

CAOCL's Approach to the Concept of Strategic Culture

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CAOCL's approaches to both Strategic Culture and the Cognitive Dimension focus on a set of values, beliefs, assumptions, norms, traditions, and modes of behavior shared by groups. What distinguishes the Strategic Culture approach, however, is that it studies a particular group of institutions and individuals – those involved in the crafting and implementation of a state's security and defense strategies. While CAOCL's Cognitive Dimension learning events and educational materials are suitable for Marines of all ranks with a tactical requirement to understand a foreign culture and mindset, the Strategic Culture learning events are more appropriate for officers and SNCOs who require an operational and strategic level perspective.

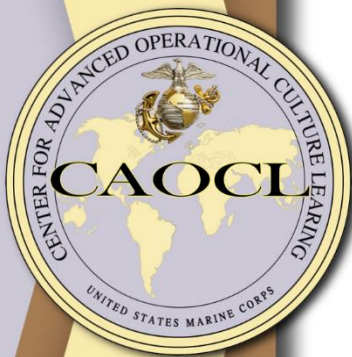
Guidance

Strategy refers to the way the state uses the instruments of power at its disposal in pursuit of its interests. The concept of Strategic Culture emphasizes intangible cultural influences on the formulation and implementation of those strategies. These cultural influences include traditions, values, norms, attitudes, and assumptions that shape the state's strategy to achieve security. A state's Strategic Culture flows mostly from its geography and resources, history and experience, society and political culture, and the nature of the organizations involved in national defense and security. A Strategic Culture approach helps explain how cultural factors shape a state's interests, preferences, and choices as well as how it goes about achieving security in a competitive international environment.

The Strategic Culture approach assumes that cultural influences have significant impact on the state, including the way the state sees the world and its place in it, how the state defines its vital and enduring national interests, what the states sees as the acceptable and legitimate policies to pursue the national interests, and how the state crafts and implements the national strategy to attain those interests. The Strategic Culture approach does not deny the importance of material factors, such as the military, economic, and demographic assets but points out that attempts to explain strategy and behavior of states solely in terms of material factors fall short. Instead, this approach aims to supplement traditional approaches to the analysis of states' strategic behavior by emphasizing the influence of cultural factors on that behavior.

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CAOCL's Approach

CAOCL defines Strategic Culture as a **set of values, beliefs, assumptions, norms, traditions, and modes of behavior shared by the strategic community of a state in regard to security and strategy**. The strategic community of a state includes the institutions and their members involved in the crafting and implementation of security and defense strategies. The focus on the strategic community does not deny the influence wider society and its various groups, as well as factors outside the state, might have on national strategy. Instead, it assumes that, while the strategic community shares cultural characteristics with the wider society, it also has a unique organizational culture and specific security-focused functions that distinguish it from all other institutions and groups in the state.

The Strategic Culture concept as discussed by scholars and military professionals indicates a strong role for all the learning areas involved in CAOCL's approach to LREC (culture general concepts and skills, culture-specific knowledge, regional knowledge, and language skills). LREC classes, briefs, and materials focused on a state's Strategic Culture emphasize concepts, skills, and knowledge that enhance Marines' ability to understand, anticipate, and influence the strategic decision-making and behavior of a target state to achieve desired effects.

For the purpose of developing and offering learning events and educational materials, CAOCL is developing a framework for LREC Strategic Culture. The framework identifies culture-general concepts and skills and culture-specific and region-specific topical areas that are applicable when addressing aspects of the Strategic Culture of a country. The purpose of this framework is to provide a basic range of issues for curriculum developers and SMEs to consider when developing learning events and educational materials for Marines' specific mission sets. The framework consists of five components. Each component is associated with a set of relevant values, beliefs, assumptions, norms, traditions, and modes of behavior shared by the strategic community of the state in regard to security and strategy:

- a. Geography: Attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs about security shaped by the perceived impact of geography, distance, size, and physical surroundings. Perceptions of security created by distance from foes and friends as well as the impact of natural protections or lack thereof.
- b. History and experience: Impact of memories and lessons from past victories, defeats, and dramatic shifts in thinking and preparation for future challenges and opportunities. Attitudes and beliefs about what the nation is good at and what its shortcomings are when in pursuit of its interests, including through war. Relating past challenges, risks, and threats to current and future ones.
- c. Resources: The effects of resources – people, wealth, economy, natural resources, etc. – on strategic thinking and attitudes about security, war, and peace.
- d. National identity: Beliefs and attitudes about the nation's place in the world, its purpose, and its enduring and vital national interests. Ideological and moral foundations of national strategy to promote national interests. Attitudes and beliefs about war, peace, use of force, and regional and world order.
- e. Political structure: The effects of political structure, public opinion, and political and social cultures within the state on the formulation of national interests and the strategy to advance them. The organizational cultures of the strategic community and their impact on strategy's making and implementation. The ideological, political, and normative influences of international structures and institutions on the state's strategic behavior and national strategy.

Most academic research on Strategic Culture uses the state as the unit of analysis; however, CAOCL's approach is more expansive. It also includes non-state entities that aspire to statehood or have experience with running state-like political entities (e.g., ISIS). These entities might not be recognized as states by any other entities but essentially function like states because they control territory, provide

social and economic services to the people living on the territory, have armed forces, and have an ideology that aims to legitimize the existence of the organization.

CAOCL's approach to Strategic Culture complements its approach to the Cognitive Dimension. While Cognitive Dimension is an established term in doctrinal publications,¹ Strategic Culture is a concept explored in the field of security studies. The Department of Defense has used Strategic Culture for concept development and policy considerations. PME institutions also have occasionally incorporated the study of Strategic Culture in curricula.

CAOCL's approaches to the Cognitive Dimension and Strategic Culture focus on the cognitive processes of groups and individuals. What distinguishes the Strategic Culture approach, however, is that it focuses on the thinking and behavior displayed by the strategic community of a state and ultimately aims to gain understanding of the strategic behavior of the state. The Strategic Culture approach is state-centric with the state as the unit of analysis. Thus, Strategic Culture learning events and educational materials will be most relevant to higher level commanders and their staffs as well as individual Marines involved in interagency planning at the strategic and operational levels.

¹ Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Planning*, 16 June 2017. Figure IV-5. p. IV-12; *Marine Air Ground Task Force Information Environment Operations Concept of Employment*, 6 July 2017.