HANDBOOK *of* INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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SAGE Publications
London • Thousand Oaks • New Delhi

ISBN 0-7619-6304-9 (hbk)
ISBN 0-7619-6305-7 (pbk)

First published 2002
Reprinted 2003, 2005, 2006

SAGE Publications Ltd
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP

SAGE Publications Inc
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks
California 91320

SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd
B–42 Panchsheel Enclave
PO Box 4109
New Delhi 110 017

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library
Library of Congress Control Number: 2001135896

Typeset by SIVA Math Setters, Chennai, India
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Cromwell Press Limited, Trowbridge, Wiltshire

17

Foreign Policy

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Taking the broad historical perspective is often a suggestive strategy for gauging the current state of a field of study. The chapter on 'Foreign Policy' in the magisterial eight-volume *Handbook of Political Science*, published in 1975, is in this regard insightful for at least two reasons. The first is its tone, which is guardedly optimistic about the future of foreign policy analysis despite deep-rooted disagreements within the field regarding both its conceptual boundaries and the most appropriate manner to analyze its substance. There is, the two authors write, a 'sense of movement at last, akin to one's first responses as a traffic jam unlocks and cars begin, hesitantly and tentatively, to pick up forward speed' (Cohen and Harris, 1975: 381). The second reason is the unquestioned assumption that the subject matter of foreign policy belongs naturally to the empirical domain of public policy rather than of international relations – so much so that Cohen and Harris' chapter was published in the volume on 'Policies and Policymaking' rather than that on 'International Politics'. To most readers today, a quarter of a century later, both of these characterizations will undoubtedly raise more than a few puzzled eyebrows. The first due to its misplaced (if admittedly guarded) optimism about the future disciplinary development of the field; and the second because if there is anything which all foreign policy analysts today can and do agree on (and there is not much else), it is that they belong squarely to the scholarly domain of International Relations (IR) rather than to any of the policy sciences.

This is not to say, however, that the study of foreign policy currently enjoys an undisputed professional domicile within IR. This uneasy state of affairs is due at least in part to the failure of foreign policy researchers, during the past twenty-five years, to consolidate their field in the manner once envisioned. Instead, their practice has to a considerable degree become one of eclecticism and defensiveness within a larger scholarly milieu which, on the whole, is not especially engaged with the issues at the head of the agenda of foreign policy analysis. A quick perusal of the table of contents of the major IR journals published during the past decade or so is quite clear on this score: very few contain titles in which the concept of 'foreign policy analysis' plays a prominent role. At the same time interest in the development of IR theory itself has grown exponentially, but for the most part with little or no reference to 'foreign policy', either as an integral part of such theory or as a separate but important approach in its own right. On the contrary, most of the time it is simply ignored in these debates and discussions, or politely dismissed with reference to the distinction between system level and unit level theories, the former pertaining to international politics proper, the latter 'merely' to the behaviour of individual states. 'Theory development at this level', a recent review of theories of foreign policy thus states laconically, 'has received comparatively little attention' (Rose, 1998: 145). Alexander Wendt's declaration of (a lack of) interest is equally symptomatic: 'Theories of international politics are distinguished from those that have as their object explaining the behaviour of individual states, or "theories of foreign policy"... Like Waltz, I am interested in international politics, not foreign policy' (Wendt, 1999: 11). Perhaps of equal significance, foreign policy analysts themselves seem to have lost heart. Hence, as a British scholar noted in 1999, 'These are testing times for foreign policy analysts. At issue is whether their area of study remains a major sub-field of International Relations

or whether it has become anachronistic, either subsumed or replaced by other approaches to understanding and explaining state behaviour' (White, 1999: 37). Similarly, a German colleague has noted that despite a plethora of publications on the topic in his home country, the study of foreign policy itself is currently in the throes of a conceptual crisis and theoretically at a standstill (Schneider, 1997).

However, let me already at this point signal that although there is some justification for the bleak picture of the sub-field of foreign policy analysis adumbrated above, it by no means represents the whole picture. It reflects a disciplinary development during the past two to three decades which has put a strong structuralist-systemic stamp on IR, and hence also an effective damper on approaches – such as foreign policy analysis – premised not primarily on the international system as the generator of behaviour but on the importance of unit-level factors and actors for understanding and explaining state behaviour. But this structuralist-systemic perspective has never been totally hegemonic even in North America, and in Europe it has failed to achieve the same grip on the scholarly imaginations of its mostly small, eclectic and not equally 'scientistic' or 'rationalistic' IR communities. More importantly, since at least the end of the Cold War – and perhaps to a considerable extent as a result of it – this dominant perspective has increasingly had to provide space for a view of the substance of interstate interactions which is more in tune with some of the basic premises of foreign policy approaches. In other words, a case can be made for why a focus on foreign policy is once again regaining ground within IR, and why it should indeed do so.

The way I intend to proceed is as follows. In the next section an intellectual history of foreign policy analysis will be presented, primarily covering developments during the past half-century. After that a conceptual and analytical overview of the field itself will be provided, in which I will first very briefly discuss fundamental definitional issues and present four rock-bottom types of explanatory frameworks defined not in terms of 'schools', 'grand debates' or 'contending approaches' but with reference to two fundamental meta-theoretical dimensions within the philosophy of social science. On the basis of these four generic perspectives, my intention in the subsequent and core part of the chapter is to highlight and briefly discuss some of the more prominent contemporary attempts to structure and to pursue analysis within the field. After this the question will be raised – and a brief answer suggested – whether a synthetic or integrated approach to foreign policy analysis is at all feasible. The concluding section will pinpoint a few current and contentious issues straddling the various approaches discussed, indicating some areas of potential development within the field.

International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis: A Short Intellectual History

As is the case with IR itself, most historical accounts of foreign policy analysis – and there are not many available – tend to suffer from a Whig interpretation of this history, or from what Brian C. Schmidt, in the opening chapter of this *Handbook*, has called the problem of 'presentism': 'the practice of writing a history of the field for the purpose of making a point about the present character of the field'. These accounts are also to a considerable degree infused with parochialisms of various shades, both of a geographic, scholarly and subdisciplinary nature. The combination of these two characteristics makes for interesting reading but hardly for a fully illuminating overview of this historical development. In other words, they have on the whole contributed to conventional images of the progression and hence identity of the field that need to be challenged and corrected.

As suggested above, the conception of foreign policy as an academic subject matter has had strong roots in the broader domain of public policy, especially in the United States. However, this is not where the field originated but is, rather, a reaction to the earlier tradition – primarily of a European provenance, with origins in the seventeenth century and the rise of the modern state thereafter – of viewing foreign policy as a distinct domain differing in fundamental respects from all other spheres of public policy. 'The leading assumption', Bernard C. Cohen thus noted some years ago, 'is that foreign policy is "more important" than other policy areas because it concerns national interests, rather than special interests, and more fundamental values' (Cohen, 1968: 530). A further consequence of this doctrine of the 'primacy of foreign policy' was, of course, that being distinct in this manner, political elites demanded that it be treated differently from all other areas of public policy, that is, beyond democratic control and public scrutiny. However, the experiences leading up to, and the consequences of, the First World War convinced some influential statesmen – in particular Woodrow Wilson – that an end should be put to the traditional secretive practices of statecraft and diplomacy.

Despite the subsequent failure of the Wilsonian project, the study of foreign policy was deeply affected – especially in the United States – by this liberal and democratic ideology, with the result that much of its activities subsequent to the Second World War, when foreign policy analysis first came to be firmly established academically, was concerned with the study of two major implications of these beliefs (Cohen, 1968). The first was to focus on how the governmental institutions responsible

for the formulation and implementation of foreign policy could be made more efficient in the pursuit of their tasks. The second had a more ideological thrust, essentially involving a plea for the democratization of foreign policy – of why and how public values and interests should be introduced to every stage in the formulation and execution of such policy.

However, concomitant with this institutionally focused and policy-oriented tradition in the academic study of foreign policy, which enjoyed its American heyday during the two decades following the Second World War, we also find a second major tradition, and one which has left a much stronger and seemingly indelible imprint on the subsequent development of the field. I here have in mind the induction into American thinking of a powerful European influence, and one that stands in marked contrast to the indigenous strands of the liberal Wilsonian project. Realism is its name, and Hans Morgenthau was for decades its undisputed high priest (Morgenthau, 1948). As argued by Stefano Guzzini in his comprehensive sociological analysis of the history of realism, Morgenthau's main concern, as that of realists more generally, was to resuscitate an older tradition by translating 'the maxims of [the] nineteenth century's European diplomatic practice into more general laws of an American social science' (Guzzini, 1998: 1; see also Dunne, 1998; Kahler, 1997). To summarize a complex argument, he did this by claiming 'that the inherent and immutable self-interested nature of human beings, when faced with a structure of international anarchy, results in states maximizing one thing, power' (Smith, 1986: 15). By linking this view of power to the concept of the national interest, he believed that he could provide a universal explanation for the behaviour of particular states.

The behaviouralist turn in American social science in the 1950s and 1960s had a decisive effect on both of these approaches to the study of foreign policy. Its impact on the institutionally oriented research tradition was perhaps the more deep-going in the sense that it changed its character altogether from being an essentially idiographic and normative enterprise – analysing particular forms of policy or prescribing better means for its formulation and implementation – to one which now aspired to generate and to test hypotheses in order to develop a cumulative body of empirical generalizations. The main outgrowth of this fundamental theoretical and methodological reorientation was a movement, starting in the late 1960s, which became known as the comparative study of foreign policy, or CFP for short. Its strong behaviouralist character is manifested in its focus on explaining foreign policy in terms of discrete acts of 'behaviour' rather than in the form of 'purposive' state actions in the realist mode; and taking its cue from how American behavioural political science focused on the 'vote' as its fundamental unit of analysis, it posited the 'event' as its dependent variable. In this view foreign policy is seen as the exercise of influence in international relations, with 'events' specifying 'who does what to whom, and how' (Hudson and Vore, 1995: 215). As a consequence the task of collecting data on and analysing such events, with the aim of generating and accumulating empirical generalizations about foreign policy behaviour, became a major industry within CFP (Brecher, 1972; East, 1978; McGowan and Shapiro, 1973; Rummel, 1972; Wilkenfeld et al., 1980). It was also an activity generously funded by a federal government fully in tune with these ambitions (Andriole and Hopple, 1984).

However, it is generally acknowledged by friend and foe alike that this programme of establishing a truly 'scientific' approach to the analysis of foreign policy was, on the whole, a significant if commendable failure. The empirical results of the major research programmes which had been launched during these years turned out to be disappointing (Hudson and Vore, 1995: 215–16), and it became increasingly evident that the aim of a unified theory and a methodology based on aggregate analysis had to be rejected as empirically impracticable and analytically unfruitful (Caporaso, et al., 1987; East, 1978; Kegley, 1980; Munton, 1976; Smith, 1987).

The CFP programme did not, however, eclipse the type of foreign policy analysis which all along had focused mainly on the processes involved in foreign policy decision-making, or on contextual or socio-psychological factors influencing such behaviour (Hudson and Vore, 1995: 216–19). The former, with roots going back the pioneering work on decision-making by Snyder, Bruck and Sapin (1954), developed into extensive research exemplified by, for example, studies focusing on small group dynamics (C. Hermann, 1978; Janis, 1982; Tetlock, 1979), the 'bureaucratic politics' approach made famous by the publication in 1971 of Graham Allison's study of the Cuban crisis, as well as Steinbruner's attempt to present foreign policy-making as analogous to cybernetic processes (Steinbruner, 1974). The latter type of research focus, concentrating on more particular aspects of the decision-making process, produced a number of distinguished studies ranging from Michael Brecher's (1972) work on Israel, Robert Jervis's (1976) book on perceptions and misperceptions, and a long series of studies – continuing to the present time, as we shall see below – on the role of cognitive and psychological factors in the explanation of foreign policy actions (Axelrod, 1976; Cottam, 1977; M. Hermann, 1974, 1980a, 1980b; Holsti et al., 1968).

What can be said generally about this broad tradition is that whereas there was perhaps a brief moment in time when it could be asserted that foreign policy analysis was self-consciously in the process of achieving an identity of its own ('all the

evidence', James N. Rosenau thus proclaimed in 1974, in a statement that was soon and forever after to cause him considerable chagrin, 'points to the conclusion that the comparative study of foreign policy has now emerged as a *normal* science'), this is certainly not the case at the beginning of the new millennium (quoted in Smith, 1986: 20). Instead, if anything is typical of its practitioners at present, it is the almost total lack of such a sub-disciplinary identity. In the words of one of its contemporary chroniclers, the attitude today is instead one of allowing 'a hundred flowers to bloom' (Hudson and Vore, 1995: 22); or as another reviewer has put it (in a slightly more upbeat locution), of opening 'conversational space' to the multiple perspectives and 'new vistas' of foreign policy analysis (Neack et al., 1995: 12).

Turning to the development of realism in the face of the behaviouralist challenge we are presented with an intriguing paradox in the history of foreign policy analysis. On the one hand, it was believed by many that given the centrality in Morgenthau's approach of power defined in terms of the innate, unobservable but crucial notion of a fixed human nature, it would not be able to withstand this confrontation. Yet, this is precisely what it did, insofar as the behaviouralists never really challenged the underlying assumptions of realism, only its methodology (Vasquez, 1983). Nevertheless, while continuing to be the major intellectual force defining IR itself (Guzzini, 1998; Hollis and Smith, 1990), realism became methodologically divided as a consequence of the debate on its scientific status, and suffered a setback – by no means permanent – with the publication of Allison's in-depth penetration of the Cuba crisis in terms primarily of an analysis of unit-level rather than systemic factors (Allison, 1971). Since the celebrated appearance of Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* (1979), an even clearer bifurcation within realism has occurred, particularly in response to the strong stand against all forms of reductionist approaches – typified by most theories of foreign policy – which lies at the core of his structuralist reformulation of realism.

In summation of half a century of foreign policy analysis one can thus say that two broad traditions have played a major role in it, and that they continue to do so. The first is the more difficult to label, insofar as it contains a host of different and disparate approaches, including work on cognitive and psychological factors, bureaucratic and neoinstitutional politics, crisis behaviour, policy implementation, group decision-making processes, and transnational relations, to name some of the most important (see Hudson and Vore, 1995: 222–8). If only for lack of a better term, we can refer to this tradition in terms of the primacy allocated within it to the role of *Innenpolitik* – of domestic factors – in the explanation of foreign policy. As recently noted, although there 'are many variants of this approach, each favouring a different specific domestic independent variable ... they all share a common assumption – that foreign policy is best understood as the product of a country's internal dynamics' (Rose, 1998: 148). Juxtaposed against its explanatory logic we find realism broadly conceived, and for the sake of simplicity (and linguistic consistency) we can refer to this tradition as that of *Realpolitik*. Although not averse to allowing for the play of domestic factors in the pursuit of foreign policy, the major explanatory weight is here given to material systemic-level factors in one form or another.

However, although this characterization in terms of the classical divide between domestic and international politics has a long historical pedigree, it does have at least one major drawback as a criterion for classifying contemporary foreign policy analysis. For while many scholars continue to think of this analytical boundary as the major line of division within the field, and one that continues to be conceptually fruitful in analysis, it is nevertheless based on an assumption which is highly questionable as both an empirical and a theoretical proposition: that it is indeed feasible to determine the nature and function of such a boundary, and to do so without begging a fundamental question in the study of international relations. Thus, while it can be argued that this characterization of the field in terms of these two broad traditions continues to reflect a sub-disciplinary self-understanding of its development, it will not be used below when discussing the current state of affairs in foreign policy analysis. Instead of a criterion based specifically on the *substantive* nature of foreign policy (and one of dubious value), the discussion will proceed from two *meta-theoretical* dimensions – one ontological, the other epistemological – which are entirely neutral with regard to the substance of foreign policy itself.

Conceptualizing the Domain

'There is a certain discomfort in writing about foreign policy,' we are forewarned in the first lines of the *Handbook of Political Science* chapter on foreign policy, 'for no two people seem to define it in the same way, disagreements in approach often seem to be deep-seated, and we do not yet know enough about it to be able to say with confidence whether it may be differentiated from all other areas of public policy' (Cohen and Harris, 1975: 318). What its two authors point to here is a twin *problematique* which has occupied a central place in the history of foreign policy analysis, and which needs to be addressed as much today as in the past. The first of these concerns the crucial issue of what constitutes the particular explanandum of the study of foreign policy: what it is that is to be explained. For while this definitional issue may on first sight seem trivial, it in fact goes to the core of what distinguishes this field of study from that of both domestic and international politics, and

hence lies at the heart of the long-standing issue of where and how to draw the analytical boundary between a sub-field that willy-nilly straddles these two major disciplinary foci of political science. Secondly, this issue is also crucial to the choice of theoretically feasible instruments of analysis, since the nature of a given explanandum has obvious and fundamental implications for the types of explanans, that is, explanatory factors, which in principle are appropriate and in practice fruitful. Although there is today (in contrast to a generation ago) a relatively stable consensus with regard to the explanandum, which therefore need not detain us for long, this is not the case with respect to the considerably more contentious meta-theoretical issue.

This consensus boils down to a specification of the *unit of analysis* that emphasizes the purposive nature of foreign policy actions, a focus on policy and the crucial role of state boundaries. The following stipulation is intended to capture these definitional aspects: foreign policies consist of those actions which, expressed in the form of explicitly stated goals, commitments and/or directives, and pursued by governmental representatives acting on behalf of their sovereign communities, are directed toward objectives, conditions and actors – both governmental and non-governmental – which they want to affect and which lie beyond their territorial legitimacy.

As a starting point for discussing the types of *explanatory factors* that have characterized foreign policy analysis, it is necessary to consider two fundamental issues that have dominated current meta-theoretical debate within social theory (and IR). The first concerns the ontological foundation of social systems: the type of issue exemplified by the claim, reputedly made by Margaret Thatcher, that there is 'no such thing as a society', but 'only individuals'. Essentially, it revolves around the question of where the dynamic foundations of social systems are located. This dynamism either has its origin in 'the effects, intended or not, of individual action; or from the slowly evolving rules of the self-reproducing structure' (Guzzini, 1998: 197). This classic distinction in social theory is usually expressed in terms of the dichotomy between 'individualism' and 'holism', the former holding 'that social scientific explanations should be reducible to the properties or interactions of independently existing individuals', while holism stands for the view 'that the effects of social structures cannot be reduced to independently existing agents and their interactions' (Wendt, 1999: 26).

This ontological polarity between individualism and holism should be clearly distinguished from the epistemological issue of whether social agency is to be viewed through an 'objectivistic' or an 'interpretative' lens. Using a different metaphor, two choices are available here: to focus on human agents and their actions either from the 'outside' or from the 'inside', corresponding to the classical Weberian distinction between *Erklären* (explaining) and *Verstehen* (understanding). As argued by Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, these two approaches tell two different types of 'stories' about international relations, each with its own view of human nature and a concomitant range of 'appropriate' theories (Hollis and Smith, 1990). The choice is thus between an approach that models itself on the natural sciences, and one premised on the independent existence of a social realm constituted by social rules and intersubjective meanings. Whereas the former is based on a 'naturalistic' epistemology self-consciously replicated on that of the natural sciences, the latter – and the epistemological notion of *Verstehen* – is based on Weber's claim that 'The science of society attempts the interpretative understanding of social action' (quoted in Hollis and Smith, 1990: 71). This means that 'action must always be understood from within', and this in a double sense: the investigator must both get to 'know the rules, conventions, and context governing the action', and 'to know what the agent intended by and in performing the action' (Hollis and Smith, 1990: 72). Although not uncontroversial and hence in need of further discussion (which cannot be provided here), this epistemological distinction will in the present context concern us only by virtue of its implications when combined with the two ontological choices presented above.

The individualistic answer to the ontological question reduces the epistemological issue to a choice between either treating actors from the 'outside' as rational or cognitive agents in social systems, or from the 'inside' as interpretative or reflexive actors in an intersubjective world of meaning. In either case, the individual is viewed as the primary source of social order, and hence all conceptions of the link between agents and social structures are ultimately reduced to explanations in terms of individual action. Explanations proceeding from a holistic approach to social order treat action either as a function of structural determination in some sense or other, or with reference to processes of socialization broadly defined. In both cases the relationship between actors and social structures is tendered in terms of some form of structural determination in which individual action is conceived as a function of a pre-established social order.

On the basis of these two dimensions we can now summarize their implications for foreign policy approaches in the following fourfold matrix (Figure 17.1) (see also Dunne, 1995: 370–2; Guzzini, 1998: 190–210; Hollis, 1994: 183–260; Hollis and Smith, 1990: 155–9, 214–16; Wendt, 1999: 22–40). I shall now proceed to discuss prominent examples of each of the four types of rock-bottom perspectives in the study of foreign policy identified in Figure 17.1. Given the space available, the ambition here is to be illustrative rather than comprehensive or exhaustive.

ONTOLOGY	EPISTEMOLOGY	
	Objectivism	Interpretativism
Holism	*Structural perspective*	*Social-institutional perspective*
Individualism	*Agency-based perspective*	*Interpretative actor perspective*

Figure 17.1 *Four types of rock-bottom perspectives in the study of foreign policy*

Current Approaches in Foreign Policy Analysis

Approaches Based on a Structural Perspective

Realism Although, as we shall see below, there are other structurally oriented approaches to foreign policy analysis as well, there is no doubt that most contemporary forms of realism fit this bill best. It is also the case that despite the massive attacks which neorealism has experienced as a consequence of its reputed inability either to predict or to explain the end of the Cold War, it continues not only to be alive and well (especially in North America), but also to contribute to the contemporary analysis of foreign policy. For although Waltz has repeatedly claimed that neorealism is a theory of international politics and hence not a theory of foreign policy (Waltz, 1996), strong counter-arguments have been made that this is essentially an untenable position, and hence that nothing prevents neorealists from formulating a theory of foreign policy of their own (Elman, 1996a, 1996b). It has also been noted that despite such denials, neorealists in actual fact frequently engage in the analyses of foreign policy (Baumann et al., 2001: 37–67).

However, there are different variants of (neo)realism, of which at least the following play important roles in the contemporary debate. First of all, a distinction should be made between 'aggressive' and 'defensive' types (Snyder, 1991: 11–12; see also Lynn-Jones and Miller, 1995: xi–xii; Rose, 1998). During the past decade *aggressive neorealism* has been pre-eminently represented by John Mearsheimer, who has argued that whereas the Cold War, based on bipolarity, military balance and nuclear weapons, produced peace in Europe for 45 years, its demise will – contrary to the conventional wisdom – perforce have deleterious effects in the long run. This pessimistic scenario follows from a strict application of neorealist tenets, especially of the view that insofar as the international system invariably fosters conflict and aggression, rational states are compelled to pursue offensive strategies in their search for security (Mearsheimer, 1995: 79–129; see also Layne, 1995: 130–76). It also emphazises the role of the polarity of the international system – bipolarity being more conducive to peace than multipolarity – as well as the effects of changes in the relative power of states.

Defensive neorealists, on the other hand, do not share this pessimistic and essentially Hobbesian view of the international system, instead arguing that although systemic factors do have causal effects on state behaviour, they cannot account for all state actions. Instead of emphasizing the role played by the distribution of power in the international system, scholars such as Stephen Walt and Charles L. Glaser thus instead pointed to the importance of the source, level and direction of *threats*, defined primarily in terms of technological factors, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities and perceived intentions (Glaser, 1995; Walt, 1995; see also the references in Rose, 1998: 146, fn. 4). The picture presented here is that states pursuing security in a rational manner can on the whole afford to be relatively relaxed except in rare instances; and that security can generally be achieved by balancing against threats in a timely way, a policy that will effectively hinder most forms of actual conflict. 'Foreign policy activity', Rose thus explains, 'is the record of rational states reacting properly to clear systemic incentives, coming into conflict only in those circumstances when the security dilemma is heightened to fever pitch' (Rose, 1998: 150; see also Glaser, 1995; Lynn-Jones and Miller, 1995: xi; Snyder, 1991; Van Evera, 1990/91: 11–17; Walt, 1995; Zakaria, 1995: 475–81).

Neoclassical realists should be distinguished from both offensive and defensive neorealists. They share with neorealists the view that a country's foreign policy is primarily formed by its place in the international system and in particular by its relative material power capabilities. However, and here the classical roots of this approach come to the fore, they also argue that the impact of systemic factors on a given country's foreign policy will be indirect and more complex than neorealists have assumed, since such factors can effect policy only through intervening variables at the unit level (Rose, 1998:

146). This view is clearly contrary to the whole tenor of offensive neorealism, but neoclassical realists also fault defensive neorealists, mainly because it is claimed that their systemic argument fails to explain much of actual foreign policy behaviour and hence needs to be augmented by the *ad hoc* introduction of unit-level variables (see, for example, Schweller, 1996: 114–15; Zakaria, 1995). As a consequence of the stress on the role of both independent (systemic) and intervening (domestic) variables, research within neoclassical realism is generally conducted in the form of theoretically informed narratives – ideally supplemented by counterfactual analysis – that trace how different factors combine to forge the particular foreign policies of states (Rose, 1998: 153). More specifically, this has yielded extensive narrative case studies of how twentieth century great powers – especially the United States, the Soviet Union and China – have reacted to the material rise or decline of their relative power in the international system (Christensen, 1996; Schweller, 1998; Wohlforth, 1993; Zakaria, 1998).

Neoliberal institutionialism Although not generally touted as an approach to the analysis of foreign policy, it is obvious that the type of focus that usually goes under the name of neoliberal institutionalism is as relevant to the study of foreign policy as are realism and neorealism in their various configurations. Indeed, insofar as this school of thought is posited as an alternative to realism (and, the view of some, as the only one), it also *pari passu* entails an alternative approach to foreign policy analysis (see Baldwin, 1993).

Neoliberal institutionalism is a structural, systemic and 'top-down' view for some of the same reasons that realism constitutes such an approach. It assumes that states are the primary actors in the international system; that they behave like egoistic value maximizers; and that the international system is essentially anarchic (Baldwin, 1993: 8–14; Grieco, 1993). It is also for this reason that Andrew Moravcsik has claimed that 'neoliberal institutionalism' is a misnomer insofar as it essentially constitutes a variant of realism (Moravcsik, 1997: 537).

What then is distinctive about the neoliberal institutionalist approach to foreign policy analysis? Very briefly, the following: whereas both realists and neoliberals view foreign policy-making as a process of constrained choice by purposive states, the latter understand this constraint not primarily in terms of the configurations of power capabilities facing policy-makers, but in terms of an anarchic system which, while it fosters uncertainty and hence security concerns, can nevertheless be positively affected by the institutional provision of information and common rules in the form of functional regimes. The result is that international cooperation under anarchy *is* possible in the pursuit of given state preferences (Oye, 1985); and hence certain specific features of an international setting can explain state outcomes in the form of cooperative foreign policies (Axelrod and Keohane, 1993; Keohane, 1993).

Organizational process approaches While both realism and neoliberal institutionalism are structural approaches of a systemic kind, foreign policy analysis can be pursued 'structurally' on a lower level of analysis as well, in which the structural factor driving foreign policy behaviour is not external but internal to the state. As argued by Hollis and Smith, a 'top-down' approach on the sub-systemic level either focuses on the causal relationship between the state and its agencies – how the latter conform to the demands of the former – or between agencies and individuals; on this level a structural view would imply that individual decision-makers do not act independently but generally in conformity with the dictates of the agencies employing them (Hollis and Smith, 1990: 8–9, 196–202).

The latter type of claim has become known as the organizational process approach ever since the celebrated publication of Allison's *Essence of Decision* in 1971. With roots in organizational theory, it focuses on decisions not in terms of instrumental rationality but as *outputs* of large organizations functioning according to regular patterns of behaviour, usually referred to as standard-operating-procedures. The most prominent recent research in which organizational theory has been used in foreign policy analysis has focused on decision-making in general, and on the role of decision-making units – particularly small groups – in this process. This has been the case, for example, in recent work reconsidering and going beyond Irving Janis's notion of 'groupthink', focusing on the interplay between group dynamics and the role of broader organizational cultures and socialization in foreign policy decision-making (Beasley, 1998; 't Hart et al., 1997; Ripley, 1995). This type of research points to the applicability of recent organizational theory (see, e.g., March and Olsen, 1998), in particular the celebrated (if not entirely transparent) distinction between the logic of 'consequences', defining the type of action appropriate within both realist and neoliberal thinking, and the logic of 'appropriateness', which – as Allison and Zelikow have claimed in their recent and substantial updating of the organizational model – is very much at the heart of the organizational process approach to decision-making (Allison and Zelikow, 1999: 146).

Approaches from an Agency-Based Perspective

Cognitive and psychological approaches Although research on the cognitive and psychological characteristics of individual decision-makers has been viewed with considerable scepticism in some quarters, this has in fact been one of the

growth areas within foreign policy analysis over the past quarter of a century (see, for example, Hudson, 1997; Renshon and Larson, 2001; Rosati, 2000; Singer and Hudson, 1992; Sylvan and Voss, 1998). As against the rational choice assumption – common to both realism and neoliberal institutionalism – that individuals are in principle open-minded and adaptable to the dictates of structural change and constraints, it is based on the contrary assumption that they are to a considerable degree impervious to such effects due to their underlying beliefs, the way they process information as well as a number of other personality and cognitive traits.

From having in its earliest years focused essentially on the study of attitudes and attitudinal change, and more specifically on theories of cognitive consistency, including cognitive dissonance, congruity and balance theory (Rosati, 1995: 52), psychological analysis underwent a 'cognitive revolution' in the 1970s. Instead of the conception of the passive actor underlying previous work, a new view emerged stressing the individual as problem-solver rather than malleable agent (Rosati, 1995: 52–4; Young and Shafer, 1998). The most significant of these have been the application of 'operational codes' (George, 1979; Walker, 1990, 1995; Walker et al., 1998), 'cognitive mapping' (Axelrod, 1976; Bonham et al., 1997; Young, 1996), 'attribution theory' (Heradstveit and Bonham, 1986) and 'image theory' (Herrmann and Fischerkeller, 1995).

Important book-length work done during the 1980s and onwards include Deborah Larson's study of changes in the attitude of major American decision-makers between 1944 and 1947 (Larson, 1985), her more recent analysis of Cold War mistrust between the two superpowers (Larson, 1997), Richard Herrmann's (1985) study of perceptions and behaviour in Soviet foreign policy, Jerel A. Rosati's (1987) cognitive study of the Carter administration, Yuen Foong Khong's (1992) study of the role of historical analogies in foreign policy decision-making, and Martha Cottam's (1994) work on Latin America. In this context mention must also be made of Yaacov Y.I. Vertzberger's magisterial *The World in their Minds* (Vertzberger, 1990), which not only provides a very useful summary of much of the work done within this genre by the end of the 1980s, but also propounds a comprehensive and multicausal framework for analysing information processing, cognition and perception in foreign policy decision-making. This was also a period when studies of how the characteristics of leadership – beliefs, motivations, decisional and interpersonal styles – affected the pursuit of foreign policies first received serious attention, a focus which has continued to this day (M. Hermann, 1993; Hermann and Preston, 1998).

To this list one must also add prospect theory, not least because it reputedly 'has evoked the most interest among students of foreign policy-making' (Kahler, 1998: 927). This approach, pioneered by Kahneman and Tversky more than twenty years ago (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979), holds that decision-makers frame – that is, identify – their choices not in terms of maximizing their expected utility (as assumed in rational choice models) but, rather, with regard to a so-called reference point (often the status quo), in terms of which they are risk-averse with respect to gains, and risk-acceptant with respect to losses (Farkas, 1996: 345; Kahler, 1998; Levy, 1997; McDermott, 1998). In other words, it claims that people are more sensitive to gains and losses from a given reference point than to changes in net asset levels; and that they tend to overvalue losses relative to gains (Levy, 1997: 89).

Finally, a review of cognitive and psychological approaches to foreign policy analysis would be incomplete without touching upon the issue of learning in foreign policy. The literature here is substantial and growing, and to some extent overlapping with some of the cognitive approaches mentioned above (although some of these have a holistic rather than individualist thrust). Fortunately, Jack S. Levy has written an excellent overview of this field, and hence – taking heed also of his characterization of it as a minefield – I will not elaborate on this theme here; he has already swept much of it for us (Levy, 1994).

Bureaucratic politics approach Although the so-called bureaucratic politics – or governmental – approach to the analysis of foreign policy, first popularized by Allison in his study of the Cuban crisis, is often assumed to be closely similar to the organizational process model discussed above (and sometimes conflated with it), it is premised on an agency-oriented rather than a structural view of the field (Allison, 1971). Insofar as it focuses on interaction among organizational players involved in bargaining games and competing preferences, it does not aim to explain in terms of organizational outputs but on the basis of the actual 'pulling and hauling that is politics' (Allison and Zelikow, 1999: 255). At the same time, although in a certain sense akin to rational choice thinking insofar as its main rationale is to explain why decisions often take the form of 'resultants' as distinct from what any person or group intended, it does this not in terms of given preferences and strategic moves but 'according to the power and performance of proponents and opponents of the action in question' (Allison and Zelikow, 1999: 256). The power in question is not in the firsthand personal but bureaucratic, insofar as the actors involved in these bargaining games represent sectional or factional rather than individual interests. Hence the famous apothegm (reputedly minted by Don Price, but also known as Miles's law) which encapsulates this bureaucratic link between individual actors and their organizational anchorage: where you stand depends on where you sit (Hollis, 1994; Stern and Verbeek, 1998: 206).

Although explicitly theorized on the basis of the empirical realities of how governments actually work (at least in the United States), this view of foreign policy decision-making has over the years received considerable criticism both with reference to conceptual confusion and poor empirical performance (see, for example, Bendor and Hammond, 1992; Bernstein, 2000; Rhodes, 1994; Welch, 1998). Nevertheless, it continues to stimulate research on foreign policy, and although earlier claimed to be excessively US-centred in its empirical applicability, it is slowly finding its way to Europe as well (see, for example, the contributions in Stern and Verbeek, 1998). Allison (with his co-author) has also upgraded the chapter on governmental politics in the second edition of his study, including in it a host of empirical examples post-dating the Cuban crisis (Allison and Zelikow, 1999: 255–378; see also Karbo, 1998).

Liberal approach Although it has roots going back to the early Rosenau (Rosenau, 1969) and prominent European scholars of foreign policy (Czempiel, 1981; Hanrieder, 1967), as well as to research on the role of domestic structures in foreign policy analysis pioneered by Peter Katzenstein (Katzenstein, 1976, 1978) and subsequently developed by Matthew Evangelista, Thomas Risse-Kappen and others (Evangelista, 1988, 1995; Risse-Kappen, 1991; Snyder, 1991), Andrew Moravcsik must nevertheless be given primary credit for having put the liberal approach squarely on the contemporary IR agenda (Moravcsik, 1997; but see also Doyle, 1997). In his view, three core assumptions underlie this challenge to neorealism and neoliberalism: the primacy of societal actors over political institutions, the implication of which is that being based on a 'bottom-up' view of the political system, individual and social groups are treated as prior to politics, insofar as they define their interests independently of politics and then pursue these through political exchange and collective action; state preferences represent the interests of a subset of society, in the sense that state officials define state preferences and act purposively in world politics in terms of these interests; and state behaviour in the international system is determined by the configuration within it of interdependent state preferences, that is, by the constraints imposed on a given state by the preferences of other states (Moravcsik, 1997: 520). Each of these core assumptions, Moravcsik argues, supports a specific variant of liberal theory, that is, ideational, commercial and republican liberalism, respectively. The first pertains to the generation of domestic social demands, the second to the causal mechanisms by means of which these are transformed into state preferences, and the third to the resulting patterns of national preferences in international settings (Moravcsik, 1997: 524–33).

Approaches Based on a Social-Institutional Perspective

Social constructivism Although 'social constructivism' (or simply 'constructivism'), like 'rational choice', is essentially a meta-theoretical standpoint in the study of social phenomena, and hence is foundational to political analysis rather than being a specific analytical or 'theoretical' approach within IR, it will here – following most constructivist scholars (Adler, 1997; Dunne, 1995; Guzzini, 2000; Hopf, 1998; Ruggie, 1998; Wendt, 1999: 31) – be used to designate a more or less coherent and emerging body of thought in IR, including foreign policy analysis. Although it has roots going back to Grotius, Kant and Hegel, and was embedded already in some of the classic contributions by Karl Deutsch, Ernst Haas and in particular the English School (Bull, 1977; Deutsch, 1954; Haas, 1964, 1990; see also Dunne, 1995), it is nevertheless regarded by most IR scholars today as a relative newcomer to the sub-discipline; the term itself was first introduced to IR by Nicholas Onuf as recently as 1989 (Onuf, 1989). At the same time, however, it has quickly established itself as perhaps the main contender to a mainstream perspective in IR usually designated as 'rationalist' (see Katzenstein, 1996; and Fearon and Wendt in this volume).

This is not the place to go into the details of social constructivism, since this is done elsewhere in this *Handbook* (see Chapter 5, as well as Guzzini, 2000). However, it is fruitful to distinguish between essentially 'thinner' and 'thicker' versions, since constructivism incorporates – rather uneasily – an increasingly broad spectrum of views. The former is quintessentially represented by Wendt in his recent treatise on international politics (Wendt, 1999), but also by other 'modernist' constructivists, including Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (1998), Jeff Checkel (1999), John Ruggie (1998), Peter Katzenstein (1996), Thomas Risse-Kappen (1995b) and Martha Finnemore (1996b). Followers of 'thicker' versions range from what Adler terms 'modernist linguistic' (or 'rule-oriented') constructivists such as Friedrich Kratochwil (1989) and Nicholas Onuf (1989), the 'discursive' group to be discussed below, to the 'postmodernists' such as Richard Ashley (1984) and Rob Walker (1993), in addition to a number of feminist scholars, particularly Spike Peterson (1992), J. Ann Tickner (1993; see also Chapter 14 in this volume) and Christine Sylvester (1994). Since Wendt's type of constructivism is explicitly not designed for the analysis of foreign policy (Wendt, 1999: 11), I will not discuss it further here. Similarly, insofar as postmodernist versions are difficult to incorporate within a foreign policy framework as defined here, these too will be left aside. The specifically discursive approach will, however, be discussed below.

This leaves us here with contributions to the study of foreign policy from within the 'modernist' type of constructivism. This stream can be said to consist, first of all, of a normative and ideational strand, which emphasizes that the world of international relations does not exist independently of human action and cognition but, rather, that it is an intersubjective and meaningful world whose rules and practices are made and reproduced by human interactions. A second strand, often intertwined with the first, emphasizes the role of identities in international relations, and does this by pointing to the 'constitutive' role that norms and ideas play in defining identities and hence prescribing proper behaviour on the part of given types of actors.

Both these strands are exemplified in the various chapters of the influential volume on *The Culture of National Security* (1996), edited by Peter J. Katzenstein. Although it by no means cuts its roots to mainstream social science (see Ruggie, 1998: 38), it takes issue with the rationalism of both neorealism and neoliberalism with regard to the role of both norms and identities in world politics. In particular, it 'makes problematic the state interests that predominant explanations of national security often take for granted', as Katzenstein writes in his introduction (1996: 1). In this volume two studies in particular exemplify a constructivist analysis of foreign policy. The first, by Richard Price and Nina Tannenwald, shows that while a rationalist analysis of the non-use of both nuclear and chemical weapons cannot account for such policies, a constructivist view, emphasizing the socially constructed nature of deterrence and deterrence weapons, shows that the non-use of these weapons can only be understood if one takes 'into account the development of prohibitionary norms that shaped these weapons as unacceptable "weapons of mass destruction"' (Price and Tannenwald, 1996: 115). Similarly, Martha Finnemore has focused on another form of foreign policy behaviour which cannot be adequately explained by either realist or liberal theories: humanitarian interventions which have no geostrategic and/or economic importance to the interveners in question (Finnemore, 1996a; see also Finnemore, 1996b). Instead, she argues, this type of behaviour, and the manner in which it has changed and developed since the nineteenth century, cannot be understood apart from the changing normative context in which it occurs, insofar as 'international normative context shapes the interests of international actors and does so in both systematic and systemic ways' (Finnemore, 1996a: 154). A third study which also exemplifies a constructivist analysis of foreign policy along these lines is Audie Klotz's analysis of the role of international norms in the international embargo against the *apartheid* regime in South Africa (Klotz, 1995). She argues that the emergence of an international norm of racial equality led states – such as the United States – to redefine their foreign policy interests despite a lack of material incentives for so doing.

Discursive approaches Following the so-called linguistic turn in philosophy and social theory, a second holistic-interpretative approach, focusing on the role of language in social inquiry, is slowly but determinedly making inroads into foreign policy analysis. One strand of this movement – belonging to the so-called Copenhagen School (see, for example, Buzan et al., 1998) – has as its starting point a critique of the use of psychological and cognitive factors in the explanation of the role of belief systems in foreign policy, in particular a tendency to focus exclusively on individual decision-makers, viewing and analysing beliefs in positivists terms, and an assumption that language is a transparent medium without an inner dynamic of its own (Larsen, 1997: 1–10). Instead of analysing the belief systems of individual decision-makers in this conventional manner, the emphasis is here put on viewing the discourse characterizing the foreign policy domain as a powerful structural constraint, on a high level of generality, shaping the foreign policy of the state in question. More specifically, drawing on social constructivist premises, Henrik Larsen has argued that 'the framework of meaning within which foreign policy takes place is seen as the basis of the way in which interests and goals are constructed' (Larsen, 1999: 453). However, contrary to 'thinner' constructivists, the assumption in this type of discursive approach is that intersubjective meaning cannot be apprehended in or by itself but, rather, that it is constituted by language. As a consequence, discourses 'provide the basis on which policy preferences, interests and goals are constructed' (Larsen, 1999: 453; Waever, 1998). Along similar lines, Ole Waever has argued for a conceptualization of security – as 'securitization' – based not on the 'objective' measures of traditional security studies but on speech act theory and its emphasis on language as a privileged vehicle for gaining and exercising social power. In this view, he writes, 'security is not of interest as a sign that refers to something more real; the utterance *itself* is the act', and hence 'something is a security problem when elites declare it to be so' (Waever, 1995: 55, 54).

A second, different and broader strand has recently been presented and discussed by Jennifer Milliken (Milliken, 1999: 225, 228–30; see also 2001). She characterizes discourse theorists as crossing over and mixing 'divisions between poststructuralists, postmodernists and some feminists and social constructivists', sharing at least the following three commitments: viewing discourses as systems of signification that construct social realities (see, for example, Milliken, 1996; Mutimer, 1999; Weldes and Saco, 1996); the claim that discourses are productive of the things defined by the discourse, such as common sense and policy practices (see, for example, Campbell, 1993; Doty,

1996; Huysmans, 1998; Waever, 1995; Weber, 1995; Weldes, 1999; Weldes and Saco, 1996); and 'studying dominating or hegemonic discourses, and their structuring of meaning as connected to implementing practices and ways of making these intelligible and legitimate' (see, for example, Bartelson, 1995; Fierke, 1998; Neumann, 1998; Sylvester, 1994). Discourse analysts thus focus on significative practices and the knowledge systems underlying them, and are as such not only concerned with meta-theoretical critique but also with critical theorizing about the knowledge/power nexus (on the latter, see also Guzzini, 2000; Neufeld, 1993).

Approaches Based on an Interpretative Actor Perspective

In their book-length discussion of core meta-theoretical issues in IR, Martin Hollis and Steve Smith have described individualist interpretative approaches to foreign policy as follows:

> Understanding proceeds by reconstructing at an individual level. This Weberian line has been much used in International Relations, especially in the sub-field known as Foreign Policy Analysis. Here the concern is to understand decisions from the standpoint of the decision-makers by reconstructing their reasons. The foreign policy behaviour of states depends on how individuals with power perceive and analyse situations. Collective action is a sum or combination of individual actions. (Hollis and Smith, 1990: 74)

In addition, they make the distinction within hermeneutics – which the above approach exemplifies – between understanding individual actions through social rules and collective meanings (a top-down procedure), and understanding collective policy through their individual elements (bottom-up). Inasmuch as the top-down view is quintessentially the one discussed above in terms of social-institutional approaches, we are here left with the latter type of focus, which also happens to be the least utilized today in the study of foreign policy.

The historical antecedents of this approach go back to the pioneering work of Richard C. Snyder and his associates, focusing on a systematic empirical analysis of the actual deliberations of foreign policy decision-makers (Snyder et al., 1962; see also Paige, 1968). Insofar as the focal point in studies of this kind are the *reasoned* – rather than rational – choices made by decision-makers, certain aspects of role theory also exemplify this approach, at least insofar as the analysis of particular role conceptions puts the focus on the reasoning of individual national foreign policy-makers and their understanding of the international system and the perceived role of their own states within this larger system (see, for example, Holsti, 1987; Hyde-Price, 2000: 42–7; and the discussion of 'role-players' in Hollis and Smith, 1990: 155–9, 214–16). The same goes for more classical understandings of the role of the 'national interest' in foreign policy decision-making, based on individual interpretations of this much maligned but exceedingly flexible concept, as well as to the study of the role of crucial decision-makers during crises (see, for example, Bernstein, 2000: 161–4).

However, a more illustrative and contemporary exemplar of this type of analysis is Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice's detailed study of German reunification (Zelikow and Rice, 1995). It offers an insider's view of the innermost workings of the top elites of the United States, the Soviet Union, West Germany, East Germany, Britain and France in the creation of a united Germany. The logic of explanation is to determine the thinking of these elites – the reasoning behind their choices – and then to proffer it in explanation of the immense changes that occurred during the year following the collapse of the Berlin Wall. This is 'thick description' at its best; and although they have been chided for eschewing theory altogether in following this strategy (see, for example, Risse, 1997), it should at the same time be emphasized that although no causal analysis (or theorizing) in the conventional sense is provided, the focus is most certainly not simply on 'what' occurred, but also on the 'why' and 'how' aspects of this process. The assumption underlying this type of analysis is the counter-factual argument that had not the main actors in this historical process reasoned and made choices the way they actually did, the history of this period would have been different. In any case, insofar as 'why' issues can have both a 'because of' and an 'in order to' implication, and since there are strong philosophical arguments in favour of imputing some form of causality also to purposive behaviour (see Carlsnaes, 1986: 32–8), there is no justification for off-hand denigrating this type of an approach for being 'descriptive' rather than 'explanatory'. In this connection it should also be noted that despite a deep concern with its lack of theoretical anchorage, Risse has been able to utilize this descriptive-analytic study to illustrate the role of 'communicative action' and 'friendly persuasion' in international relations (Risse, 2000). Indeed, insofar as the 'logic of arguing' – as distinct from the logics of 'consequentialism' and 'appropriateness' – aims at achieving a reasoned consensus on the part of real life decision-makers (such as Kohl and Gorbachev), this approach seems to be ideally suited for analysis from within the interpretative actor perspective.

Is a Synthetic Approach to Foreign Policy Analysis Feasible?

This rich flora – indeed, surfeit – of alternative approaches to foreign policy analysis raises the question whether it is possible to synthesize or integrate

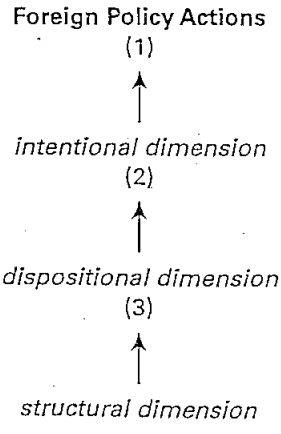
at least some of these, or if we are willy-nilly obliged to choose between them. Hollis and Smith, for example, have claimed that there are always two stories to tell – that of 'explanation' versus 'understanding', corresponding to the distinction above between 'objectivism' and 'interpretativism' – and that they cannot be combined into one type of narrative (Hollis and Smith, 1990). Similarly, 'holism' and 'individualism' have most often been assumed to be in principle mutually exclusive categories, forcing us into either a 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' mode of analysis. However, other scholars – often with a less pronounced meta-theoretical bent – have argued for the feasibility of such analytical integration, usually combining this with empirical research that has lent strong support for such an integrative view of foreign policy analysis.

Perhaps the most notable recent example of such an ambition is provided by a number of studies that have focused on the link between domestic structures and foreign policy actions. Peter Katzenstein's early work (1976, 1978) has played a pioneering role in paving the way for studies of this kind, which have often had the added advantage of being comparative and hence reaching back – albeit without the same 'scientistic' ambitions – to earlier work within CFP. Significant research stimulated by this approach has included studies by Matthew Evangelista (1988, 1995), Risse-Kappen (1991, 1994, 1995a) and Jack Snyder (1991; see also the discussion in Evangelista, 1997). Some of this work has also taken its cue from Peter Gourevitch's notion of the 'second-image reversed', focusing on how international institutions affect foreign policy change via its effects on domestic publics and hence on state actions (Gourevitch, 1978; Checkel, 1999; Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Risse et al., 1999).

However, the main problem with 'domestic structure' as an integrative bridge is that it assumes and hence reinforces the divide between domestic and international politics which, as I have suggested above, is highly questionable as a feasible foundational baseline for a sub-discipline that needs to problematize this boundary rather than positing it by assumption. Furthermore, this argument has various strands that are not necessarily mutually compatible as explanations. Thus, it can refer to an essentially holistic structural view, as in Katzenstein's work on the role of weak versus strong societies (Katzenstein, 1976), or in the 'democratic peace' argument (Russett, 1993); to an agency-based view in terms of which domestic structures act as intervening factors between societal actors and state action (Checkel, 1997; Risse-Kappen, 1991); or to more recent constructivist approaches emphasizing the impact of ideas and norms – either domestic or international – as sources of foreign policy change (Checkel, 1997; Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Reus-Smit, 1999). Given these contending uses to which the domestic structure argument has been put, as well as the more fundamental criticism raised above, it is difficult to see how it can sustain a central role as a 'theoretical bridge' (Evangelista, 1997: 204) in foreign policy analysis.

My own view is that a synthetic framework for analysing foreign policy is indeed possible, but that it has to be on a level of abstraction that does not substantively prejudge explanation in favour of any particular type or combination of empirical factors (such as 'domestic structure'). Since I have elaborated on it elsewhere, I will here simply give a skeletal outline of the explanatory logic of such a suggested synthetic framework of analysis (Carlsnaes, 1986, 1992, 1993, 1994). The starting point is the claim that while the meta-theoretical matrix used above is specifically designed for the purpose of classifying approaches to foreign policy analysis in terms of their most fundamental ontological and epistemological presuppositions, it is less suitable for *empirical* analysis itself as distinguished from *meta-theoretical* dissection. Arguably, in the 'games real actors play' (Scharpf, 1997) action is always a combination of purposive behaviour, cognitive-psychological factors and the various structural phenomena characterizing societies and their environments, and hence explanations of actual foreign policy actions must perforce be able to give accounts that do not by definition exclude or privilege any of these types of explanans. Insofar as the matrix used above does have such implications (albeit for good analytical-cum-pedagogical reasons), it simply will not be able to deliver the goods in this respect. Indeed, an ironic implication of this way of conceptualizing and understanding the foundational issues underlying foreign policy analysis is that it is only when we succeed in *overriding* the logic exemplified in this chapter – the four generic perspectives, which by definition are mutually exclusive – that there will be a real chance of achieving this ambition.

Thus, rather than thinking in terms of a logic of mutual exclusion, I suggest that we instead conceptualize such an analytic framework in terms of a tripartite approach consisting of an *intentional*, a *dispositional* and a *structural* dimension of explanation, as follows:



Although analytically autonomous, these three dimensions are conceived as closely linked in the sense that they can be conjoined in a logical, step-by-step manner to render increasingly exhaustive explanations of foreign policy actions qua explanandum as defined earlier. This means, first of all, that a teleological explanation (1) in terms solely of the intentional dimension is fully feasible, based either on strict rationality assumptions or on more traditional modes of intentional analysis. It also means, however, that one can choose to 'deepen' the analysis by providing a causal determination (2) of policy – as opposed to an explanation wholly in terms of given goals and preferences – in which the factors characterizing the intentional dimension are themselves explained in terms of underlying psychological-cognitive factors which have disposed a given actor to have this and not that preference or intention. The distinction between these two levels can also be described in terms of an 'in order to' and a 'because of' dimension, the former referring to the intentional sphere, the latter constituting the link between this intention and the having of it: how a particular intention has become a particular actor's intention. Finally, the third layer is based on the assumption that in so far as intentional behaviour is never pursued outside the crucible of structural determination, factors of the latter kind must always be able to figure causally (3) in our accounts of the former. As conceived here, this link between structure and agency can be conceived as both of a constraining and of an enabling kind, causally affecting policy actions via its effects on the dispositional characteristics of the agents of policy. (Although not indicated in the figure, foreign policy actions can in turn affect – either by intention or unintentionally in the form of outcomes – both the structural and dispositional dimensions, providing for the dynamic interaction over time between agential and structural factors, thus invoking the agency–structure issue, to be discussed briefly below.)

Although this type of an integrative framework eschews the dichotomization of approaches discussed above, it does not as such negate the applicability of any of these – as long as they are used when and if analytically appropriate. Indeed, approaches from all the four types of rock-bottom perspectives discussed above can be fully utilized: the 'structural' and 'social-institutional' when analysing causal links between the structural and dispositional dimensions; 'agency-based' perspectives when tracing causal patterns between the dispositional and the intentional dimension; and the 'interpretative actor' perspective when the purpose is to penetrate the teleological links between intentions and foreign policy actions.

Concluding Remarks

To round up this overview I would like to conclude by briefly pointing to three theoretical issues that cut across the perspectives discussed above and which, in my opinion, will continue to remain topical and controversial in the study of foreign policy (as in the social sciences in general).

The first of these pertains to explaining the dynamics of foreign policy *change*, both in terms of actor and policy characteristics. Except for a short burst of interest in the early 1980s (Buzan and Jones, 1981; Gilpin, 1981; Goldmann, 1982; Holsti, 1982; Holsti et al., 1980; see also Goldmann, 1988), this was not a topic that attracted much attention until the profound transformations occurring at the end of that decade. These developments revealed the embarrassing fact that not only were many of these changes unanticipated, but also that the events in question were difficult to explain even *ex post facto* in terms of existing theories, models or analytic approaches. Although this theoretical dearth led to a renewed interest in the analysis of foreign policy change (Carlsnaes, 1993; Gustavsson, 1998, 1999; Hermann, 1990; Rosati et al., 1994; see also Koslowski and Kratochwil, 1995), there is little consensus on the best way of doing so. Given the eclectic nature of the field as such, as well as the fundamental differences between the types of perspectives presented above, some of which are inherently more amenable to the study of change than others, this should of course not come as a surprise. At the same time, this issue is seminal to the future of the field as a whole, given the increased globalization of international relations – a process arguably undermining the relative *autonomy* of the state qua foreign policy actor – as well as the emergence of new types of foreign policy actors, such as the EU, claiming not only foreign policy competencies of their own but also as representing their member states, hence eroding the *sovereignty* of the latter (see, for example, White, 2001).

A second contentious and topical concern within the field pertains to the role of *ideas* in the explanation of foreign policy. For long banished from mainstream social science explanations, the ideational factor finally gained full admission in the early 1990s with the publication of the edited volume on *Ideas and Foreign Policy* (Goldstein and Keohane, 1993). Underlying this introduction lay the realization that explanations based solely on rational actors maximizing a utility function rooted in material interests were often inadequate to account fully for the foreign policy behaviour of states. Instead, it was suggested, ideas too can have an independent causal effect on foreign policy 'even when human beings behave rationally to achieve their ends' (Goldstein and Keohane, 1993: 5; see also Checkel, 1997; Jacobsen, 1995; Risse-Kappen, 1994; Yee, 1996). Although welcomed by scholars on the interpretative side of the epistemological fence, this admission of the causal efficacy of ideas has nevertheless led to considerable controversy within the field (see, for example, Koslowski and Kratochwil, 1995; Laffey and Weldes, 1997). The basic criticism is that

'rationalists' continue to think in terms of 'naturalistic' factors even when conceptualizing ideas (viewing them as cognitively and individually held 'beliefs' with causal effects, as well as being distinct from 'interests'), whereas the social constructivist view is that 'ideational factors relate to social action in the form of constitutive rules', as Ruggie notes (Ruggie, 1998: 38). In the light of this view, to speak of 'ideational variables' is tantamount to perpetrating an oxymoron – a begging of the whole question of what ideas are and are not, and hence how they are affected by and affect social interaction. Clearly, this debate is only at its beginning and will continue to be a focal point for critical discussion.

Finally, a third issue, and one that has received considerable theoretical attention during the past decade, and continues to do so today, is the *agency-structure problematique* in foreign policy analysis. For all practical purposes Wendt put it on the agenda in a much-quoted article published in 1987, and since then it has been hotly debated but hardly resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned (Bieler and Morton, 2001; Carlsnaes, 1992, 1994; Dessler, 1989; Doty, 1997; Friedman and Starr, 1997; Guzzini, 1993; Hollis and Smith, 1991, 1992, 1994; Patomäki, 1996; Suganami, 1999; Wight, 1999). At the heart of this problem lies the increasingly widespread recognition that, instead of being antagonistic partners in a zero-sum relationship, human agents and social structures are in a fundamental sense dynamically interrelated entities, and hence that we cannot account fully for the one without invoking the other. The 'problem' is that although such views of reciprocal implication suggest that the properties of both agents and social structures are relevant to a proper understanding of social behaviour (including the study of change), we nevertheless (as Wendt noted in his original article) 'lack a self-evident way to conceptualize these entities and their relationship' (Wendt, 1987: 338).

This is also, perhaps, an appropriate issue and tone of voice with which to put an end to this overview of the vicissitudes and current condition of foreign policy analysis, since it touches on the central core of the field itself: the fact that foreign policy actions are located at the very centre of the international relations of states, incorporating a multitude of influences – structural and agential, as well as international, societal and individual – that continually impinge on them and on their decision-makers. To capture these complex and reciprocal processes, and to do so well, is the challenge that will persist in energizing this field of study as long as states continue to remain viable actors within the international system.

Note

The author would like to thank the following colleagues (as well as an anonymous reviewer) for commenting on earlier versions of the chapter: Stefano Guzzini, Valerie Hudson, Jennifer Milliken, Thomas Risse, Jerel Rosati, Beth Simmons and Colin Wight. The author also thanks participants at various seminars in Uppsala, Oslo and Gothenburg.

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