importance" (Huntington, 1997, 41). Culture is no longer homogenous, or unitary; it transcends national boundaries; it plays an integral role in sustaining our social consciousness, and it evolves and changes through time.

3.1 Origins

One approach suggests that culture arises in part from an epistemic need for verifiable knowledge, and for certainty and confidence in our perceptions of the world around us. The creation of a shared reality – a common set of beliefs, expectations and rules for interpreting the world – helps fulfill this need to validate one's own construction of reality. Classic research on norm formation is consistent with this perspective (Lehman et al, 2004, 692). In addition, under conditions in which needs for closure are heightened, individuals are more likely to conform with perceived norms, are more likely to reject deviants from social groups, and are quicker to achieve consensus – all evidence that the need for epistemic certainty contributes to the formation and persistence of culture (Lehman et al, 2004, 692). As humans, we need to make sense of the environment and reality surrounding us, hence we create culture, and as we attempt to increase the stability (need for closure) in that environment, we seek to conform to and create consensus in our social surroundings.

3.2 Terror management theory

Apart from the epistemic need for verifiable knowledge, there exists another approach that could explain the origins of culture. Terror management theory (TMT) posits that culture emerged, in part, to serve as a psychological buffer against the existential anxiety that results from the awareness of our own mortality. Culture acts as a buffer because many specific beliefs and behaviours that define cultural worldviews offer symbolic immortality (e.g. religious beliefs in the afterlife, naming one's children after oneself, so that one's name lives on) (Lehman et al, 2004, 692).

> Culture also provides a buffer against anxiety by providing a set of values and normative standards against which an individual may be judged a worthwhile, socially acceptable person. One hypothesis is that feelings of self-worth buffer against existential anxiety. The other hypothesis is that the awareness of one's own mortality leads to enhanced attempts to defend one's own cultural worldview (Lehman et al, 2004, 692).

In a sense, TMT is a coping mechanism necessitated by of our awareness of death, a "result of the evolution of human consciousness" (Solomon et al, 2004, 35).

Other scholars go further to suggest that culture and all of its manifestations – religion, art, philosophy, politics, economics, and so on – serves an adaptive function by creatively misrepresenting reality in order to preserve psychological equanimity (Solomon et al, 2004, 25). There are three reasons that support this line of thinking: (a) It follows from basic evolutionary principles; (b) it can account for what we know about past and present cultures; and (c) it is supported by a large body of empirical evidence (Solomon et al, 2004, 25).

As such, it is plausible to assume that mortality salience increases one's existential uncertainty, which may heighten one's need for closure. Thus, the increased adherence to one's cultural values under mortality salience may represent not only the need to perceive one's existence as meaningful, but also a defense against uncertainty and the tendency to embrace culturally shared realities. Rosenblatt and colleagues (1989) demonstrated that mortality salience increases the intolerance and hostility toward those who threaten one's cultural values or worldviews (Richter & Kruglanski, 2004, 109). What is interesting to note is that violent extremist groups routinely heighten the degree to which mortality salience is emphasized through the use of religion; this suggests that such groups may intuitively grasp the intricacies of social and cultural manipulation to a certain extent.

In short, the terror management and epistemic perspectives are well supported by empirical evidence, and identify conceptually complementary processes that help explain why cultures emerge at all (Lehman et al, 2004, 693).

3.3 Evolutionary theory

From an evolutionary perspective, solitude is dangerous; mutually supportive collective behaviour is beneficial, both for survival and sexual reproduction. Thus, it makes sense to assume that humans have an evolved tendency toward the establishment of shared beliefs, behaviours, and normative structures that help hold social collectives together (Lehman et al, 2004, 691).

Moreover, cultural norms – common beliefs, expectations, and practices – may also have conferred adaptive advantages by facilitating efficient coordination of activities necessary for survival, sexual reproduction, and the successful rearing of children to mating age. Consequently, several theoretical analyses suggest that culture emerged as an extraordinary and highly flexible sort of evolutionary adaptation (Lehman et al, 2004, 691).

However, while evolutionary processes may have shaped culturally shared conceptions of morality pertaining to a broad set of behavioural domains, and although culture may be socially constructed, there are fundamental biologically based constraints on the construction process: Some specific kinds of beliefs and behaviours are especially likely to be normative across human populations, whereas others are extraordinarily unlikely ever to be popular (Lehman et al, 2004, 691).

Accordingly, some beliefs and behaviours are better than others at solving adaptive problems, and these are the beliefs and behaviours that are likely to become and remain culturally normative (Lehman et al, 2004, 691).

3.4 Culture and communication

While any number of factors may contribute to culture, one thing is certain: there can be no culture without communication. Human communication, through language, art, music and other channels of expression comprise the building blocks of cultural formation.

"Distinct cultural populations emerge as the consequence of interpersonal communication and social influence" (Harton & Bourgeois, 2004, 41-75).

Because social influence attends any act of communication, and because individuals communicate more regularly with others who are closer to them in geographic or social space, a dynamic process is set in motion in which neighbouring individuals mutually influence each other on a wide variety of beliefs and behaviours (Lehman et al, 2004, 693). Culture is formed through reciprocal and recursive individual social influence. This influence relies on communication at the local level and leads to an organization of beliefs (cultures) at the larger group level, whether the 'larger group' is 10 people or 10 billion people (Harton & Bourgeois, 2004, 45).

Cultures are formed and changed through daily communication, as overlapping regional differences in attributes lead to identities. Without necessarily even being aware of it, individuals act to perpetuate their cultural present and help to define their future, simply as a result of going about their days (Harton & Bourgeois, 2004, 68).

Indeed, recent advances in cognitive psychology and cultural studies reveal that the use of language in human interaction may play an important role in the evolution and maintenance of cultural representations by increasing the accessibility of existing shared representations in the culture. "Through communication, private, idiosyncratic representations will be transformed into public, shared representations, which in turn form the cognitive foundation of culture. Evolved shared representations would then be encoded into the language and the cycle continues" (Lau et al, 2004, 77-78).

Languages are for more than just peer-to-peer communication, however. Benjamin Lee Whorf, an ethnolinguist, suggested – through the theory of linguistic relativity – that a language's grammar constrains the way its speakers perceive external information and shapes their mental representations of the information. Essentially, that "language embodies a worldview and shapes individual cognition" (Lau et al, 2004, 79). Thus, the intrinsic nature of a language can influence and shape the social collective from where it originated. While the way in which it accomplishes this requires further study, the implications suggest that one approach to understanding a culture's social consciousness is to closely examine (and perhaps deconstruct) the nature and structure of its language, and analyze its "linguistic genome."

Apart from the cognitive and sociolinguistic significance, the day-to-day use of languages also has repercussions on the balance of relative power amongst social groups. For example, the languages spoken by powerful groups are more likely to proliferate than those spoken by

relatively powerless groups. When speakers of a language are more involved in international banking, trade or politics or when speakers are influential religiously or militarily, those languages will be advantaged compared to others (Harton & Bourgeois, 2004, 62). By extension, this suggests that the culture of the advantaged language proliferates as well.

3.5 Culture and influence

We know that virtually all of human behaviour is transmitted by culture…the question is how biology and culture interact, and in particular how they interact across all societies to create the commonalities of human nature (Wilson, 1998, 126). In this section, we will examine how culture influences society, and vice-versa.

Our relationship with culture is inexorable and inextricable. From the time we are born, to the time we die, we are continuously embedded within culture, which is why we have to be pre-disposed towards internalizing it quickly.

> Humans have the longest period of socialization of any species, which reflects our great dependency on acquiring cultural sources of meaning. Survival depends on the individual's ability to successfully learn the language, technology and customs of his or her surrounding cultural environment. Thus, humans must come into the world prepared to attend to and seize cultural meanings from around them. (Heine & Lehman, 2004, 308)

Culture can be both a stabilizing as well as a destabilizing force. In a sense, culture is a

"commitment device in cooperation settings, and culture and adherence to religious tenets are means of controlling access to club goods valued by citizens" (Munger, 2006, 132). External factors do affect the commitment process too, as noted by Lehman: "the likelihood of following a cultural paradigm in judgment and decision making increases when people need to recruit culturally validated reasons to justify their decisions, have a high need for cognitive closure, are cognitively busy or need to make judgments under time pressure" (Lehman et al, 2004, 701).

Evidently, when placed at decision-making junctures, an individual would have to choose whether to conform or rebel, and then subsequently self-validates that choice. As a self-regulating force, culture helps to clarify consensus levels or highlight adversarial relationships at the very outset – it is fairly straightforward in most cases to determine if an individual subscribes to the group's cultural norms or rejects them. In this regard, culture can be exploited to mobilize or manipulate the masses.

When considering the role that institutions may play in adopting a cultural strategy, an organization "chooses from what aspect of participants' lives they will draw these institutionalized elements. Once the organization chooses a cultural strategy, it focuses attention

on some segments of participants' cultural terrain rather than on others. This area of primary attention becomes the organizations' cultural base for its work in developing leaders and building a political culture" (Wood, 1999, 310). This dynamic can be represented in the diagram below:

Cultural strategy   Internal   →   Projection   →   Ability
      +   →   political   of   to shape
Cultural base   culture   social power   public realm
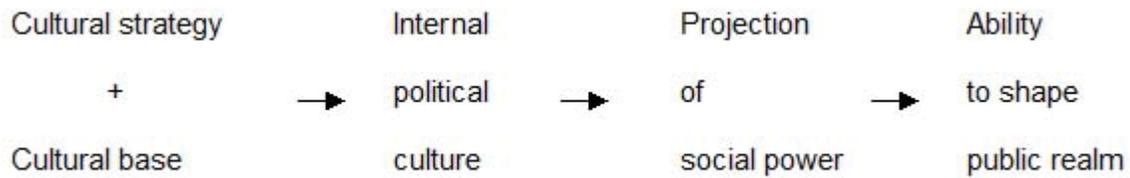
Figure 3: Cultural strategy and mobilization (Wood, 1999, 311)

The level of commitment can vary however, depending on the strength of the norms or values that have been internalized:

> Vague acceptance of shared symbols or meanings can help a group cohere during calm times, but in the more raucous waters of political engagement, with the constant threat of fragmentation through conflict or dissipation through loss of commitment, more deeply held cultural elements become important for holding a group together. So the group must develop intensely shared cultural elements sufficient for stabilizing the group. Thus, the first key quality of the internal political culture that challenger groups must seek is high intensity of shared cultural elements (Wood, 1999, 314).

Conversely, people from other cultural contexts, who do not understand the commitment value, or who do not value the access rights, afforded by cultural obedience, are likely to mischaracterize the strategic situation they face, and systematically misunderstand the likely actions of opponents, or even potential allies (Munger, 2006, 144) – an error that can have tragic consequences in conflict situations or military operations.

3.6 Cultural impact

In his prolific work, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Samuel Huntington claims that "the most pervasive, important, and dangerous conflicts will not be between social classes, rich and poor, or other economically defined groups, but between peoples belonging to different cultural entities. People separated by ideology but united by culture come together, as the two Germanys did and as the two Koreas and the several Chinas are beginning to" (Huntington, 1997, 20).

Although Huntington's work can be viewed as controversial in some respects (we could argue for example that the two Koreas are far from coming together, and similarly with China and Taiwan),

his comments on the primacy of culture in geopolitics have a ring of legitimacy about them. Huntington views the world in groups of civilizations, as opposed to discrete nation-states, and emphasizes the pre-eminent role of culture to support his theory. Indeed, he often uses the two terms (civilization and culture) fairly interchangeably, and, based on the material we have examined thus far, this is understandable (though misguided) to a certain extent.

Culture is more malleable, permeable and adaptable than commonly held notions of "civilization." We would contend that culture is more of a subset of a civilization than its synonym. Moreover, as we have seen, culture can be used to stabilize, mobilize, destabilize, and even incite violence.

According to Schiller, to begin to explain violent outbreaks, we must discriminate between the factors that precipitate violence and the fact that those engaged in violent confrontation may justify their actions in terms of cultural differences or practices (Schiller, 2001, 4). In this respect, culture can be used as a scapegoat; a societal straw man to incite, inflame, and encourage conflict. Culture may also shape strategy in the sense that abiding by the rules of cultural expression yields more calculable consequences than contesting them (Polletta, 2008, 91), and such action may involve adaptation by actors within and at the margins of cultural boundaries (Farrell, 2005, 452). The act of appearing to conform, or capitulate is noteworthy (and possibly recurrent) in particular situations where the opposing forces are asymmetric, and a more creative, oblique approach to strategy is necessary on the part of the weaker group.

Some studies even suggest that under certain conditions, culture may have a role to play in the election or installation of autocratic leaders. For example, in situations characterized by "considerable turmoil or uncertainty, such as war, revolution, or significant downturns in the economy, group members' need for closure may soar and a group culture will emerge that centers around an autocratic leadership" (Richter & Kruglanski, 2004, 113) – the reverse however, may also be true, with the reins being passed on to a democratic leadership. Much would depend on the individual and collective mindsets of the social groups involved, the strength of the underlying cultural norms and affiliations at work, personal convictions, and even individual cognition.

3.7 Acculturation and identity

Thus far, we have examined culture from a collective perspective, how it can affect and be affected by its surroundings and environment, but what of the individuals that comprise that collective? While the sum of its parts may not necessarily lead to the whole in all instances, we cannot disregard how discrete actors may affect their social groups and by extension, cultures. Much of how individuals assess themselves from a social standpoint relies on how they perceive their social identities.

Historically, the notion of national identity is more often than not allied to territory – they are normally bounded and particular (Gilroy, 2000, 99). However, in the age of satellite communications, cellular phones, texting and social networking for example, technology has acted as a force multiplier and enabled transnational groups to socially coalesce, and with greater speed, ease and effectiveness than ever before. Technology has accelerated the formation of unbounded communities, and unbounded cultures.

One such manifestation of an unbounded community is the phenomenon of diaspora, which can be thought of as a "nation unbound, that re-inscribes space in a new way" (Basch et al, in Cohen, 1997, 2). Through diaspora, "the transnationality of individuals' thoughts, emotions and practices challenge 'modern' notions of territoriality" (Carter, 2005, 61).

Thus, would it be reasonable to claim that the primary difficulty in attempting to counter the terrorist threat arises from the fact that we are not dealing with a bounded community but with a transnational collective – a diaspora – that bypasses geographical boundaries, national and even ethnic lines of identity? In effect, a diaspora can be seen as "ways of sustaining connections with more than one place while practising non-absolutist forms of citizenship" (Clifford, 1997, 9). A diaspora may also act as a coping mechanism for communities of immigrant groups who may feel alienated in their host country. As Phinney and colleagues observe, "because of the importance of one's ethnic identity as a defining characteristic of minority and immigrant group members, pressures to assimilate and give up ones' sense of ethnicity may result in anger, depression, and in some cases, violence" (Phinney et al, 2001, 505).

Individuals within the dominant culture may also react in a number of ways. A host of compensatory processes are consequently instigated to "restore psychological equanimity: derogating those who are different, pressuring them to dispose of their beliefs and convert to the dominant worldview (assimilation), incorporating neutered versions of their views into one's own (accommodation), and/or annihilating them to demonstrate that your vision of reality must have been 'right' after all" (Solomon et al, 2004, 36).

3.8 Cognition & identity

Consequently, it is reasonable to suggest that different social groups would manifest different modes of committing to, perceiving, understanding, and transmitting culture. Immigrant groups may make choices based on different schema as opposed to the dominant groups within the community.

Indeed, given that inferential rules and cognitive processes appear to be malleable even for adults within a given society, it should not be surprising if it turned out to be the case that members of markedly different cultures, socialized from birth into different world views and habits of thought, might differ even more dramatically in their cognitive processes (Nisbett et al, 2001, 291). Even if all cultures possessed essentially the same basic cognitive processes as their tools, the tools of choice for the same problem may habitually be very different. Moreover, members of

different cultures may not see the same stimulus situation as a problem in need of repair. A seeming contradiction is a problem for Westerners but may not be for Easterners (Nisbett et al, 2001, 306).

For example, some scholars suggest that bicultural or multicultural individuals may "switch frames" in social situations to help rationalize their environment and this adaptive process has a bearing on how these individuals assimilate, accommodate or reject the dominant social values or host culture that they are embedded in. While frame switching, the individual "shifts between interpretive frames rooted in different cultures in response to cues in the social environment" (Hong et al, 2000, 709). The process is an integral one in shaping individual identity or determining notions of self; ideally, immigrant groups should possess strong ethnic and national identities.

The consideration of flexibility in cultural frame switching may help explain a consistent finding regarding immigration, ethnic identity, and psychological well-being: Immigrants with both a strong ethnic identity and a strong national identity tend to exhibit the best psychological adaptation (Phinney et al. 2001, 502). Interestingly, the cultural flexibility does not apply solely to immigrants: individuals with extensive multicultural experiences may also have more tools in their toolbox than do monocultural individuals (Lehman et al, 2004, 702). In effect, individuals with intercultural experience, whether through time abroad in another culture or through daily interaction with a culturally diverse community, demonstrated cultural flexibility (Yamada, 1999, 699).

With respect to our inquiry, the clearer an understanding we have of how individuals respond to culture and their social environment, the better we'll be equipped to manage situations where cultural sensitivity is necessary. This area of study may also shed light on how certain individuals – who appear to be well adjusted culturally – may yet be capable of unthinkable acts of violence; through frame switching and using the tools in their cultural toolbox, they may blend in with their surroundings, mask their marginalized states and discontent, and not arouse suspicion.

In sum, the cognitive processes triggered by a given situation may not be so universal as generally supposed, or so divorced from content, or so independent of the particular character of thought that distinguishes one human group from another (Nisbett et al, 2001, 307). On the one hand, we must remain open enough to adapt to new situations in our social and cultural landscape, on the other, we must be closed enough to remain rooted in our core values and beliefs. As noted by Richter & Kruglanski:

> In a sense, there can be no culture, as this term is generally understood, without at least a modicum of closed mindedness. Culture represents a set of constraints upon what is believed, cherished, or valued. It represents an elimination of possibilities, via choice and commitment. A total open-mindedness would render culture and tradition impossible. However, excessive close-mindedness may undermine societal effectiveness in a variety of respects. It may promote humdrum homogeneity, suppress creativity and innovation, foster an overidentification with one's in-group, and foster the derogation of alternative cultural groups. (Richter & Kruglanski, 2004, 118)

As in all things, somehow, a balance must be struck.

3.9 Culture & evolution

What next for culture? If we are to accept evolutionary theory as a mode of analysis, given the arbitrary nature of the evolutionary process, the way forward – although it can be extrapolated to a certain extent by studying how culture works – cannot be accurately mapped, per se.

Understanding the nature of a thing, the elements that influence it and vice-versa does not necessarily mean that we can chart its course. Based on what we do know about culture, cognition, sociology and psychology however, we may be able to hypothesize working models of culture.

For example, Vandello & Cohen suggest a four-stage model for some hypothetical transition stages in cultural evolution. This model is "speculative, stylized, and undoubtedly not applicable to many instances of cultural perpetuation or change. Nevertheless it provides a helpful way to think about social processes behind at least some patterns of cultural perpetuation in the face of environmental change" (Vandello & Cohen, 2004, 282).

While the diagram below encapsulates key points in the literature reviewed thus far, it should be noted that "rejection" and "non-compliance" could be inserted in the stages following the "meaning stage" as well. Being value-neutral increases the utility and explicative power of theoretical models.
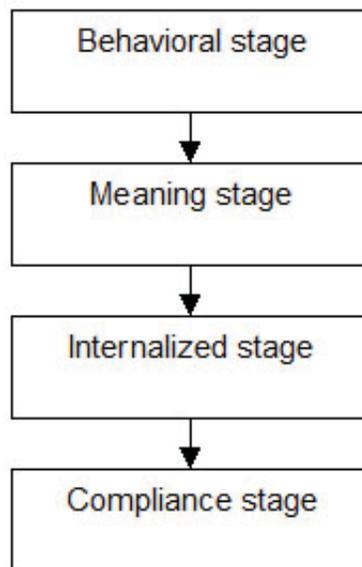

Figure 4: One hypothetical model of transition stages in cultural evolution and persistence

(Vandello & Cohen, 2004, 283)

4   Power

In the third section of our review, we examine the nature of power using the theoretical framework established by Joseph Nye (2004) because of its affinity to culture, holistic approach, and explicative ability. Nye, a renowned political scientist, popularized the concept of "soft power" (attractive power) as a means of obtaining national and strategic advantage (Nye,2004, 6). As noted in the introduction to this report, "power" in a generic sense refers to "the ability of one person or group to change the behaviour of another person or group" (Huntington, 1997, 83) using various means.

Hard power strategies focus on military intervention, coercive diplomacy, and economic sanctions to enforce national interests. In contrast to coercive power, soft power is the capacity to persuade others to do what one wants. Nye (1990, x) defined it as the ability to get what one wants through persuasion or attraction rather than coercion (Wilson III, 2008, 114). Soft power uses "a different type of currency to engender cooperation – an attraction to shared values and the justness and duty of contributing to the achievement of those values" (Nye,2004, 7). Soft power is not about winning conventional battles; "winning the peace trumps winning a war, and soft power is essential to winning the peace" (Nye,2004, xii).

	Hard	Soft
Spectrum of Behaviors	coercion inducement Command ←———•————•————	agenda setting attraction ————•————•———→ Co-opt
Most Likely Resources	force payments sanctions bribes	institutions values culture policies

Figure 5: (above) – Behaviour / Resource matrix (Nye,2004, 8)

	Behaviors	Primary Currencies	Government Policies
Military Power	coercion deterrence protection	threats force	coercive diplomacy war alliance
Economic Power	inducement coercion	payments sanctions	aid bribes sanctions
Soft Power	attraction agenda setting	values culture policies institutions	public diplomacy bilateral and multilateral diplomacy

Figure 6: Three types of power & their currencies (Nye ,2004, 31)

Nye cites the collapse of the Soviet Union as an application of soft power (albeit unintentional). Through cultural exchanges and education in the US, individuals internalize social values, norms and customs, repatriating them when they return home. Some of these individuals may end up in influential positions, as in the case of senior statesman Alexander Yakovlev, who had studied at Columbia University, and was a key liberalizing influence on Gorbachev. These exchanges were a "Trojan Horse for the Soviet Union. They kept infecting more and more people over the years" (Nye,2004, 46).

In this capacity, film, art, music and other facets of the "infecting culture" may act as vessels of social transformation. "The American way of life slowly eroded Soviet belief in the legitimacy of their own system" (Nye,2004, 49). By Nye's reckoning, "the Cold War was won by a mixture of hard and soft power. Soft power had eroded the Soviet system from within," (Nye,2004, 50) while ostensibly, hard power had bought the US enough time to leverage its soft power influence. The irony of course, is that this collapse was in all likelihood precipitated unconsciously by the US, which was not intentionally deploying soft power as a resource or weapon.

Despite the potential of soft power, Nye does warn against its irresponsible use: "attraction can turn to repulsion if we act in an arrogant manner and destroy the real message of our deeper values" (Nye,2004, x). Huntington too, offers a similar warning: "The dangerous clashes of the future are likely to arise from the interaction of Western arrogance, Islamic intolerance, and Sinic assertiveness" (Huntington, 1997, 83).

Acting as a foil to Nye, Wilson suggests that "smart power" – the capacity of an actor to combine elements of hard power and soft power in ways that are mutually reinforcing such that the actor's purposes are advanced effectively and efficiently – is a more appropriate iteration and evolution of soft power (Wilson III, 2008, 115). The ideal deployment of smart power is not easily accomplished however:

> A genuinely sophisticated smart power approach comes with the awareness that hard and soft power constitute not simply neutral 'instruments' to be wielded neutrally by an enlightened, all-knowing, and independent philosopher king; they themselves constitute separate and distinct institutions and institutional cultures that exert their own normative influences over their members, each with its own attitudes, incentives, and anticipated career paths. (Wilson III, 2008, 115)

Wilson uses China's foreign policy as an example, to illustrate his point:

> Though not without significant flaws, the leadership of the People's Republic of China (PRC), for example, has deployed power resources strategically. The individual policy choices made by President Hu Jiantao and his advisors have reflected a sophisticated analysis of the world as it is; and they have deployed a balanced, integrated array of instruments to achieve their narrow political goals as well as to advance their national purposes. Hu's decisions to develop and consistently pursue a doctrine of 'China's Peaceful Rise' is a clear counterpoint to President George W. Bush's approach, which has focused largely on the need to maintain military superiority. (Wilson III, 2008, 111-112)

This is not to say that China had little choice in its decisions. China could have been diplomatically dysfunctional in its treatment of African nations and clumsy in its pursuit of oil and mineral resources; instead it created a multifaceted 'charm campaign' offering African leaders foreign assistance and high level attention. Likewise it could have ignored Europe and relied mostly on hard power across the straits of Taiwan. While the charm offensive of the PRC has yielded mixed results, it was based on a sophisticated appreciation for the full range of instruments of national power (Wilson III, 2008, 112).

4.1 Communities and empowerment

Our examination of power and culture thus far has been at the strategic level, but what of the group and community levels? What is their relationship with power and culture? Studying disenfranchised or marginalized groups as opposed to dominant, influential groups may help us understand how the power dynamics of influence work in varying circumstances. To begin with, while marginalized communities may be relatively powerless in relation to social and economic structures, they have considerable scope for exercising power and agency" (Williams et al, 2003, 39). Williams and colleagues notes how "certain aspects of contemporary globalization also create opportunities for empowering forms of cultural expression" (Williams et al, 2003, 34).

They point out how, by using storytelling as a communications bridging tool, social workers and therapists were able to gradually empower marginalized women's groups in New Zealand through its transformative power (Williams et al, 2003, 36).

> Storytelling is acknowledged as a method of building trust and connection between people, lending itself well to the task of strengthening relationships in fragmented communities, and when conducted within group and community development work allows people to reveal and strengthen new communal narratives that challenge dominant narratives, and to (re)construct communities as empowered rather than disempowered collectives. (Williams et al, 2003, 36)

The project undertaken with these groups poses interesting possibilities when the situational context is substituted. For example, can the schema presented here be applied to violent political or extremist groups? Such groups are often marginalized (or they perceive themselves to be) and the struggles that they engage in are often asymmetric; as such, by having to adopt irregular tactics or unconventional warfare, would the creation of their own verbal history through storytelling be a way of legitimizing their acts, and empowering their group through cultural manipulation? If so, are there ways to counter or disrupt their efforts?

In examining the opposite pole – dominant or influential groups – the schema is markedly different simply because the context is different. These groups do not have to engage in practices of empowerment nor consider using violent means to achieve their objectives. An example of these groups would be what Haas refers to as "epistemic communities."

Essentially, an epistemic community is "a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area" (Haas, 1992, 3). They are channels through which new ideas circulate from societies to governments as well as from country to country (Haas, 1992, 27). In line with this definition, epistemic communities could be think-tanks, research institutes, scholarly organizations, non-governmental groups or NGOs, scientific organizations and the like.

Epistemic communities need not be made up of natural scientists; they can consist of social scientists or individuals from any discipline or profession who have a sufficiently strong claim to a body of knowledge that is valued by society (Haas, 1992, 16). These individuals are subject matter experts who share common goals and similar cultural values. In this respect, they are not the influence peddlers or lobbyists that percolate in political or popular culture, although their vision and shared objectives may be political.

Epistemic communities are significant because they are, in a sense, the gatekeepers and stewards of specialized knowledge: "Control over knowledge and information is an important dimension of power and that the diffusion of new ideas and information can lead to new patterns of behaviour and prove to be an important determinant of international policy coordination" (Haas, 1992, 2).

Moreover, decision makers are most likely to turn to epistemic communities under conditions of uncertainty. The specialists called upon for advice bring with them their interpretations of the knowledge, which are in turn based on their causally informed version of reality and their notions of validity (Haas, 1992, 21). In other words, these specialists bring with them their personal cultural worldviews and toolkits. Effectively, culture informs epistemic communities, who in turn inform decision-makers, whose polices inform culture once again, *ad infinitum*.

Thus, in the above examples, while disempowered groups may employ storytelling as a means of gaining legitimacy, dominant groups employ specialist knowledge to attain theirs. In both instances however, culture plays a central role in enabling the sphere of influence.

5   Analysis and implications

We began this inquiry with the question: How can culture be exploited to effect and affect political power? We have reviewed a wide selection of literature from several fields and perspectives, with the assumption that the greater our knowledge of a phenomenon, the more competent we'll be in managing, shaping or influencing it. Our examination comprised a survey of three social poles: norms, culture and power; what they are and how they relate to one another. We posit that a relationship exists between the three poles, although we cannot ascertain the sequence of influence nor the extent (recall the relational diagram in Fig. 1). The observations that follow are in no particular sequence or priority.

- Norm transmission and internalization: we know that this is a fairly arbitrary process that would depend on multiple factors; the social environment, the individuals themselves, and how clear, specific, durable and widely accepted the norms are. Imported norms may not be fully accepted however, and may be localized to resonate with traditional customs and practices before they are. The process of acceptance is also dependent on the individuals' reactions to the norms; whether their cultural toolkit is more adaptive, or less so. Bi or multi-cultural individuals or those with more experience with foreign cultures may be more culturally adaptive than monocultural individuals.

- Ethnicity – we can no longer assume that cultures are unitary, even if the culture in question appears to be geographically bounded. We have to consider that cultural communities may appear homogenous but are both socially and even geographically heterogeneous. This is especially so if we are studying diasporas, sub-cultures or the like.

- Cognition and learning – we have to be mindful of the fact that different cultures may have distinct intellectual and learning traditions from our own. Disparity is not an acceptable reason for discrimination or prejudiced thinking; all it means is that the culture in question has a worldview and perspective that we are not familiar with yet, simply because we are unfamiliar with the "social rules" and mores that are used to process information in their environment. Would the discovery of such intellectual traditions be useful in threat assessment?

- Language/communication – culture would not be possible without language and communication, not just in an existential sense, but in diffusion and transmission as well. Culture cannot replicate without communication. Language itself, whether alphabetic, ideographic, or otherwise may contain intrinsic features that shape the way we learn, perceive and consequently, think. This suggests that deeper insights into a culture's consciousness may be gained by understanding the sociolinguistic nature and structure of their language.

- Discourse/narrative – can community empowerment under certain conditions represent a prelude to (possibly violent) political action? Narratives (storytelling) are used to bind communities together and empower them against dominant social structures / institutions. Could extremist groups use this practice to create legitimacy (or even attract recruits), and entrench violence as normative group behaviour? Irrespective of the level of analysis

– national, local or individual – perhaps a "cultural code" can be discerned from the stories that are shared and the ones that are not. Learning and understanding these codes may hold the key to enhanced bilateral cooperation and cultural bridge-building.

- Transnationality – given the porous nature of cultural borders (especially in open societies), how vulnerable would our own societies be to subversive influence? Through a better understanding of the cultures in the theatre of operations, would it be possible to better prepare or "bullet-proof" serving personnel from subversive influence?

- Evolutionary theory – this theoretical framework offers some useful tools in the analysis of culture. While some relational similarities between genes and norms exist, we should exercise caution when applying analysis by analogy – inductive reasoning is not definitive. Evolutionary theory does shed some light in the area of cultural genesis, via terror management and mortality salience. The latter perspectives appear to explain our need to create culture, as a method of rationalization and validation. Irrespective of whether we conform to the dominant social norms or not, we need to justify our decisions, and this process arises out of a pre-existing need to manage our terror or sense of mortality (manifested through consensus-building within our group or the marginalization of other groups). The culture creation process can be mapped thus: Terror management => need for closure=> need for consensus => norm internalization (or rejection) =>culture creation

- Soft/smart power – if we accept that hard power alone is no longer sufficient to resolve the conflicts of our generation, shouldn't more resources be poured into the development of soft/smart power development? If culture can be viewed as a strategic resource, shouldn't there be corresponding levels of urgency, funding and training? More emphasis should thus be placed on developing and promoting cultural resources or the "cores of soft power" like public diplomacy.

For example, the typical US Department of Defense budget of $260b dwarfs the State department's $10b (Wilson III, 2008, 116). Is it strategic to be channelling massive amounts of resources into hard power "solutions" that do not necessarily work when they are deployed? How would the role of the US military and weapons development and procurement be shaped and affected? In addition, since "wielding soft power is contingent on mass communication, cornerstone technologies in information sharing, social networking and mass media are crucial in spreading / deploying soft power" (Nye,2004, 102).

6   Concluding remarks

What is the significance of all these perspectives on norms, culture and power? Essentially, despite the rapid evolution and exponential increases in technology, humans as a species have not evolved much. We are products of our own culture, which shape the way we behave, think, react, and ultimately, make peace or war. Research into the way culture interacts with power is essential because of this, and because of our ethnocentric tendencies. We cannot help but be influenced and coloured by the culture we create, and since the latter permeates through every conceivable aspect of our lives, it is reasonable to assume that our culture would shape our strategic decisions as well.

According to Ken Booth, we are ethnocentric in our strategic thinking; we cannot help it: "By its very nature, the theory and practice of strategy adopts a nationalistic view of the world. It is full of the concomitant value judgments of the traditional society of states. Perhaps above all activities, strategy is based on and devoted to an ethnocentric and nationalistic conception of international politics" (Booth, 1979, 22). Indeed, governments do conceive themselves "to be locked into strategic competitions and do sometimes respond directly to each other's actions and potential actions. But they do not necessarily respond to military stimuli and they do not respond in any mechanical way. If they respond at all, they respond according to national styles and personal idiosyncrasies" (Booth, 1979, 23).

In other words, we respond according to our culture.

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(U) Understanding the relationship between norms, culture and power is a challenging task, given the prolific and complex nature of these terms. Norms inform the way we think, behave and react, and by their internalization (or rejection), we generate our culture, through a process of socialization. Culture informs our social psyche; our hopes, mores, aspirations, fears and dreams; these find expression in art, music, entertainment, literature, politics and more. Power is the ability to get others to do what we wish, through a variety of means. At the state level (hard power), these means include military and economic channels. But are there different forms of power (soft power) based on different means? Can culture provide a source from which a different kind of power can be developed? That a relationship between norms, culture and power exists is apparent; how this relationship works is the subject of this study.

(U) Il est difficile de comprendre le lien qui unit les normes, la culture et le pouvoir, étant donné la nature vaste et complexe de ces termes. Les normes orientent la manière dont nous pensons, nous comportons et réagissons. Ainsi, lorsque nous les intériorisons ou les rejetons, notre culture se crée par un processus de socialisation. La culture développe notre psyché sociale, c™est à dire nos espérances, nos mœurs, nos aspirations, nos peurs et nos rêves. Nous exprimons ces notions dans l™art, la musique, le divertissement, la littérature, la politique, etc. Le pouvoir, quant à lui, est la capacité d™inciter les autres à faire ce que nous souhaitons par divers moyens. Au niveau étatique (pouvoir coercitif), les moyens employés sont souvent de nature militaire ou économique. Toutefois, existerait-il d™autres formes de pouvoir (pouvoir persuasif) qui feraient appel à d™autres moyens? La culture peut-elle générer un autre type de pouvoir? Puisqu™il apparaît qu™il existe bel et bien un lien entre les normes, la culture et le pouvoir, la présente étude vise à élucider la façon dont ce lien fonctionne.

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(U) norms;culture;power