

CULTURE, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, AND MULTILATERAL PEACEKEEPING: CONFUSING PROCESS AND PATTERN

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Some time ago, Laura Nader (1969) urged anthropologists to “study up” as well as “down.” No community is more “up” than the people actively engaged in governmental-international affairs which deal with war and peace, whether as diplomats, soldiers, or analysts.¹ The actions and beliefs of members of this community, like those of people everywhere, are situated in a cultural context that is embodied in, and results from, their daily experience. This is the culture *of* international affairs. Further, this cultural context supports particular ways of thinking about culture, which, in turn, affect the way community members approach the social and cultural aspects of their own work. The conceptions of culture used by the international affairs community circumscribe the role of culture *in* international affairs. The culture of international affairs and the conceptions of culture used in international affairs are related in complex and systematic ways.

These conceptions of culture are necessary because they allow community members to define problematic situations as problems that can be solved using well-understood patterns of action (Schön 1983). All conceptions of culture have consequences, for international affairs these include defining which representations of social and cultural life are taken as plausible and useful. This paper inquires into the international affairs community’s operating conceptions of culture, and their consequences, as these are represented in the actions and literature of that community.

Lively intellectual debate within the international affairs community often masks the fact that the work of that community has been dominated during the past forty years by a widely held world view, the influence of which has been especially important in the areas of international security and conflict resolution (for an example see, Ferguson and Mansbach 1988: 13-31). This world view has been maintained even when international security policies have often

produced paradoxical results—protracted conflict where peace was intended, abuse and torture of people where human rights was the goal, and despotism where democracy was sought (Rubinstein and Foster 1988). Moreover, the vigor of the current debate obscures the fact that this world view continues to provide the context within which competing approaches to international affairs are evaluated, and that it forms the symbolic matrix which shapes discourse about these approaches (Cohn 1987, Brasset 1988). In an important sense, the role accorded the analysis of social life and lived experience in international affairs emerges from the culture of the community of international affairs professionals. This is a culture which places a premium on the production of information that can be characterized as “objective,” “rational” (in a logical sense), amenable to formal modeling, and derived from “correct scientific methods” (Beeman 1986, Rubinstein and Foster 1988: 3-7).

Often in contrast to this, especially during the last half-decade, anthropologists have reported many studies that bear on questions of culture in international affairs and international security. There is now a considerable anthropological literature showing how non-anthropological analyses of international affairs fail because they ignore cultural and symbolic factors (Foster and Rubinstein 1986, Worsley and Hadjor 1987, Rubinstein and Foster 1988, Turner and Pitt 1989). Yet, the international security and arms control communities become increasingly dependent upon the physical sciences and technology in their attempt to develop effective strategies for conflict resolution (Hamburg 1986: 533). It turns out that when attention is paid to the human arrangements upon which the success of these policies depends it has largely been in the form of formal models, like econometric and game-theoretic models of behavior, decision-making, and negotiation (Brams 1985, Ball and Richelson 1986, Knudsen 1986). For the most part, sociocultural processes which affect these models have not been considered (Rubinstein 1988a: 23-31).

This appears all the more puzzling because recently, especially among political scientists and policy analysts, attention has focused on the dynamics of international negotiations (Fisher and Ury 1981, Raiffa 1982), and “cultural styles” have often been mentioned as important considerations. Yet, these discussions have for the most part failed to consider the role of social process and lived experience in cultural life, and instead have emphasized the formal aspects of negotiations. Moreover, these discussions have tended to characterize these negotiations in the context of East-West political, economic, and ideological contests. This result from a particular way of framing problems in international affairs which paradoxically discounts the importance of cultural

factors at the same time it seeks to engage them (Rubinstein 1988a: 30), often leading to prolonged conflict (Bateson 1988, Beeman 1986).

In this paper, I suggest that when cultural considerations enter international affairs discourse at all, they do so in a manner which confuses social pattern with social process. The result of this confusion is that these discussions fail to adequately take into account the complex, dynamic, and multifaceted nature of social life. In addition, I note that traditional anthropological discussions of the nature of culture have contributed to this misunderstanding because they have failed to make clear the multiple ways in which culture emerges from, and is constantly changed by, experience. In this discussion, I use data from ethnographic work among senior diplomats and military officers concerned with conflict resolution and peacekeeping to illustrate some of the various ways that social processes relate to cultural patterns important to international affairs.

The Culture of International Affairs

The culture of the international affairs community emerges from the practice of its members (compare Geertz 1983: 10-11). As for any group, this practice has over time resulted in a dynamic set of symbolic processes and instrumental activities (some formalized in ritual behavior) which help members of the community manage a complex environment by situating their actions (including intellectual activities) in conventionalized and meaningful routines (Rubinstein 1988b: 5-7, Kertzer 1988). Part of this culture embodies a world view, often called "political realism,"² which uses several premises about (1) what the proper unit of analysis is for understanding world affairs, (2) what kinds of information ought to be taken into account by decision makers, (3) how "rational" decision makers act, (4) the nature of power, and (5) the overriding importance of Super Power concerns.

"Political realists" assert that in international affairs the State is the most important unit of analysis (Korany 1986: 548). Thus, in this view, international security is to be understood based on the actions and interests of Nations. Discounted (if not completely ignored) are questions of inter-group relations at levels other than the state, issues of meaning and symbolism, and local-level views of the significance of conflict situations. Perpetuated is a representation of culture as essentially simple, homogeneous, and univocal.

Underlying "political realism" is the view that useful knowledge must be based on "objective," "scientific" facts. Often quantitative indices of interstate

relations are taken as the hallmark of useful knowledge. That it is the "political realist" world view itself that determines what counts as fact and what as fantasy is rarely discussed, and is most often expressed in the rejection out-of-hand of descriptions of world affairs that do not conform to "realist" expectations (Kim 1983: 9).

Scientific facts, however, are never "just facts." Indeed, they depend upon value judgments that can be consciously presented and explored, or, for whatever reasons, hidden. As Myrdal (1969: 51-52) observed:

biases in social sciences cannot be erased simply by 'keeping to the facts' and refining the methods of dealing with statistical data. Indeed data and the handling of data are often more susceptible to tendencies towards bias than is 'pure thought.' ...Biases are thus not confined to the practical and political conclusions drawn for research. They are more deeply seated than that. They are the unfortunate results of concealed valuations that insinuate themselves into research at all stages, from its planning to its final presentation. As a result of their concealment, they are not properly sorted out and can thus be kept undefined and vague.

A corollary of the first two aspects of the "political realist" world view is the belief that once States have the objective facts they (through their leaders) will act rationally. Actions are judged more or less rational to the degree that they conform to the behavior that is predicted by formal models (of econometric analysis or game theory) that are based on objective facts.

Although the "political realist" view has for a long time been criticized as over-narrow (see the articles collected in Mendlovitz 1975, Falk and Kim 1980, and Falk *et al.* 1982) it has dominated discussions of international affairs for the past four decades. Its continued operation can be seen in the international affairs literature. Thus, for example, Davis and Winnefeld (1983) describe the philosophy and methods of the work of the RAND Corporation Strategy Assessment Center. They describe that work as based on automated war games where decision models which use heuristic rules for guiding behavior and rules for coordinating responses of forces in several operational areas are substituted for human decision makers.

Further, they argue, that

The power of the approach is due in large part to its emphasis on realism (relative to more standard approaches) and to the use of artificial intelligence and force modeling techniques that make behavior rules and other key variables transparent and interactively variable (Davis and Winnefeld 1983: vii).

Such "technical rationality" excludes a wide range of substantive cultural

and social information (Simon 1983: 75-107), and is perhaps more appropriately described as logical rather than rational.

To understand world affairs and to ensure international security, the "political realist" view calculates the relative power of states acting "rationally" on the basis of "objective" knowledge. Only physical and material resources are included in the calculations of power. Kim (1983: 9) notes that

the concept of 'power' in mainstream realism is excessively narrow and limited. This realism respects only material and physical power and is contemptuous of 'normative power,' ...It denies the existence of the world normative system.

One result of this is that powerful actions based on normative or non-material strength are difficult to understand from the "realist" perspective (see Bateson 1988, Sluka 1988, Rice 1988). Yet, normative imperatives form an important basis for many activities important in international affairs. Indigenous peoples have successfully challenged the actions of materially more powerful groups, and stopped the self-interested actions of those more powerful groups. For example, the Dené (Kehoe 1988) successfully oppose uranium mining and other nuclear related actions, and the Cherokee successfully resist economic and cultural extinction (Rubinstein and Tax 1985). The Dené, Cherokee, and other indigenous peoples' resistance is based on normative, not material, resources. Normative cultural aspects play important roles in the affairs of many countries, like Iran (Bateson 1988, Beman 1986) and China (Potter 1988).³

Finally, the culture of the international affairs community accords privileged position to the interests and interpretations of the Super Powers. Diplomatic and military initiatives are treated from the perspective of these ideological, political, and economic contests, and the local-level concerns that motivate non-Super Power groups tend to fall from view. A recent study of constraints on United States policy in relation to Third World conflicts (Hosmer 1985, see also Record 1985) reflects this over-narrow view of global affairs. This report considers United States involvement in the Third World almost solely from the perspective of military relations. Moreover, it treats that involvement primarily in relation to Soviet Union, *not* in relation to the specific interests and concerns of the Third World. Hosmer's (1985) monograph, for example, reflects the preoccupation with East-West relations. In his study Hosmer makes *explicit* reference to the Soviet Union on 90 of the monograph's 130 pages, and on nearly all of those pages free of direct reference to the Soviet Union, its interests, or its clients, Hosmer refers to Chinese communist interests

or actions. Worsley's (1982, 1986, 1987) discussions of the Third World, and of the consequences of excluding the concept of culture from the analysis of it, provide a more general perspective on this issue.

Anthropological work recognizes that different groups conceptualize security and power differently, and that such concepts are always socially situated. In this light, conditioning the analysis of conflict in the Third World on East-West interests is clearly misguided. Moreover, the anthropological literature shows that often these conceptions employ symbols and metaphors other than those acknowledged by "political realists" as those that guide actions (Rubinstein and Foster 1988, Singer 1988). Once one acknowledges the legitimacy of these alternative conceptions it is difficult to accept the "realist" analysis as satisfactory. In fact, however, cultural and social considerations are as important as technical and technological concerns in reaching a satisfactory understanding of world events, and understanding social and cultural factors in human affairs requires the careful analysis of experience.

Nonetheless, because of its claims to objectivity and scientific validity that derive from a kind of methodolatry, "realist" analyses have been taken as more reliable and useful than reports based on close attention and long experience in the area in question. This parallels developments in general social science theory, which has become fundamentally intolerant of ambiguity and therefore lacks methods for dealing with it. As Levine (1985:8) notes, "[in social theory] the ambiguities of life are systematically under represented, when they are not ignored altogether, by methodologies oriented to constructing facts through strictly univocal modes of representation". A consequence of such a narrow conception of culture in the international affairs community is the rejection of advice based on experience that can only be correctly treated as complex and multivocal. For instance, although Senior Foreign Service officers had determined that the Marshall Mission to China in the mid-1940s would be unable to accomplish its goal, their advice was rejected because it was not the product of proper "realist" methods. Rice (1988:6), discussing this mission says that,

Dean Acheson, while secretary of state had great difficulty in accepting some of the recommendations of such eminent Foreign Service officers as George Kennan and Charles Bohlen because they had not been reached through a consciously formulated series of steps. What Acheson needed in his dealings with the president was communicable wisdom, rather than mere conclusions, however soundly based in experience or intuition.

The Marshall Mission failed to achieve its announced purpose.

This was not simply a curious historical event. Rather, as I describe in the

next section of this paper, it is re-enacted in contemporary international affairs analyses (Beeman 1986, Bateson 1988, Rubinstein 1988a).

Culture as Pattern in International Affairs

In response to frustrating and unexpected failures, some international affairs professionals and security strategists began to argue, nearly two decades ago, that analyses which depend upon the models of incorporeal, idealized, rational actors used by "realists" were critically flawed by ethnocentrism (Booth 1979). As a result, the work of the international affairs community has not been completely insensitive to culture in international affairs. Unfortunately, however, culture has been treated as the stable precipitate of the actions of Nation States that can be represented, usually in formal terms. Anthropological conceptions of culture have been incompletely incorporated into international affairs discourse. Moreover, those which have been included have been incorporated without a full appreciation of the scope of the conceptions or of the assumptions underlying them.

In order for discussion of cultural factors to become part of the discourse of the international affairs community, the conception of culture employed, and the methods used to investigate, it had to conform to the more general principles of "realism," especially "objectivity" and "correct scientific method." Consistent with these imperatives, culture was therefore considered to be an collection of patterns which endure even though specific elements might change. The parts of anthropological and sociological debate about the nature of culture which were most amenable to this type of treatment were those that emphasized patterns of culture and social structure (for example, Benedict 1946). Left behind were those portions of anthropological discussion which emphasized the important point that patterns of culture are the temporary crystallizations of the organization and interpretation of social life in a group, stable only insofar as social processes did not lead to changes in values and goals leading to the reinterpretation of lived experience. By treating culture as a stable, homogeneous element in the conduct of nations "realists," in a curious way, at once gestured at the possibility for social and symbolic factors of human life to be included in international affairs analyses and also foreclosed their meaningful contribution.

Perhaps it is not surprising that the international affairs community assimilated the notion of culture as a stable pattern to its work, which was already treating international affairs in terms of supposed concrete, stable elements. In

addition, however, international affairs professionals may well have been confused by two aspects of the anthropological literature which they encountered.

The first aspect was the nature of the anthropological debate about the character of culture. In these discussions anthropologists debated the relative importance of pattern or process for understanding social and cultural life (Singer 1968:532-533). In part because this debate was grounded on discussions of how best to understand specific aspects of sociocultural systems—like kinship systems—it was easy to miss that what was at issue in anthropological discussions was the relative emphasis placed on pattern or process, not the essential complex and multiply determined nature of those systems (see, for example, Redfield 1962, Geertz 1983, Levine 1985).

Second, in their efforts to contribute to resolving practical problems in international affairs some anthropologists attempted in the 1930s and 1940s to derive such “patterns of culture” as a way of rendering understandable seemingly odd behaviors of other groups. Because of pragmatic limitations, some of this work, which sought to derive generalizations about culture in order to forecast the conduct of nations, involved attempts to discover patterns of culture at a distance. It is this “arms-length” approach to the study of culture that found its way into the work of the international affairs community, perhaps because it could most easily be rendered amenable to the units of analysis and methodologies familiar and acceptable to the international affairs community.

Unfortunately, even as the international affairs community began to embrace this truncated conception of culture, anthropologists and sociologists were turning away from this work as inadequately conceptualized and methodologically misguided because they realized that this work overlooked the diversity of cultures and the dynamics of their social processes (Bateson 1988:37). Perhaps because this rejection came in the technical anthropological literature it did not penetrate the international affairs community. That the incomplete conception of culture as stable pattern discernible at the level of the state persists in international affairs is easy to see in the literature on the importance of “cultural styles” in bilateral negotiations.

The analysis of negotiations has been a long-standing concern of the international affairs community (Inkle 1964). For a long time this work concentrated on examining how nations negotiate, and focused on the structural stages of international negotiation, on how these develop, and on how formal negotiations relate to informal diplomacy. More recently, a growing concern with the possibility of nuclear annihilation has focused attention on Soviet-Ameri-

can negotiations. The resulting literature principally develops two distinct lines of thinking. The first describes how we can improve prospects for negotiations, for example, by creating "win/win" situations or by developing a variety of confidence-building mechanisms. This line of inquiry has resulted in several guidebooks for better negotiations and projects for cultural exchange (for example, Fisher and Ury 1981). The second considers past and possible negotiation situations as examples of "two-player games," and analyses how better, more "rational" international security decisions might be reached. This line of work has resulted in a large policy-oriented literature which seeks to define the necessary shape and scope of American military preparedness.

Related to this interest in the formal aspects of negotiations are several attempts to characterize national negotiating and decision making styles. The literature resulting from these efforts seeks to specify how the national culture affects negotiations in order to advise diplomats about what to expect in negotiations with different countries. This work treats culture as though it were stable and discovers patterns by collecting the impressions of one's own diplomatic and military personnel of 'what it was like to deal with *them*,' or by gathering impressions from the personnel of a third country. Thus for example, interviews with Polish personnel are used to reveal the cultural basis of the Soviet negotiation strategies (Checinski 1981), and Middle Eastern negotiation styles are stereotyped as deriving from the haggling behavior sometimes observed in bazaars (Binnendijk 1987).

Attempting to take culture into account by examining "it" at arms-length by debriefing negotiators is probably an improvement over failing to take account of culture at all (but, see Lieberman 1985:13-62). However, giving information derived from that approach privileged status on methodological grounds is certainly dangerous. Yet, now as it in the Marshall Mission episode described by Rice (1988:6), this is what happens. For example Beeman (1986:336-342) describes how during the Iranian-American Hostage crisis advice offered by anthropologists and other consultants experienced in the dynamics of Iranian cultural processes was rejected because it did not conform to the "principles of belief" of the United States government. Beeman (1986:342) says that

The U.S. government continues to ignore the broad social and cultural processes which motivate the vast majority of humans in the conduct of their day-to-day affairs. Because it believes these processes irrelevant in foreign relations, it gives them no place in its own calculations.

Relying on stereotyped characterizations of cultural negotiating styles is misguided because doing so assumes that cultures are homogeneous and stable,

and that once described the patterns stay intact and can then be factored in to "realist" analyses. Yet, anthropological work shows that cultural styles are not stable in this way, even if they are well-described in relation to a particular problem or situation. This is because societies always contain within them a variety of styles, some of which will be in direct tension with each other.

Bateson (1988), for example, describes how United States assumptions about Iranian political styles proved inaccurate precisely because they failed to be aware of cultural heterogeneity. Bateson and her colleagues (Bateson *et al.* 1977) isolated two totally different political styles in Iran—the opportunistic and the absolute forms of political discourse. At the time of the Iranian revolution public rhetoric and public policy changed in ways that baffled United States analysts (Beeman 1986). Yet, understanding that contrasting themes coexist in any culture renders these events more understandable. As Bateson (1988:39) puts it,

Iranian public policy and public rhetoric, both domestically and internationally, went through an apparent radical change at the time of the revolution into a style that appeared totally different and therefore unpredictable, but we would argue that the two styles—and more significantly the tendency to think of them as alternatives facing individuals and societies—were and still are both implicit in Iranian culture.

Understanding that opposing styles exists in any society, and being aware of which styles are ascendant in a particular situation, requires that the analyst be aware of the different contexts in which negotiators must frame their work, and understand how the give-and-take of social process in these situations keeps the cultural matrix in which actions are situated in constant flux. Indeed, "the truth of the matter is that people have mixed feelings and confused opinions, and are subject to contradictory expectations and outcomes, in every sphere of experience" (Levine 1985:8-9).

Culture as Process in International Affairs

Regional conflicts seem to many to be increasing in number, intensity, and duration, and these conflicts appear to be becoming more intractable (Rice 1988). In addition, it can now be reasonably argued that the greatest risk that nuclear weapons will be used, or that there will be a catastrophic nuclear accident, comes from the proliferation of nuclear capacities in the Third World (Worsley and Hadjor 1987). As a result, multilateral solutions to conflicts—the use of third parties in negotiations, multilateral treaties, peacekeeping forces—

are becoming increasingly necessary and frequent (Väyrynen 1987, Wiseman 1983).

Given the increasing importance of multilateral activities it is dangerous, in my view, to continue to rely on the impoverished caricature of culture now found in most of the international affairs literature. Any diplomatic agreement, or treaty regarding the deployment or withdrawal of military troops, is only effective to the extent that parties to the agreement concur in its design and specification of its operation, and can insure cooperation with the agreement (Rikhye 1984). Because negotiators, and later peacekeeping forces, are involved in an ongoing web of social processes, it is important to be aware of how these interactions affect them as *actors*. For instance, Beeman (1986) and Bateson (1988) point out, knowing which political styles are relatively ascendant in Iran at a particular time, and thus gauging the political motivation and resources available to support the implementation of an agreement, depends on taking seriously information derived from the study of Iranian day-to-day experience. This *experiential knowledge* of the processual aspects of culture is as important in relation to the negotiations surrounding the Iran-Iraq war as it was during the Iranian-American Hostage Crisis, or during Iran-Contra.

Such study requires the recognition that participants in international affairs each share in multiple, overlapping cultural communities, and that the full understanding of their actions depends upon examining the complex connections between the cultural and symbolic processes in each of those communities, and on understanding how the interconnections between these cultural communities affect social action. Further, it is important to recognize that any characterization of the interests of the participants in international affairs must be understood as relative to a particular constellation of social and cultural interactions. Characterizations of culture are representations that construct a framework of interpretation from a variety of elements available to the analyst. Thus, what counts as a legitimate element in the characterization depends upon the reason for the characterization, and the uses to which it will be put (Rubinstein, Laughlin and McManus 1984). As a result, the relevant culture sphere from within which the international affairs professional acts changes as his or her experience motivates and constrains that action.

In order to adequately account for the role of culture in international affairs, it is necessary to recognize that the study of culture is the study of social and symbolic processes (Geertz 1983). This study must be recursive, and carried on with the understanding that there is no single "Culture" which can account for the actions of participants. Rather than seeking to characterize "national

cultures" in international affairs, it is necessary to specify the unit of cultural analysis according to the requirements of the situation on hand, and to use a variety of levels of analysis in the selection of those units (Rubinstein, Laughlin and McManus 1984:90). Thus, the scope of the cultural descriptions relevant for international affairs will not always be national, or even ethnic. Rather they may be groups and guilds, like the professional cultures of United Nations diplomats.

Spheres of Culture in Peacekeeping

In its current form multilateral peacekeeping began, depending upon one's historical interpretation, either with the United Nations Commission on Indonesia in 1947 or with the deployment of the United Nations Emergency Force—to separate the military forces of Egypt from Israel, France, and the United Kingdom—in 1956 (Wiseman 1983). In any event, since that time, there have been peacekeeping forces established, usually under United Nations auspices, in other parts of the Middle East, Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and Oceania.⁴ And, in 1988 there are several peacekeeping missions now in the early stages of development, including those in Iran-Iraq and Namibia.

Although cultural processes permeate the conduct of international affairs, the multiple, interdependent, and dynamic relationships of social process and symbolism are perhaps most clearly seen in considering peacekeeping. Everyone involved in a peacekeeping operation—from those negotiating and planning the mission to the soldiers deployed to carry it out—participates in several cultural spheres, which provide the context within which their actions are interpreted and understood. The following sketch may suggest something of the complexity and fluidity of multilateral negotiations for conflict resolution and peacekeeping *per se*.

Problematic situations can only be dealt with effectively once they have been defined as problems. In most phases of human life the ability to construct problems from the analysis of troublesome experience develops through practice (Schön 1983), and that experience is captured, more or less formally, in the rules of a group's culture.

In the face of mounting tensions or actual military confrontation, the members of the international diplomatic community engage one another in conversation about the difficulty—that is, they negotiate informally or formally—and seek to frame the problematic situation as a problem. They succeed by assimilating the current situation to culturally familiar solutions to similar problems.

Yet, each negotiator comes to the conversation seeing the difficult situation as a problem which has been framed by the knowledge and values of his or her diplomatic cultural community. These conversations may lead to a multilaterally acceptable formal definition of the problem. But, when each negotiator returns to his or her colleagues the context in which the multilateral definition is understood changes and it is reinterpreted in light of local understandings, which are, in turn, also influenced by what has happened in the multilateral arena. Thus, while the events which are problematic are common to all negotiators, their interpretation of those events differ. Since each local community assimilates to itself the common problem definition, it is not surprising that not only the definition of the problem but also the symbolic value of the problem differs.

As a peacekeeping mission is defined, various agreements are entered into by the disputants and by the countries which contribute forces to the mission (see Rikhye 1984, IPA 1984). However, apparently clear-cut agreements about the status of forces, area of operation, and even the purpose of the mission are variously interpreted based on the cultural and social processes given the cultural context of the interpreter.

Once troops are deployed, the scope of activities available to the peacekeepers and the meaning of their actions is constantly in flux, as a result of their daily activities and encounters. As Heiberg and Holst (1986:400) observe,

The effectiveness of a given peacekeeping mission depends critically on its reputation for impartiality. ...perceptions of impartiality differ among the contending parties. Impartial behavior in the eyes of some parties may seem partial from the point of view of other parties to the same conflict.

Thus for example, because of its actions defending a weak national government, the Multinational Force in Lebanon came to be viewed by some as partial and thus unwelcome and subject to attack, although the local opposition groups had originally welcomed the Force (Heiberg and Holst 1986).

Of course, the day-to-day experiences of the peacekeeping troops also affects their interpretation of the situation. Thus, in interviews with former and active peacekeepers I have recorded many comments to the effect that between beginning and ending their tour on a peacekeeping mission, their sense of purpose and sympathy, and the meaning they ascribed to their activities changed, sometimes completely reversing their original understandings. These changes are brought about by the close contact with the continuing social and symbolic events in the area, that is through the peacekeepers' lived experience. These shifts, in turn, are communicated back through the diplomatic commu-

nity becoming part of that community's experience.

This process brings about change in the peacekeeping mission. The text of the multilateral agreement does not change. Rather, the agreement comes to be situated in a changed social reality so that its interpretation and meaning shift, sometimes radically. This process of local experience and interpretation, and communication of the reinterpreted problem to other communities, is continual.

Once this is recognized it undermines any sense that "The Problem" is unchanging, or that there are stable, homogeneous "national cultures" from which actions derive. It also follows that it is not just nations, or even principally nations, that are the actors in international affairs. In fact, the appropriate unit of analysis—who are the parties involved—needs to be constantly re-evaluated in light of day-to-day experience of people, rather than from the perspective of some mythic "national culture." Recognizing this will not itself bring peace (Booth 1979), but it may allow a broader range of information to be treated as relevant. This in turn will help to revitalize work in international affairs (Rubinstein and Foster 1988), and perhaps help us reach wiser policy decisions (Rubinstein 1986).

Conclusion

I am not arguing in this essay that we should abandon the well-developed standards of the international affairs community. Rather, I suggest that community maintains an overly simple view of the role of culture in human affairs. Moreover, this view was developed in part because they are well-described, precise methods which purport to capture the essence of the cultural experience and to represent it as a variable like any other.

I have argued here, that this view of culture is mistaken and leads the international affairs community to ignore the importance of diversity in cultures and to discount the role of experience in organizing that diversity and motivating social actions. Using the caricatured conception of culture found in the world view of the international affairs community may allow for the development "realist" models. It may well simplify logical analyses to assume that the appropriate unit of analysis for international affairs is the nation state and that all value conflicts are situated in East-West struggles. But doing so renders the range of questions that can be legitimately raised about the role of culture in international affairs nearly inconsequential. Yet, as Cantril (1967:93) points out, it is "much more important to analyze crucial questions with

whatever methods are available ...than ...to study trivial problems with precise methods."

But, is not simply that the international affairs community can develop more realistic analyses by paying attention to the complexities of anthropological conceptions of culture. Rather, it is my view that by studying the interrelationship between the culture of international affairs and the role of culture in international affairs we can better understand the nature of cultural processes as well.

Anthropological conceptions of culture developed in the context of studies of relatively small, well-bounded groups living in fairly stable environments. To be sure, the regularities of social life among these groups were seen to result from active processes, but these studies left the impression of cultural homogeneity resulting from processes which acted relatively slowly. As investigations changed to focus on social life in less well-bounded settings—for example, among peasant and urban peoples—the realization that the situation is more complex than early studies supposed soon followed. All culture is local, in the sense that it emerges from the daily practice of people confronting problematic circumstances. Culture allows the representation of the social and physical environments in ways that make it possible to turn problematic situations into problems so that they can be discussed and managed (Rubinstein 1984:173-178). However, because culture is emergent, in this sense, what counts as local varies depending on the perspective and purpose of the actors.

Culture provides the matrix which allows the establishment of predictable social exchanges through which meaning is constructed, transacted, changed, and maintained. That this is due to the processual aspects of daily life, and therefore must be conceptualized as emergent and dynamic, is made evident by the study of less isolated, often literate, groups. There is therefore an essential diversity and incompleteness, or ambiguity, in culture (Rubinstein and Lauglin 1977:480).

A challenge for cultural analysis is to better describe how culture emerges and is shaped by social process. By seeking settings where cultural and social life is more rather than less fluid we can focus research in a coordinated way on both process and pattern. Studying the social organization of the communities of professionals involved in international affairs and peacekeeping allows us to focus attention on the patterns of interaction within and among local communities and also on the dynamics of their representations of culture in confronting problematic events. Moreover, in examining how international

affairs professionals construct culturally meaningful contexts for their work as they participate in multiple communities we confront especially clearly some of the ways in which cultural processes shape and are shaped by experience. This allows the construction of better models in international affairs and the development of more processually sophisticated accounts of culture while confronting the essential incompleteness and permeability of both representations of social and cultural life.

In an era when regional conflicts can endanger world peace or when nuclear war can annihilate life, it is especially important that those concerned with questions of international affairs not accept the well-worn conception of the existence of homogeneous, stable "national cultures," and that they instead engage in thoughtful analysis of culture as a dynamic and complex set of processes affecting international affairs. To do so requires careful attention to the units of analysis appropriate for problematic situations in international affairs, and it presents tough methodological challenges (Rubinstein and Foster 1988). The problems are important, the questions crucial, the methods to begin the study extant. It is time we in the international affairs community get on with this difficult and challenging task.

NOTES

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² I place "political realism" in quotes because from an anthropological perspective this view is not realistic at all (see, Rubinstein and Tax 1985, Beeman 1986, and Rubinstein 1988a, from which this summary of the features of the "political realism" is derived).

³ For interesting non-anthropological discussions of such anomalous events in international affairs see Booth's (1975) work on ethnocentrism and strategy and Rice's (1988) work on conflict in underdeveloped countries.

⁴ Peacekeeping missions consists of the use of international military forces to observe that cease-fire agreements are adhered to, supervise the withdrawal of troops, and sometimes to promote conciliation and confidence building between beleaguered parties. Although most peacekeeping forces are fielded by the United Nations after an appropriate Security Council resolution, some have been the product of the joint efforts of countries acting in concert outside of the United Nations context. Examples, are the Multinational Forces deployed in Lebanon and the Sinai. This, of course, adds further interesting complexity to the cultures of peacekeeping.

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