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A Case for Strategic Culture as Discursive Practices: Reconstituting New Labour's decision to intervene in Sierra Leone, 1997-2000.

Abstract

The concept of strategic culture promises to offer causal, non-materialist explanations of state behaviour, but it adheres to incommensurable explanatory modes of investigation. Outdated mechanistic concepts of strategic culture still inform many descriptions concerning the use of force. Offering a discursive alternative to contextual strategic culture, this article defends a version of practice theory. It intends to empirically show its superiority over contextual understandings of culture, as well as the limits involved. In doing so, it describes a movement away from congealed structure to social structures, and from discourse towards optimal agency in discursive practices, involving doctrine and civil military relations.

This movement can be seen as a wider development within debates on culture. It is argued here that an oppositional view of structure and agency will be unproductive. Strategic culture can be operationalized when defined as the discursive interplay between grand strategy as a discourse and relevant strategic practices. Applied to the British military intervention of Sierra Leone in 2000, the model shows that practices crucially affected hesitant political decision-making, and changed strategic assumptions on the unilateral use of force.

Declaration

The word length of this dissertation is

I hereby declare that this thesis has not already been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being currently submitted in candidature for any other degree.

It is the result of my own independent investigation and all authorities and sources which have been consulted are acknowledged in the appended bibliography.

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'Ideally, one might seek to analyse the communicative practices of those most intimately involved in the making of strategic policy, … Alternatively, speeches, press releases and policy documents produced by officials from the various departments and government bodies that are involved in the policy making process...' (Lock, 2010, p. 702)

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Introduction: The Lure of a British Way of War

Strategic culture has traditionally been likened to stable national views of the use of force, an understanding harking back to geographical, historical and political experiences and structures. (Gray, 1999; Booth & Trood, 1999) The flaws of such mechanistic applications of strategic culture have long since been exposed, but there has been little resonance of this in the mainstream literature. Outdated concepts of strategic culture still inform cursory descriptions of the assumed continuity of Britain's sterling military performance. As a consequence, under-theorised analyses of British military interventions separate military and political decision making levels. The military level in question is invariably depicted as acting normally or rationally, whereas the political sphere is regarded as incorrigibly opportunistic. Strategic culture then functions in the background, being glorified as the 'right way'.

But culture is what we collectively do, good and bad, confirmed in every-day behaviour. Strategic culture is primarily expressed in the practices and exchanges between those involved in bringing security to communities. Such dynamism cannot be captured by an assumed body of attributes, affecting the behaviour of security communities. It becomes a temporary description of a discursive dynamic between discourse and practice, which influence each other through processes of governmentality and conceptual power. Strategic culture, then, can best be understood as the discursive interplay between grand strategy as a discourse and relevant strategic practices. (Neumann & Heikka, 2005)

The concept of strategic culture promises to offer causal, non-materialist explanations of state behaviour, but it adheres to incommensurable explanatory modes of investigation. The resulting weaknesses prohibit it from moving towards more interpretative approaches. This means it must address those issues that have until now ignored in the conceptual debate. These issues regard the origins, operation and analysis of strategic culture, and warrant a look at earlier discursive understandings of strategic culture. (Lock, 2010, p. 691)

This article defends a version of practice theory as a discursive alternative to contextual strategic culture. It intends to empirically show its superiority over contextual understandings of culture, as well as the limitations involved. In doing so, it describes a movement away from congealed structure to social structures, and from discourse towards optimal agency in discursive practices. As a consequence the concept acquires a different purpose. It means asking 'how possible' questions of process, rather than 'why' questions on motives. (Doty, 1993) To embrace descriptive strategic culture means to reject positivist assumptions of

causality. In order to intelligibly resolve these issues surrounding the concept it is necessary to place the concept of strategic culture amidst broader issues of culture and the structure-agency debate within International Relations Theory. The model proposed combines constructivist insights and practice theory within a strategic model of decision making. Having established the model, it will then be used with regard to the British intervention in Sierra Leone in 2000.

British forces are often said to have either a history of fighting small colonial wars, or a military doctrine that has continuously focused on manoeuvre and command based on initiative. (Mockaitis, 1990; McInnes, 1996; Pugsley, 2011) Some military analyses of New Labour's intervention in Sierra Leone in 2000 similarly see 'a British military culture' confirmed. (Roberson, 2007, p. 27) David Richards' examination of the British task force under his command in Sierra Leone in July 2000 points the finger at inert UN bureaucracy, in dire need of military tempo and structure. (Richards, 2011) Similarly, Clegg has argued that New Labour's subsequent operations in Iraq in 2003 took place in a stable strategic culture. With casualties mounting, the issue of force protection was strongly politicised for electoral gain, but responsibility remained in the trusted hands of the military, or so his argument goes. (Clegg, 2012) The immediate objection to such essentialisation is factual. When performance does not meet expectations, it is easy to censure those responsible for rash policy, rather than those who adhere to the tried and tested ways of the past. In fact, strategic cultural analysis ought to include such processes.

There were no recriminations after the British military involvement in Sierra Leone, as it was 'a textbook success'. (Richards, 2012) It is inviting to argue for the operation as a typical 'British way of warfare' solution, embedded in counterinsurgency tactics derived from Imperial Policing. It is easy to see this as nothing new, at least for British operations. But it has been argued that the operation signalled new beginnings for the British army, too. The two missions were 'pregnant with lessons' for best-practice intervention. They also brought on new insights on Labour policy, as well as the military decision making process. Richards considered them a clear example of inertia on the part of the international community, which had failed to exact 'coherent and timely pre-emptive action'. (Richards, 2011, p. 271) During the operation, '[j]oint staff officers represent[ed] a purple wave of the future who are doctrinally aware of the need to work together for inter-service ideals. [However, s]uch laudable achievements reflect organizational change rather than a bottom-up initiative to influence attitudes.' (Connaughton, 2000, p. 94) This meant that the innovation of joint operations would have to be extended to the lower service levels through practice, not just

organisation. (Dandeker, 2000, pp. 173-5) The view of unchanged strategic culture ignores these events. To paraphrase Prime Minister Blair: it may well be the custom, but should it be?

Preference of a discursive interpretation over a conceptual explanation does not fully position the argument. Constructivists differ about the nature of these concepts, debating how far they should distance themselves from foundationalist approaches to international relations theory. Critical constructivists consider the constitutive nature of discursive practices to best reflect the process that leads to political decisions. But conscious practice assumes a very high level of agency, somewhat detached from structure, and therefore, meaning. At some point the actions of individuals and institutions lose their signifying connection to discourses, and their causal effect. In the end, explanations of culture for political behaviour are located in a cultural continuum with its own trade-offs.

Layout of the argument and text structure

This article argues that the concept of strategic culture must be understood discursively to account for the processes that drive it. Therefore it must centre on strategic practices concerning the use of military force. To support this, several key discursive practices that constructed foreign policy towards Britain's military intervention in Sierra Leone in 2000 are established. Against claims of a stable national strategic culture under New Labour, the case of Sierra Leone confirms the simultaneous contestation and confirmation of New Labour's views on the use of force. Using practice theory within a critical constructivist model, strategic culture regains its agency as an analytical tool towards domestic decision making levels.

The argument supporting the case is divided into five sections. Firstly, a literary review introduces the analytical and philosophical limitations of mainstream structural conceptions of strategic culture. These involve the under-theorised issues of origins, operation and analysis. Related to this is the role of military doctrine and civil-military relations within the concept. Secondly, the discursive approach to strategic culture of the second generation is discussed as an alternative. As cultures 'do not stand still for their portraits', any model of strategic culture should address its constitutive nature. (Neumann, 2002, p. 628) Whereas the early discursive conceptions of strategic culture as a Gramscian hegemony recognise the concept as a political tool legitimising the use of force, they do not elaborate on its working as a product of interaction at the military-political level. Critical constructivism is shown to offer a bridge towards a model of agency.

Thirdly, the three approaches to the concept are placed within the larger cultural debate between structuralists and culturalists. Their contention on strategic culture as meaning or as practice coincides with the structure-agency debate. Abandoning this eternal juxtaposition for a cultural continuum makes possible an inclusive image of agency, one that allows a measure of causality.

The fourth section summarises the case for agency and its ontological limitations. Ultimately, agency and structure are indivisible dimensions of the same social environment. Practice theory can remove many objections against the analytical use of strategic culture, but only when the concept incorporates both dimensions. Strategic culture will be understood here as the discursive interplay between grand strategy as a system, and the strategic practices of doctrine and civil military relations.[1] (Neumann & Heikka, 2005, pp. 14-16)

Lastly, we will build our model on the foundations of the previous sections. Departing from conventional constructivist understanding, practices are performed by conscious actors that operate in a 'collective field of imaginable possibilities'. (Cruz, 2000, p. 276). This situates strategic culture, and eliminates the risk of mock agency through predetermined behaviour. This marks the last step from social structure towards agency, which is at the heart of the debate surrounding the concept. (Poore, 2004, p. 45)

Case selection: Sierra Leone, 'pregnant with practices'.

The British military intervention in Sierra Leone fits our purposes for several reasons. First and foremost, the case shows three evocative examples of agency: strategic practices regarding the use of force, which relate directly to strategic culture. The political decision to intervene in Sierra Leone was constituted by events and practices preceding it. Actions by individuals and departments at senior levels during the first three years of the Labour Government have crucially altered the case for British intervention in Sierra Leone, and not necessarily in the way intended. While the development towards the decision to intervene arguably was a drawn-out political process involving many factors, actions by key individuals were instrumental in building consensus and crucially influencing debate. British foreign policy had initially ducked the crisis, subsequently mishandled it, and then saved it in a last ditch attempt.

Secondly, the case shows that instead of a collection of 'beliefs, values and habits regarding the threat and use of force' strategic culture is best understood as discourses that are

[1] Neumann (2005) also identifies procurement & budgeting as strategic practices. These practices are equally valid for this discussion, but they are less relevant to the case at hand. Therefore, these are not discussed.

open to contention and politicisation. Not only do we tend to see ourselves favourably, we also want our 'truths' to be the norm. Culture is not contested because it is hard to find agreement on definition, but because dynamism is its very essence. Following New Labour's victory under Tony Blair in 1997, Foreign Secretary Robin Cook articulated New Labour's 'ethical' foreign policy. The substance of this policy is still debated, but by now it is clear that 'Moralism' was but one of four priorities of policy, competing with Atlanticism, Economic Liberalism, and Multilateralism. (Williams, 2005, pp. 28-32)

Lastly, changed political and military understanding of the use of force at the top level constitute changes in strategic culture. The successful intervention marked the crowning achievement of two trends, one concerning military doctrinal development towards joint operations for 'peace enforcement', (Mader, 2004) the other the redemption of the New Labour ethical policy. There was praise all around for the British military performance in Sierra Leone. Operations Palliser and Barras, in July and October 2000 respectively, finally restored the democratically elected President Kabbah to power, after nearly a decade of civil war. British policy regarding Sierra Leone had made a similar learning curve. Palliser and Barras served as an impetus for interventionism. This attitude would later inform the judgment of British government officials after the 9-11 attacks. (Seldon, 2007, p. 604)

Criticising first and third conceptual generations of Strategic Culture

Johnston (Johnston, 1995, pp. 36-44) identified three generations of thinking about strategic cultures, one mechanistic, a second discursive, a third positivist. All of them are flawed in some way. Snyder's landmark 1977 article on "Soviet strategic culture" defined the concept as 'a distinctive and lasting set of believes, values and habits regarding the threat and use of force, which have their roots in such fundamental influences as geopolitical setting, history and political culture.' (Snyder, 1977, p. v) Although much quoted, it fails the key test of operationalization. (Duffield, 1999, p. 776; Johnston, 1995, pp. 37-9; Neumann & Heikka, 2005, p. 8)

The contributions on New Labour by Clegg and Sierra Leone by Roberson relate to such outdated first generation conceptions of strategic culture. Clegg posits that British strategic culture regarding methods of force protection was stable during operation Iraqi Freedom, in spite of major political debate between the New Labour Government and the opposition. Instead, 'government became too closely involved in the planning and execution

of operations'. Using an early definition of strategic culture by Gray, Clegg is able to argue a divergence between 'modes of thought and [of] action with respect to force, derived from the national historic experience', thus not responding to his full concept of culture. (Gray, 1984, p. 131)

Clegg does not question 'whether senior officers have struck the right balance in their relationship with ministers and senior officials in the Ministry of Defence', (Melvin, 2012, p. 26) when there is a perceived 'temptation to act politically' on the part of servicemen. (Melvin, 2012, p. 21) He elaborates on politicians micromanaging military affairs, but misses the emergence of politically adroit soldiers like David Richards. Plenty of words were spent between government and opposition about the mounting casualty rate in Iraq, and military men had their say on both sides. Clegg mistakenly assumes the British military culture remained isolated from the political level.

Clegg invites us to discount the active debates underlying our understanding of what constitutes 'normal' use of force. We might then find the following description of the Sierra Leone intervention convincing. Referring to the checklist for intervention in Blair's Chicago Speech (Blair, 1999), Roberson states: "In the case of Sierra Leone, the British government could answer yes to all the questions [raised by] The national interest and cause, the safety of British citizens, were easy to answer. The Lomé Peace accords had failed, so there were no more diplomatic solutions. The recently created JRRF provided a tailored force package that could achieve the military objectives. Finally, the UK was already committed to the long term with contributions and aid packages. The case for the military intervention fell directly in line with the standing foreign policy of the Prime Minister." (Roberson, 2007, p. 5)

This omits the changeable attitudes to the use of force. Initially, British involvement did not even intend to go beyond extraction of British and EU nationals being threatened by the Revolutionary United Front, but it ended up expanding to direct the ailing international efforts to stabilise the country. (Olonisakin, 2008, pp. 91-95) In Sierra Leone, British forces had deliberately operated separately from UNAMSIL, at 11,000 the largest UN mission to date. UNAMSIL was the irresolute successor to the West-African contingent of ECOMOG, itself tainted by Nigerian adventurism. Operation Palliser prevented a UNAMSIL rout at the last minute. UN Security Council members had taken their time to confront the problem, having long neglected Sierra Leone as a West-African problem, and then forced a debilitating compromise on President Kabbah at the Lome Peace Accords in July 1999. The international community, Britain included, had redeemed itself.

In his analysis of the operation in Sierra Leone Roberson presumes 'the analysis of the British military culture underscores many of the reasons why the UK's forces are well suited for counterinsurgency'. (Roberson, 2007, p. 25) This implies timeless knowledge about putting down rebellion, and harks back to the old days of 'policing the empire'. (Clegg, 2012, p. 29; Cassidy, 2005) Reyifying connections between culture and behaviour, and culture and doctrine, ignores that counterinsurgency doctrine was continually being developed by the British Army. In reality, doctrine is always under development at many levels, 'the distillation of experience placed in the context of the present and with an eye to the foreseeable future'. (Alderson, 2007, p. 7)

Crucially, the same holds true for strategic culture. Snyder later orphaned his brainchild exactly for that reason, the acceptance of '[dubious] explanation of strategic doctrine in terms of national or elite political culture'. (Snyder, 1990, p. 6) Roberson's quotations highlights the outcomes, but ignores the political controversy preceding and informing the decision to go, the inordinate size of the taskforce relative to the objectives, and the jumps foreign policy had made to arrive at the decision to intervene. All of these reflected strategic practices by ministers, field officers and soldiers, of which we will examine three.

The common thread in both examples is that cultural explanation takes a backseat to 'plain old politics' (Snyder, 1990, p. 8) Using Gray's 1984 definition of strategic culture as 'thoughts and actions' Clegg does not do justice to Gray's later insights about strategic culture as dynamic, elusive, and overlapping, nor his admonition not to essentialize strategic culture. (Gray, 2007; Gray, 1984) Concluding with a now moribund view of strategic culture by Snyder, Clegg understands strategic culture as a historical development, evolving when certain "objective conditions change". (Clegg, 2012, p. 29.) In this respect it is worth repeating Booth's powerful rebuttal of Snyder's rejection of cultural explanations. Booth claimed that '[internal and external] "realities" in human behaviour are in the eye of the beholder…we live in a created world.' (Booth, 1990, p. 124) Clearly, strategy formulation cannot be divorced from the cultural dimension.

Not only are Clegg and Roberson are extolling a reified understanding of British strategic culture, they understate the processes underlying the use of force. Only when enough time has passed, does Clegg allow these same practices to become part of the cultural curriculum, like the Balkans operations in the early 1990s. (Clegg, 2012, p. 29) But key experiences do not lag, in fact decision makers are acutely aware of them. It follows that practices should be prominent aspects of their behaviour. An example of this is the observation that contemporary missions in Northern Ireland created an 'in-built default

setting' for actual Rules of Engagement used in Sierra Leone. (Dorman, 2007, p. 192) Doctrine is most significant to strategic culture when it is debated, applied, or discarded. Formal doctrine risks being a dead letter.

First and third generations examined

The previous applications of strategic culture show an understanding of culture as national and contextual. In Johnston's oft-cited distinction of three generations of strategic culture, such use would classify as first-generation conceptualisation, supported by Snyder and Gray. (Johnston, 1995) First-generationalists consider culture key to understanding the thought process of particular security communities, but only contextually so. Gray welcomed Snyder's concept as an indispensable addition to neorealist explanations based on 'locally forged, but generically understood' rationality. (Gray, 2003, p. 292) Following Snyder's lead, he identified a national American style for security issues. (Gray, 1984)

The first and third generations have limited their debate to the place of behaviour within a unitary strategic culture. The first deterministically includes it as a shaping factor of behaviour, the third excludes it as a falsifiable independent variable. (Poore, 2003, p. 279) Neither thoroughly addressed the sources of strategic culture, how it works, and the best way to study it. (Lock, 2010)

First-generation definitions of strategic culture as historical national context confines its operationalization to generalised thick descriptions. (Poore, 2003) This prompted Johnston to come up with a falsifiable theory of strategic culture, using culture as an independent variable impacting on strategic behaviour. Dubbing himself a third-generationalist, Johnston argued for a 'limited, ranked set of grand strategic preferences' like books on a shelve. (Johnston, 1995, pp. 36-8)

> *'Strategic culture is an integrated system of symbols (i.e. argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors, etc.) that acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting grand strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious.' (Johnston, 1995, p. 36)*

Against Johnston, Gray has powerfully argued that we are all 'encultured' and we choose our books wearing our cultural lenses. (Gray, 1999, p. 135; Johnston, 1995) Any attempt to

separate the behaviour of decision makers from their cultural make-up will only lead to tautological reasoning. Johnston's solution implies that decision makers have no influence on culture, like mindless 'automata'. (Lock, 2010, p. 693; Gray, 2007, p. 8) Gray has exposed this fallacy confirming that 'people make culture'. Unfortunately, his alternative of 'a centuries-long dialogue between a people and its history' is equally inoperable. (Gray, 1999, p. 130; Gray, 2007, p. 19; Booth, 1990, p. 126) Remarkably, while castigating Johnston's efforts to define the 'mysterious "it" of culture', Gray still manages to exclude 'mere opinions, .. fashionable attitudes, [and] shifting patterns of behavior'. (Gray, 2007, p. 11)

Upon closer examination it becomes clear that first and third generation views while contradictory and inconclusive, represent a bedrock for promising constructivist interpretations. Also, few references to Snyder's definition include his introduction that strategic culture is the result of a 'socialisation process', indicating the dynamic and constitutive nature of culture. (Snyder, 1977, p. v) To Johnston's definition of strategic culture it can be added that interaction is a constitutive part of those strategic preferences. To paraphrase Gray, they are not only 'encultured', but 'enculturing'. Gray admits that '[i]n practice, of course, we tend to see ourselves as we would like to be.' (Gray, 2007, pp. 8,17) He comes close to a sub-national definition;

> *'Culture yields us the truths, small and large, that we know should guide our decisions and actions. In practice, we will often ignore those truths and behave expediently. Our strategic culture is likely to educate us with quite powerful preferences. But in … a political process, we must do the best we can.' (Gray, 2007, p. 12)*

Here, Gray contradicts himself by stating culture is both all-encompassing context, and the opposite of rationality. His statement of expedient 'practice versus truth' opens the door to constructivist explanations of culture, but Gray refuses to enter. He retreats to his ivory tower, stating '[s]trategy is a value-neutral tool…the process by which security communities make the hard choices which relate military power to political purposes.' (Gray, 2003, p. 288) Both Gray and Johnston gloss over the constitutive role of human practice in producing culture. (Lock, 2010, p. 694), Each presents 'strategic culture' as an objective, bounded category that obscures the subjective and iterative nature of the underlying political processes.

Their deadlocked debate with regard to the causality and analysis of strategic cultures derives from culturalist ambitions to make strategic culture into a counterweight to structural realism. (Desch, 1998) Yet, a juxtaposition of culturalist versus realist understandings of culture is erroneous, because neither can do without the other: there are no 'unencultured realists'. (Gray, 2003, pp. 292-3) As we shall see, a more discursive definition of strategic culture offers a via media.

Three generations: grappling with origin, operation and analysis

The first and third generations have flaws regarding the origin, operation and analysis of strategic culture. Their account of the constitution of strategic culture is unsatisfactory. Johnston speaks vaguely of 'experiential legacies' in the origins of security communities as constituting strategic culture. (Johnston, 1995, pp. 29,40) Booth and Trood offer a explanation of cultural origins similar to Snyder's, namely geography and resources, history and experience, and political structure and defence organisation. (Booth & Trood, 1999, pp. 365-6; Booth, 1979) Gray sums it up stating 'Germans cannot help but be German'. (Gray, 1999, p. 50) Such flawed thinking about strategic culture as a natural quality within a security community still 'underpins virtually every study of this concept'. (Lock, 2010, p. 692)

Underspecified constitution also makes explaining the operation of the concept difficult. Against Johnston, Gray argues in favour of including behaviour, as 'human strategic actors and their institutions "make culture"' (Gray, 1999, p. 130). Indeed, Johnston cannot maintain his causal separation of culture and actor, and allow agency on the part of decision makers at the same time. Once decision makers can reject their own cultural preference, the model loses its explanatory power. Practices supposedly do not themselves constitute culture, an untenable proposition.

Gray chooses deterministic arguments over an engagement with the relationship between structure and agency, that lies at the heart of the debate. (Lock, 2010, p. 693) '[C]ommunities do not deliberately construct their cultures, strategic and other. Those cultures emerge and change as a kind of natural phenomena. They are the ever evolving product of the many efforts peoples make to explain their past, understand their present, and anticipate their future.' (Gray, 2007, p. 14) While we agree with Gray on the dynamic nature of culture, it is a key point of this article to argue that his argument for strategic culture as an ephemeral, unconscious phenomenon is deterministic, making culture overly structural.

With regard to the question of analysis, another encounter between first and third generation authors offers a partial answer. The Kier-Posen debate asks whether military doctrine as part

of national strategy is informed by organisational culture or material interest. (Farrell, 1998, p. 409) Kier's contribution stands as a key example of third generation work on strategic culture. Posen defends realist motives underlying doctrine. (Poore, 2003, p. 284n19; Posen, 1984; Posen, 2004)

Kier judiciously argues how cultural assumptions on the use of force by politicians and military constrained the Anglo-French war preparation prior to 1940, yet she fails on method. Kier makes military culture a variable between political constraints and military planning, assuming political cultures as constant. Her emphasis on cultural causality downplays functional motives that were part of military-political contestation. This follows from her definition of culture as 'the set of assumptions so unselfconscious as to seem a natural, transparent, undeniable part of the structure of the world.' (Swidler, 1986, p. 279; Kier, 1997, p. 26) Kier confuses doctrine with strategy to argue dominance of civilians over strategy and cultural effects, leading her to prioritise operational procedures (or practices) for political goals translated in military strategy. This unnecessary dichotomy opens her up to narrow realist criticism regarding doctrine as 'merely techniques'. (Porch, 2000, p. 168; Desch, 1998, pp. 161-2)

Both Kier and Porch evade the dynamism of doctrine, both its power to lead innovation and its 'dysfunctional lag' in implementation. (Alderson, 2007, pp. 8-9) Projected onto the 1990s, this tactic would have ignored that British armed forces saw "major shifts in the civil-military relationship, which impelled the military to adjust their thought and action more to the norms of civilian society." (Mader, 2004, p. 25) Again, taking doctrine and civil-military relations as static entities misses the point of their constitution. Our model must incorporate them as constitutive processes, or practices.

The neglected second generation: strategy as discourse.

Constitution, workings and analysis of strategic culture remain problems for the previous approaches. The interpretive approach of the second generation of strategic culture partially addresses these issues. Taking a post-positivist approach in an unreceptive era, this work has been overshadowed by the Johnston-Gray debate. (Lock, 2010, p. 691)

Bradley S. Klein's idea of strategic culture as a 'political web of interpretation in which strategic practices gain meaning' realises a much broader conceptualisation of strategic culture. (Klein, 1988, p. 136; Lock, 2010, p. 687) His contributions take strategic culture away from the ontological and epistemological assumptions by Gray and Johnston. Klein takes reality as constructed, rejecting the foundational division between subject and object. To

him, strategic culture is a form of ideology that justifies and shields real politics. During the Cold War the United States of America postulated a declaratory policy of defensive nuclear strategy, but actively pursued an operational policy of global hegemony. (Klein, 1988, p. 138) Klein's observations bring us two further building blocks, and a warning.

Firstly, identity is not 'natural' or primordial, it is constructed. Culture does not just shape practices, as Gray has argued; their actors derive their identity and therefore their interests from culture. Why people fight depends on how they think about themselves and their enemies. This is why political bodies, which incorporate military style and infrastructure, actively hegemonise the right to define legitimate uses of force. This is similar to Kier's point on civilian government's primacy on constraining domestic military power, and Lock's on the communicative practices of the 'politics of strategy'. (Kier, 1997, p. 21; Lock, 2010, p. 697) As Lock clarifies, military strategy must be considered a cultural practice for it to be properly analysed. (Klein, 1988, pp. 135-6; Lock, 2010, p. 698)

Secondly, strategic practices consist of material and a cultural meanings. From Klein's Gramscian division of strategic culture between declaratory and operational culture, it follows that strategic practices like doctrine and civil-military relations will have a meaningful part and an operative part. Official doctrine is a public document streamlined by government policy discourses, but equally doctrine has to provide practical guidelines for those in the field. Snyder identified a Soviet declaratory policy, leading him to question the validity of using Soviet military doctrine as an unpolemical internal source. (Snyder, 1977, p. 8) Kier hinted on this duality regarding civil-military relations: 'the military's culture shapes how the organisation responds to constraints set by civilian policymakers…[and it] intervenes between civilian decisions and military doctrine.' (Kier, 1997, p. 5)

Lastly, Klein assumes discourse to be coherent with the operation, the reverse of Johnston's premise of behaviour following culture. This leads him to ignore the real possibility that decision makers are themselves socialised by 'the symbolic discourses they manipulate'. (Johnston, 1995, p. 40) Consequently, we have to allow for mutual constitution of discourse and practice, structure and agent.

Constructivists assume an intersubjective reality of mutually constitutive structures and agents. These shape seemingly 'natural' identities, and the 'power of practice in its disciplinary, meaning-producing mode'. (Hopf, 1998, p. 182) Our interest in the latter, not the former sides us with critical constructivism. Not all constructivists are prepared to trade in their explanations of socially produced structures for constitutive strategic practices.

Conventional constructivists accept minimal positivist assumptions of practices, power, institutions, and norms being somehow stable. They assume categories exist and identities are relatively stable. (Hopf, 1998, p. 184; Katzenstein, 1996; Wendt, 1992) This allows them to use these as variables explaining state behaviour. Understandably, they feel close to the realist methodology. (Farrell, 2002, p. 72) Having wrested the initiative from realists with their narrow material explanations of state identity and interests, conventional constructivists maintain that strategic culture, although constituted, is in some way collective, distinctive, and stable. (Duffield, 1999, p. 770; Hoffmann & Longhurst, 1999, p. 31) Critical constructivists rightly disqualify this sudden amnesia, regarding causality through edified identities as void. Instead, they aim to uncover the power relations underlying 'natural' identities. (Hopf, 1998, pp. 183-4)

An example will clarify the point. From the vantage point of 'new institutionalism', Farrell makes a case for culture as shaping institutional preferences, similar to contextual approaches. Farrell's 'competitive institutional isomorphism' informing organisational practices, has the same effect as Johnston's one-way approach of 'culture informs behaviour'. (Farrell, 1998, p. 412) Remarkably, Farrell persists with institutional explanations of Irish conventional military reorganisation after the Anglo-Irish War of 1921, in spite of his recognition of converging practices of resurgent guerrilla warfare and adoption of British administration by the Irish Government. (Farrell, 1998, p. 416)

It is legitimate to ask why Farrell subscribes to the constitutive nature of culture, yet does not criticise 'the existence of communities such as military organisations and states'. The fact that such entities are maintained, while others are not mentioned, creates a red flag in itself. (Lock, 2010, p. 701n82) This shows that conventional constructivists risk falling into the determinate traps of origin, operation, and analysis as first-generationalists.

Power relations at the grand strategic level are reflected in debates between military and political levels. 'Strategic culture constitutes a set of rules regarding what may be communicated, and implicitly, what may not. (Lock, 2010, p. 700) Communication presumes shared understanding of symbols, and the political process is essential in this regard. (Lock, 2010, p. 700) Politics revolve around the contestation of meaning. Agents do not meekly pass on meanings dictated by social structures. They actively participate to manipulate this process in their favour. In the case of strategic culture, it means that military and political levels must be analysed whenever they position themselves. As Klein put it: "To study strategic culture is to study the cultural hegemony of state violence." (Klein, 1988, p. 136)

Taking long-term cultural patterns for granted is to deny this every-day process. Primordialist understandings of national identity like 'The British Way of War' are rarely appropriate as there seldom is a fully homogenous population. On the other hand, even politicians have their memories. Generalisations will have some credibility. Befitting our goal of a middle ground, Cruz has suggested a 'declaratory identity' as an understanding of national identity that is neither primordialist, nor invented. Instead, she focuses on 'collective fields of imagined possibilities' in which the present is continuously contested within 'rhetorical frames'. (Cruz, 2000, pp. 281-2) As beliefs are not predetermined, and subcultures at every level will exist, there is always a need to persuade others of the need to listen to this or that interpretation of past events. Actors' behaviour must therefore be empirically examined. To do this, Cruz reverts to the 'discursively explicit', because these are observable and political. (Cruz, 2000, pp. 279-282) From there it is a small step to practices.

So far, this article has embraced the critical constructivist view on identity as a dynamic of power and practice, to counter cultural generalisations. We will now turn to the question of where to locate strategic culture. Lock situates strategic culture as 'a particular social structure [that] shapes the content and meaning of strategic discourse as well as what implications follow from the deployment of that particular discourse'. (Lock, 2010, p. 701) Prior knowledge will influence actors positions, but what they say and repeat will direct the debate. Klein implies such emphasis on practices, stating 'widely available orientations to violence and to ways in which the state can legitimately use violence against putative enemies…[P]opular representations…become artefacts [that] render a distinct range of identities implausible [or plausible].' (Klein, 1988, p. 136) We need to distinguish how practices relate to structures.

Agency needs structure. The limits of conceptual power

The ternion debate on strategic culture takes place within the larger culturalist debate on structure and agency. More generally, the concept suffers when it inherits the drawbacks of the ontology supporting it. It has been held back by positivist attempts to make it objective. Initially strategic culture was conceived as a secondary explanation to rational and realist approaches offering non-material motives of decision makers, a 'residual label' to be used 'only when all else fails.' (Snyder, 1990, p. 4) Reflectivist approaches fit uneasily with those approaches that centre on the international side of politics, and those that regard state interest to be defined materially.

Strategic cultural debates are part of the broader debate on culture and the state, and it shares many of its developments. Steinmetz lauds Stuart Hall's (1994:527) 'emphasis on distinctive social groups and classes,… [instead of] culture as an integrated whole' as a watershed in the understanding of the concept (Steinmetz, 1999). The unequal distribution of power within symbolic systems and a historicity of culture that allows fundamental changes, as opposed to the Herderian geographical delineation of culture. (Steinmetz, 1999, p. 6) This is necessary to avoid simplified national 'ways of war'.

The agent-structure debate is at the heart of (strategic) culture. Hall has pointed to the two understandings of culture, one structuralist, and one culturalist. 'Whereas, in 'culturalism', experience was the ground-the terrain of 'the lived'-where consciousness and conditions intersected, structuralism insisted that 'experience' could not, by definition, be the ground of anything, since one could only 'live' and experience one's conditions in and through the categories, classifications and frameworks of the culture, …of which experience was the effect.' (Hall, 1980, p. 66)

Structuralist approaches build on ideas to form a common culture defined as a 'general social process: the giving and taking of meanings, and the slow development of 'common' meanings' But the understanding of culture as a sum-total of social behaviours isolates meanings from 'the active and indissoluble relationships between elements or social practices'. (Hall, 1980, p. 59; Barnes, 2001, p. 27)

Conventional constructivists consider material interests to be cultural first - constituted by mutually constructed institutional identities. (Wendt, 1992, pp. 399, 405) Paradoxically, they consider these to be relatively stable social structures. Critical constructivists rebuke both schools for adhering to foundationalism and accepting naturalised patterns of unobservables. (Hopf, 1998, p. 183) Explanation, as opposed to understanding, requires structure, but structure induces determinate behaviour. (Doty, 1997, p. 370) This is the problem. How do we account for collective experiences without making them predetermined.

Hall sees culture and structure as two sides of the same coin. He offers a useful definition of 'culture' that reflects this duality. Culture is;

> *'both the meanings and values which arise amongst distinctive social groups and classes, on the basis of their given historical conditions and relationships, through which they 'handle' and respond to the conditions of existence; and as the lived*

traditions and practices through which those 'understandings' are expressed and in which they are embodied. (Hall, 1980, p. 63)

This definition will form the grindstone to our proposed form of practice theory. Culture emphasises the heterogenic nature of practices, structure stresses the collective they constitute (Hall, 1980, p. 72); " 'Culture' is not 'a' practice; nor is it simply the descriptive sum of the 'mores and folkways' of societies-as it tended to become in certain kinds of anthropology. It is threaded through all social practices, and is the sum of their inter-relationship." (Hall, 1980, pp. 59-60)

Curtailing postivism is no invitation for an overly radical position. The views are not juxtaposed, but part of a 'continuum of increasingly thoroughgoing culturalism'. (Steinmetz, 1999, p. 27) One side is occupied by radical culturalists, who see all social objects and practices as cultural, ever changing constructions of meaning. This perspective favours behavioural contingency, irreducible to structural explanations. The other extreme regards culture as purely contextual, secondary to cognition. This perspective sees culture 'set[ting] an overall context of constitutive rules, the ideological terrain of taken-for-granted assumptions, within which strategic [human] action occurs…. [which has] a certain strategic reasonableness (if not rationality)'. (Steinmetz, 1999, p. 27) Gray's assumption of neutral strategy is a good example.

Taking everything to be cultural unrealistically removes materialism from the picture. This represents a nihilist position. Primordialist and positivist generations favour rational-choice perspectives within a cultural context. Without a traceable concept, a falsifiable theory, and concise operationalization, positivist cultural causality of strategic behaviour is inconsequential. Reifying strategic culture is opposed by those that want to define it as contingent forms of meaning. Some precipitously argue that this makes interpretative understanding a more productive research program. (Lock, 2010, p. 690)

Faced with these equally unattractive perspectives, a culturalist approach that allows indeterminate practices to coexist within a social structure seems to be the via media that Hall suggested. Laitin warns against ignoring the rationality of actors; culture is 'Janus-faced: people are both guided by the symbols of their culture and instrumental in using culture to gain wealth and power.' (Laitin, 1988, p. 589) Any model of strategic culture must therefore incorporate these two sides of culture.

The debate in IR has so far persisted in opposing views of scientific explanation and interpretative understanding (Kurki & Wight, 2010, p. 21). Both views share a flawed belief in causality, embraced by one and rejected by the other. 'Independent variables' to explain causal relations within a falsifiable framework, is essentially the same as viewing 'constitution' of ideas, structures or rules. (Kurki, 2008) Moreover, both perspectives explain state behaviour in terms of causality. Poststructuralists themselves often imply agency and structuralism in their work. (Doty, 1993, p. 389)

Even though reflectivists of all colours regard their approach more, or less, a-causal, their vocabulary is nonetheless full off causality. Instead of reasons, they focus on consequences and constitutions of identities. (Kurki, 2008, p. 114) Jenny Edkins, arguing against notions of causality in the field of International Relations, has given an example of humanitarian intervention where she differentiates between 'causes, [and] political reasons or motivations.' (Edkins, 1999, p. 15) Arguably, this is just another way of seeing causation, between 'motivations' and crises. (Kurki, 2008, p. 199) Kurki reverts to Aristotle's four causes - material, formal, efficient and final – to construct a new basis for causality. (Kurki, 2008, p. 220) The four causes also interact with each other. (Kurki, 2008, pp. 207-9)

The Aristotelian model reminds us that we cannot ignore material factors, that formal causes are not merely 'mental' as neorealist assume, that efficient agency is always embedded in causal context, and that final causes are intentions, but not teleologically so. The pay-off is to think of causal explanation not as 'the gathering of regularities, but conceptual explanation of the variety of forces that bring about regularities or observables.' Reducing causal explanation to 'mechanistic metaphors or relations of 'independent and dependent variables is to overly restrict our understanding of the complex social reality around us.' (Kurki, 2008, pp. 210-11)

In particular, Aristotelian final causes can help us out of the problem created by conscious individual actors negating general laws. Final causes must be understood as non-mechanistic, non-regularity bound causal forces. (Kurki, 2008, p. 226) Final causes are a crucial and irreducible separate cause. (Kurki, 2008, p. 222) The motivation for executing a practice may not correlate with the material means applied, yet express causal effect. For example, the size of the British intervention force did not necessarily establish prior motives to escalate.

As is the character of discursive practice, its causality works in both ways. It frees us from the covering law adage of cause and effect being proven through each other. Non-conceptual causality makes strategic culture as an imagined entity unnecessary. Moreover, it

means we can differentiate its perceived outcomes. Most importantly, the focus on practice as an itinerary to agency does not preclude causality.

Structurally informed Agency.

All three generations of strategic culture see social structures as separate from agents. As Hall's definition of culture (p.12) has shown, it is not necessary, or even desirable, to choose between social structures and agents. As the two tenets of social life, they both affect strategic culture. (Wendt, 1992, pp. 337-8) The conventional constructivist subscription to scientific realism condemns them to the identified problem of social causality. Logically speaking, objective and powerful structures cannot coexist with subjective but autonomous agents. This is important, because it contradicts Wendt's famous argument for mutually constitutive actors that can escape systemic anarchy. (Wendt, 1992)

Maintaining the juxtaposition of agent and structure prevents a solution as both categories are highly dubious, as they are overdetermined and lack any essence (Doty, 1997, pp. 386, 387) They will invariably lead to 'attributing some timeless and unexplained quality to all subjects'. (Doty, 1997, p. 384) As this is a problematic of strategic culture, it is better to analyse discursive practices. These cannot be essentialised, for they do not carry meaning or signification outside of discourse. (Doty, 1997, p. 377) Discursive practices assume that 'words, language, and discourses have a force which is not reducible to either structures or cognitive attributes ('signifieds') of social actors'. (Doty, 1993, p. 301) 'Discursive practices create subject-positions, a subject being defined as a position within a particular discourse… [retaining] varying degrees of agency.' As a result, a subject can only be defined relative to other subjects and objects. (Doty, 1997, p. 384; Doty, 1993, p. 306)

Strategic Culture as a dynamic interplay of Grand Strategy

Expressing strategic culture as a discursive will lift the eyebrows of realists, but it is not as radically critical as it sounds. It is possible to be encultured, yet retain individual choice. (Gray, 2007, p. 10) Gray dexterously argues that '[t]here may be a body of strategic beliefs and attitudes to which, say, most Americans would sign up. But, the many organizational players in policymaking and policy implementation will each have their unique take on how those common beliefs and attitudes should be expressed in actual strategic behaviour.' (Gray, 2007, p. 10)

We express grand strategy as a discourse, and doctrinal development and civil-military relations as strategic practices. (Neumann & Heikka, 2005, p. 17) Discourse here may be

understood as a system, or preconditions, for the formation of statements. (Neumann, 2002, p. 630) Preconditions refer to the iteration, not definition, of meaning. Doctrine is 'the sub-component of grand strategy that deals explicitly with military means' (Posen, 1984, p. 13) The dynamic interplay between these elements together forms strategic culture. (Neumann & Heikka, 2005)

To clarify, a synonym for strategic culture in this sense could best be 'politics of strategy' rather than a 'century-old dialogue'. (Lock, 2010, p. 707) As culture is understood dynamically, the term 'strategic culture' can only connote a provisional description of power relations. This does not rule out lasting beliefs, but makes them dependent on what decision makers consider to be their cultural heritage, and what they do to manipulate this shared understanding. After all, implementation of the use of force is an exercise of 'who we are and why we fight'.

Culture can be understood as a circuit where practice and discourse continuously influence each other through the application of knowledge and power. Practices incorporate social rules, and contingent resources. In fact, observance of discourse, and performance of establish practices are two sides of the same coin – they confirm each other's power. A discourse as a system of meaning that commands the observance of established practices, possesses the Foucauldian power of governmentality. Practices can be changed, or re-enacted in new situations, which places them outside of the discourse. They can nonetheless be acceptable, once they have been understood to fit other practices, and institutionalised as an established practice. This 'conceptual power' is how social change occurs. (Neumann, 2002, pp. 636-7)

Neumann does not mention what or where strategic culture is in this model. Cruz' suggestion of 'collective fields of imaginable possibilities' accurately describes the process of political contention that underlies the model. (Cruz, 2000) Rhetoric politics make explicit the political struggle over meaning and shared identity which dictate what options are negotiable and what ought to be done.

Strategic culture is not a monolithic entity, but is constituted at the military and political levels, (Kier, 1997) and, some would argue, the public level too. (Gray, 2007) Political decision-making sets boundaries on the responses that military organisations and their separate military cultures will generate. (Kier, 1997) Static, or linear, conceptions of strategic culture do not reflect the continuous influence of culture, or the fact that diversity is created by different actors. Although space does not permit its treatment here, the model warrants an international dimension to cover discursive practices that have interstate and

international reach, such as doctrinal cross-fertilisation and procurement strategies. Unquestionably, 'policy and strategy are negotiated outcomes'. (Gray, 2007, p. 25)

The function of practices in behaviour

So far we have examined the flawed assumptions of mainstream concepts of strategic culture. They can be placed on the structuralist side of the cultural continuum. Our proposition achieves a middle road between Weberian individualism and Durkheimian emergent structures that 'are not reducible nor, therefore, explicable from those of its component elements –human individuals'. (Frisby & Sayer, 1986, p. 36) A fully structural concept of strategic culture leads to essentialised primordial explanations of strategic culture in support of rational theory. We cannot ignore structure, because power is socially constituted, it 'emerges out of order'. This actually empowers the individual member, whose power grows from social agreement on practice. 'Power is shared practice'. (Barnes, 2001, p. 27n2)

Practice theory offers a solution to ontological and epistemological problems of connecting ideas to explanations for behaviour. It refines the traditional Weberian idea of material structures, and ideational actors. (Weber, 1978; Swidler, 2001, p. 76) A focus on practices avoids structural determinism of 'actors who can only recite pre-existing scripts' (Sewell, 1992, p. 11). Practices lie in between the subjects of structure and agents, incorporating elements of both. Therefore they are products of interaction. Unfortunately, IR theorists have ignored practices as the key issue of the Agency-Structure debate. This is likely because genuinely empowered practices reconstitute determining structures that are assumed as stable. (Doty, 1997, p. 376)

> *"Practice theory moves the level of sociological attention 'down' from conscious ideas and values to the physical and the habitual. But this move is complemented by a move 'up', from ideas located in individual consciousness to the impersonal arena of 'discourse'. A focus on discourses, or on 'semiotic codes' permits attention to meaning without having to focus on whether particular actors believe, think, or act on any specific ideas." (Swidler, 2001, p. 75)*

Where Hall's duality separates the two sides, the meanings and values, and the practices that re-enact them, this paragraph completes the argument. The two dimensions or structure and agency are brought together within the concept of practice. Social rules provide a mould, actors choose to wield resources to sustain or alter them. This is why strategic negotiations are the heart of a cycle of mutually constitutive practices and discourses that embody strategic

culture. The public manifestation of professional military opinions on British force protection discussed by Clegg suggests a change in civil-military relations. These are a key element of strategic culture as a discursive. Without this side of the military-political dynamic any explanation of the broader change in attitudes to the utility of force, such as fighting an insurgency and the best way to force protection, becomes disjointed. In fact, after 2001 British counterinsurgency doctrine stayed the same, while actual practices changed. (Alderson, 2007, p. 9)

Autonomous agents and all-encompassing structure are blended together in practices. Sewell argues that structure can be 'defined as composed simultaneously of schemas, which are virtual, and of resources, which are actual'. (Sewell, 1992, p. 13) Discourse, as a form of structure, becomes less important than the heavy schemas underlying it; 'deep structural schemas' [that] are pervasive [and] 'taken-for-granted mental assumptions' and modes of procedure that actors [unconsciously] apply.' (Sewell, 1992, p. 22) Similarly, Swidler defines practices as 'routine activities of an unconscious, automatic unthought character…by individual actors, or by organisations'. (Swidler, 2001, p. 74) Social practices are equated to agency, to replace the intransigence of individual decision makers. Practices are not actors, but they do possess agency. They are pervasive societal structures, but at a lower level they do possess social procedures, or resources, and the underlying schemas that inform them. As Swidler concludes, '[p]ractices are structures in just this sense'. (Swidler, 2001, p. 79)

Constructively understood, structures are 'sets of schemas, and resources may properly be said to constitute structures only when they mutually imply and sustain each other over time.' (Sewell, 1992, p. 13) People apply their material and mental assets – resources – to the execution of social tasks at an appropriate time – schemas. Through their action they reaffirm the validity of the structure – the combination of resource and schema. An email of a civil servant to a journalist can be helpful, courageous or illegal depending on the situation and the actors involved. It is entirely possible to perform a practice with other resources, or in different situations. 'Resources, we might say, are read like texts, to recover the cultural schemas they instantiate. Indeed, texts- whether novels, or statute books, or folktales, or contracts-are resources from the point of view of this theory.' (Sewell, 1992, p. 13)

Furthermore, practice theory addresses epistemological problems of culture: its invisibility and its assumed power over passive actors. (Barnes, 2001, p. 17) Taking practices as the unit of analysis remedies the problem of connecting actors with their social environment. What is called 'culture' is found in those practices 'that anchor other forms of practice and discourse because [they] enact a constitutive rule that defines a [significant]

social entity', identifying a community, or a labour relationship. (Swidler, 2001, p. 90) It can also explain why changes in accepted ways occur, in a way that can be observed.

Discourses are not so much the end result of practice, but understood as the system of meanings that determine what is meaningful. Epistemologically practices are easier to study than thoughts. This also avoids the problem of relating culture to action. (Johnston does this by analytically separating action from culture). Moreover, practises are action, being defined as 'routine activities of an unconscious, automatic unthought character…by individual actors, or by organisations'. (Swidler, 2001, p. 74) This also allows a plausible explanation for cultural change, because 'structures are multiple and intersecting, because schemas are transposable, and because resources are polysemic and accumulate unpredictably.' (Sewell, 1992, p. 19) Swidler adds: '..and most importantly because the schemas implicit in arrays of resources can be 'read' in multiple and sometimes competing ways, transformation as well as continuity of structures is possible.' (Swidler, 2001, p. 79)

Swidler stipulates that not all practices are equally powerful, that they can be public and still be powerful anchors of social rules, and most importantly, that they are at the bottom but still anchor the larger constitutive rules that in turn make up discourses. She argues that 'it is the practice itself that anchors, and in some sense reproduces, the constitutive rule it embodies.' (Swidler, 2001, p. 83) This corresponds to Swidler's previous understanding of culture as a toolkit that shapes the formation of strategies of action, routines from which actors choose and pick. Cultural repertoires are built from such societal toolkits of symbols stories, rituals and worldviews. (Swidler, 1986, p. 273)

Practice as conscious action

One problem remains. Swidler identifies culture as an unconscious (Swidler, 1986), unthought attribute of behaviour, or 'set of unselfconscious assumptions'. Similar to Johnston's separation of culture from behaviour, she emphasises practices as 'routine, unthought activities'. (Swidler, 2001, p. 74; Swidler, 1986) Such tactics smuggle predetermination and simple causality in through the back door, presuming everyone performs certain shared practices in exactly the same way. Practice cannot be its own cause and effect. Such assumption would risk a tautological perpetuation of system and practice. (Barnes, 2001, pp. 21,23n4)

To see individuals as empowered by a social practice departs from mechanistic models where rationally or culturally prescribed individual actions add up to social power. (Barnes, 2001, p. 21n2) It also follows that discourse is conservatively defined as a set of

preconditions. To define it in Klein's way, as an all-encompassing cultural illusion amounts to a pre-determined structure without agency.

Of course behaviour remains individual. Skill levels and material resources of individuals and groups are never exactly the same. It has been suggested that we should abandon our efforts to combine disparate individual habits into social behaviour. (Turner, 1994) But there is no reason to give up on practices as being socially constituted. If a unit of cavalrymen would exchange their horses and equipment, the performance of the group would certainly drop significantly. Even though they have received the same drill, they will not understand or execute even routine tasks in exactly the same way. Again, power comes from shared practice. Based on this, we reject Swidler's reading of a toolkit of fixed practices. Her definition of practice as an unthinking process is reminiscent of Johnston's ranked preferences. Simply put, labels of tradition, routine, or the collective are inadequate reasons for why things are done.

Practices should therefore be defined as 'socially recognised forms of activity done on the basis of what members learn from others, and capable of being done well or badly, correctly or incorrectly.' (Barnes, 2001, p. 19) Each cavalryman is a 'competent member', blessed with different skills, tools, motivations. Each knows what is required of him to make the cavalry perform as a fighting unit. To do so, each makes a conscious decision to align his resources with the others for the common goal. (Barnes, 2001, pp. 24-5) . This consciousness makes all the difference. It returns true agency to the debate. The implication is that structures can no longer be thought of as objective, or even stable. Instead they must be analysed for the elements that constitute them.

Seeing practices accordingly solves cultural problems of origin, workings and analysis, as identified by Lock. It also corresponds with Hall's idea of bodies of meaning, and practices as the purposeful, conscious expression of those meanings. Discourse is not regarded as an explanation in itself, but merely the temporal setting for contestation; "Because actors situate their struggles within a dominant rhetorical frame (Strategic Culture), political contests between them engender a collective field of imaginable possibilities (Grand Strategy), [defined as] a restricted array of plausible scenarios (Practices) of [reality and the future]. (Cruz, 2000, p. 277) In the vocabulary we have so far established Cruz' elaboration could translate as follows: 'Because military and politicians debate over security policy from a national strategy prioritising governmental responsibility, they take up subject-positions that engender a strategic culture, defined as strategic practices of doctrine, civil military relations

and diplomacy that are based on resources such as official publications and, and schemas like shared experience.'

Case study Sierra Leone: practices influencing the use of force

In perhaps the most detailed study of British political involvement in Sierra Leone in the 1990s, Michael Kargbo uses M. Clarke's description of the British Cabinet to characterise it as a grouping of several committiees and subcommittees: 'less a machine than a network of well understood procedures'. (Clarke, 1992, p. 92). These are frequently left out of every-day policy-making. (103) This is echoed in the constructivist, radically culturalist idea of the state as 'a complex and mobile resultant of the discourses and techniques of rule.' (Steinmetz, 1999, p. 27)

Using practices, we can examine the machinations between different policy groups without reducing actors and their environment to fixed categories of government, state and diplomacy. Indeed, Neumann's contributions have shown that diplomacy is a multilevel affair, and dynamic in its area of responsibility. (Neumann, 2002) Focusing on practices as a combination of resources, or skills, and schemas, we intend to show how three actors crucially affected the use of force as part of foreign policy towards Sierra Leone. The first case will show how a discourse on the use of force directs practices. New Labour's ethical policy became a straightjacket when practices publicly deviated. A discourse that holds broad acceptance needs no enforcing. This is called governmentality. The second case shows some practices can fit within a diplomatic discourse but be at odds of the government discourse. The last case shows how the use of force as a practice has conceptual power that influences the discourse, and takes it further. Lastly, the three cases span a period of three years. Taken together they suggest that attitudes in government changed from hesitant ethical policy to a commitment to humanitarian intervention. The proven ability of British force projection operations in Sierra Leone cast its shadow to the cases belli in Afghanistan and Iraq. (Seldon, 2007, p. 604)

'The constitutive elements of Labour's foreign policy'

Within the discourse of humanitarian intervention, two relevant schemas can be identified, namely the ethical policy of New Labour, and the Peace Support Operations military doctrine that developed parallel with it. Between 1997 and 2000, both developed towards activism. When New Labour came to power in 1997, it set out to change the Conservative record on

foreign policy, which was tainted by their brawls with the EU and handling of the wars in Yugoslavia. (Williams, 2005, p. 22) Behind these familiar ideological strands of Multilateralism, Atlanticism, Neoliberalism and, perhaps, Moralism was a new conviction that globalisation required a more active approach to build democracy and stability. Foreign policy became the area of real differentiation. (Williams, 2005, pp. 27-8)

Despite Labour's aim to become 'a force for good in the world', it struggled to deliver. Among its foreign policy innovations were new limitations on British arms exports, a focus on Africa and a Strategic Defense Review for the overstretched and underfunded armed forces. All these activities amounted to a veritable change of defence policy culture. (McInnes, 1998, pp. 830, 844-5; Williams, 2005, pp. 22,31) The Strategic Defense Review was new in three senses. It was formal, allowing an unprecedented measure of input from the uninitiated in the government and military. It was foreign policy oriented, not a cost-cutting exercise. Lastly, it gave prominence to 'defence diplomacy'. (McInnes, 1998, p. 844)

The development of British doctrine during the 1990s was generally a narrative of successful institutionalisation and consolidation of inter-service doctrine. This pioneering development also brought British international leadership in developing peace enforcement doctrine for humanitarian missions. Sierra Leone was a successful example of constabulisation of military tasks. (Mader, 2004, p. 208)

The operations in Sierra Leone vindicated the newly developed all-service arms military doctrine of the Joint Rapid Reaction Force under a Permanent Joint Head Quarters. (Connaughton, 2000; Roberson, 2007, p. 87) The mission was also a resounding success for the Blair government, which had initiated a messy unilateral intervention in Kosovo the year before. The argument to do so was given by Tony Blair in 1999. In his 'Chicago Speech' Blair had formulated five criteria to identify when to 'get actively involved in other people's conflicts.' (McInnes & Wheeler, 2002, p. 159) Benevolence had controversially stretched the limits of the legitimate use of force to include the right to intervene in states shirking their responsibilities.

Cook's ethical policy: Discourse governmentality dictates practices

Policy and actions, in our parlour discourse and practices, need to correspond for either of them to be sustainable. New Labour's legitimisation on military interventions ran counter to international laws protecting state sovereignty, notably article 51 of the UN Charter. (Shaw, 2008, pp. 1143-5) This was increasingly at odds with its multilateralist aims. (Williams, 2005) We can take this activist foreign policy as a practice, with moralist ideology for a schema, and

aims and understandings of Labour, the Cabinet and Cook as resources.

The views of the preceding Conservative government regarding intervention were that endangered expatriates warranted unilateral action, provided it was a last resort and proportionate. This view was at odds with on the point of intervening in sovereign states to protect nationals. Article 51 mandates the 'territorial integrity and political independence of the target state'. Following Prime Minister Tony Blair's 1999 Chicago Speech Foreign Secretary Robin Cook in July 2000, the start of Operation Palliser, made public six principles to justify intervention in the case of 'massive violations of humanitarian law or crimes against humanity.' (Cook & Campbell, 2000) Like Blair's five points, they all applied to Sierra Leone.

In the 1997 Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Mission Statement Foreign Secretary Cook announced that it was high time for the introduction of 'an ethical content for foreign policy [which] recognises that the national interest cannot be defined only by narrow realpolitik.' This admonition for a cosmopolitan liberal internationalism was partly inspired by Cook's unhappiness at receiving a seemingly unspectacular posting. Another part was rhetoric against Conservative and unsuccessful 'old' 1980s Labour policies (Williams, 2005, p. 18), a sign of the 'new' art of framing the opposition, rather than taking controversial positions. (Lilleker, 2000, p. 231) Lastly, its production reflected genuine and carefully drafted government policy. (Williams, 2005, pp. 19-20)

A prime example of this difficult, perhaps naïve policy was to unilaterally, although selectively, restore hope to African economies ravaged by neopatrimonialism, and structural adjustment policies of the World Bank. (Williams, 2005; Richards, 1996; van de Walle, 2001) A separate department was set up to this end, weaning (budget) responsibilities from the foreign office. Clearly, this was not merely 'government' policy, but a discursive within the 'network of procedures'. When the high standards contrasted with other government goals, some suggested to stop re-enacting such practices. (Kargbo, 2006, p. 313) In September 2000, in the run up to the 2001 elections, and during operation Barras, several Labour ministers considered 'ethical foreign policy' was considered a 'misrepresented label' obscuring achievements. The 'millstone' was hung squarely on Cook's neck by Foreign Office Minister Peter Hain and others. (Dodd & MacAskill, 2000) Cook's reputation had been damaged by scandals that implicated his department in condoning illegal arms trade, notably to President Kabbah of Sierra Leone.

Instructively, even Blair's ensuing public dismissal of the 'overblown hoo-hah' was followed by his unethical defence of the ends of stability in Sierra Leone justifying the means

of mercenaries. (The Economist, 1998; Williams, 2005, p. 82) Cook was replaced as Foreign Secretary after New Labour's 2001 victory by Jack Straw. Nevertheless, 'Blair's government continued to offer ethical justifications for its foreign policies', notably on Iraq after 2002. (Williams, 2005, pp. 187,209; BBC News, 2003) Far from being Snyderian 'plain old politics', this demonstrated that the discourse of clean hands was constraining British foreign policy to a point where practices were accumulating to present a 'normal' picture that was diametrically opposed to it.

Penfold and the 'Sandline Affair': practice out of step with discourse

Midlevel diplomatic activities are practices within the discourses of the diplomatic service and government foreign policy. (Neumann, 2002) Such practices can be out of step with social schemas. In the case of Sierra Leone such practices clearly impacted on government policy. The second case concerns the activities of Peter Penfold, High Commissioner to Sierra Leone. Penfold was a decorated civil servant with extensive diplomatic experience in Africa. He had been appointed High Commissioner to Sierra Leone in a few weeks before the May 1997 coup, during which he distinguished himself. (Kargbo, 2006, pp. 96-7)

His actions were found to be in clear breach of UN embargo 1132, set up at British instigation. (UN Security Council, 1997; Williams, 2005, p. 82) 'In 1997-…the FCO colluded with the military consultancy form Sandline International to bring 30 tonnes of arms and ammunitions into Sierra Leone.' It led commentators to question the official stance that ministerial levels had not known about Sandline's involvement. Labour's ethical policy was put to the fire. (The Economist, 1998)

Assisting in formulation of policy is the responsibility of diplomatic missions as civil servants, and they operate in a high-impact environment. (British Civil Service, 2010)[2] Neither national interest nor individual errors are suitable to explain the behaviour of Penfold. The first ignores the creation of policy through practice at lower levels. The latter ignores the social context in which Penfold operated. In his memoires Penfold pointed to the Legg Report, which stated that despite 'individual failures and judgments… most of the trouble originated from systematic and cultural factors'. (Penfold, 2012, p. 85; Legg & Ibbs, 1998, pp. 1.1, 10.57) What concerns us is the schemas alluded to here.

Penfold has denied advocating Sandline as a suitable partner to President Kabbah of Sierra Leone. The Legg investigation into the Sierra Leone arms supplies, the 'Sandline affair', offers secondary evidence to the contrary. Tim Spicer, CEO of Sandline concurred for

[22] The earlier version of the Civil Service Code used by Kargbo (2006, p. 110) speaks of 'formulating policies' instead of 'developing policies'.

the investigation that Penfold was their government spokesperson with regard to dealings with Kabbah. Penfold's own defense is dubious. He correctly points to higher FCO officers who were in contact with Spicer at the time. On the other hand he personally discussed the Sandline contract with Kabbah, and agreed to liaise with Tim Spicer on his behalf. (Penfold, 2012, pp. 54-57)

Coles has argued that what he called the three golden rules of civil service were at variance with Penfold's maverick behaviour. In this light, it is well to remember that Penfold was a decorated and exceptional field diplomat, one tour short of retirement after forty years of service. (BBC Newsnight, 2002; Kargbo, 2006, p. 97) Acting as 'our man on the ground' Penfold proactively represented Britain in words and actions, not sitting around for detailed instructions – although apparently not keeping his betters adequately informed thru normal channels. (Kargbo, 2006, p. 99) This entrepreneurship has precedence.

There are precedents for this behaviour. Against those who favour the tradition of British Counterinsurgency methods securing the Commonwealth, it can argued that post-1945 local colonial British officials routinely crafted problematic 'forward policies', perhaps even 'covert empires', to further the continuity of their region within the British empire, as Mawby and others have shown this to be true of colonial administrators in Aden, Kenya, and Egypt. (Mawby, 2001, p. 75; Mawby, 2002; Satia, 2008, p. 8; Bennett, 2007, p. 158)

It should also be noted that the Conservatives had earlier sponsored a failed private military action against the rebels in Sierra Leone. (Williams, 2005, p. 229n33; Economist, 1998) This suggests that civil servants had a rather different understanding of ethical policy, equating it to 'quiet' practice. (The Economist, 1998) Indeed, the mainstay of diplomatic work was commercial promotion of British interest, as Cook himself discovered upon taking office. (Kargbo, 2006, p. 101) For this reason, Cook wanted to get rid of the 'establishment culture' of the Foreign Office (Theakston, 2000, p. 112), which he suspected of secretiveness which ran counter to the more open approach New Labour and he himself favoured. (Kargbo, 2006, p. 113)

Penfold advised President Kabbah to solve his lack of military support by hiring the British private military company of Sandline International, represented by Tim Spicer. The countermanding UN resolution he disregarded, or was not told of by the FCO office, or more probably was ignored by both. (Penfold, 2012, p. 54) This ran counter to government policy which pursued a peaceful resolution of hostilities, and had pressed for sanctions and an arms embargo through UNSC resolution 1132 of October 1997. (Kargbo, 2006, pp. 100, 95) It has been suggested that Sandline was the primary source of intelligence on Sierra Leone for the

Foreign Office. (Kargbo, 2006, p. 100) In any case, evidence shows a culture of permissiveness at the FCO department that interpreted and influenced official policy wayward of ethics. (Kargbo, 2006, p. 102) Peter Penfold as High Commissioner was only the most prominent among a number of FCO and military liaison operatives in Sierra Leone who had had dealings with Tim Spicer and his associates from Sandline International. (Spicer, 1999, pp. 212-3) The FAC was not able to ascertain the level of knowledge of both sides due to lack of documentary evidence. For our purposes, it suffices to establish that such diplomatic practices were the norm and went outside of the discourse of ethical diplomatic behaviour.

Penfold as an experienced diplomat was aware of this social schema. Using his resources, Penfold decided that his experience, connections and conviction meant that he knew better than Whitehall. Routine activities such as the 'golden rules' were not his 'anchors'. It was Penfolds's conscious calculation regarding their observance that favours discursive practices. More specifically, the 'establishment' discourse was closer to him than official foreign policy. To this must be added that specific guidelines were only recommended after the affair by the FAC.

Penfold's behaviour, when made public, caused an indictment of FCO procedures and official government policy that appeared to genuinely pursue a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Sierra Leone. Kargbo considered Penfold 'overenthusiastic' and neglectful of the rules. (Kargbo, 2006, p. 102) The official Leggs/Ibbs investigation on the Sandline Affair found that communications by his superiors to ministers had been 'incomplete, inaccurate, indigestible' (Legg & Ibbs, 1998, pp. para 9.29, p.89). The Foreign affairs Select Committee concurred on 'an appalling failure'. It condemned 'alternative or non-official foreign policies being set by officials in the field who may think they know best.' (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, 1999, pp. paras 67, 55) The Legg Report placed the blame squarely with the Foreign office. Although ministerial levels were exonerated, a prosecution was deemed 'not in the public interest.' (Legg & Ibbs, 1998, pp. 2-3) No doubt this would have brought to light other discordant practices.

All this public excoriation of rule-breaking ignored that the stand-off role of the 'Cabinet', an amalgam of 'several committees and subcommittees that are formally secret…informal groupings on a 'need to know' basis. Cabinet only decides on policy when it is nationally important, or prone to attract parliamentary scrutiny. (Kargbo, 2006, p. 103) Nevertheless, the Sandline Affair had boosted Sierra Leone from the doldrums to newspaper headlines ridiculing ethical policy, but policy priority remained low. The FAC investigation 'attracted

significant media attention, not because Sierra Leone was considered important to UK interests but rather because it could be used to ridicule Cook's portentously proclaimed 'ethical' approach to foreign affairs.' (Kargbo, 2006, p. 128)

Cooks proclamation was discursive. As such, it had to be seen to guide practices in order to be of political value. When it did not, the discourse came under pressure to adapt. (see Kargbo 129) FAC recommendations on procedure and workload were adopted, and Cook confronted 'the vestiges of imperial attitudes' within his department. The media were critical of government extending foreign policy through private military companies, a fact easily contrasted with the proclaimed ethical policy. (Kargbo, 2006, p. 133) Indeed, while Labour had denied Kabbah's 1999 request for British operational control of the Sierra Leonean Army (specifically that Brigadier Richards would remain there), it had maintained British officers in an unofficial capacity. (Kargbo, 2006, p. 133) This referred to the fifteen official British advisors, and the seventy British soldiers training the Sierra Leone Army within the IMATT program. (Lewis, 2004, p. 165) Overall, the fall-out from the 'Sandline Affair' influenced policy making. (Kargbo, 2006, p. 129) Practice did inform discourse, but indirectly. Even though the media did not call for intervention in Sierra Leone, the government sustenance of its ideology of ethical policy meant that unofficial use of force could no longer be legitimised. From now on, New Labour had to perceivably practice what it preached.

Richards' gamble: conceptual power of practices

Practices can go against the grain of normal custom, but as the third case shows, but they can also function as a catalyst for new discursives. Brigadier Richards headed the operational liaison and reconnaissance team that arrived in Freetown, Sierra Leone on 6 May 2000, to prepare a non-combat evacuation operation (NEO) for around three-hundred nationals there. He immediately requested release of the spearhead element of the maiden Rapid Reaction Force. (Connaughton, 2000)

An armada of ships, aircraft and infantry men was released within forty-eight hours. We can only speculate about the reasons for the inordinate size of this 'evacuation force', but the size appears to have been an military overestimation, likely based on recent abductions of UN soldiers by the Revolutionary United Front. (MacAskill & Norton-Taylor, 2000) Incidentally, Penfold recounts that he had helped evacuate nearly four thousand evacuees from Freetown without such force three years earlier. (Penfold, 2012, p. 182) Richards as acting military commander decided on the spot to extend his brief of quickly extracting British nationals to

providing full military support for the Sierra Leonean government. (MacAskill & Norton-Taylor, 2000) This pitted his powerful force against thousands of RUF rebels, who had controlled much of the Sierra Leonean landscape for many years.

> *"The pragmatics of the operation dictated that the British army secure a suitable exit point – Lungi airport was the obvious choice. Foreign Minister Peter Hain later told the House of Commons' Foreign Affairs Select Committee that this entailed securing 'the airport and its perimeter because you do not secure an airport in this kind of operation unless you are able to have a wide deployment area, perhaps at least four miles around.' " (Williams, 2002, p. 156)*

Having personally guaranteed British support to President Kabbah without conferring with his superiors at the Ministry of Defence, Richards energetically went to work. (Little, 2010) 'It became clear to me that such a force could achieve much more than a NEO if we were able to stiffen the resolve of the better UN contingents,… the [Sierra Leonean Army] and the Kamajors [loyalist tribes]…' (Richards, 2011, p. 266) Mobile patrols of 1 and 2 Parachute Regiment were pushing inland to engage the RUF rebels. (Lewis, 2004, p. 177)

> *"[O]n 17 May British paratroopers and Nigerian troops killed four rebels about 20 miles from Lungi Airport. This incident sparked a series of debates not only about the risk to British soldiers but also about the nature of their mandate in Sierra Leone. (Williams, 2002, p. 154)*

From the divergence in troop location it will be clear that Richards purposely picked a fight with the RUF, which was obviously outgunned in all dimensions by his amphibious force. (Connaughton, 2000, p. 93) What was a forward Para ambush at Lungi Lol , 30 miles east from Freetown. It estimates RUF casualties conservatively at fourty killed out a hundred and fifty rebels. (Lewis, 2004, p. 178; Williams, 2005, p. 229n37; Dorman, 2007, p. 189) It is clear that this crucial battle was a result of British aggressive patrolling, something reflecting the operational choice made by Richards, not the RUF.

Richards was risking severe criticism and demotion. He did not exaggerate when he commented years after; "If it had gone wrong, they'd have cut me off at the knees." Richards claims to have used the media to bypass the chain of command to get the ministerial level to grasp that '..with a little robustness, we could make a difference'. (Little, 2010) He was referring to top-level political sensitivity to international objections that might follow from what was nominally an illegal and unilateral intervention. It has to be emphasised that

President Kabbah had earlier requested the British government such assistance, and that the UN was already present with the ineffective UNAMSIL. Another political problem of the blanket arms embargo had been lifted to exclude the Sierra Leonean government through resolution 1171. (UN Security Council, 1998) Ten days after his decision to stay, Richards received clearance from London. (Penfold, 2012, p. 182)

Obviously unaware, Foreign Secretary Cook was hesitant on 8 July. In the Lower House he declared continued British commitment to stability and peace in Sierra Leone, but refused to go further than protection the airport as a supply line for the UN mission, and evacuation of British citizens from Freetown. (Cook, 2000, pp. 520,523-4) On the other hand, sending in mercenaries now, would be 'nothing but a menace'. (Cook, 2000, p. 525) The government was clearly set on a 'carefully, carefully' approach towards the use of force in Sierra Leone.

Richards' call was a case of personal judgment against the dominant political norms of risk aversion and protocol, and the military norms. In so doing he generalised his prime minister's claim of exceptionality in the Kosovo humanitarian intervention of 1999. (Williams, 2005, p. 175) The success of operation Palliser and the rescue of soldiers from the RUF in operation Barras in September 2000 did not conceal that Britain remained alone with the US in advocating unilateral humanitarian intervention. (Williams, 2005, p. 172.) As Blair put it controversially in 2004, after the invasion of Iraq: 'This may well be the law, but should it be?' (Blair, 2004)

Common reasons given for the British intervention were saving British nationals, ending humanitarian suffering, defending democracy, or supporting the feeble UNAMSIL mission. (Kargbo, 2006, pp. 297-313) We should relegate these for a stronger reason, the credibility of the Blair doctrine that fully warranted British intervention in the conflict in Sierra Leone. To save only British lives would have debilitated Labour's foreign policy. Britain was head of the policies had helped introduce mercenaries to the conflict, dictate an unequal peace agreement in Lome and broken an arms embargo of its own making. Combined with the 1997 FCO mission statement, this was impossible to ignore. (Kargbo, 2006, p. 312) Once success had been assured, the government was quick to capitalise. The decision to post-date Richards' decision to escalate was defended on 15 May 2000 by Defence Secretary Geoffrey Hoon, referring to the rapid deployment concept as intended in the Strategic Defence Review. (Hoon, 2000, pp. 23-28)

This brings us to the military discourse that was in effect, the implementation of doctrine. The military norms, for our purposes equated to the British doctrine of Peace

Support Operations, had developed after the Strategic Defence Review of 1997. (Williams, 2005, p. 177) Peace Support Operations 'fulfilled the idea of doctrine in its truest sense – to provide fundamental principles by which military forces guide their actions in support of objectives and at the same time to stress common sense and judgement in application'. (Mader, 2004, p. 227)

The key change that PSO doctrine established was to synthesise warfighting and peacekeeping. The new doctrine described the idea of peace enforcement as follows:

> *'Peace enforcement operations are coercive operations required in the absence of consent, or at least in the expectation of one, or all, of the parties failing to comply with agreed conditions. Peace enforcement will be necessary when the commander's estimate deduces that peacekeeping techniques alone cannot put an end to human rights violations and achieve the specified end-state.' (Mader, 2004, p. 224)*

By deciding to escalate, Richards ignored the specified end-state of a NEO. Instead, he let doctrine work for him. This was quite unlike some previous British commanders in 1990s crisis zones. (Smith, 2000) This is a double example of practice. Resources adapted the formal (social) rules of the practice of doctrine. By pledging British military support to President Kabbah Richards also made *de facto* policy in the absence of the British Government. The outcome shifted the balance of civil-military relations, and confirmed the moral (though not legal) justification of ethical intervention in the years ahead.

Put simply, practice forced the discourse. Even in May of 2000 there was no agreement on the extent of military force, or the 'objectives after evacuation of British nationals'. (Kargbo, 2006, p. 105) It shows in the many stated reasons for the intervention. They were not simply evidence of an international humanitarian norm, or just a result of 'Blair's Wars', but a 'tapestry of imperatives which Britain could not just ignore'. (Kargbo, 2006, p. 298; Kampfner, 2003) It is more interesting to help trace the varying importance of those reasons over time. Saving expatriates, or Sierra Leoneans was only part of the explanation, Labour's advocacy of democracy and multilateralism was another. The timing was best explained as an attempt to reconcile the pressing ethical foreign policy and Britain's record on Sierra Leone, alluded to earlier, and support for international stability more generally. Obviously, Robin Cook now strongly favoured shoring up government policy regarding Sierra Leone. (Kargbo, 2006, p. 312)

We may ask ourselves whether the actions of one man can really reflect the whole of

government. Perhaps Sierra Leone was special in this regard. Referring to the British single-command system, Roberson points out Richards was more powerful than his official subordination to the Sierra Leonean Government implied. 'In reality, the system placed the British commander in a position where he could directly influence the Sierra Leone Ministry of Defence. Additionally, by working in concert with the British High Commissioner, the British commander could influence all the [Sierra Leonean] departments.' (Roberson, 2007, p. 81) Likewise, Richards has sternly defended Penfold, stating that without Penfold's work, the popular attitude would not have supported the British presence. (Penfold, 2012, p. Foreword)

Concerning practices of civil-military relations, the changed strategic environment of the 1990s required doctrinal reorientation, as well as adaptation to domestic pressure on military institutions, procedures. (Mader, 2004, p. 70) Sierra Leonean intervention is indicative of both the doctrinal development towards joint interservice expeditionary operations, and the responsiveness of the military operational level to the exigencies of politics, media and the public at large. (Mader, 2004, pp. 187,207) Richards' actions reflect a keen sense of the requirements of 'modern soldiering', skills no doubt contributing to his promotion to Chief of the Defence Staff in October 2010.

We can see how the distinction between political organisation and military culture is artificial. Richards' choice to escalate was not derived from doctrine. He could have fallen back on new doctrine demanding that the force be impartial. In fact the numerically strong UNAMSIL force adopted taken a neutral peace keeping role when their UN mandate allowed them to enforce peace. (Dorman, 2007, p. 187)

In terms of strategic culture, the main point must be that it reflects the interplay of discourse/Grand Strategy, and practices/Doctrine/Relations. As such it shows a convergence of military and political policies. The doctrinal development, sketched broadly from Wider Peacekeeping and British Defence Doctrine to Strategic Defence Review and Peace Support Operations , interacted with New Labour's political evolution from quiet diplomacy to multilateralism and interventionism. Although Sierra Leone was clearly an exceptional case, the actions of a diplomat and a military commander engaging in each other's hemisphere may not be as excentric as commonly assumed.

Conclusion

This article has shown the validity and merits of a discursive approach to strategic culture based on the dynamic of practice and discourse. Earlier models of the concept are crucially flawed. Static contextual models can only respond to change by making definitions even more

inclusive, to the point of methodological nihilism. The first and third generations with their implicit aim of national or systemic explanations of non-material interests are poor models. The hegemonic discursive of the second generation does not engage with operationalization leading them to ignore socialisation of actors.

Strategic culture as a set of discursive practices equates to grand strategy, and the practices of doctrine and civil military relations. Using strategic practices as a medium of conscious agency between actors and their social environment solves problems of constitution, operation and analysis. Culture no longer has to be a generalised, bounded entity in order to have conceptual value based on deductive-nomological causality. Contingent resources make it possible to explain anomalies against social rules, and therefore, change.

The case of Sierra Leone has shown that practices and discourse mutually constitute each other. New discourse may lack governmentality. This leaves unanchored practices at lower levels at odds with what is regarded as the norm. In the case of High Commissioner Peter Penfold such practices nevertheless impacted on those who maintained the new discourse, notably Robin Cook.

Practices in turn possess conceptual power. Commander Richards conduct forms an excellent example of this. His decision worked at the levels of doctrine and civil-military relations, and caused a lasting change in government attitudes towards unilateral military intervention. Causality here can be understood in Kurki's Aristotelian senses of formal meaning, and final intentions. (Kurki, 2008, p. 220)

Reenlisting causality within discursive practices means reflectivists also have to confront their own assumptions of non-causality. Another consequence is the nature of strategic culture which now holds no bounded meaning, but merely describes discursive processes.

Such processes are rhetorical and political in a broad sense, and centre on the contestation of policies by actors whose interests depend on their constituted identities. Even the cursory case study presented here gives ample evidence of this. Depending on the social schemas, and more importantly the resources they wield, their input will affect the accepted view of the use of force. In so doing they reflect strategic culture.

Practices shape political discourse, that then made possible other practices. Such a dynamic is much better suited for foreign policy questions. It is also much more adaptive to networking organisations and international influences, without jeopardising the state as a functioning body. The international aspect has not been covered by this examination. In the context of strategic culture this certainly merits further attention.

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