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Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse
and Beth A. Simmons

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Foreign Policy

Walter Carlsnaes

A decade ago it could still be claimed that the study of foreign policy may have had its day, and hence that 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' (White, 1999: 37).[1] Ten years onwards, little is left of this bleak picture, and instead of a questioning of its identity and raison d'être within the broader domain of International Relations (IR), we find an élan and optimism suggestive of nothing less than a revivalist rejuvenation – if not outright rebirth – of the field. 'The beginning of the twenty-first century', Valerie Hudson thus proclaims in her recent book, 'was a propitious time for Foreign Policy Analysis ... There is no longer any doubt that the field, so long in the periphery of International Relations, is becoming more theoretically important ... Foreign Policy Analysis, even though it has been around since the late 1950s, is poised to become one of the cutting-edge fields of social science in the twenty-first century' (Hudson, 2007: 185). Indices that can be adduced to exemplify this upsurge in interest and activity within the field include the establishment

in 2005 – for the first time, filling an inexplicable lacuna in the dissemination of IR scholarship – of a journal exclusively devoted to the field (*Foreign Policy Analysis*); the notable fact that the Foreign Policy Analysis section of the International Studies Association has surged ahead to become one of its largest; and the impressive number of essays with a foreign policy analysis focus – around 34 – in the recently published *The International Studies Encyclopedia*.

At the same time, this remarkable change of fortune within the academy should not be over-emphasised. Thus, while a scholar writing in a recently published handbook on IR felt emboldened to claim that foreign policy is 'one of the most popular subfields of international relations', this assertion is perhaps somewhat undermined by the fact that his is the only chapter on this topic – or, more precisely on 'foreign policy decision making' rather than 'foreign policy' itself – in a massive volume consisting of 44 chapters (Stuart, 2008: 576). Even more telling is the fact that one of the most internationally popular texts on international relations and world politics continues, in its most recent edition, to omit altogether a chapter on foreign policy analysis (Baylis, Smith, & Owens, 2010)[2].

All in all, however, there has recently been a noteworthy scholarly upsurge of interest in and contributions to this subdiscipline, and it is against the backdrop of these developments that this overview of the past and current condition of the field will be presented below.

The way I intend to proceed in this chapter 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 or so. After that, a conceptual and analytical overview of the field itself will be provided, in which I will first discuss fundamental definitional issues and thereafter 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 or ideal types, 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 pursue analysis within this subdiscipline. 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.

However, before proceeding with this overview, a brief terminological clarification needs to be made. In this chapter, the acronym FP will be used instead of FPA for the field of study usually called Foreign Policy Analysis (uppercase), even though the latter abbreviation is the normal one in the current literature. The primary reason for this is that this acronym has been appropriated to designate a *specific* approach to the study of foreign policy – mainly focusing on psychological processes and on decision making – rather than the field *as a whole* (see, in particular, Hudson, 2005, 2007, 2008)[3]. This terminological practice represents a misconceived denotation of the analytic scope of the field as *actually* found in the foreign policy

literature, and as such causes unnecessary confusion in current discussions within the field (Smith, Hadfield, & Dunne, 2008a: 4). In addition, this acronym – FP – is more in line with the way the analysis of international relations – International Relations (uppercase) – is abbreviated: IR and not IRA.

THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF FP

The present state of a field of study can be fully understood and assessed only if placed in its proper historical context. In this respect, our understanding of IR is slowly approaching maturity following a recent upsurge of in-depth studies penetrating its intellectual roots and subsequent growth as a scholarly discipline (Buzan, Waever, & Wilde, 1998; Dunne, 1998; Guilhot, 2008, 2011; Guzzini, 1998; Kahler, 1997; Hudson, 2010; Knutsen, 1997; Schmidt, 1998, 2002; Thies, 2002; see also the chapter 1 by Schmidt in this volume). Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about FP, even though it too has an eminent pedigree as a body of thought – in the past admittedly focusing mainly on diplomacy and security issues – stretching back a number of centuries. Except for short (and often laudatory) overviews in introductory textbooks and state-of-the-art accounts, this to a large extent remains virgin territory, and hence one that is best traversed with considerable circumspection. A particular danger here is the practice, often referred to as Whig history or 'presentism', of writing history by emphasising 'certain principles of progress in the past and to produce a story which is the ratification if not the glorification of the present', as noted by a famous British historian (Butterfield, 1959: v). More specifically, the temptation here is to write such a history in terms of one's own favoured conception of its present condition, including current methodological commitments and substantive concerns, and to extrapolate from these into the past, which as a consequence easily becomes distorted in one way or another.

Despite these problems in delineating an adequate intellectual history of a discipline, an attempt will be made here to present such a historical narrative by tracing some of the central historical pathways that the study of foreign policy has taken by pinpointing the most important junctures – or formative moments – which have defined its scholarly trajectory over the past half a century or so.

The origin of two traditions

Foreign policy analysis 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 origins of the field as an empirical object of study are to be found, since these can be traced back to an earlier and long-standing tradition – primarily of a European provenance, originating in the 17th 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 politics and public policy. 'The leading assumption', a leading scholar of foreign policy analysis wrote many years ago about the intellectual and political differentiation between the two spheres, '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 crucial consequence of this doctrine of the 'primacy of foreign policy' – of *raison d'etat*, to use the classical phrase – was that political elites expected that it should be treated differently from all other domains of public policy, that is, be excluded from democratic control and public scrutiny. However, the international perturbation leading to, and the consequences of, World War I convinced some statesmen – Woodrow Wilson in particular – that an end should be put to the traditional secretive practices of diplomatic statecraft, which almost invariably had led to bloody wars, great social upheaval, and immense material destruction.

Despite the failure of the Wilsonian project during the interwar years, 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 democratisation of foreign policy making so that public values and interests could be introduced to every stage in its formulation and execution. In short, as against the older European tradition of diplomatic relations between a small number of statesmen, we can here speak of the 'domestication' of foreign policy.

However, together with this domestically oriented focus 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, consisting of the immensely successful 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]1973). As argued by Stefano Guzzini in a comprehensive sociological analysis of the history of realism, Morgenthau's main concern, as that of realism in general at this time, was to resuscitate an older diplomatic tradition by translating the maxims of nineteenth-century European *Realpolitik* into the ostensibly more general laws of an American social science (Dunne & Schmidt, 2008; Guzzini, 1998; see also Kahler, 1997). This he did by claiming 'that the inherent and immutable self-interested nature of human beings, when faced with a

structure of international anarchy, results in states maximising one thing, power' (Smith, 1986: 15). By linking this conception of power to that of the national interest, he believed that he could provide a universal explanation – based on the 'objectivity' of the laws of politics – for the behaviour of states. This explanation is premised on a logic of perpetual power-seeking behaviour on the part of the state, and it is this dynamic – rather than the motives or ideological preferences of decision makers – which explains its actions vis-à-vis other states. Domestic factors thus play little or no role in this conceptualisation of the nature of international politics, especially since domestic political struggles – waged within hierarchical rather than anarchic structures – are qualitatively different from those characterising the international system (Dunne & Schmidt, 2008: 93).

Hence, it is not difficult to understand why there was so little contact between realism and the tradition of 'domestic' foreign policy analysis adumbrated above, despite the fact that both lived side by side within American universities for a number of years after the Second World War. However, as recently suggested by Nicolas Guilhot, this relationship – or rather lack thereof – has an additional component which also needs to be recognised if we are to understand the subsequent vicissitudes of both traditions. In his view, the issue here is both philosophical and disciplinary, involving a deep-rooted conflict between the post-war émigré realists and the emerging scientific rationalism increasingly characterising American political science, which led the realists to an attempt in establishing a separatist movement with the aim of insulating the study of international politics from these currents of change (Guilhot, 2008). The paradoxical result of this resolve to forge a separate IR identity was that despite the 'scientific' language appropriated by Morgenthau, the 'first IR *theorists* were united by their negative view of the social sciences: they saw in scientific rationalism the same utopian drive that characterized the legalist vision of the interwar years' (Guilhot,

2008: 298–299). Instead of such a rationalistic 'policy science' conception of the discipline, they 'viewed politics as an art, performed not by technical specialists but by a few men of good judgment, an elite seasoned in the arcane wisdom of statecraft' (Guilhot, 2008: 300). Although a noteworthy step in the genesis of IR as a field of study in its own right, this separatist movement was ultimately a failure.

The behaviouralist challenge

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 domestically oriented research tradition was perhaps deeper 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 generalisations. 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 quantifiable 'votes' as its fundamental unit of analysis, it posited 'events' 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 & Vore, 1995: 215). As a consequence, the task of collecting data on and analysing such events, with the aim of generating and accumulating empirical generalisations about foreign

policy behaviour, became a major industry within CFP. It was also an activity generously funded by a federal government fully in tune with these ambitions.

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 & Vore, 1995: 215–216), 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, Hermann, & Kegley, 1987; Kegley, 1980; Smith, 1987).

The CFP programme did not, however, eclipse the type of foreign policy analysis which all along had focused mainly on the domestic processes involved in foreign policy decision making, or on contextual or sociopsychological factors influencing such behaviour (Hudson & Vore, 1995: 216–219). The former, with roots going back the pioneering work on decision making by Richard C. Snyder, H.W. Bruck, and Burton Sapin (R. C. Snyder, Bruck, & Sapin, 1962; R. C. Snyder, Bruck, & Sapin, 2002), flourished in the form of studies focusing on both small group dynamics (C. F. Hermann, 1978a; Janis, 1982; Tetlock, 1979), the 'bureaucratic politics' approach made famous by the publication of Graham Allison's study of the Cuban crisis (Allison, 1971), as well as John 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 itself, produced a number of distinguished studies ranging from Michael Brecher's work on Israel (Brecher, 1972), Robert Jervis's work on perceptions and misperceptions (Jervis, 1976), 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. G. Hermann, 1974, 1980; O. R. Holsti, North, & Brody, 1968).

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, as well as his distrust of scientific rationalism, 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, & 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* (Waltz, 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 translation of realism into neorealism.

In summation of this historical overview of foreign policy analysis, one can thus say that two broad traditions have from the very beginning 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 neo-institutional politics, crisis behaviour, policy implementation, group decision-making processes, and transnational relations, to name some of

the most important (see Hudson, 2007: 17–30, 2008). 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 noted by Rose, 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 in some of its more recent forms it is 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 characterisation 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 which 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 boundary characterisation continues to reflect a 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 methodological – which are entirely neutral or agnostic with regard to the substance of foreign policy itself.

CONCEPTUALIZING THE DOMAIN OF FP

'There is a certain discomfort in writing about foreign policy', we were forewarned many years ago, '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 & 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 (or dependent variable in neo-positivist parlance) of the study of foreign policy: what it is that is to be explained. For while this conceptual issue may on first sight seem trivial, it in fact goes to the very core of what distinguishes this field of study from that of both domestic and international politics, since it lies at the heart of the long-standing question of where and how to draw the analytical boundary between a subfield which willy-nilly straddles these two major foci of political science. In short, insofar as foreign policy is neither fish nor fowl in the study of politics, but an empirical subject matter characterised by its symbiotic links to both the internal and the external domains of a state, its conceptualization needs to be handled with particular care. Secondly, this issue is also crucial to the choice of analytically feasible instruments of explanation, since the nature of a given explanandum has obvious and fundamental implications for the types of explanans, that is, explanatory factors or independent

variables, which in principle are appropriate and in practice fruitful.

Defining the explanandum

In the current literature, we find two essentially different specifications or stipulations of the explanandum in the study of foreign policy. The first is characterised by a focus on decision-making *processes* in a broad sense, while the second makes a clear distinction analytical between such processes and *policy* itself, defined more narrowly in terms of its content *qua* a choice of action in the pursuit of a goal, or a set of goals, often characterised as an undertaking. I shall briefly discuss each specification and their explanatory implications.

Valerie M. Hudson has provided a representative example of the first approach in a series of important contributions to the field over the past decade or so. 'The explanandum of foreign policy analysis', she stipulates in the first and keynote article of *Foreign Policy Analysis* when first launched in 2005, 'includes the process and resultants of human decision making with reference to or having known consequences for foreign entities' (Hudson, 2005: 2). She then elaborates on this broad conceptualisation as follows: 'One may be examining not a single decision, but a constellation of decisions taken with reference to a particular situation. Furthermore, decisions may be modified over time, requiring an examination of sequences of decisions. Also, the stages of decision making may be the focus of inquiry, from problem recognition, framing, and perception to more advanced stages of goal prioritisation, contingency planning, and option assessment' (Hudson, 2007: 4). This is a tradition that goes back to the pioneering work of Snyder and his associates, whose ideas – at least in Hudson's view – are now finally making their way 'toward the heart of current debates' (Hudson, 2002: 1). The notion here is essentially that the object of examination – foreign policy – is a question of what foreign

policy decision makers are thinking and doing, that is, their behaviour and what they are up to in taking part in the dynamic and complex process of making decisions; hence, this is what needs to be examined and explained. Or as she notes: 'The explanans of FPA [sic] are those factors that influence foreign policy decision-making and foreign policy decision-makers' (Hudson, 2007: 5). The focus is thus explicitly on 'human decisional behaviour,' as Douglas T. Stuart has recently noted, adding that this 'makes this the most ambitious and multifaceted subfield of international relations' (Stuart, 2008: 576). Because they aim to explore the process of foreign policy decision making as a whole rather than policy per se, scholars of this ilk sometimes use the acronym FPDM to describe the focus of their field of study (Mintz & Derouen, 2010). As summarised by Hudson, foreign policy analysis is 'centered on foreign policy decision making (FPDM) as it is performed by human beings' (Hudson, 2007: 165).

A central assumption of scholars focusing instead on explaining the choice of specific *policies* or *policy actions* rather than decision-making processes is the notion that policies *result* from such processes – hence causally explaining these – rather than being part of them. Charles Hermann, discussing many years ago 'that which is to be explained,' thus wrote of foreign policy that it 'it is the discrete purposeful action that results from the political level decision of an individual or group of individuals,' and as such it is 'not the decision, but a product of the decision' (C. F. Hermann, 1978b: 34). Similarly, Edward L. Morse many years ago enjoined that when 'process definitions of foreign policy are employed they tell us very little about foreign policy, but can help in the elucidation of a good deal about policy making … No matter how much analysis is brought to bear on processes they can tell us very little about policies themselves and can hardly explain them' (Morse, 1971: 40). In my judgement, this second view of the explanandum is today embraced by most

foreign policy analysts – not only by those scholars working within the *Realpolitik* tradition, who never abandoned the notion of states actively pursuing their national interests, but also by those placing themselves within the *Innenpolitik* fold in one way or another.

In summation, while process-oriented researchers seem reluctant to be too explicit about defining their object of analysis (understandably, since human decisional behaviour is highly complex, contingent, and multifaceted), there is considerable consensus today among scholars writing within this latter tradition around the view that the nature of the explanandum should at a minimum be defined in terms of the *purposive nature* of foreign policy actions, a focus on *policy undertakings*, and the crucial role of *state boundaries* (Carlsnaes, 1986, 2002). This is a view of the explanandum already endorsed as a minimum consensus definition by Bernard C. Cohen and Scott A. Harris some thirty-five years ago, writing that foreign policy is understood as a 'set of goals, directives or intentions, formulated by persons in official or authoritative positions, directed at some actor or condition in the environment beyond the sovereign nation state, for the purpose of affecting the target in the manner desired by the policymakers' (Cohen & Harris, 1975: 383).

How to explain foreign policies

As a starting point for discussing the types of *explanatory factors* that have characterised foreign policy analysis, we will proceed from two *meta-theoretical* dimensions – one ontological, the other methodological – which are entirely neutral with regard to how IR and FP approaches are usually categorised. The underlying assumption here is that the study of foreign policy, like that of any other form of social interaction, can be addressed on two levels: in terms of a second-order or foundational level, which concerns itself with questions about 'what there is and how we can explain or understand it – ontology, epistemology and

method'; and with respect to a first-order level, which is substantive and domain specific (Wendt, 1999: 4–5). Although foreign policy scholars have on the whole been much more concerned with substantive rather than foundational issues (see, e.g., the recent collection of essays in Lieber, 2008), the role of social theory – which quintessentially focuses on theory – and second-order questions – is fundamental to all second-order questions, is fundamental to all forms of sociopolitical inquiry, for the simple reason that it specifies its basic assumptions. These include 'the nature of human agency and its relationship to social structures, the role of ideas and material forces in social life, the proper form of social explanations, and so on', as Wendt has written (Wendt, 1999: 5). Although his focus is on IR, these claims apply equally to FP. They also suggest that underlying the various and often contending approaches to foreign policy analysis are different foundational choices made by the scholar, whether implicitly or explicitly, and that it is in terms of these second-order choices that these differences can be pinned down in their most fundamental form.

In current meta-theoretical debate within social theory (and IR), two such fundamental issues have dominated the discussion. The first concerns the *ontological* foundation of social systems: the type of issue exemplified by the claim, reputedly made by Margaret Thatcher in her heyday, that there 'is no such thing as a society,' only individuals and families (quoted in Wight, 2006: 6). Essentially, it revolves around the question what constitutes the basic building blocks of social existence or, in view of our concerns here, where the dynamic foundations of foreign policy making are thought to be located, and what the meta-theoretical implications of such a determination are. As Stefano Guzzini has written, 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), presenting us with 'competing visions of what the social world is and what it might become' (Wight, 2006: 4). Its importance to us lies in the fact (as noted by

Colin Wight) that 'research is only possible on the basis of some or other ontology', and that 'Uncovering these deeply embedded and often implicit ontologies can play an important role in terms of understanding the theory and practice of international relations' (Wight, 2006: 4–5). This goes as much for understanding various approaches within FP as for those in IR, and will hence here constitute one of two fundamental criteria in distinguishing between them.

Using a classic dichotomy in social theory which is equally germane to FP, the relevant ontological issue is here is the choice 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 … Holism implies a top-down conception of social life in contrast to individualism's bottom-up view. Whereas the latter aggregates upward from ontologically primitive agents, the former works downward from irreducible social structures' (Wendt, 1999: 26). Although much more can be said about this distinction and its implications, this is not the place for an in-depth analysis of this classic debate. It suffices to note that for our purposes these two categories in their ideal form constitute research programs in which the position on social ontology that one takes will affect which factors are downplayed and which are taken for granted as more or less axiomatic.

This ontological polarity between individualism and holism should be distinguished from the question of how we acquire knowledge of social interactions, which is essentially a *methodological* issue. As noted in a volume appropriately entitled *Ways of Knowing*, the focus here is on the question 'How do we know?' (Moses & Knutsen, 2007: 5). In the literature on social theory, two choices are made available to us: to focus on human agents and their actions either from the 'outside' or from the 'inside',

corresponding to an approach based on a naturalistic view self-consciously replicated on that of the natural sciences, or one premised on the independent existence of a social realm constituted by social rules and intersubjective meanings. Although not uncontroversial and hence in need of further discussion, this methodological distinction – expressed here as a choice between an 'objectivistic' versus an 'interpretative' methodology – will in the present context concern us only by virtue of its implications when combined with the two ontological choices presented above.[4]

The individualistic answer to the ontological question reduces the methodological 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 socialisation 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 socio-structural order.

On the basis of these two dimensions, we can now summarise their implications for foreign policy approaches in the fourfold matrix presented in the figure below (Fig. 12.1).

A caveat is, however, in order here: this type of logical representation of a complex analytic discourse should not be taken to reflect 'real' disciplinary boundaries despite being – in various analogous forms – common within both IR and in the social sciences in general (see Dunne, 1995: 370–372; Guzzini, 1998: 190–210; Hollis, 1994: 183–260;

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

Figure 12.1   Four types of rock-bottom perspectives in the study of foreign policy.

Hollis & Smith, 1990: 155–159, 214–216; Wendt, 1999: 22–40; Wight, 2002: 24, 2006: 85–89). As Wight notes in this volume, although 'such devices may be valuable aids in teaching and understanding complex issues', they provide 'an image of rigid boundaries that do not hold when the issue is considered in other discursive and less dichotomous ways.' Nevertheless, if we view this matrix simply as an analytical aid in the above sense, these four rock-bottom perspectives – in the form of ideal types – can be used to provide a conceptual structure for an analytical overview of the most significant current approaches which, in my reading of it, can be found in the contemporary FP literature. In contrast, in the concluding part of this chapter there will also be a discussion of how to bridge what may seem here to be excessively rigid analytical boundaries. The figure below gives the reader a preview of these particular approaches and the metatheoretical criteria in terms of which they have been classified.

I shall now proceed to discuss prominent examples of each of these four types of rock-bottom perspectives in the study of foreign policy. Given the space available, the ambition here is to be illustrative rather than comprehensive or exhaustive.

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 attacks which neorealism has experienced as a consequence of its reputed inability either to predict or to explain the end of the Cold War or the events of 9/11, it continues

Structural perspective	Social-institutional perspective
Realism Neo-liberal institutionalism	Social constructivism Discursive approaches
Agency-based perspective	**Interpretative actor perspective**
Foreign policy decision making (FPDM) Cognitive and psychological approaches Bureaucratic politics New Liberalism	Interpretative actor approach

Figure 12.2   Current Approaches in FP.

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 counterarguments 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; Rittberger, 2001). As recently noted by Stephen M. Walt, 'despite his emphasis on the autonomous role of system-level forces, Waltz's "neorealist" theory still relied on unit-level factors to account for the security problem … In order to explain why conflicts arise and states are insecure, in short, Waltz ended up saying one needed a separate theory of "foreign policy", which is merely another way of saying that one must add unit-level factors to fully explain why states in anarchy are insecure' (Walt, 2010: 3). 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 is often made between 'aggressive' and 'defensive' forms – two terms originally coined by Jack Snyder (see also Lynn-Jones & Miller, 1995: xi–xii; Rose, 1998; J. Snyder, 1991: 11–12). *Aggressive neorealism* has for a number of years been pre-eminently represented by John Mearsheimer, who argues that given the anarchic nature of the international system, and the fact that security is always scarce, states have to maximise their share of world power unabatedly in order to remain secure (see also Layne, 1995: 130–176; Mearsheimer, 1995: 79–129). Or as recently suggested by Steven E. Lobell in explanation of this view: 'Uncertainty about intentions of other states combined with the anarchical nature of the international system compels great powers to adopt competitive, offensive, and expansionist policies whenever the benefits exceed the costs' (Lobell, 2010: 2).

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 emphasising the role played by the distribution of power in the international system, scholars such as Walt and Charles L. Glaser have 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' (Glaser, 1995; see also Lynn-Jones & Miller, 1995: xi; Rose, 1998: 150; J. Snyder, 1991; Walt, 1995; Van Evera, 1990/91: 11–17; Fareed Zakaria, 1995: 475–481).

More recently a third variant of realism has become increasingly popular, called *neoclassical realism*, a term introduced by Gideon Rose in an oft-cited overview article on realism in FP (Rose, 1998; see also Schweller, 2003). This approach, William C. Wohlforth has claimed, 'is, simply put, realist theory for the foreign policy analyst', and has quickly established itself among foreign policy analysts with a realist bent as an alternative to both offensive and defensive neorealism (Wohlforth, 2008: 46). It shares with neorealism 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). Or as noted by Walt, the causal logic of this approach 'places domestic politics as an intervening variable between the distribution of power and foreign policy behavior' (Walt, 2002: 211). 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, e.g., Schweller, 1996: 114–115; Fareed 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 – sometimes supplemented with 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; Faheed Zakaria, 1998). More recently, as discussed in the first systematic survey of the neoclassical approach, a host of empirical studies have seen daylight – too numerous to list here in full (Lobell, Ripsman, & Taliaferro, 2009; see Taliaferro, Lobell, & Ripsman, 2009: 8–9 for such a list). However, important examples are Christopher Layne's examination of US grand strategy and strategic adjustment (Layne, 2006), and Schweller's study of threat assessment and alliance formation in Britain and France before the two world wars (Schweller, 2006).

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 moniker 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 (see Baldwin, 1993). Its roots go back to the study of economic and political interdependence a number of years ago, culminating in Keohane and Nye's seminal reformulation of institutional analysis in *Power and Interdependence* (Keohane & Nye, 1977).

What is distinctive about the neo-liberal 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 with reference to 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 international regimes. Thus, instead of viewing international institutions as epiphenomenal and hence constituting a 'false promise' (Mearsheimer, 1994–5), neoliberal institutionalists emphasise that such institutions do matter – that they 'make a difference in the behaviour of states and in the nature of international politics' (Stein, 2008: 212). Or as noted by K.J. Holsti, how states 'defend and pursue their purposes is tempered by international institutions that encompass ideas, norms, rules, and etiquette … [which] have a moderating influence on the plans and actions of their sovereigns' (K.J. Holsti, 2004: 306–307). As a result, international cooperation under anarchy *is* possible in the pursuit of given state preferences (Oye, 1985); and

hence certain specific features of an international institutional setting can explain state outcomes in the form of cooperative foreign policies (Axelrod & Keohane, 1993; Keohane, 1993).

Recent substantive work which has proceeded from this approach include John Ikenberry's empirical analysis of the increasingly institutionalised international orders created by victorious hegemons (Ikenberry, 2001), and Holsti's more general study of change in the institutional framework of international politics (K.J. Holsti, 2004).

Approaches from an agency-based perspective

Foreign policy decision making (FPDM)

As discussed above, this approach differs from all other approaches discussed here by specifying the decision-making process as the explanandum, and hence viewing the explanans as those factors that influence foreign policy decision making and foreign policy decision makers rather than the content of policy itself (Hudson, 2007: 5). More specifically, it is an actor-specific approach – only real decision makers count, since actors in this perspective are not generic entities but always specific individuals (Hudson, 2007: 6) – premised on the notion that the behaviour of such actors is affected by explanatory factors on various levels of analysis, 'from the most micro to the most macro', as Hudson writes (Hudson, 2005: 2). In its simplest form, such a levels-of-analysis framework is defined in terms of an individual level, a state level, and an international level of explanation (Neack, 2003), with additional variants including a group decision-making level as well as one incorporating culture and national identity (Hudson, 2007). Furthermore, the causal effects on the decision-making process of actors and structures are examined one level at a time, with actors dominating on the lower levels of analysis (individual and group decision levels), while structures take over the stage as the levels become more general

and abstract (state, cultural, and international levels).

Recent book-length contributions to studies with this explanatory focus are Hudson's recent text, which includes a host of empirical examples (Hudson, 2007); Neack's second edition of *The New Foreign Policy* (Neack, 2008); and Alex Mintz and Karl De Rouen's *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making* (Mintz & Derouen, 2010), which provides a book-length overview of the field, combining theory with a number of case studies from around the world.

Cognitive and psychological approaches

Although research on the cognitive and psychological characteristics of individual decision makers has been viewed with considerable scepticism in some IR quarters, this has in fact been one of the most substantial growth areas within foreign policy analysis over the past three decades. Indeed, as recently noted in an overview of the field, 'the literature has become so large and extensive that a comprehensive review of the vast body of cognitive-oriented scholarship in foreign policy accumulated over the years makes it a very difficult if not virtually impossible undertaking' (Jerel Rosati & Miller, 2010: 1; see also Goldgeier, 2010; Mintz & Derouen, 2010). A brief summary of the field will nevertheless be attempted (see also Stein's chapter 8 in this volume).

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, this approach broadly defined is based on the contrary assumption that they are to a considerable degree impervious to such effects due to the stickiness of their underlying beliefs, the way they process information, as well as a number of other personality and cognitive traits. However, in its earliest years having 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 (Jerel 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 viewed emerged stressing the individual as problem-solver rather than malleable agent (Jerel Rosati, 1995: 52–54; Young & Shafer, 1998).

Yaacov Y.I. Vertzberger's magisterial *The World in their Minds* (Vertzberger, 1990) provides a very useful summary of much of the work done within this genre by the end of the 1980s. 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. G. Hermann, 2005; M. G. Hermann & Hagan, 2002; M. G. Hermann & Preston, 1998). Here one can also include small group approaches, including a focus on the effects of 'groupthink' (Garrison, 2010; Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 1997; C. F. Hermann, Stein, Sundelius, & Walker, 2001; M. G. Hermann & Hagan, 2002). 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). James W. Taliaferro has provided us with the most recent and up-to-date review of this approach and its current applications in FP (Taliaferro, 2010). Role theory, first introduced into FP by Kal Holsti (K. J. Holsti, 1970; see also Walker, 1987), should also be mentioned in this connection; Cameron G. Thies has recently provided a useful overview of this approach (Thies, 2010).

Important book-length work done within this field during the past decade or so include Deborah Larsen's work on Cold War mistrust between the two superpowers (Larson, 1997); Samantha Power's analysis of how previous experiences – especially in Somalia – led to American inaction in such places as Bosnia and Rwanda (Power, 2002); and David Patrick Houghton's study of the Iran hostage crisis (Houghton, 2001).

Bureaucratic politics approaches

The intellectual roots of this approach can be traced to the first period of foreign policy analysis discussed above, focusing on public administration, to the early foreign policy decision-making approach launched by Snyder and his associates, as well as to classic scholarship on the role of domestic politics in public policy-making (Jones, 2010: 2). Allison drew heavily on these traditions in his study of the Cuban crisis, while putting his own particular stamp on it (mainly by discounting domestic factors and the role of the worldviews of decision makers).

Although focused heavily on organisational and institutional factors, it is nevertheless premised on an agency oriented rather than a structural view of the field (in contrast to his organisational process model, which has had little impact on FP, and which therefore will not be discussed here). Insofar as it focuses on interaction among organisational players with competing preferences involved in bargaining games, it does not aim to explain in terms of organisational outputs (as in organizational process models) but on the basis of the actual 'pulling and hauling that is politics' (Allison & Zelikow, 1999: 255). The power involved in this type of political infighting is not in the first-hand 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 organisational anchorage: 'where you stand depends on where you sit'.

Although explicitly theorised 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, e.g., Bendor & Hammond, 1992; Bernstein, 2000; Rhodes, 1994; Welch, 1998). Nevertheless, it continues to stimulate

research on foreign policy, mainly in the form of a 'third generation' of bureaucratic politics scholarship which began to emerge in late 1990s; and although earlier claimed to be excessively US-centred in its empirical applicability, it is slowly finding its way to Europe and elsewhere (see, e.g. Jones, 2010; Stern & Verbeek, 1998; Tayfur & Goymen, 2002; Zhang, 2006). Although not part of this third generation of bureaucratic scholars, the second edition of Halperin and Clapp's oft-cited *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* provides a number of new examples of bureaucratic politics behaviour based on developments in the Carter, Reagan, Bush I, Clinton, and Bush II administrations (Halperin & Clapp, 2006).

New liberalism

Although it has roots going back to the early Rosenau (Rosenau, 1969) and prominent European scholars of foreign policy (Czempiel, 1981; Hanrieder, 1967), Andrew Moravcsik must nevertheless be given primary credit for having put the liberal approach – or the 'new liberalism', as it is also called – squarely on the contemporary IR and FP agendas. This research programme places state-society relations at the centre of world politics, and is 'based on the fundamental premise that a critical causal factor influencing a state's behaviour is the relationship between the state and the domestic and transnational society in which it is embedded,' Moravcsik writes in explanation (Moravcsik, 2003: 361). Examples of research influenced by this approach include studies focusing on transnational advocacy networks (Carpenter, 2007; Keck & Sikkink, 1998), agricultural trade policy (Gawanda & Hoekman, 2006), bilateral investment treaties (Elkins, Guzman, & Simmons, 2006), and the role of electoral institutions in producing illiberal commercial policies (Ehrlich, 2007). More spectacularly, this approach has also inspired the presentation of new liberal theory in the form of a prospectus for US foreign policy (Ikenberry & Slaughter, 2006) – 'an approximation of what new liberal foreign relations might look,'

as a commentator has recently surmised (Simpson, 2008).

Approaches based on a social-institutional perspective

Social constructivism

Although 'social constructivism' (or simply 'constructivism'), like 'rational choice' (or 'rationalism'), 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, 2002, this volume; Dunne, 1995; Guzzini, 2000; Hopf, 1998, 2002; Ruggie, 1998; Wendt, 1999) – be used to designate a more or less coherent and by now fully established body of thought in IR, including foreign policy analysis. Although it has roots in early phenomenological accounts of international relations (see Kowert, 2010), and was presaged in some of the classic contributions by Karl Deutsch, Ernst Haas, Richard Snyder, Robert Jervis, and the so-called English School (Bull, 1977; Deutsch, 1954; Dunne, 1995; Haas, 1964; Jervis, 1976; R. C. Snyder et al., 1962), it is nevertheless regarded by most IR scholars today as a relative newcomer to the subdiscipline; 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 'rationalism' in IR (see Fearon & Wendt, 2002; Katzenstein, Keohane, & Krasner, 1998).

This is not the place to go into the details of social constructivism, since this is done by Emanuel Adler elsewhere in this handbook. As a minimum, however, 'all strands of constructivism converge on an *ontology* that depicts the social world as intersubjectively and collectively meaningful structures and processes' (Adler, 2002: 100). This means that all constructivists share the 'view that the material world does not come classified, and

that, therefore, the objects of our knowledge are not independent of our interpretations and our language' (Adler, 2002: 95). Beyond this, constructivism is an increasingly broad church incorporating a wide spectrum of views; space, however, prevents delving here into these differences and exemplifying approach each in turn (see, e.g., Barnett, 2008, and Adler in this volume). Instead, a representative if small number of the most recent and notable social constructivist approaches to FP will be briefly presented.

A first group of prominent social constructivists adhere to a *normative-ideational* strand, which conceives of norms as aspects of social structure emerging from the purposive behaviour of actors in specific communities and that these, in turn, shape such behaviour by constituting the identities and actions of such actors (Hoffmann, 2010: 2). Challenging mainstream assumptions of the international system as essentially consisting of power calculations and material forces, early normative constructivists 'worked to demonstrate that shared ideas about appropriate state behaviour had a profound impact on the nature and functioning of world politics' (Hoffmann, 2010: 2). With particular reference to foreign policy behaviour, the goal was to show how such behaviour is enabled or constrained by normative-ideational factors, that is, how social norms influence states' understanding of the external, material world (see, e.g., M. Finnemore, 2003; Martha Finnemore, 1996; Katzenstein, 1996; Klotz, 1995; Legro, 1996; Price, 1997; Tannenwald, 1999). While this early work on norms treated them as essentially static social entities explaining foreign policy actions, more recent scholarship has moved towards a more dynamic conception of norms and their possible effects on state behaviour. Two issues, in particular, have received prominence in current norms-oriented constructivism: norm compliance and norm change (Hoffmann, 2010: 4–10). Both engage with notions of normative contestation, and as such problematise aspects of norm dynamics that tended, as Hoffmann has recently argued, to

be held constant in earlier work. As a consequence, he adds, 'current norms research explores when/where norms matter and how/when/why norms themselves change to a greater extent' (Hoffmann, 2010: 5). This in turn has meant that while previously having functioned as an explanatory factor in foreign policy analysis, norms have increasingly become a referent object in their own right. A prime example here is Alastair Iain Johnston's recent study of how the participation of China's foreign policy elites in a number of international security institutions socialised them to accept certain norms and practices not congruent with their previous foreign and security policy beliefs (Johnston, 2008).

A second constructivist research focus, often intertwined with the first, centres on the notion of *identity* to highlight the socially constructed nature of the state and its interests. As noted by Bruce Cronin, 'identities provide a frame of reference from which political leaders can initiate, maintain, and structure their relationships with other states' (Cronin, 1999: 18); and as such it 'is a constructivist concept if there ever was one' (Berenskoetter, 2010: 2). Indeed, as Paul A. Kowert has recently claimed, most of 'constructivist scholarship in foreign policy … dictate a concern with state identity' (Kowert, 2010: 2). Although the meaning of the concept itself continues to be contested (see Kowert, 2010: 2–5), two aspects of the turn to 'identity' in IR to describe and to explain international interactions can be said to be central to FP. The first is its deconstruction of the Westphalian notion of statehood as a fixed entity defined by a bounded territorial state, and the positing in its stead of a view highlighting the historically contingent nature of the state as a product of shifting collective identities and social conventions. The second is the rejection of rational choice assumptions about exogenously given interests, claiming instead that the interests of a state – its foreign policy preferences – are dependent on endogenously generated conceptions of identity (see Berenskoetter,

2010: 2–3). Taken together, these two claims have inspired a growing body of work suggesting how conceptions of national identity have not only defined state preferences but have also been used by decision makers to justify and to pursue particular forms of foreign policy. Prominent examples include Jutta Weldes' and Henry Nau's books on the United States (Nau, 2002; Weldes, 1999); Iver Neumann's analysis of the role of the 'East' in European identity formation (Neumann, 1998); Ted Hopf's study of the Soviet Union and Russia during two periods (also see below) (Hopf, 2002); John S. Duffield's analysis of the role of political culture in German foreign and security policy (Duffield, 1998, 2003); as well as Thomas U. Berger's comparison of cultures of antimilitarism in Germany and Japan (Berger, 1998). On a more policy-specific level, Nina Tannenwald has argued that refraining from using nuclear weapons is not due to deterrence but to the constitutive effects of a nuclear taboo – of complying with a role prescription pertaining to the identity of 'civilised states' (Tannenwald, 2007: 45–46). In an earlier study, Richard Price has made a similar argument regarding the use of chemical weapons (Price, 1997).

Discursive approaches

Following the so-called linguistic turn in philosophy and social theory, a second holistic-interpretative approach, focusing on the role of language and discourse in social inquiry, is slowly but determinedly making inroads into foreign policy analysis. One early strand of this movement – belonging to the so-called Copenhagen School (see, e.g., 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 positivist terms, and the assumption that language is a transparent medium without its own inner dynamic (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 characterising the foreign policy domain as a powerful structural constraint, on a high level of generality, shaping the foreign policy of the state in question. Contrary to more conventional constructivists, the assumption in this type of discursive approach is that inter-subjective meaning cannot be apprehended cognitively but is, rather, constituted by language and must hence be studied interpretatively by analysing discourses.

More specifically, we can here distinguish broadly between post-positivist and post-structural variants of discourse analysis. The first is quintessentially exemplified by Ted Hopf's study and comparison of the relationship between identity and Soviet and Russian foreign policy during two time periods: 1955 and 1999 (Hopf, 2002). In his own words, the aim is 'to show how a state's collection of identities, how it understands itself, can affect how that state, or more precisely its decision makers, understands other states in world affairs' (Hopf, 2002: xiv). His starting point is the assumption that any society consists of a social cognitive structure within which we find a number of discursive formations, and that these – which can be apprehended inductively through the interpretation of various types of texts and narratives, both low and high – constitute identities of various kinds. Such identities, in turn, set the limits for foreign policy behaviour, thus linking domestic discourse to foreign policy choice.

Post-structural discursive approaches differ from post-positivist variants above all with respect to the claim that 'to theorise foreign policy as discourse is to argue that identity and policy are constituted through a process of narrative adjustment, that they stand ... in a constitutive, rather than causal, relationship' (Hansen, 2006: xvi). In short, insofar as 'discourse is co-extensive with the social', discourse theory of this kind 'opposes the causal explanation of social phenomena' (Torfing, 2005: 9, 19). Furthermore, while

Hopf's analysis has an explicit phenomenological and inductivist starting point (Hopf, 2002: 23), post-structuralism of the kind referred to here is decidedly deductive insofar as 'it is not sufficient on epistemological grounds to rely upon actors' self-interpretations', since these need to be located in a broader perspective 'by employing theoretical concepts and logics not readily available to social actors themselves' (Howarth, 2005: 320). While much of the earlier work within this genre explored the links between identity and foreign policy in terms of identity construction through foreign policy (see, e.g., Campbell, 1998; Wæver, 2005: 34), more recently the direction of this link has also been reversed. This is the case, for example, in Lene Hansen's book-length and detailed exploration of Western discourses surrounding the Bosnian war (Hansen, 2006), in which she documents in meticulous detail the co-constitutive character of identity and the various foreign policy positions taken by the United States and Europe in this conflict (see also her chapters in Smith, 2012; Baylis, 2010).

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 & Smith, 1990: 74)

They also distinguish 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 utilised today in the study of foreign policy.

The historical antecedents of this approach go back to Snyder and his associates, focusing on a systematic empirical analysis of the actual deliberations of foreign policy decision makers. 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, e.g., Aggestam, 2006; Hyde-Price, 2000). 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, e.g., Bernstein, 2000: 161–164).

Although somewhat dated, Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice's detailed study of German reunification (Zelikow & Rice, 1995) remains an illuminative exemplar of this type of analysis. 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, e.g., Risse, 1997), it should at the same time be emphasised that although no causal analysis (or theorising) 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 counterfactual 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 this connection, it should also be noted that despite his concern with its lack of theoretical anchorage, Risse has been able to utilise 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.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

To round up, I would like to conclude by briefly pointing to three important and interrelated issues raised by the above overview, each of which in my judgement merits serious consideration in the future development of FP.

The first is that while FP – as we have seen above – is a well-established subdiscipline with a long, eminent if somewhat chequered historical pedigree, there is an increasing *lack of agreement* on the most fundamental aspect of any scholarly inquiry: what its *object of analysis* is conceived to be. I do not here have in mind so much definitional differences with respect to how the explanandum qua policy undertaking is conceptualised – disagreements regarding its *connotations* are unavoidable – as the increasingly common

denotational practice of positing in its stead processes of decision making as that which needs to be explained.[5] In this respect the recent resuscitation and interpretation of Snyder et al. as precursors of the current conceptualisation of the explanandum of foreign policy analysis in the form of decision-making processes is both ironic and problematic, insofar as their objective quite clearly was to explain state action – that is, foreign policy qua explanandum – as a causal effect of how decision makers subjectively view their situation (explanans). In any case, the practice in some quarters of defining the object of analysis in FP in terms of what many scholars continue to regard as essentially relevant explanatory factors is deeply unfortunate; and in my view its implications need to be addressed forthwith and head-on if we do not want to avoid foreign policy analysts increasingly speaking past one another.

A second important question raised in the light of the overview presented above is whether it is either desirable or possible *to integrate* at least some of the perspectives discussed here, 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. Similarly, 'individualism' and 'holism' have most often been assumed to be in principle mutually exclusive categories (often expressed in the form of the agency-structure *problematique*), forcing us into either a 'bottom-up' or 'top-down' mode of analysis. Despite these problems, Valerie Hudson concludes in her recent book that 'theoretical integration is an imperative' for foreign policy analysis, even though 'it remains a promise unfulfilled for the time being' (Hudson, 2007: 165, 184).

My own view is that a synthetic framework for analysing foreign policy is indeed feasible, but only if, as a first step, the explanandum is defined as purposive policy

behaviour rather than in process terms à la Hudson. The second step is a recognition and acceptance of the empirical fact that all foreign policy actions – small or large – are linked together in the form of intentions, cognitive-psychological factors, and the various structural phenomena characterising societies and their environments; and hence that explanations of actual foreign policy actions must be able to give accounts that do not by definition exclude or privilege any of these types of explanans.

My favourite way of conceptualising such a synthetic analytic framework consists of a simple tripartite approach to explaining foreign policy actions consisting, respectively, of an *intentional*, a *dispositional*, and a *structural* dimension of explanation, as follows (Carlsnaes, 1992):

Foreign Policy Actions
(1)
↑
|
Intentional dimension
(2)
↑
|
Dispositional dimension
(3)
↑
|
Structural dimension
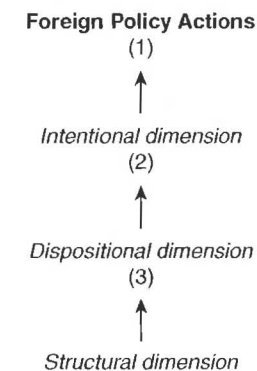
Although conceptualised as analytically autonomous, these three dimensions should be viewed as closely linked in the sense that they can be conjoined in a logical, step-by-step manner to produce increasingly exhaustive (or 'deeper') explanations of foreign policy actions.

The starting point in such an explanation would be to focus on the first link, that is, the relation between a given foreign policy action and the intention or goal that it expresses (arrow 1 in the figure). This is a teleological relationship, giving us the specific reason(s) for, or goal(s) of, a certain policy undertaking. This is also a necessary first step, given

the inherently intentional nature of the explanandum. However, scholars who are interested also in giving causal in additional to intentional explanations – presumably most of us – will want to go further than this. This distinction can also be described in terms of an 'in order to' and a 'because of' dimension in explanations, in which the former refers to actions pursued intentionally (i.e., 'in order to' achieve a certain aim), while the latter aims to indicate those prior or underlying mechanisms which 'caused' a given actor to have a particular intention. Thus scholars not satisfied with merely tracing descriptively the reasoning behind a certain action will want to ask why one rather than another intention in the form of a policy undertaking was being pursued in the first place.

In such an analysis, the next step would be to trace the link between the intentional and the dispositional dimensions, with a view to finding the specific underlying psychological-cognitive factors which have disposed a particular actor to have this and not that preference or intention (arrow 2 in the figure). In the analysis of such dispositions, the primary focus would be on the underlying values ('belief systems') which motivate actors to pursue certain goals, as well as on the perceptions which make actors see the world in particular ways ('world-views'). This is where cognitive and psychological approaches to the explanation of foreign policy enter into the analytic picture.

This leaves us with the question how structural factors are to be incorporated into this framework, since they are present in neither of the first two dimensions. In my view, they do so in terms of a third, deeper, and very powerful structural dimension, always underlying and thus affecting the cognitive and psychological dispositions of individuals (arrow 3 in the figure). These structural factors – domestic and international, social, cultural, economic, material, normative, or ideational – do so in many ways, but essentially as a consequence of being perceived, reacted to, and taken into account by actors (consciously or not); and it is in this sense

that structural factors can be said to influence, condition, or otherwise affect – either by constraint or by enabling – human values, preferences, moods, and attitudes, that is, actor dispositions as here conceptualised. It is also by causally affecting the dispositional characteristics of the agents of policy in this manner that one can say that structural factors – via its causal effects on the dispositions of actors (and only in this manner) – also determine the particular types of intentions motivating policies (thus combining all three arrows).

If this approach to foreign policy analysis provides an integrative framework, linking both individual decision makers and social structures across state boundaries, does it resolve the agency-structure problem mentioned above? No, not as it stands, for although it combines actor and structural features (which is a step forward), it privileges structures over actors insofar as the former are viewed as having causal effects on the latter, but not the latter on the former. In short, it is a logically static framework, which can be used to explain single foreign policy actions – in terms of the explanatory chain discussed above – but not a series of such actions over time. However, once we view policy undertakings with reference also to their actual *outcomes* – which may be intended or unintended, extensive or marginal – a dynamic component enters into the picture. In other words, insofar as these outcomes have subsequent causal effects *over time* on both the structures and actors determining the foreign policy undertakings of a particular state, we have a case of mutual interaction between agency and structure (see Carlsnaes, 1992).

A final comment concerns the relationship between FR and IR. As Houghton has recently argued, the former has for many years been 'a kind of free-floating enterprise, logically unconnected to the main theories of international relations' (Houghton, 2007: 2). Although there are reasons to be sceptical about his recommendation that social constructivism be hitched to cognitive

psychological approaches in order for FP to be fully reinvigorated, he has raised an important issue which needs to be addressed forcefully by scholars from both disciplines. In my judgement, such a rapprochement should proceed hand in hand with the ambition of integrating into a common framework – including an agreement on the object of analysis – the various perspectives discussed in this chapter.

NOTES

1 On my own take a decade ago on these developments, see the predecessor to this chapter (Carlsnaes, 2002).

2 Admittedly, this omission is to some degree rectified by the recent publication – by the same publisher, in a similar format, and with a joint co-editor – of an advanced text entirely on foreign policy analysis (Smith, Hadfield, & Dunne, 2008b; 2012).

3 In this context, it is also significant that in the aforementioned journal *Foreign Policy Analysis*, the substantive core of the field is described as follows: 'Foreign policy analysis, as a field of study, is characterized by its actor-specific focus ... In its simplest form, foreign policy analysis is the study of the process, effects, causes or outputs of foreign policy decision-making in either a comparative or case-specific manner' (see inside back cover of each issue).

4 For an exhaustive discussion and critique of these meta-theoretical issues, see Colin Wight's book on the ontological nature of politics (Wight, 2006), as well as his chapter in this volume.

5 For a classic discussion of the distinction between 'connotation' and 'denotation' in conceptualisation, see Sartori (1970).

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