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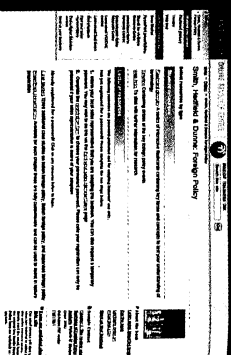
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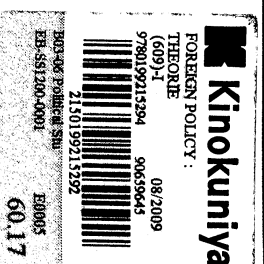
# Theories • Actors • Cases

Steve Smith Amelia Hadfield Tim Dunne

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# Foreign Policy

theories • actors • cases

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## Foreword

James N. Rosenau

My contribution to the analysis of foreign policy began on a blackboard. I was prompted to clarify for students what variables were central to probing the dynamics of foreign policy. The result was an eight-column matrix that listed the relative importance of five key variables in eight types of countries (Rosenau, 1966). And that matrix still informs my teaching and research. It also implicitly underlies more than a few of the chapters in this volume. Needless to say, I am honoured that this volume takes note of my contribution to the field.

I called the eight-column matrix and the description of it a 'pre-theory of foreign policy'. It provoked sufficient interest among colleagues around the country to convene a series of conferences that explored various facets of the pre-theory, which in turn led to the publication of a collection of essays prepared for the conferences (Rosenau, 1974). This collaboration among some twenty scholars who had developed a keen interest in comparing foreign policies gave rise to the founding of the Inter-University Comparative Foreign Policy (ICFP) project. The members of ICFP remained in continual contact for some six years, thus demonstrating that like-minded colleagues can pool their resources and sustain collaboration across some ten universities during a period of diminishing support for comparative and quantitative research.

The matrix was impelled by the milieu of the field at that time. It was a period in which comparison was very much in vogue and it seemed to me that foreign policy phenomena were as subject to comparative analysis as any other political process. Indeed, I still find it remarkable that no previous analyst had undertaken a comparative inquiry of when, how, and why different countries undertook to link themselves to the international system in the ways that they did.

In retrospect, it seems clear that the original pre-theory sparked wide interest not only because it stressed the need for comparative analysis, but for several other reasons that also underlay the enthusiasm for the ICFP. First, the pre-theory offered a means for analysing the conduct of foreign policy in previous years as well as anticipating future developments in a country's external behaviour. Second, as stressed below, it provided a means for bringing foreign and domestic policy together under the same analytic umbrella. Third, it highlighted the virtues of case studies as a basis for comparing, analysing and interpreting foreign policy phenomena. All of these central characteristics of the field are fully represented in the chapters that comprise this volume.

Much progress has occurred in the field since the founding of the ICFP. The very fact that it is now comfortably regarded as a 'field' is in itself indicative of how

Goldstein, E. B. (2007). *Cognitive Psychology: Connecting Mind, Research and Everyday Experience* (2nd edition, Wadsworth Publishing).

This book introduces cognitive psychology and the theories of cognition, with a final chapter on 'reasoning and decision-making'.

Hudson, V. and Singer, E. (1992). *Political Psychology and Foreign Policy* (Boulder: Westview Press).

This book discusses the impact of psychological processes on foreign policy decision-making.

Kosfeld, M., Heinrichs, M., Zak, P. J., Fischbacher, U., and Fehr, E. (2005). 'Oxytocin Increases Trust in Humans', *Nature*, 435: 673–676.

This neurobiology-based paper discusses the role of the neuropeptide 'oxytocin' on human social behaviour: results demonstrated that oxytocin evokes feelings of 'trust', and may ultimately have a potential role in political negotiations.

McDermott, R. (2004). 'The Feeling of Rationality: The Meaning of Neuroscientific Advances for Political Science', *Perspectives on Politics*, 2(4): 691–706.

This article discusses the uses of neuroscience in understanding decision-making in politics.

Mintz, A. (2003). *Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision-Making* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan).

This edited volume draws from both cognitive and rationalist ideas to examine how foreign policy decisions are made, using case studies and experimental analysis.

Yettiv, S. A. (2004). *Explaining Foreign Policy: U.S. Decision-Making and the Persian Gulf War* (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press).

In this book a theoretical framework on foreign policy decision-making is presented and tested using the Persian Gulf War of 1991 as a case study.

Zak, P. J. (2004). 'Neuroeconomics', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society (Biological Sciences)*, 359(1451): 1737–1748.

This paper introduces the emerging transdisciplinary field known as 'neuroeconomics', which uses neuroscientific measurement to examine decision-making. The role of emotions is examined in social and strategic decision-making settings.



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# 7

## Implementation and behaviour

*Elisabetta Brighi and Christopher Hill*

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### Reader's guide

This chapter examines the implementation phase of foreign policy-making, that is, the period in which decisions are translated into action. Implementation can lead to both problems and surprises for decision makers, whose intentions often get left behind in the complexities of practice.

In order to shed light on why this is the case, so we first of all look at the theoretical problems involved in deciding where a foreign policy actor's ends and its environment begins. The difference between the inside of state decision-making and the outside world of international relations is by no means as clear as traditionally supposed. We then illustrate the variety of problems that states encounter when trying to implement their foreign policy, and the range of instruments—diplomatic, military, economic and cultural—available to them. The chapter concludes by outlining the endless loops which connect and blur the ends and means of foreign policy, identifying the key lessons that practitioners need to keep in mind.

## Introduction

The phase of implementation is one in which actors confront their environment and in which the environment confronts them. In essence, this phase implies an interactive, strategic process which is important when it comes to translating foreign policy objectives into practice, and decisive when it comes to turning practice into desired outcomes. The first half of this chapter examines some of the most typical features and dilemmas of the phase of implementation. This phase requires crossing the boundary between actors and the outside world, if outcomes are to be shaped on the basis of stated objectives. The second half of the chapter will then look of at the practical choices means and modes through which states conduct foreign policy. The exercise of channelling intentions into outcomes, via the use of instruments, is complex and rarely a mere technicality; indeed, it has the power to change foreign policy in the process.

By way of introduction to this set of issues, the chapter presents some general remarks on the issue of how to conceptualize foreign policy implementation as a form of strategic and dialectic interplay between a foreign policy actor and its environment. As we will see, a successful implementation of any foreign policy

depends not only upon a clear definition of objectives, and on a sound choice of instruments, but also—and

rather crucially—on the interplay between the actor's strategy and the context surrounding it. Accordingly, it also depends on the actor's ability to adjust to unforeseen circumstances. The second section will examine in more detail what we mean by context when dealing with foreign policy: in doing so, we will present a picture of the 'international' seen from the perspective of the actor. This involves two steps: on the one hand, we will draw different pictures of the 'perimeter' of the 'international' (from the regional to the global); on the other, we will look at the many dimensions of which the 'international' is made, and explore their interconnectedness. Finally, we will shift the perspective to consider implementation from the point of view of both the actor and the context, and will focus on some of the dilemmas and synergies inherent in the process of connecting the 'domestic' and the 'international' while pursuing one's foreign policy objectives. Implementation thus emerges as a complex and fully political activity; a 'boundary' process which connects actors to their environments via the pursuit of foreign policy.

## When actors meet their environment—theoretical issues

The issue of how social and political actors pursue courses of action and, through actions, succeed in attaining their objectives is a conundrum not just for foreign policy analysts, but for all social scientists. How is it that even the best-laid plans do not succeed in achieving one's goals? And conversely, what does it take to turn situations to one's own advantage? These puzzles confront foreign policy makers' daily efforts to project their country's interests and goals abroad, and cut to

the heart of the 'problem' of implementation in foreign policy. Not merely a technicality, implementation is a fully political activity; not least in the sense of reflecting a clash of wills between different actors, and between actors and their environment.

Despite the rather inchoate literature which has developed around it, the best place to begin considering the question of foreign policy behaviour and implementation from a theoretical point of view

remains the so-called 'agency–structure debate' (*inter alia* Wendt, 1987; Hollis and Smith, 1991; Carlsnaes, 1992; Wight, 2006). At its most basic, the debate concerns the vexing question of whether action can be explained from the 'inside' or the 'outside' of actors. Is it possible to find the roots of actions in the actor's preferences, interests, and meanings, or is it instead the external context, constraints, and patterns which steers actors in certain directions and not in others?

As some of the most compelling literature in foreign policy analysis has now made clear, foreign policy can be considered as a form of action (Carlsnaes, 1989); indeed, foreign policy is an important site of political agency in contemporary world politics (Hill, 2003). In this sense then, the agency–structure debate does have something to say about foreign policy, primarily about the phase of actor behaviour and policy implementation.

Consider the following counterfactual. If an actor (for instance a state) existed in perfect isolation (or alternatively, if it were all-powerful), it would surely have little problem in translating its intentions, motivations, and desires into objectives. Indeed, objectives and outcomes would be practically the same; the process of implementation would be quite smooth, either because it would be accomplished in a vacuum, or because the actor would be fully in control of the environment, able to manipulate it at its own will.

World politics, however, hardly resembles this picture. The international scene is made up of actors, states, and non-states, each with their own set of interests, objectives, and priorities—not necessarily in conflict, but very often distinct from one another. For all but the most powerful actors, a degree of resistance is therefore bound to be encountered in the process of 'having one's own way' in the system, with the intent to produce desired outcomes. Further, even the most powerful actors might not be in the position to fully manipulate the environment around them, either due to failures of judgment, or because of disadvantageous asymmetries in other important dimensions besides that of power (e.g. information, or legitimacy).

How can one come to an elegant formalization of the set of issues and processes with which actors on the international scene are confronted when trying to implement their objectives, thus producing foreign policy behaviour? The argument advanced here is that in order to conceptualize behaviour and implementation, foreign policy analysis needs to adopt a strategic–relational approach (for the original statement of the model, see Hay, 1995, 2002; for a full application to foreign policy, see Brighi, 2005). A type of systems approach, the idea at the heart of the strategic–relational model is that foreign policy behaviour is produced via a dialectic interplay between the actor's own *strategy* on the one hand, and *context* on the other hand. The approach is called strategic because actors are understood to be oriented towards the attainment of stated goals. In the process of elaborating courses of action actors inevitably have to take into account the strategies of all other players. The approach is also relational because it assumes that actors and their behaviour become only intelligible when analysed in relation to their surrounding environment. In turn environment, or, context becomes truly 'real' only when looked at from the perspective of the individual actor in question; it therefore always exists in relation to something, or some other actor.

The strategic–relational model was first introduced in political science in order to reject the view that (political) action could be reduced to either external constraints or internal preferences. If it is reasonable to assume that both elements are at play most of the time, what becomes interesting is investigating how constraints and preferences interact, sometimes clashing and sometimes producing virtuous synergies.

If one applies this approach to foreign policy, certain aspects of implementation are found. Firstly, the strategic–relational approach tells us that neither strategy nor context taken in isolation can explain the success or failure of a certain foreign policy to deliver an intended outcome. An exclusive focus on the domestic political process cannot explain those instances in which outcomes deviate from intentions

(which is the rule rather than the exception). Conversely, an exclusive focus on context places too much emphasis on the constraints and opportunities shaping action, and cannot contemplate any real sense of intentionality.

A schematic illustration of the model is provided below (see Figure 7.1).

In applying this model to foreign policy implementation and behaviour, three considerations are relevant. Firstly, with regard to context, we should avoid the fatalism usually associated with the term 'structure' in much IR literature. Context is not a monolithic, impenetrable entity which pre-exists actors, and against which actors stand virtually powerless. Rather, context is here mainly intended as *other actors* and the set of relations which they entertain. Even the material environment, which arguably forms an important and 'objective' part of context, becomes fully meaningful only through the relations that actors establish with one another. The coexistence of different actors, their interaction, and complex aggregation of interests is what makes 'the international' an uneven terrain for foreign policy. The likelihood of achieving an objective is dependent on how strategically placed the actor is on this terrain: given its position in relation to the context, some actions, in other words, will be more successful than others. Moreover because of its inherently *relational* nature, context means different things to different actors, depending not only on where they are placed, but also on how they interpret the features of the terrain surrounding them. The cycles of isolationism and interventionism in US foreign policy, for instance can be understood not so much as

resulting from an objective change in the country's position in the world but, perhaps more importantly, as a result of different interpretations of the same position, with its constraints and opportunities.

Secondly, there is a constant interplay between actors and context, and it is through this interplay that behaviour is produced. This interplay, in turn, does not play itself out at the material level only, but is mediated by the role of ideas and discourses. Thus, it is important not just to take into account the way the context responds to the actors' behaviour, but also the way such responses are filtered through perceptions, paradigms, and narratives, to be eventually internalized in the political process.

Thirdly there is constant feedback from the actor to the context and vice versa. Produced through an interactive process, foreign policy behaviour then feeds back into the context (Fig. 7.1  $f_2$ ), restructuring the environment or leaving it unchanged, and into the actor itself (Fig. 7.1  $f_1$ ), by making adaptation possible. Think, for instance, of the various repercussions of the US foreign policy actions in the Middle East. These have not only changed the context at the regional, and international, level but have impacted on the US itself, causing a reaction against the excesses of American unilateralism whose effects are likely to be felt in the domestic debate.

Figure 7.2, building on the work of Michael Brecher among other systems theorists who have worked on the subject, outlines the processes of action, reaction, and feedback which characterize the foreign policy-making process, creating endless loops of policy and implementation rather than a clear line of formulation—choice—decision—action which a rationalist approach might be thought to presuppose. See Box 7.1.

Since both strategy and context are important in foreign policy, we now take a closer look at each in turn, starting from the latter. 'The international' is the natural context of foreign policy, and yet there is more than one sense in which this habitat provides a rather complex and challenging environment for states to operate in. The section that follows will examine why this is the case.

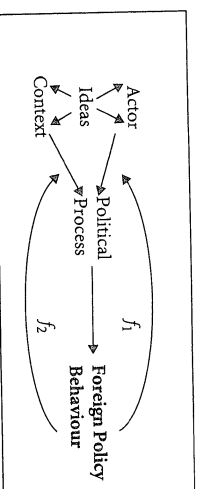


Figure 7.1 The strategic-relational approach to foreign policy

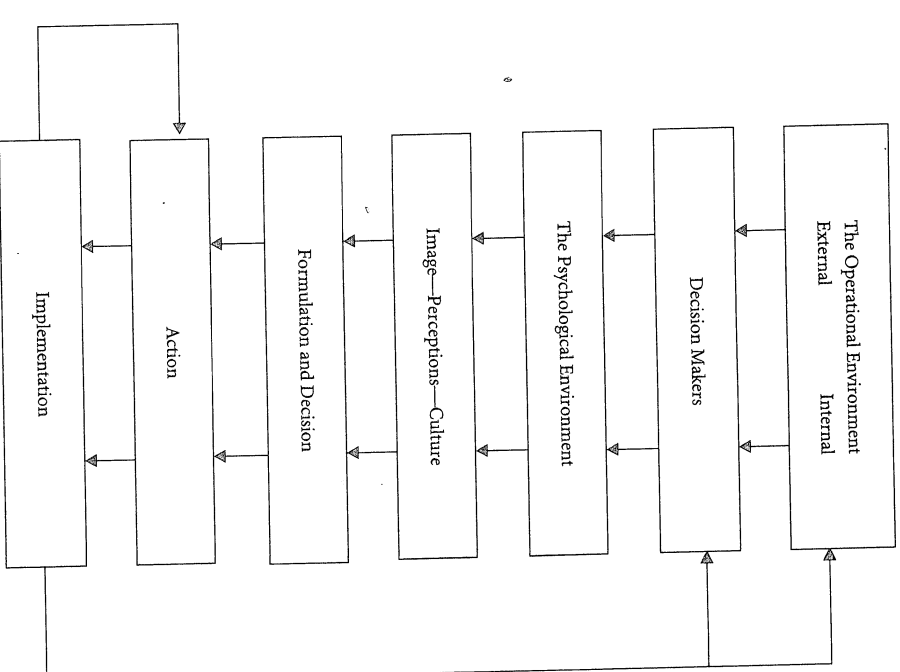


Figure 7.2 The place of implementation in the foreign policy-making process

Note: The arrows represent the flow of decision-making and the main lines of feedback. Source: Adapted from Brecher, M. (1974), p7.

BOX 7.1 Systems theory

**Systems theory** is the approach, deriving from natural science but associated in political science mostly with the work of David Easton, which sees most phenomena as interrelated, through processes of input, output, and feedback from the environment. The system is characterized primarily by a process of *homeostasis*, or dynamic equilibrium through interaction of the various forces involved. This can be as true of international politics—e.g. via the balance of power—and foreign policy, via the instinct for political survival, as it is of natural features such as body temperature or climate.

We then move on to the side of strategy, and examine how the 'domestic' affects foreign policy in its implementation.

### 'Ideas of the 'international': a view from somewhere'

As illustrated in the previous section, the 'international' means different things to different actors, depending not only on where actors are placed within it, but also on how they (actively) interpret the constraints and opportunities offered by context. From the perspective of a single foreign policy actor, then, the 'international' appears as a rather varied landscape, with features that can only be partially manipulated.

The ecological metaphor is helpful in considering different pictures of the 'international' (see the classic Sprout and Sprout, 1965). Indeed, when discussing the reach of a country's foreign policy, it is customary to turn to geographical/geometrical metaphors such as 'circles' or 'spheres'. Winston Churchill's image of the 'three circles' of British post-war foreign policy is probably the most well-known case in point, but one only has to think about how diffuse the expression 'sphere of influence' is to understand how this mode of language is engrained in the exercise of representing the 'outside', or the 'abroad' (Dodds and Atkinson, 2000).

From the perspective of a single foreign policy actor, the 'international' has at least two dimensions: horizontal and vertical. Horizontally, the international unfolds on a *continuum*, from proximity to distance, from 'near' to 'far', from local to global. Vertically, the international is stratified into a number of functional layers: political, social, economic, military, normative, and so on. Without any doubt, when called to formulate interests and implement objectives, the greatest challenge for foreign policy makers is both to harmonize the two dimensions, and to keep a certain degree of internal consistency within each.

In horizontal terms, the implementation of foreign policy objectives starts from the environment

closest to the actor, generally the neighbouring states usually grouped in a region. Regional environments are, of course, specific to where actors are placed with them, and how concentrated or widely spread their interests are. For most continental European countries, the regional environment coincides with the borders of Europe. However, as the example of Europe well testifies, the regional borders of an actor's foreign policy are far from fixed. They are susceptible to being renegotiated following historical, political, or simply ideological developments. Witness the fate of Eastern Europe, hardly a foreign policy priority for most European states before 1989 (with a few notable exceptions such as Germany, France, or Italy), and now considered to be part of a single European region (Wallace, 1990). Consider also how geographical proximity does not by definition ensure inclusion in the region of interest to foreign policy. Geography must always be read in conjunction with politics. Thus, despite erupting at the heart of the continent geographically, the Balkan wars were dealt with as a periphery of Europe (Simms, 2001). Conversely, it was the political and ideological bond of communism which connected geographically distant states (as with Cuba's or North Korea's relation with the former Soviet Union) in a rather homogeneous environment.

If all states have a region of priority for their foreign policy, then only a few can really aspire to have a genuinely global frame of reference. That the 'international' is more and more frequently equated with the 'global' testifies to the success of the globalization paradigm, but does not *de facto* imply the possibility for all actors to exercise a truly 'global' foreign policy. Indeed, foreign policy as a *political activity* has the potential to be global both in its causes and in its effects—and has not, contrary to expectations, become obsolete. In fact, there is a sense in which, in conditions of globalization, *all politics has become foreign policy*, in one way or the other.

And yet, not many actors can elaborate, let alone afford, a truly 'global' foreign policy. The United States has most notably laid such a claim since the end of the Cold War, and reinforced it in the wake of the September 11 attacks. Despite an overwhelming

military and economic power, however, America's vision of a global foreign policy has been only partly fulfilled, suffering a number of important setbacks.

Interestingly enough, it is precisely in the phase of implementation that America's foreign policy designs have most frequently failed. If we look back at the strategic-relational model presented earlier in the chapter, however, this is not at all surprising. A failure to take into account both the strategic and interactive nature of foreign policy means a high likelihood of problems occurring at the implementation phase. As analysts have noted, many of the difficulties encountered by the US in its foreign policy (let alone military) projection are due to a poor appreciation of the crucial relation between ends and means on the one hand, and between foreign policy actions and context on the other. This alone would explain much of the frustration encountered, without considering the additional failure to take into account the mediation of ideas and their impact on such an interplay.

For middle and small states, the 'global' remains but an aspiration, or a rhetorical commitment. The case of Britain is instructive: despite the New Labour pledge of a foreign policy informed by global normative commitments, the difficulties of implementing such a grand design were countless over the last decade, in economic, military, and political terms (Dunne and Wheeler, 1999). More generally, as some of the literature has made clear, one of the paradoxical effects of globalization has been that of reinforcing the regional dimension, pushing middle and small states especially to strengthen the regional scope of their foreign policy (on the rise of regionalism, see Hurrell, 1995).

The perimeter of the 'international' thus varies greatly depending on the actor, its position in the environment, on the resources at its disposal, and on the strategic value of these resources. But there is also a second dimension along which actors measure the 'international', and that is the vertical axis of functional differentiation. Thus, the 'international' results not just from a horizontal continuum but from its stratification in different layers, the most important being political, economic, military, normative, and cultural. Two qualifications must

accompany such a characterization, however. Firstly, the hierarchy among layers is by no means fixed; indeed, the traditional distinction between 'high politics' and 'low politics' which claimed a primacy for political and military issues (Hoffmann, 1966) is increasingly problematic in a world in which issues such as culture have become (or rather, returned to be) the terrain of greatest contestation. At the very least, what counts as 'high' or 'low' politics changes from actor to actor, and is inevitably subject to political, let alone idiosyncratic, considerations. Secondly, while analytically separable, these layers are in fact at least marginally interlinked, partly because any given foreign policy has effects at many different levels, and partly because layers overlap in important ways, empirically as well as conceptually.

The political layer of the 'international' is formed by the complex web of interrelations which bind actors together. Diplomacy is one, the traditional but critical expression of the existence of such a web, which consists of far more than just international institutions or 'regimes'. Moreover, in conditions of globalization, the political dimension of the 'international' acquires, at least potentially, further depth in three directions (Held and Archbugi, 1995). Firstly, the domestic politics of states, especially big ones, becomes a factor in this interdependence, affecting other actors through their foreign policies, and sometimes also their own domestic politics. Secondly, the progressive formation of a 'global public sphere' means that political interdependence gradually comes to feature processes of political adjudication and contestation, until recently exclusive to life 'inside' states. Thirdly, a variety of actors, state and non-state, participates in the political interdependence which makes up the political layer of the 'international'. This, however, does not happen on a condition of parity, as states still express their agency through channels which are far more institutionalized, accountable, and varied than those at the disposal of non-state actors.

The political dimension of the 'international' has important areas of overlap with the social and normative 'layer'. Diplomacy is in fact one of the key institutions of what the English School of International

Relations calls the 'society' of states, or 'international society' (Bull and Watson, 1982). Norms are another important component, both in their more codified version (international law) and in their informal variety (customs). More generally, this is the level at which ethical concerns play themselves out. The extent to which these have come to affect foreign policy is nowhere more apparent than in the wave of 'humanitarian interventions' which was initiated in the early 1990s (Wheeler, 1997). This practice provides evidence that foreign policy must now confront an environment which is also a society—and not just a society of states, but of individuals as well (Linklater, 1998).

The economic layer is, if possible, even more pluralistic in its inclusion of a variety of actors of different nature. Not surprisingly, here the superiority which some states enjoy is far less marked than at the political level, partly because of the less hierarchical nature of economic transactions, partly because economic interdependence has often thrived irrespective of the international political systems in place (Strange, 1988). Economic issues, however, are constantly susceptible to becoming highly politicized: witness the case of natural resources, and how this issue has become a matter of greatest concern for the foreign policy of states, especially emerging powers such as China. (See Chapter Eighteen.)

At yet another level, foreign policy must take into account the existence of patterns of military alignments, both cooperative and adversarial. According to some theories of international relations, most notably neorealism, this is indeed the layer which is ultimately the most significant in foreign policy terms. While this may be true in the sense that military affairs carry with them the greatest threat, that of physical annihilation (Aron, 1966), security problems are usually multi-faceted and often derivative of political, economic, or cultural conflicts. (See Chapter Nine.) Finally, there is an important cultural dimension to the 'international', which foreign policy makers cannot afford to leave out in their effort to implement their foreign policy objectives. It is not just that cultural factors such as religion have come back supposedly to ignite fundamentalism and terrorism,

but that these factors play today an increasingly important role in all international relations (Hatzopoulos and Pettio, 2003). This is due, on the one hand, to the forced contiguity among different cultures brought about by globalization; on the other, to the decline of that modern paradigm which marginalized all forms of culture (religion *in primis*) to the realm of the private, excluding them from the public. Foreign policy today finds itself dealing with these issues, and with the complications produced by their entanglement with all the remaining dimensions. (See Chapter Eleven.)

To sum up, the context of foreign policy means different things to different actors, according to who and where they are. The 'international' is a kaleidoscopic formation which develops both horizontally, extending from local to regional to global, and vertically, layering political, economic, military, normative, and cultural dimensions. Despite its varied complexion, context is often perceived as a whole, as a 'system', by foreign policy makers (Hill, 2003: 164). And yet, interestingly enough, the greatest challenge for them is precisely how to ensure that all these dimensions do not contradict each other. There is, in fact, a natural centrifugal tendency that threatens consistency and coherence in foreign policy. Complexity breeds specialization, if not fragmentation. Thus, it is very frequent for economic foreign policy to deviate from that officially played out at the political level; this in turn is often in tension with the principles governing the normative dimension of the 'international' and so on. The exercise of making these different logics work in synergy in the pursuit of objectives is certainly one of the most daunting challenges for the foreign policy makers of today.

### Balancing 'inside' and 'outside', implementing foreign policy

If implementation is about reaching out into the environment to transform one's objectives into outcomes, one should not think of this process as exclusively directed *to*, let alone *from*, the outside. On the contrary, the implementation of goals in foreign policy involves an important 'domestic' or 'internal'

component. More specifically, it involves an act of balancing, and indeed a process of interplay between what goes on inside the actor, and its projection towards the outside. As the strategic-relational model presented above illustrates, all of these dialectic processes take place in the political process, and are mediated by the impact of ideas and discourses.

There are at least two general ways in which the 'domestic' is implicated in foreign policy implementation, aside from the very fundamental role of deciding which objectives to pursue in the first place. To begin with, implementation presupposes not only the capacity to pursue goals with effective means, but more generally the ability of governments to extract and mobilize resources from their audiences, both material and immaterial, and channel them into the pursuit of given objectives (Mastanduno, Lake, and Kenberry, 1989). The most classic example of mobilization happens, of course, when states go to war. In the kinds of 'total wars' experienced in the twentieth century, entire societies were involved in sustaining the war effort (*nations* go to war, as the expression has it)—with their economy and culture transformed by the will to attain war *aims*. But more prosaically, either simply through the collection of taxes, or through more specific actions, societies take a direct or indirect part in realizing foreign policy aims. Secondly, but relatedly, at least in democratic societies the 'domestic' enters the picture of implementation in the form of the *consensus* needed to sustain the foreign policy projection necessary to attain objectives (Lamborn, 1991). When a modicum of consensus is missing, foreign policy is undermined from below, so to speak; as a result implementation is potentially a lot weaker, or can be even at risk. In fact, if consensus breaks down entirely, a crisis can erupt to threaten not only the foreign policy in action, but the survival of the government itself.

In general, therefore, implementation always develops on two levels, 'domestic' and 'international', which are in constant interaction. This is what the political scientist Robert Putnam had in mind when he imagined foreign policy as a 'two-level game' (Putnam, 1988; Evans et al., 1993). Using this metaphor, Putnam focused on the issue of how democratic foreign policy tends to be internationally and domestically constrained in the specific context of multilateral economic bargaining. As the literature in PPA has made clear, this intuition can be applied to foreign policy (in the broad sense) and indeed encapsulates an essential feature of the process of implementation. In the words of Wolfram Hanrieder, the first foreign policy analyst to examine this issue in detail, implementation hinges on a 'compatibility-consensus' balance and unfolds within a 'double constraint' (Hanrieder, 1971). In order to be successful in achieving their objectives, actors need to pursue a foreign policy that is compatible with the context and, at the same time, supported by a reasonable degree of agreement inside the state. Implementation thus calls for an attention to both fronts, domestic and international, and foreign policy makers need to make them work in tandem as much as possible.

But the exercise of balancing the domestic and the international does not exhaust the ways in which these ambitions can be connected in the phase of foreign policy implementation. In fact, sometimes it is the dynamic interplay or synergy between them which is of most interest. This happens, for instance, whenever the attainment of a foreign policy goal has domestic implications, or vice versa. In fact, sometimes *domestic* objectives are achieved via particular *foreign* policies, whereas *foreign* policy objectives are pursued via *domestic* policies. When this happens, the synergistic (or dialectic) nature of foreign policy manifests itself most clearly, and the process of interplay between actor, context, and foreign policy at the heart of the strategic-relational model seen above comes full circle.

As for the first possibility, the choice of many countries to join the European Union provides a good case in point. Naturally, entry into the EU is portrayed primarily as a foreign policy issue; negotiations, after all, take place at the level of the foreign policy apparatus. And yet, there is a sense in which historically the entry into the EU (or the EC before Maastriicht) was pursued by policy makers primarily for domestic purposes. Think of the enlargement to Spain or Greece, between the 1970s and 1980s, and how this was functional to the overriding domestic



objective of democratic consolidation. The same logic applies today to some of the applicants from former Eastern Europe (Tovias and Ugur, 2004). Further, there is no doubt that part of the controversy surrounding the accession of Turkey to the EU originates from an opposition to the set of domestic objectives which accession is supposed to produce or facilitate, most notably political reform.

Examples of the opposite case are also frequent, and indeed very relevant to the current predicaments of some democratic states. Today's conditions of globalization, and especially multiculturalism, mean that domestic measures directed to minorities are sometimes the only way of achieving a foreign policy objective which is considered too costly or too risky to carry out at the foreign policy level (Hill, 2007).

## Exerting influence

All foreign policy, by definition, is about the outside world. While the issues of the definition of 'outside' and the boundaries between 'us' and 'them' are highly contested, they are discussed elsewhere in this book. The purpose of this section is to examine the practical problems which occur when foreign policy-making processes collide with the world for which they are intended. Intention, however, is itself a variable phenomenon in this context. Some foreign policy is initiated at home, whether by a new government, a strong-minded leader, or pressures from below, such as those represented by nationalism. But many other foreign policy positions are reactions to events beyond borders, and thus either to the initiatives to others, or to chains of events which have spiralled beyond any single actor's control. Either way, a policy can be rational or not, and compatible—or not—with other aspects of the government's programme. Yet whatever its internal logic it still has to face up to the problem of implementation, that is, the putting of a policy into practice through engagement with other international actors, often physically in the outside world.

In Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) implementation has several meanings, of which two are focused on

For instance, the restrictive policies impinging disproportionately on Muslim minorities, which are currently pursued in the US, but also in Britain, are implemented with a specific foreign policy aim, namely to target those Muslim countries actively supporting terrorism.

As illustrated in this section, therefore, a degree of interplay between the 'domestic' and the 'international' in the process of foreign policy implementation is inevitable, and indeed necessary for its success. This is true in a number of ways: firstly, domestic participation features in the implementation phase either simply in terms of consensus or in terms of the specific resources to be mobilized; secondly, through foreign policy the 'domestic' can become the channel by which the 'international' is pursued, and vice versa.

here: on the one hand is the issue of the channels through which foreign policy aims are translated into practice, involving the often complex relationship between ends and means; on the other are the difficulties which states have in *operating* in what is literally a 'foreign', and quite often a highly intractable, world—and how they *adapt* their behaviour on the basis of the interaction between with and feedback from that outside world. Those who work more on the policy-related side of FPA have always written about the challenges represented by a particular instrument, particularly diplomacy, and military force. Detailed research has also been conducted on propaganda, and the use of economic sanctions, while key figures like Alexander George have underscored the links between instruments, as in his influential work on 'coercive diplomacy', which has now spawned the subfield of 'defence diplomacy' (George, 1994). More direct theoretical work, however, is also vital to an understanding of implementation, whether relating to the bureaucratic dimension, or to the underlying problems of planning and rationality. Graham Allison has been the most influential figure on both counts, providing a bridge as he does into the work of economists

and administrative theorists like Herbert Simon and Charles Lindblom (Allison and Zelikow, 1999; see also Chapters 5 and 6 above).

The above two meanings of implementation will be explored through looking at, in turn:

- The variety of relationships that exists with the outside world, because of the many different kinds of states conducting foreign policy, and the varying challenges that their external activities involve. For instance, the implementation of British policy towards New Zealand is a very different matter from its conduct towards Belarus. Despite the much greater geographical distances between the parties to the first relationship, the degree of 'foreignness' (i.e. political and cultural distance) is far less than in the second.

- The foreign policy instruments available to decision makers as they contemplate the best way

to translate their intentions into actions which have a chance of success in the international environment. The main instruments fall into four categories: political, military, economic, and cultural/ideological. Yet any analysis of them soon encounters complex problems, in the first instance

of the choices over the use of which instrument for what purpose, and in the second instance over the relationship between the instruments themselves and the underlying capabilities which make them possible.

- The theoretical issues raised by any discussion of the ends-means relationship in foreign policy. In the context of implementation, this means the issues of rationality, slippage, and complexity. It also means some particular reflections on one of the central concepts in all International Relations, namely power. The key issue here is the distinction between power as a *means*, and as a *context*.

## The practical importance of context

Foreign Policy Analysis is a comparative field of study, which generates observations of more or less generalizability. Sometimes its insights will need to be heavily qualified through the particularity of period and circumstances, while others will amount to propositions of wide applicability. In terms of implementation, it is not contestable that the follow-through phase of decision-making (which in this case is more properly termed action, or agency) always has the capacity to raise new problems and to derail the original intentions. This now seems an unremarkable statement, but it was not always the case. Even today, rationalists often do not make allowances for the fact that choices and trade-offs are not the only determinant of outcomes; choices are not self-executing. For their part, politicians very often neglect, in their enthusiasm, to factor in either the 'foul-up' factor or the inconvenient unwillingness of outsiders to conform to the roles expected of them. It is enough to mention the gap between intentions and outcomes on the part of the proponents of the Iraq war to make the point.

### Great powers, small powers

This kind of high-level generalization, however, is only a start. To understand implementation more fully we also need more fine-grained work on the basis of distinctions between the kinds of actors producing foreign policies, and between the kinds of relationship in which they are engaged. On the first count, for example, it might be thought that great powers (to say nothing of the world's only superpower) would have far fewer problems in implementing their external policies than small and/or weak states. But this is not necessarily the case. It depends, crucially, on what aims are being sought. Despite its status as a middle power, and the considerable array of means at its disposal, Britain is torn between aspiration and (in)capacity. It has, for instance, failed to fulfil many of the foreign policy aims dictated by its 'new' global agenda. This is only in part due to the fact that 'the global' has been used primarily as a rhetorical strategy, as mentioned above. More interestingly, it

was the very nature of some foreign policy aims, most notably those of a normative kind, which was difficult to match with the means used to pursue them.

A small country which over-reaches itself, in terms of seeking to change the whole character of the international system (as Fidel Castro's Cuba has occasionally tried to do, and as Hugo Chávez seems fixated on in contemporary Venezuela), risks even greater complications, if not outright failure. On the other hand this is not to say that they will achieve nothing. If they have already discounted the risks, and the unlikelihood of achieving the stated goals, they may still fulfil lesser, and probably unstated, goals, of a satisfying kind. Thus Muammar Qaddafi in Libya has defied all predictions of his demise and has exerted, despite his undoubtedly erratic behaviour, a disproportionate degree of influence in the Maghreb and even in sub-Saharan Africa. By extension, a small country which remains modest in its goals may have relatively few problems of implementation because it will be too cautious to attempt anything which attracts the hostile interest of the more powerful, or exposes it to other kinds of potentially destructive blow-back.

Conversely, the United States often encounters serious problems of implementation with its foreign policies, precisely because it has global interests and is active on almost every front. As the 'hegemon'/'leader of the free world' it has a forward stance on enough issues to run almost inevitably into difficulties in some of them. Overstretch is a term which refers to a structural condition over an historical period (Kennedy, 1988). It refers to the tendency of great powers to take on imperial commitments which they cannot sustain, financially or militarily. In particular circumstances, it may take the form of a foreign policy which is undertaken without the available resources to follow it through, even if in principle the state in question should have no problem in doing so. The United States discovered this truth in Somalia in 1993, where it rapidly withdrew after only a few casualties, including (possibly with undue haste) that there was not the domestic support for a long engagement. The Soviet Union suffered the same fate in Afghanistan, after much longer, and much greater losses, during the years following their invasion of December 1979.

Thus, the foreign policy designs of great powers have most frequently failed in relation to implementation. This result, though puzzling, can be illuminated through the strategic-relational model presented in the first part of the chapter. Two of its insights must be kept particularly in mind. Firstly, given the constant interplay between strategy and context, successful implementation requires a certain degree of flexibility to accommodate on-going feedback processes. A foreign policy which is projected to the outside without much understanding of such interplay is likely to backfire, as recent American foreign policy has vividly demonstrated. Secondly, a successful implementation depends also on the crucial relation between ends and means. No matter how powerful or big a state is, the pursuit of foreign policy aims is contingent on the ever-important choice of the appropriate means.

### Multilateralism and the complexity of action

Nor is the military dimension the only one in which problems of implementation arise. Tony Blair apparently succeeded in getting the G8 to commit to a policy of debt cancellation in Africa during the Gleneagles summit of July 2005, only to find that many of his partners simply failed to live up to their promises. This is one example among many which demonstrates that, almost by definition, any foreign policy action depends on others for its full implementation. If being pursued bilaterally or multilaterally, it will require the cooperation of partners. But even then, and certainly in all unilateral actions, it depends on how the majority of actors affected, whether hostile, supportive, or just indifferent, respond to the action. If they choose to take an interest in the subject, for whatever reason (and the indifferent may decide to take a stance if only to give themselves leverage on something else), these actors are likely to create friction, add costs or at the least complicate the implementation of the policy. Even if they are neutral on the substance, their technical assistance may still be needed, as with the controversial (and therefore

secret) rendition flights of US aircraft in ferrying presumed terrorists to and from their detention centres.

Despite the controversy of recent years between the United States and its allies as to whether unilateralism, multilateralism, or 'effective multilateralism' (the compromise position) is the preferred approach to international relations, the reality is that most implementation entails some or other form of multilateralism. Occasionally, states indulge themselves in pure, myopic, solipsism, as with the wild calls of Iranian president Ahmadinejad for Israel to be wiped off the map. Even then, they are usually attempting to rally support in a particular quarter or to provoke reactions in another. But for the most part, states take for granted the fact that success in foreign policy will require mobilizing support, neutralizing hostility, shaping the balance of influence, and (increasingly) winning the rhetorical wars which characterize the modern, multi-layered international system. Often this work takes place within formal international organizations, whether universal through the UN system, or partial, in the form of networks of allies, regional partners, or the 'like-minded'. But just as much is ad hoc, cutting across institutional boundaries and not restricted by formal rules or agreements. Even in its moment of maximum self-assertion, when it disregarded the Article 5 offer of help from its NATO allies immediately after 9/11, the United States was collaborating pragmatically with a wide range of countries involved in the hunt for Al Qaeda members. The 'war on terror' could not be other than a collective affair, even if it also divided the world crudely into 'those who are for us, and those against us'. In other words, the deployment of the immense national power which the US has at its disposal, is in itself no guarantee of effective implementation. The very use of the famous 'axis of evil' image was an attempt to mobilize the international community on one side by 'othering', or scapegoating, a small number of seemingly irresponsible states.

Implementing foreign policy, therefore, usually requires the simultaneous use of various levels and techniques of international cooperation, bilateral, multilateral, and transgovernmental—that is, links between parts of one state's machinery and parts of another, as with the privileged links between the French and German ministries of Defence which produced the joint brigade in the late 1980s. Not all of these will be visible to the public; indeed, perhaps most will operate at the level of what used to be called 'secret diplomacy'. 'Secrecy' is an over-rated quality these days, as relatively few activities require the absolute darkness associated with the preparation, say, of a surprise attack. Even in those cases, it is impossible to maintain absolute surprise. There were plenty of indications of Hitler's impending attack on the USSR in June 1941, of Israel's on Egypt in 1967, or of Argentina's on the Falkland Islands in 1982, for those who wanted to listen, or were capable of reading the signs correctly. In the contemporary media-driven environment it is especially difficult to keep something secret for long, as the Reagan administration discovered in 1986–87, when its attempts to use money from arms deals with Iran to fund illegal military campaigns in central America (the Iran–Contra affair) were exposed with serious consequences for its policies on both fronts.

All this is to say that most foreign policy implementation involves a tangled web of connections with other states, or at least parts of other states, which is both necessary and a serious complication of agency, in that it may compromise the aspiration towards a single, rational strategy and the control of outcomes. If foreign policy inevitably means sub-contracting out various parts of the endeavour to different parts of the state bureaucracy and to outside entities in the world where the effects are sought, then those sub-contractors have the capacity to reframe, distort, and even subvert the policy's original intentions. This is the strategic-relational approach in practice, looking inside as well as outside the state. One might adapt Truman's famous remark about General Eisenhower, as the latter prepared to take over the Presidency: 'He'll sit here, and he'll say, "Do this! Do that!" *And nothing will happen.* Poor Ike—it won't be a bit like the Army' (cited in Neustadt, 1960: 9).

Inside any political machinery, and even more so in the complex world of international relations, 'orders'

may easily be issued, but that is only the beginning of the process of attempting to achieve one's goals.

Moreover this is true for all kinds of states, whatever their size, or level of sophistication.

## The instruments of foreign policy

When it comes to choosing the instruments with which to act, the differences between states do come into play. The wide variation in state capacities is a key determinant of what can even be attempted in the outside world. The larger states will possess the full portfolio of potential instruments, from the hardest of hard power to the most subtle and indirect cultural influences. They will also have the capacity to act well beyond their own locality, perhaps globally. It is, indeed, a plausible definition of a superpower that it can expect to determine outcomes in any geographical arena, and via any available instrument. At the other end of the spectrum, it will be a major challenge for a micro-state even to preserve its autonomy. Its foreign policy will have no further ambition than to assist in the achievement of basic domestic policy goals, through diplomacy alone. Between these two extremes, most states survive on the basis of a limited and patchy range of instruments, possessing armed services of highly variable size, quality, and scope, embassies in some parts of the world but not all, the ability to exert economic influence according to levels of development and/or the lottery of geographical position, and probably very limited cultural outreach.

Any understanding of how states approach the problem of deciding on the best means of implementing their foreign policy must remember two dicta: firstly, instruments are themselves dependent on underlying capabilities, which are in turn a function of the resources at the disposal of the society in question; secondly, decision makers do not choose instruments as the surgeon selects the scalpel—rather, the nature of the available instruments tends to shape their policy choices in the first place. These points are expanded in what follows.

Resources refer to what the French school called the 'basic forces' of foreign policy (Renouvin and Duroselle, 1968; Merle, 1987), that is, a country's sum total of (dis)advantages derived from climate,

position, geography, population size, education, tradition, and level of development. These things are not unchangeable—the Law of the Sea Treaty expanded territorial waters from 12 to 200 miles in the 1970s—but for the most part they change slowly. This is on the assumption that territorial expansion is not generally acceptable. Where it does occur, as with Israel's conquests of 1967, the parameters of both security and access to raw materials (in this case water) can change dramatically. Resources are

a critical factor in determining a state's choices in foreign policy, although there is no simple correspondence between the possession of an asset and the ability to exert influence, as with Nigeria's wasting of its oil revenues, or Indonesia's failure to translate its status as the world's fourth most populous country (235m) into an equivalent political ranking. Conversely, states with no apparent resource advantages, such as Singapore and Switzerland, have managed to achieve both security and prosperity, at least in the modern era. Resources thus have to be managed effectively. What really makes possible the pursuit of an effective foreign policy is capabilities, which in turn determine the range of possible instruments at decision makers' disposal.

Capabilities are resources that are made operational but which are not yet translated into the specific instruments which may be applied in practical politics, such as propaganda or the use of force (see Figure 7.3). Accordingly they may be seen as the elements which an intelligent government will always seek to improve, to give itself a better chance of implementing an effective foreign policy, but which will be seen more as a long-term investment than as providing an immediate pay-off. Into this category fall such factors as the strength of a national currency, the size and proficiency of its armed forces, and the skills of its people—this last was the reason why Prime Minister Blair continually stressed

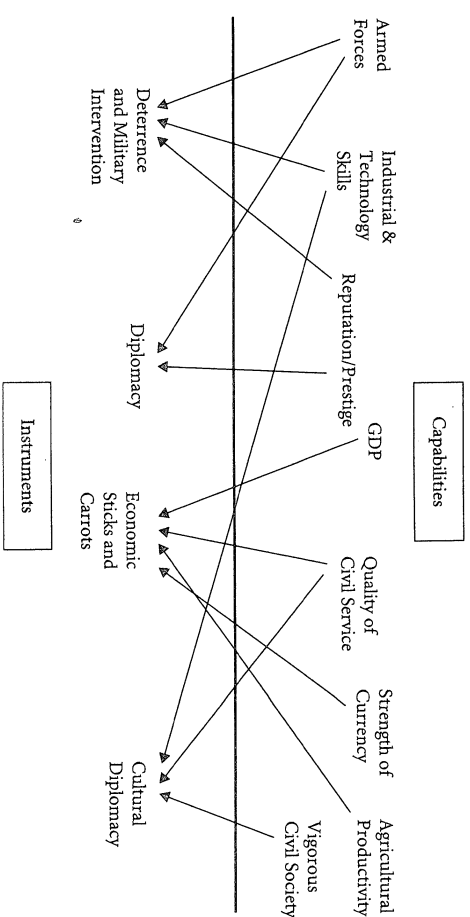


Figure 7.3 Links between the principal capabilities and instruments of foreign policy

the importance of education to the UK's position in the world, economic and political.

On the other hand, such capabilities are of importance in themselves, and to the well-being of any society; their role in underpinning foreign policy is incidental except in cases where leaders see the latter as providing their primary goals. This was evidently true for Hitler and Mussolini, who provided full employment as a means to pursuing their country's international greatness, rather than the reverse. This means that foreign policy and its implementation is to a large extent at the mercy of factors beyond its control and of long-term developments. It is for this and other reasons that the second dictum referred to above applies: that decision makers cannot choose on an abstract, rational basis the instrument which would best serve their immediate purpose. They are limited not only by the size and wealth of their country, that is, by basic resources, but also by the decisions of their predecessors in office to develop (or not) a particular capability which would have made possible the preferred instrument. And that in turn will have depended on the priority given to external policy. France in the 1880s was determined to reverse the humiliation it had suffered at the hands of Germany in 1870–71, and focused on educational

reform and population growth (not with great success) as the means of doing it. Israel, throughout its whole existence, has made foreign and defence policy the overriding priority, although it has only been able to do so through unwavering US support. But for many states foreign policy is rather like an expensive insurance policy whose dues seem disproportionate to the risks they face. They often neglect the relevant capabilities or divert them in other directions, especially if able to free-ride on more activist allies. They may also misunderstand the link between capabilities and instruments, assuming more choice when it comes to implementing a foreign policy than they in fact possess. To put it at its most simple, if they have allowed weapons procurement to run down, or have closed embassies for financial reasons, they will have much less leverage available to them when the need arises. In such circumstances misperceptions are common, and may be fatal.

The actual instruments of foreign policy, that is to say the forms of pressure and influence available to decision makers, represent an ascending scale of seriousness in terms of the commitment of resources, the impact on third parties, and the according degree of risk in use. (See Figure 7.4.) This scale is akin to the spectrum from soft to hard power now familiar in

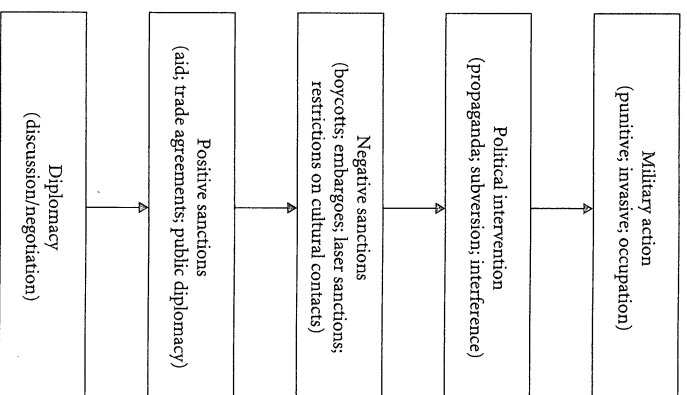


Figure 7.4 The ascending scale of foreign policy instruments

the discussion of international politics (Nye, 2004). If a problem occurs which requires a foreign policy response, it would take a particularly irrational leader (it can happen) to go straight for the high-risk option (interestingly now referred to as the 'nuclear option' in everyday speech). The pragmatic initial response is to discuss the issue with other relevant states, that is, to employ diplomacy. If that is unproductive there may be some attempt to incentivize compliance by various forms of positive or negative sanctions, not all of them economic. Appeals to an adversary's own domestic opinion, through public diplomacy or employing civil society in direct cultural linkages, have some chance of weakening his or her political base.

Failure at this level then leaves the initiating state with a serious choice: does it go on to escalate the dispute by exerting punitive measures (assuming it has that opportunity) which will almost certainly

raise the level of tension between the two parties to the point where it might as easily spiral out of control as produce compliance, or does it decide to cut losses and back off, possibly with the consequences of international humiliation and domestic criticism? The same choice, but of an even more serious kind, awaits further down the road, if and when sanctions turn out to have been ineffective. This was the dilemma faced by the United States and Britain in 1998, as they attempted to enforce the no-fly zones in southern Iraq on Saddam Hussein, and to press him to renounce the suspected programmes of biological and chemical weapons production. The economic sanctions which had been in place since 1991 seemed not to be working, and indeed were attracting ever more criticism on the grounds of their damaging impact on Iraqi civilians. Yet to abandon them without any alternative course of action would have been to hand a diplomatic victory to Saddam, and perhaps to encourage him to develop further 'weapons of mass destruction' (WMD). This reasoning produced Operation Desert Fox, viz the major air attacks on southern Iraq launched by the US and UK in December 1998. In time, and catalysed by 9/11, this led to the aim of regime change and to the full-scale invasion of Iraq (Kampffner, 2003).

The ladder of escalation in the use of foreign policy instruments is a tendency, rather than an absolute rule. It conforms to a rational ideal-type which may only be honoured in the breach. Powerful states are able to use different instruments simultaneously, or in rotation. They are certainly able to benefit from the law of anticipated reactions by keeping the mere possibility of escalation in the minds of their weaker adversaries, who may decide that prudence is preferable to any kind of risk. Lesser powers have fewer options, and not just in relation to hard power. Their embassies may be restricted to a few major capitals, plus the UN network, their economic weakness will rule out any use of sanctions, and their ability to project themselves abroad culturally will be very limited. This does not mean that they are totally hamstrung; if prepared to take risks, like Castro or Kim Jong Il, they may have surprising degrees of success, even over long periods, by being prepared

to defy all their opponents' instruments, short of regime change itself. If, conversely, they do not wish to attract hostility, they may still have some capacity to implement effective policies so long as they show creativity and do not become over-ambitious. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania fitfully displayed these characteristics in the 1960s and 1970s, giving his country an influence on African politics that it has not had since his departure (Nzomo, 1999: 184–186). President Morales in Bolivia is currently raising his similarly weak country's profile with a shrewd mixture of diplomatic activism and dignified restraint.

## Power, and the ends–means relationship in foreign policy

The concept of power is a common thread not only in the story of implementation but in the analysis of foreign policy more broadly. All action implies the exercise of power to a greater or lesser extent, both as a means and as a context. In the former sense power, and thus foreign policy, is an inherently relational activity in that it only exists in relation to some object or some other party (Baldwin, 1985). In the latter sense, as context, power impinges on foreign policy through its unavoidability; if decision makers behave as if the power of others, or their own lack of it, is not relevant, they will soon suffer some unpleasant shocks. Conversely, if they become over-confident about their power position, or interpret it too narrowly, they risk the usual outcome of hubris—a hostile coalition and probable failure.

In a theoretical sense, power is often defined as getting A to do what they might not otherwise do, or even consider doing. Yet in order to understand the way in which power both works in the implementation process, and can be drained away during this crucial phase, it needs to be disaggregated and contextualized. In the inevitable shorthand talk in International Relations of 'great powers', 'power politics', and the like, Foreign Policy Analysis provides a useful corrective, through employing middle-range theory to explore the different levels and processes beneath the surface of events. As seen

in Part I, the FPA perspective allows us to unpack the interplay of structures with agency, and in a much more concrete way than that relationship is usually discussed. It tends to be sceptical of single-factor explanations, whether at the level of the motivations, actions, or effects of foreign policy. Equally, it shows—and most clearly in the particular context of implementation—how ends and means exist in a perpetual loop of interconnectedness, with the latter often determining the former.

The rational model, which stresses setting one's goals in line with available power and then choosing the most appropriate instrument to achieve them, rarely conforms to actual foreign policy practice. Actual decision makers often confront an unexpected problem and turn to the first potential solution to hand, bearing in mind the need to build a coalition of support within the government and (at times) to carry domestic public opinion with them. They may then get sucked into an unforeseeable tunnel of events which throws up yet further choices over both ends and means. This was evident in the Balkans during the 1990s, as the western states grappled with the complex consequences of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, finally taking on commitments to de facto protectorates in three countries (Bosnia, Macedonia, and Kosovo), and (in the case of the EU) accepting a major enlargement of membership across the whole region. The many complex instruments thus deployed were ostensibly as a *means* towards the *ends* of stabilization and pacification, but the longer they stay in place the more difficult it is to distinguish the two. Indeed, most foreign policy implementation is best judged not via a snapshot in the moment, but over the long term, in relation to changing goals and the flexible use of a range of means.

Certainly, leaders need to be clear and reflective about their goals, and about the ends—means relationship, but in foreign policy they should not be under any illusion that the latter can be held steady, or that any given means can be relied upon to deliver results. The implementation phase of policy making always involves some loss of momentum through transaction costs, political friction, and disillusion. Because decisions are never self-executing (except

in the case of Saddam Hussein, who is said literally to have executed one death sentence on a ministerial colleague) leaders rely on sub-contracting to bureaucratic agents, some of whom may take the opportunity to slow down or undermine the policy, or even to run their own policies in competition, under the cover of agreement. More likely, they will

just be guilty of inefficiency, which can still endanger the original policy. As John Kennedy famously said during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 (after one of his spy planes had strayed over Soviet territory, strictly against his orders), 'there's always some son-of-a-bitch who doesn't get the word' (Allison and Zelikow, 1999: p. 241).<sup>2</sup>

## Conclusion

The key points which emerge from the analysis of the confrontation between foreign policy and the world in which it has to operate all qualify rationalist notions of power and the ends-means relationship. They stress the importance of understanding the interplay between context and policy, between structures and actors. And they highlight the huge potential for slippage between intentions and outcomes, between actions and consequences. Indeed, foreign policy decisions should be seen primarily as heightened moments of commitment in a perpetual process of action, reaction, and further action

at many different levels and involving a range of different actors, inside and outside the state, all of which need to be taken into account. In short, they are best understood through the strategic-relational model. The most important thing for practitioners to remember is that the point of decision in foreign policy is usually only the start of a long process of immersion in a fluid and unpredictable external environment. The onset of implementation denotes not the end of politics, but simply a new phase of it.

### Key points

- Foreign policy is not self-executing; the implementation phase is critical to success.
- The means of foreign policy can distort and even transform its original ends.
- The implementation of foreign policy needs to be highly flexible—it is self-defeating to rely on one instrument alone, or one strategy for too long.
- The international environment is fluid and difficult to manage. Foreign policy makers should be alert to the constant feedback it provides and adapt to its changing circumstances—however clear their initial objectives.
- Implementation takes place in several different arenas simultaneously—the local, the states system, the global/transnational, and even the domestic (of both the acting and the receiving state).
- Implementation can be a purely technical, executive matter. For the most part, however, it is as political—and therefore as ethical—a dimension as any other aspect of foreign policy.

### Questions

1. Why is it generally difficult for states to translate intentions into foreign policy outcomes?
2. What is the 'international' made up of?

3. Do ideas have any role at all in implementing foreign policy, or does this phase merely involve technical issues of execution?
4. Is domestic consensus always necessary for foreign policy to succeed?
5. Do big powers have fewer problems of foreign policy implementation than small ones do?
6. How easy is it to acquire new instruments of foreign policy?
7. Why is so much expected of 'soft power', even by the United States?
8. Assess the problems associated with distinguishing between ends and means in foreign policy and its making.

### Further reading

- Cohen, R. (1991), *Negotiating across Cultures: Communication Obstacles in International Diplomacy* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace).
- A richly informed analysis of culturally derived misperceptions in foreign policy.
- George, A. and Simons W. E. (eds), with contributions by David K. Hall (1994, 2nd edn), *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boulder, Co: Westview).
- The best discussion of how force and diplomacy are often combined, if not always to good effect.
- Hill, C. (2003), *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan).
- A wide-ranging discussion of the conduct of foreign policy, with much attention given to the problems of acting in an intractable environment.
- Nye, J. S. (2004), *Soft Power: the Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs Books).
- The fullest statement of the argument that even major powers need the full range of foreign policy instruments.
- Smith, S. and Clarke, M. (eds) (1985), *Foreign Policy Implementation* (London: Allen & Unwin).
- The first treatment of the implementation problem, with a range of different aspects covered.
- Wolfers, A. (1962), *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins).
- A classic, containing several essential essays, on the nature of goals, and the ends-means problem.



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