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The influence of strategic culture on shaping security policy

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Abstract

Objectives: The aim of the article is to examine the role that strategic culture plays in creating and shaping security of the future. Taking account of the purpose of this paper, the main research problem took the form of the following question: To what extent does strategic culture have an influence on shaping security of the future?

Methods: In order to achieve the aim of this paper and solve the main research problem, the following research methods will be applied: method of analysis, synthesis and method of conclusion. The empirical methods facilitate examination of processes with the aim of drawing conclusions. The article uses a research method such as observation.

Results: Strategic culture is not a dogma or a camera through which we can look into the past or the future. It is a tool useful for understanding how and what the circumstances are in which a country defines appropriate measures and goals to achieve its goals regarding security.

Conclusions: Strategic culture can help us to understand the real cultural identity of a particular entity (such as a country or an organisation) and its role in the system of international relations in a better way. Therefore, it can contribute to a better understanding of security policy implemented by the entity and, what is more, an analysis of strategic culture can lead to a better understanding of the opponent's strategic behaviour on the basis of how the opponent defines victory, defeat, loss and suffering.

Keywords:

security, future, strategic culture

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"In human history, cultures died when they did not find enough strength to absorb and shape others with their values, their attractiveness."
J. Nikitorowicz

Introduction

At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, the issue of culture in security sciences began to play an increasingly crucial role. According to Hannerz, "culture is everywhere" (Hanerz 1992; Piwowarski 2015), while Mamdani adds that "culture is a matter of life and death" (Mamdani 2000). At present, culture affects and filters all areas of human life and also has an influence on armed conflicts and, thus, the way wars are conducted. Jacques Chirac, former president of the French Republic, in his speech at UNESCO in Paris in 2001, stated that "in the 19th century there was a nationality-based conflict, the 20th century witnessed an ideological conflict, while the 21st century will be the century of culture-based conflicts" (Al Rumaihi 2018). No armed conflict is devoid of specific culture, even if this concept is narrowed down to the symbolic area of human activities. Events which take place during armed conflicts are hidden under "a net of ideas, beliefs, customs, rituals, principles, values, standards that, together with material objects, technology, which make war activities and their organisation possible (from the level of a battlefield, i.e. the so-called tactics, through the institution created to lead wars, i.e. the army, to the organisation of the whole of society ready to wage wars)" (Olzacka 2019). What is more, Likhaczow stated that "true resistance is not about having weapons in your hands; it is about being resistant to creativity. [...] The winner is the society with a higher creative potential and thus, a cultural potential. This is the spiritual defense of the nation" (Avdeev 2009).

The aim of the article is to present the role that strategic culture plays in creating and shaping security of the future. Taking account of the purpose of this paper, the main research problem took the form of the following question: To what extent does strategic culture have an influence on shaping security of the future? In order to achieve the aim of this paper and solve the main research problem, the following research methods will be applied: method of analysis, synthesis and method of conclusion. The empirical methods facilitate examination of processes with the aim of drawing conclusions. The article uses research method such as observation.

The text has been divided into an introduction, four substantive parts and a summary. The first part regards the significance of strategic culture in shaping the future, the second part presents the characteristics of strategic cultures of China, Russia, the USA, the third part refers to the future security environment, and the fourth part presents the importance of strategic culture in shaping the future. In order to achieve the aim of the article and solve the research problem, the authors applied a critical analysis of both Polish and foreign language literature.

Strategic culture – the essence and definitions

As a result of the development of civilisation, the relationship between culture and security has become increasingly multi-dimensional (Jarmoszko 2015a). Modern and current civilisation constantly searches for the sense of security (Żebrowski 2010) and culture becomes one of those elements which shape security. According to Jarmoszko, "strategic culture is a kind of superstructure of a crucial part of safety culture, as it focuses on the external condition and activity of a country, and at the same time is based

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on general (structural) issues of activities of a country represented by its elites (political, media, scientific and military environments). On the other hand, strategic culture under specific conditions results from safety culture, from its most general (structurally located at the top) constructs" (Jarmoszko 2015a).

The concept of strategic culture has a significant heuristic potential and can be very useful while analysing security strategies (Aleksandrowna 2016). Taking account of the strategy, it should be noted that this concept shifts our point of view beyond the moment we live in or are present in. The strategy does not allow us to give in to the dictatorship of the moment (Nayoufa 2013) and is primarily a matter of the future we want to build. Incapable of predicting the future, a strategist will create it to free himself/herself from uncertainty and inevitability, and then modify the present so that it can lead to world-shaping choices (Campion 2019).

The debate on strategic culture began almost four decades ago and led to thought and reflection upon the beginnings of the strategy and strategic choices in politics. Although efforts aimed at defining the role of culture in the strategy can sometimes be affected by the absence of precision, the discussion on the impact of culture on acting in the area of security is still valid and relevant (Al-Rodhan 2015). At present, we can even talk about the international dimensions of strategic culture, which are set by two main indicators, with the first one being an economic power together with technological maturity. The richer and more advanced the country is, the greater its abilities to have modern, better armed and prepared armed forces able to win a battle. The second indicator of the international dimension of strategic culture is the position and influence of the country in international relations − the stronger and more influential the state is, the more significant the international dimension of its strategic culture is (Eichler 2014).

In *Słownik terminów z zakresu Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego* (Eng. The Dictionary of National Defence terms) published by the National Defence University of Warsaw (currently: the War Studies University) strategic culture has been defined as "*historically shaped system of values, beliefs, symbols and customs affecting the attitude of society to the armed forces and the manner of their application*" (Słownik terminów… 2008). However, it should be emphasised that there is no single universal definition of strategic culture as demonstrated by the definitions by Mahnken and the analysis of strategic culture according to Yien. Mahnken defines strategic culture as "a set of commonly accepted shared beliefs, convictions, assumptions and ways of behaviour which originate from common, accepted experiences shaping self-identification and relationships towards strangers, as well as determine appropriate methods and measures necessary to achieve the goals of security policy" (Mahnken 2006). However, Yien defines strategic culture as "a complete symbol which establishes universality and durability thus, creating concepts regarding the role and usefulness of a military power in interstate political matters (Xiaoyan 2006). However, Yassin, an Saudi scientist, reckons that strategic culture is "an intellectual environment that determines the behavioural choices of the nation in the field of war and peace. To be more specific, it is an integrated pattern of symbols, metaphors and linguistic trajectories describing enemies who may pose a threat to the state" (Yassin 2019). An example thereof is Arabic strategic culture, which perceives Israel as the source of main threat to Arabic national security. The conflict between a number of Arab countries and Israel is a conflict of existence, not a border conflict (Yassin 2019).

In terms of praxeology, strategic culture is the culturally determined algorithms of the behaviour of entities (such as countries and international organisations) in the international environment, a specific way of analysing and responding to the events taking place in world politics, and especially threats to safety and security. A historically established by

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each entity set of standards, principles and methods of active involvement to achieve their most vital interests (Sabak 2017).

According to Wasinsky, strategic culture has three significant meanings: firstly, strategic culture helps in examining the role of war in international relations; secondly, it explains how to deter opponents and analyse the risks associated with them, and thirdly, strategic culture ultimately provides an answer to the question regarding the effectiveness of using force when being faced with threat and danger (Wasinski 2006).

Taking the above into account, it might be assumed that strategic culture is the source and basis of the state strategy and policy in the area of safety and security. By analysing the history of a nation, experience, memory, ideology, and external conditions (such as alliances), strategic culture determines the way security is perceived, e.g. the perception of threats, preferred security policy measures, potential directions of seeking allies or ways of eliminating threats (Jakubczak and Flis 2010). It should also be emphasised that the undertaken cognitive activity in the context of strategic culture is also open to strong criticism. Kuźniar believes that "researchers of strategic culture clearly showed their disappointment with the much lower than expected, explanatory power of this category of strategic studies. The main reason for frustration is the insufficient precision in identifying the connections between strategic culture and the strategy itself" (Kuźniar 2005). In contrast, supporters of the theory of strategic culture believe that strategic culture is "a dependent variable" in the process of ensuring international security. According to Jarmoszko, although it is possible to accurately distinguish the specificity of strategic culture of the actor in question, there are still great difficulties when trying to measure its impact on specific decisions and behaviour in the field of strategy. In Jarmoszko's opinion, "strategic culture explains much better more long-term trends than any specific behaviour of the entity understood as an element of the process or decision mechanism, and especially the effect of this process becoming materialised in specific activities. Therefore, it should be noted that the direct impact of strategic culture on specific decisions and actions cannot be measured. However, the fact is that strategic culture is an important factor shaping the behaviour of countries" (Jarmoszko 2015b). To make it simple, strategic culture is a deep cultural factor that affects state strategic thinking, strategic orientation, strategic intentions and so on (Xiaoyan 2006).

It should also be mentioned that at present, we can also consider strategic culture of organisations, such as corporations. Corporate strategic culture influences the strategic thinking of people and then influences strategic behaviour such as strategic decision making, implementation and control, as well as directs and regulates the strategic behaviour of people in order to achieve expected strategic goals. Its direct role in this case is strategic thinking, which translates into an impact on strategic choices (Korporacyjna kultura… 2019).

Strategic cultures of selected countries

Together with the end of the second decade of the 21st century, one can observe the superpowers competing in the military, political and cultural aspects, and thus, competition of different strategic cultures with regard to the United States, Russia and China can be observed. Different strategic cultures lead to various approaches of countries to changes in the nature of war. Countries can use the same technology in different ways and manners, according to their social and cultural models, and ultimately create a military innovation which is different from each other (Adamsky 2012). It is noteworthy that strategic culture differs significantly in democratic and undemocratic regimes, as well as in countries ruled by various civilian regimes (Lantis and Howlett 2010).

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Chinese culture is basically realistic in its basic orientation. Most Chinese elites believe that pacifism is their strategic culture. It is said that Chinese civilisation is purely peaceful and the defensive character of their national defence policy results from its historical and cultural traditions. Peacefulness in Chinese strategic culture originates from the Confucian teachings. Confucius thought that the use of military force was a manifestation of fanaticism, whereas peace was the most valuable (Valandani, Rahmatipur 2013). China, however, has always seemed prepared and ready to use force whenever there was such an opportunity and nowadays we can more and more often observe Chinese militaristic policy (Ford 2016). These two approaches to Chinese strategic culture do not exclude each other, as Chinese strategic culture was shaped to a large extent by the work of Sun Tzu – The Art of War, according to which the best way to defeat an enemy is to use artifices; the second best way is to use diplomacy; the third way is to start a war (Xiaoyan 2006). In contrast, Russian strategic culture is excessively militaristic and creates problems for the United States and its allies in Europe (Tellis 2016). At present, the dominant conviction among Russians is that "it should build a security system based not on interdependence, but on strength, not on predictability and cooperation, but on surprise, intimidation and extortion as well as political subordination of its neighbours to Russian interests" (Urbański 2018). Together with the beginning of the 21st century, we might observe that Russian political life is becoming militarised. It might be related to its desire to regain the status of a universal superpower, as well as the growing role of special services in security policy. In order to understand and comprehend Russian strategic culture, one might consider a record noted in the Russia's 2014 Military Doctrine concerning Russia's ability to intervene in neighbouring countries to protect its citizens living abroad, or even in a situation when the authorities of neighbouring countries ran policies in contradiction to its interests (Doktryna wojenna 2015).

Americans, on the other hand, perceive themselves as exceptional. Therefore, this uniqueness influenced the way in which the United States perceives others on the international scene (Lippmann 1952). As a result of the disintegration of the bipolar world and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the United States became a global hegemonic superpower influencing the fate of other countries. Dynamic international processes which took place at the beginning of the 90s confirmed that the United was the country that would guard the global order (Harzowski *et al.* 2015). The United States, just as ancient Rome and the British Empire in the past, became "the main creator of the modern world, a superpower which pushes the world forward, a force that determines balance and blocks anarchy (Kiwerska 2015). The conviction of its superpower leads to situations in which the USA assumes and usurps the right to attack anyone who will be considered a threat to American interests. In Fulbright's opinion, "in America we are clearly used to wars. Either we have been fighting for many years, or we are ready to immediately start a war in any part of the world. War and army have become an integral part of our everyday lives and violence is the most important product in our country" (Imperializm USA... 2019).

"My interest is in the future because
I am going to spend the rest of my life there."
Ch. Kettering

Future security environment

The world in the second decade of the 21st century is different from what we knew and in which we used to live not so long ago. However, it reflects both the revolutionary change in science and technology, but also the evaluation of already diagnosed threats (Korycki 1994) and predicted challenges for shaping and creating future security in the world in

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which we must live, in which one of the basic distinguishing features is all kinds of knowledge, but also wisdom − which, unfortunately, the faster the technology develops, the faster it disappears. The world we must live in is becoming more and more unpredictable, dynamic and at the same time full of risk and uncertainty, creating a number of barriers and dilemmas. This world, however, is concentrated on people. The more so it should be assumed that thinking about security of organisations in the future is a duty and not a will, it is a necessity and not an opportunity for each of us who tries to determine not only their future fate, but also the fate of the organisation they represent. And this is all the more important since in these times in which we live and work, there is no one coherent theory describing "this" anticipated shape of future security, even by taking the prospect of the next few years (decades?) into account (Kozub and Mitręga 2018).

Today's computer models show that we are not able to adapt quickly as we do not think about the future. The current generation will determine together whether civilisation will survive or not. Martin from the University of Oxford presented 17 great challenges that humanity will face in the 21st century. The first challenge is to *save the Earth from climate change*, the second challenge is related to *reducing poverty*, because rich nations are getting richer, while billions of people still live in extreme poverty. Another challenge will be to *stabilise population growth*, which is associated with reducing poverty, as improving lifestyle is equivalent to controlling the population. The fourth challenge is to *achieve sustainable development* on the basis of protecting the environment. Another challenge refers to preventing armed conflicts, because war in the 21st century could bring an end to everything. *Dealing effectively with globalism* is challenging as well, as the right balance between what is global and what is local needs to be achieved. The seventh challenge is to *protect the biosphere*, the next is to *reduce terrorism*, especially in the context of terrorists acquiring weapons of mass destruction. The ninth challenge is *creativity combined with the technological development*, as technology will lead to an era of extreme creativity. The tenth challenge refers to *reducing the occurrence of infectious diseases*. Spread of infectious diseases might kill many millions of people, as has happened many times in history. The eleventh challenge is related to *the expansion of human potential*, which can accelerate scientific and technological development, and as a consequence, the development of civilisation. The twelfth challenge is associated with *artificial intelligence* which, described as peculiarity, must be under strict control, since its free and unrestricted development could bring irreversible consequences for the human race. Another challenge is related to *the existential threat* resulting from the possibility of releasing a genetically modified pathogen. The fourteenth challenge is related to the possibility of *shaping people*. This is the first century in which we will be able to radically change people. The so called transhumanism[1] can lead to constructing a much more advanced civilisation than the current one. Another challenge is linked to the previous and consists in planning advanced civilisation. As a result of transhumanism and peculiarity, changes will be more extreme than most people might comprehend and understand. We must now ask ourselves: "what kind of civilisation would we build if we could? The sixteenth challenge refers to *modelling planetary systems*. Thanks to planning and monitoring Earth in a meticulous and detailed manner, we will be able to find answers regarding the planetary system as well as any phenomena (such as climatic or geological) taking place on Earth. The last challenge is related to *the gap between our skills and our wisdom*. Science and technology are rapidly accelerating, but wisdom keeps falling behind. As a consequence, we cannot cope with problems which are becoming increasingly complex (Martin 2007).

With regard to the analysis and attempts to evaluate a number of theories regarding future security, it can be assumed that the world is entering increasingly faster an era in which even the most extreme scenarios of its development are becoming more and more possible. Many still cannot be imagined as, e.g. there are no words to describe them, but the

1 Transhumanism is a concept which claims the use of science and technology in order to overcome biological limitations of humans. As a result, posthumans appeared − humans improved in terms of: life expectancy, cognitive abilities, emotional abilities (Szymański 2015).

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most important factors of the future world should encompass technology, demography and climate (Hammond 2008), but also changes in natural resources and rare elements. Other theories indicate that finding even more efficient and, at the same time, clean sources of energy, or social changes, but also the progressive degradation of the natural environment will be one of the most important challenges. Nevertheless, this entire list of challenges faced by the world of the 21st century always includes a real danger of an outbreak of military conflicts since people have an expansionist nature. Earth, water, raw materials, technology and many other determinants may become the reason for conflicts in the future; that is why becoming familiar with strategic cultures of countries is a duty in order to anticipate and predict certain patterns when being faced with aggression.

"The best way to predict the future is to create it."
P. Drucker

Future and strategic culture

Strategic culture is part of broadly understood strategic studies. Together with the end of the Cold War, the end of strategic studies was predicted. On the other hand, the events at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries were the decisive factor in the development of this field of science which is trying to answer the question *what is the reason for it*? In this way, the issue of strategic studies includes many factors that shape global policy. In contemporary strategic research, strategic culture is considered in two forms: firstly, as the context of making strategic decisions; and secondly as a cognitive paradigm. The context can be defined as a structure of social situation properties systematically relevant to the discourse. Two main hypotheses underlie reflections on strategic culture as the context:

1. researchers assume that the behaviour of countries in previous periods has a strong impact on current and future abilities and their behaviour on the international scene;
2. another hypothesis is based on the ideas of countries and nations, on the identity or national character, which suggest the country's predisposition to implement a particular type of policy.

The usefulness of strategic culture aimed at analysing the future security environment depends on whether someone believes that this concept should be used to "explain" or "understand" the process of making strategic decisions. "Explaining" emphasises the structural and causal conditions of international politics, while "understanding" is concentrated on conditioning the entities through factors such as rules, intentions and context. It translates into the question *Does strategic culture define or shape the strategic decision-making process of countries?* Komrji (2012). Countries which skillfully used the tools of their culture, civilisation, history and geography in order to influence others have become much more long-lasting and effective on the domestic and international political stage. It should be added that research into the future increases the awareness of stakeholders with the view to acting faster and earlier. As a result, both organisations and societies are more effective in coping with changes. The ability to predict provides extra time for understanding the risks and opportunities in a better way and makes it possible to build more creative development strategies, new products, and also presents visions of some organisational changes. The value of research into the future is certainly less as far as the accuracy of forecasting is concerned, but is crucial in planning and considering new opportunities and changes in the action programme (Awedyk 2015).

Thanks to the research on the future, it is possible to make decisions which take account of future opportunities and threats. Strategically, it is better to anticipate these problems

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than to react to them. Artificially created positive visions of development, without previously conducted analyses, may lead to failures, which will be the effect of the willingness to achieve impossible goals and schedules. Such forecasts should include an analysis of the impact of trends, which are specific determinants that hamper and jeopardise the fulfilment of unrealistic ambitions and dreams, but at the same time outline the way of conducting a policy moderating expectations and preventing disappointments (Awedyk 2015). Although it is always preferable to have a theory of the future, it is still necessary to create a conceptual framework that will help us to understand the future. Six pillars can be mentioned among all various available approaches. The first pillar includes "Planning the future", the second "Predicting the future", the third "The time of the future", the fourth pillar is "Developing in the future". The fifth pillar refers to "Creating alternatives', while the sixth pillar is about "Transforming the future" (Inayatullah 2012).

Strategic culture is, among other things, the ability of a strategic community[2] to predict long-term consequences of decisions and, in the face thereof, conduct complex and dynamic processes with very unclear results. A strategic community should have a special desire to get into the dynamics of events and overcome the barriers of uncertainty, volatility, complexity and ambiguity which are practically inaccessible to decision makers (Ozhiganov 2012). With clear goals and visions of the future comes trust and confidence in the organisation management – what is the final result that should be achieved within a specific time? who should perform it? what and when? what actions will be sufficient to achieve the desired result? It is the certainty and clarity of the image of the future that provides the motivation to achieve a common goal (Varfolomeeva 2017).

2. The concept can be defined as "both emergent and strategic, a collaborative, inter-organiszational relationship that is associated with creative yet strategic thinking and action in an ongoing process, as in arrangements such as strategic alliances, joint ventures, consortia, associations, and roundtables …". Strategic communities can exist within a global organization and/or between organizations for fast and collaborative innovation in an environment beset with uncertainties. (Mäkäräinen-Suni 2011).

Summary

When considering strategic culture in the context of creating the future, it should be added that strategic culture can help encourage a better understanding of the real cultural identity of a particular entity (such as a country or an organisation) and its role in the system of international relations. Therefore, it can contribute to a better understanding of security policy implemented by the entity and, what is more, the analysis of strategic culture can lead to a better understanding of the opponent's strategic behaviour on the basis of how the opponent defines victory, defeat, loss or suffering. Therefore, thanks to the analysis of strategic culture, the entity can create appropriate strategies (such as deterrence) in order to reduce potential losses and costs in the event of armed conflicts (Johnson *et al.* 2009). It is notable, however, that strategic culture is not a dogma or a camera through which we can look into the past or the future. It is a tool useful for understanding how and what the circumstances are in which a country defines appropriate measures and goals to achieve its goals regarding security (Al-Rodhan 2015). Therefore, strategic culture researchers face the task of exploiting the knowledge acquired as a result of considering strategic culture in order to assess new challenges so that we can be prepared for them in a practical way (Lantis and Howlett 2010).

When analysing strategic culture, it should be clearly highlighted that the research into strategic culture is subject to continuous evolution, as strategic cultures can change and sometimes even radically but it depends only on the impulse. As far as the generational change is concerned, the most common change in strategic culture goes hand in hand with a breakthrough and shift in the way of thinking (Howlett 2006).

To conclude, it should be stated that low strategic culture or its absence means weakness of the country in terms of applying this strategy in politics (Marczak 2019). As Marshal Józef Piłsudski pointed out, strategic illiteracy provokes neighbours to attack

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(Kmiecik 2016). In the modern world based on the multidimensionality of threats, as well as changes in the circumstances of the strategic security environment, these words seem to be extremely up-to-date and relevant. Moreover, as Kozub points out "an important task of strategic culture would be [...] to create strategic studies among the country's political establishment, which should "discipline" political thinking and action. This is all the more important as the features of strategic studies are the reverse of bad politics, even politicking, which leads to a country's internal and international weakness" (Kozub 2014).

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