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Foreign Policy Engineering

Philip Zelikow

From Theory to Practice and Back Again

Decades of modern scholarship about foreign policies have actually produced relatively few suggestions about how such policies ought to be constructed. Many volumes discuss the ways in which the process works, from bureaucratic turf battles to the influence of television. More volumes suggest what should be done about some particular issue, from preventing military use of outer space to dividing property rights at the bottom of the sea. But few books offer explicit general advice about just how policies should be crafted, divorced from opinions about a particular issue.

This is one reason why international policies are usually not very well understood, even by academic experts. Indeed many diplomats and officials do not themselves fully grasp the conceptual framework or pivotal choices implicit in their own country's policies. Lacking any common vocabulary about the building blocks of policies, practitioners have difficulty communicating to others what is going on, so they consciously and unconsciously simplify the policy into broad themes or vivid anecdotes, and then feel frustrated at the gulf in understanding between themselves and outsiders, whether academics or newspaper editors.

For their part, outsiders may sense that policies are going well or faring badly, but find it difficult to diagnose the cause of the success or the failures, especially if the matter cannot be reduced to a clash in personal values. The outsiders (and many insiders) usually have one of three responses. They may turn to caricatures of the people involved: Leaders have "vision" or they are "preoccupied"; an official is "canny" or he is "bookish"; the diplomats are "misguided" or they are "shrewd." Alternately, they may resort to caricatures of the policies involved, condensing several kinds of challenges to

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gether into “underestimation of those revolutionary forces” or “undue reliance on that dictator” or “back-room bargaining.” Thirdly, they may write off the problem as unintellectual or “judgmental,” and raise the study of international politics to a level of abstraction where the vagaries of particular policies episodes are eclipsed by the grander forces shaping the global “system.”

This is not good enough. If citizens are to understand the choices being made by their government, and if more of the vast store of knowledge outside of government is to inform and improve public policy performance, officials and observers need a relatively simple, usable framework that helps them appraise the analytical components of a public policy.

This essay offers such a framework. It can be outlined as follows: First think of three streams, constantly interacting with each other: problem recognition, politics (bureaucratic and otherwise), and policy “engineering.” The essay concentrates on just one of these streams, that of policy “engineering,” defined as the application of knowledge, principles, and methods (including both policy analysis and institutional analysis) to the solution of specific public problems in a given political environment. The “engineering” task has seven parts: national interest, objectives, strategy, design, implementation, maintenance, and review. Particular descriptions of each of these parts, or policy components, are offered below.

This framework is prescriptive. Policies ought to include all these components but sometimes they do not. Yet though there are a few suggestions here and there, the essay does not try to say how good policies should be made. Its framework is just a tool for determining which analytical propositions are truly material to the success of a policy. Once the material propositions are forced into the open, it becomes easier for insiders and outsiders alike to see just what kinds of social science, what “if-then” generalizations, are relevant. The framework might also help policymakers draw up a checklist of questions they may ask themselves, or others.

An example of how social science can be related to concrete policy propositions is Alexander George’s new book, *Bridging the Gap: Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy*.¹ George’s work illustrates the application of general knowl-

1. Alexander L. George, *Bridging the Gap: Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1993), p. 108. From the time he worked for the RAND Corporation during the 1950s, George has spent most of his intellectual life on the frontiers between political analysis and the use of history in focused case studies, psychology, and practical advice for policymakers, usually about the efficacy of using or threatening to use force. He long directed

edge to one of the seven policy engineering components, that of strategy. George and a few other scholars are indeed building bridges between theory and practice. This essay tries to help others who wish to follow their example.

Bridging the Gap

Unless explicit technical or scientific questions are at issue, policymakers tend to draw on academic knowledge principally in the form of historical study or familiarity with the culture and language of particular regions, leavened occasionally by a bit of economics or comparative political theory. As in domestic policymaking, “analysts not familiar with the government decisionmaking process are surprised and often shocked by how small a direct contribution research makes.”² “Only rarely have I witnessed serious governmental attention being given to serious social science research,” said James Q. Wilson; “I will make an even stronger statement: I have only rarely observed serious social science being presented to government agencies.”³

a research program at Stanford devoted to “Theory and Practice in International Relations”; see Alexander L. George, “Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice,” in James Rosenau, ed., *In Search of Global Patterns* (New York: Free Press, 1976), pp. 114–119. Some of the leading examples of George’s scholarship are Alexander L. George and Juliette L. George, *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House: A Personality Study* (New York: Dover, 1964); Alexander L. George, David K. Hall and William E. Simons, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971; 2d ed. forthcoming); Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); Alexander L. George, Ole Holsti, and R.M. Siverson, eds., *Change in the International System* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980); Alexander L. George, *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980); Alexander L. George, ed., *Managing U.S.-Soviet Rivalry: Problems of Crisis Prevention* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983); Alexander L. George, Philip J. Farley, and Alexander Dallin, eds., *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation: Achievements, Failures, Lessons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Gordon A. Craig and Alexander L. George, *Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Problems of Our Time* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Alexander L. George, ed., *Avoiding War: Problems of Crisis Management* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991); Alexander L. George, *Forceful Persuasion: Coercive Diplomacy as an Alternative to War* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1991).

2. Henry J. Aaron, *Politics and the Professors: The Great Society in Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1978), p. 165. This intuitive impression is reinforced by the writings of many perceptive practitioners who, after having significant foreign policymaking experiences in government, joined or rejoined the world of scholarship, including George Kennan, Raymond Garthoff, Henry Kissinger, William Hyland, Leslie Gelb, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Robert Blackwill, William Quandt, Robert Pastor, and Gregory Treverton. Careful narrative history is the dominant analytical discipline.

3. James Q. Wilson, “Social Science and Public Policy: A Personal Note,” in Laurence E. Lynn, Jr., ed., *Knowledge and Policy: The Uncertain Connection* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1978), pp. 82–83.

Government officials in turn tend to have little regard for the research that is presented to them. Paul Nitze recently reflected that “most of what has been written and taught under the heading of ‘political science’ by Americans since World War II has been contrary to experience and to common sense. It has also been of limited value, if not counterproductive, as a guide to the actual conduct of policy.”⁴ Nitze helped build one of the major graduate schools devoted to international affairs and knows a good deal about the academic world, and thus his comment is an especially arresting example of a view quite widely held among long-time veterans of public service.

Yet it does seem that government would benefit if the vast stores of outside knowledge could somehow be brought to bear on daily policy challenges. It has happened. A young student described lunch with the great economist John Maynard Keynes one summer day in 1922. Keynes and his French counterparts could turn from “the latest gossip about Continental statesmen, their mistresses, their neuroses, as well as their political manoeuvres” to “the international movement of money.” Most astonishing, they “seemed able and ready to relate their items of financial interest to theoretical doctrine” with “subtle points of criticism.” Realizing that he “was in the presence of something quite unusual—this mixture of *expertise* in the latest theories with inside knowledge of day-to-day events,” the student recalled that “the excitement was unbearable.”⁵

To reignite such excitement, the “expertise” must be connected to particular problems of public policy. *Bridging the Gap*, George’s latest book, identifies three types of knowledge that can help policymakers find the right strategy for influencing adversaries. The first is to conceptualize strategies, expose their internal logic, and deduce what elements—in theory—such strategies appear to require. The second is generic knowledge, derived from systematic comparison of past cases, which offers conditional generalizations about the strengths and weaknesses of various chains of strategic logic. Third is the knowledge that can help policymakers develop more nuanced and individual (“actor-specific”) models of how others will behave.

Modest about how much theory can contribute to final policy judgments, George nonetheless shows how valuable theory can be, using the case of

4. Paul H. Nitze, *Tension Between Opposites: Reflections on the Practice and Theory of Politics* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1993), p. 3.

5. Roy Harrod describing a lunch on July 27, 1922, quoted in Robert Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes: The Economist as Saviour 1920–1937* (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 114–115 (emphasis in original).

U.S. policy toward Iraq before, during, and after the Gulf War. Less interested in the details of either the means used or the ends being sought, George tries to conceptualize the relationship between them.

In *Bridging the Gap*, George describes how Washington first tried to moderate the behavior of an outlaw state with moderate incentives. George defines the essential strategic question: how does one go about attempting to moderate the behavior of an outlaw regime?⁶ He criticizes the Bush administration for either “poor implementation of the strategies” or “an inability to cope with severe situational constraints on more effective application of the strategies” (p. 40). He also criticizes the intelligence community for not

6. It is important, however, that Iraq was not actually perceived as an “outlaw state” by the moderate Arab states or Western Europe until the spring or summer of 1990, at the very earliest. Iraq, viewed as the paladin of the Arab world in early 1989 and the host for foundation of the Arab Cooperation Council, was actually much closer to the Arab “establishment” than Syria. Iraq retained this status at least until the mask began to drop at the May 1990 ACC summit. Second, George misunderstands the nature of the incentives being offered, though his description of them is important to his narrative. George questions why the Bush administration did not “at least substantially reduce the flow of economic and indirect military assistance to Iraq” before the invasion of Kuwait (p. 34). But there was no indirect military assistance and the flow of agricultural credits actually was reduced in 1989 before being suspended indefinitely in May 1990. The agricultural credits program did not add to Iraq’s net cash inflow in 1989–90. The only international cash flow possible under the program was one-way, from Iraq to the United States. Agricultural exporters were paid directly by American banks who then sought payments on Iraqi letters of credit. The letters of credit were secured by U.S. agricultural credit guarantees, a form of credit insurance. Iraq received no money. Nor could the guarantees be used to secure loans of cash, such as those made to Iraq by the Atlanta branch of the Banca Nazionale de Lavoro (BNL). Also, in FY 1990 Iraq received \$392 million worth of agricultural goods like wheat and rice under the agricultural credit guarantee program, but made hard currency payments of \$855 million to American banks on its outstanding letters of credit. No evidence has emerged to substantiate other assertions that Iraq’s military was aided in 1989–90 by kickbacks from grain exporters or by bartering American wheat and rice on the international arms market. See “USDA Administrative Review of Iraq GSM-102 Program,” May 21, 1990 (released by congressional staff); General Accounting Office, “International Trade: Iraq’s Participation in U.S. Agricultural Export Programs,” GAO/NSIAD-91-76 (November 1990); Kenneth Juster, “Iraqgate: Anatomy of a Myth,” *Foreign Policy* (forthcoming). The small amount of publicly licensed Iraqi commercial purchases of dual-use technology in 1989–90 (about \$75 million worth) were also restricted further in the spring and summer of 1990, after discovery of several illicit Iraqi arms buys, leading to the U.S. government’s Enhanced Proliferation Control Initiative of July 1990. See Letter from James Baker to Robert Mosbacher, July 25, 1990 (released by congressional staff); Department of Commerce, “BXA Facts: Fact Sheet on Export Licensing for Iraq,” December 16, 1991. George believed, relying on a misinformed source, that the U.S. actually continued most forms of assistance after its spring 1990 policy review. In fact, most assistance was cut off in May 1990 as a result of this review. See, e.g., State Department note from Robert Kimmitt to James Baker, “DC Meeting on Iraq,” April 17, 1990; Commerce Department memo to Dennis Klosske, “Interagency Meeting on Iraq,” June 11, 1990 (both released by congressional staff). Assertions that the United States had a policy of aiding Iraq by willfully ignoring misconduct in giving loans at BNL-Atlanta are also unsupported. See Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Report on Banca Nazionale de Lavoro and the Intelligence Community* (1992). 3

fully pursuing the implications of Saddam's extraordinary dedication of scarce resources to ambitious military programs, including weapons of mass destruction.⁷

But George's main point is that the strategies adopted to moderate Iraqi behavior were not well thought out. Therefore several analytically distinct approaches, such as graduated reciprocation in tension reduction, bribes, conditional reciprocity, and behavior modification, were blurred, impeding coherent execution and systematic evaluation. He concentrates on the potential for a strategy of conditional reciprocity, and offers hypotheses about the risks of such a strategy and how to minimize them.

Given the lack of preparation for a strategy of confrontation and containment of Iraq, it is no surprise to George that the United States was unable to mount a credible strategy of deterrence or reassurance in the last weeks before the August 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Policymakers understood the conceptual requirements of the strategy well enough, George concludes, but neither Congress nor local Arab states were willing to support the military deployments that could have displayed a credible deterrent. The "sobering" lesson is that "what the United States was willing and able to do *after* the aggression against Kuwait, it was not able to threaten to do on behalf of deterrence *before* the invasion occurred" (pp. 73–74). Efforts to reassure Saddam Hussein about America's desire for friendship only mixed the already weakened signals.

George then turns to the new range of strategies that became available after the invasion of Kuwait, which fall under the heading of coercive diplomacy. Here his conceptualization helps again, distilling the need to decide: (1) what to demand of the opponent; (2) whether and how to create in the

7. A possible excuse George offers for the intelligence failure is that "the commitment at the highest levels of the administration to pursue friendship with Saddam Hussein may have discouraged intelligence and policy specialists from a more vigorous challenge to the policy" (p. 42). He later refers again to this "strong presidential commitment" (p. 50). George is too generous to the analysts. There are numerous examples of analysts not being so deterred. But a key feature of America's Iraq policy before July 1990 is the relative inattention of top officials. President Bush participated in only one discussion of policy toward Iraq before the invasion of Kuwait (in the summer of 1989) and his contribution was to wonder aloud whether Saddam's behavior could be changed. The consensus response, even then, was that "the leopard will not change his spots." Interviews with Robert Gates, Richard Kerr, Richard Haass, and U.S. intelligence officials. The relevant policy document, NSD 26, was never itself discussed at the Cabinet level, was so ambiguously drafted as to be almost completely non-controversial, and sat in White House in-boxes for months before Bush bothered to sign it.

adversary's mind a sense of urgency about complying with the demand; (3) how to create a sufficiently credible threat of punishment for noncompliance; and (4) whether to couple the threatened punishment with positive inducements.

Neither the United States and its key allies on the one hand, nor Saddam Hussein on the other, were ever willing to negotiate down from absolute positions. The U.S. choice was deliberate: aggression had to be seen clearly to fail. Saddam could be allowed to save himself and his army, but he could not be allowed to save face or be rewarded in any way.

George does not argue that Washington should have softened its approach. He does spell out the difficult challenge coercive diplomacy faced in trying to impose such demands, as the coalition shifted from the strategy of economic sanctions to an ultimatum backed by a threat of military action. Still, the main miscalculation was Saddam's and, "ironically, the failure of coercive diplomacy was necessary [for the United States] to gain support for war when war became the last resort" (p. 88).⁸

George demonstrates that conceptualizing strategies can illuminate the logic and key variables associated with their success. He is therefore justified in claiming to have created a "basic framework for understanding the nature and general requirements for designing an effective strategy" (p. 137). Both generic knowledge and analysis of the actors involved can then be brought to bear to improve this component of policymaking. Unfortunately, "adequate scholarly knowledge of the conceptual and generic types does not yet exist for many of the standard strategies and instruments of policy" (p. 138).

Why is this so? Much of the problem in the dialogue between policymakers and academic experts stem, as Adam Yarmolinsky noted long ago, from the inability of officials to formulate the kind of questions that academics can usefully answer.⁹

The Questions Academics Ask

Many observers have noted, of course, that social scientists and historians pursue fields of intellectual inquiry that ask quite different kinds of questions

8. See also Janice Gross Stein, "Deterrence and Compellence in the Gulf, 1990-91: A Failed or Impossible Task?" *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Fall 1992), pp. 147-179.

9. See Adam Yarmolinsky's excellent essay, "How Good Was the Answer? How Good Was the Question?," in Charles Frankel, ed., *Controversies and Decisions: The Social Sciences and Public Policy* (New York: Sage Foundation, 1976), pp. 259-272.

than those that interest policymakers. There is a striking resemblance to the dichotomy between the sciences, such as physics and mathematics, and the profession of engineering. Former aerospace engineer and current Stanford professor James Adams has pointed out how “the motivations of pure scientists are markedly different from those of practicing engineers” because “pure scientists desire to understand phenomena. Their product is published knowledge, and their audience and judges are their colleagues. They are not necessarily concerned with the application of their knowledge.” On the other hand, “engineers are motivated to solve their problem successfully within a given schedule and budget. They would prefer to understand the microscopic phenomena that cause macroscopic behavior, but they must complete their work whether they do or not.”¹⁰

Two distinct problems are presented in applying “outside” knowledge to “inside” problems. The first is to develop knowledge that can readily be applied by practitioners in the development of public policy.¹¹ But a second problem is to understand the ingredients of policy development well enough to see how to use “outsiders’” stores of knowledge to help answer material questions.¹²

10. James L. Adams, *Flying Buttresses, Entropy, and O-Rings: The World of an Engineer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 40–41. For comparable descriptions in the public policy area see Seymour J. Deitchman, *The Best-Laid Schemes: A Tale of Social Research and Bureaucracy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976), pp. 440–41; George, *Bridging the Gap*, pp. 3–18; and Yarmolinsky, “How Good Was the Answer? How Good Was the Question?” pp. 262–263. After Philip Heymann returned from a sojourn in government (as head of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division), he wrote about just how to maintain legislative and public support in the political process for an agency and its leader’s objectives. He observed that “the literature in the area of my concern is often brilliant but always addressed to a somewhat different set of questions,” so that books like Allison’s *Essence of Decision*, for example, “has much to teach, but its purpose is explaining not prescribing.” Philip B. Heymann, *The Politics of Public Management* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. xiii–xiv.

11. For some examples of how this can be done, see Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers* (New York: Free Press, 1986); Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership from FDR to Reagan* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1988); Robert L. Rothstein, *Planning, Prediction, and Policymaking in Foreign Affairs: Theory and Practice* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972); and Alexander George’s own work.

12. The goal should be to draw out those propositions that are “material” to the development of foreign policies. American legal rules of evidence draw a nice distinction between the concepts of materiality and relevance. “In the courtroom the terms relevancy and materiality are often used interchangeably, but materiality in its more precise meaning looks to the relation between the proposition for which the evidence is offered and the issues in the case. If the evidence is offered to prove a proposition which is not a matter of issue or probative of a matter at issue, the evidence is properly said to be immaterial. . . . Relevancy in logic is the tendency of evidence to establish a proposition which it is offered to prove. Relevancy, as employed by judges and lawyers, however, is the tendency of the evidence to establish a material proposition.” Edward

Much of the study of public policy is concerned with developing theories about why nations, governments, or officials act the way they do, rather than theories about how they should do better. Many of the theories about national behavior have such a determinist cast that the effort to improve policymaking performance can even seem to be intellectually vain or uninteresting. After all, if one has painstakingly developed propositions about patterns of behavior of nation-states over centuries, the attempt to apply such theories to a particular bilateral policy in a given month must seem appallingly reductionist.¹³ One result, as George observes in *Bridging the Gap*, is that “not a few policy specialists exposed to the scholarly literature have concluded that most university professors seem to write largely for one another and have little inclination or ability to communicate their knowledge in terms comprehensible to policymakers” (p. 7).

The kinds of questions academics ask have influenced the methodology they employ in answering them. The dominant methods of scientific inquiry into foreign policymaking compare the inputs into policymaking and the outputs from it, or just observe outputs, so as to postulate the patterns of behavior that validate or disprove theory. Another version is to use historical case studies to develop axioms about the way nations, particular governments, or officials tend to behave.¹⁴

The literature on inputs into policymaking is certainly extensive. Such inputs can be traced back to the culture of a nation or society,¹⁵ extend to

W. Cleary, ed., *McCormick's Handbook of the Law of Evidence* (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1972), pp. 434–435.

13. On the divide between the tasks of providing information useful in making policy choices and the task of studying social processes, see Mark H. Moore, “Social Science and Policy Analysis: Some Fundamental Differences,” in Daniel Callahan and Bruce Jennings, eds., *Ethics, the Social Sciences, and Policy Analysis* (New York: Plenum Publishing, 1983), pp. 271–291.

14. On the underlying limitations of this method of studying politics, and the often false view that techniques for the scientific study of natural phenomena can readily be applied to human subject matter, see Gabriel A. Almond and Stephen J. Genco, “Clouds, Clocks, and the Study of Politics,” *World Politics*, Vol. 30 (1977), pp. 489–522. George himself helped develop the methodology for using historical cases to distill valuable axioms or conditional generalizations. See Alexander L. George, “Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison,” in Paul Gordon Lauren, ed., *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy* (New York: Free Press, 1979).

15. Contrast, for example, the magisterial distillations of Raymond Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations*, tr. Richard Howard and Annette Baker (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), Part Two; or Stanley Hoffmann, *Gulliver's Troubles, Or the Setting of American Foreign Policy* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1968), Parts Two and Three; with the more scientific approach exemplified in Ronald Inglehart, “The Renaissance of Political Culture,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 82, No. 4 (December 1988), pp. 1203–1230; or Harry Eckstein, “A Culturalist Theory of

the role of public opinion,¹⁶ and encompass prevailing intellectual currents and ideas, including the way sets of ideas are selected and promoted by communities of experts.¹⁷ The individual backgrounds and psychological motivations of officials have not been neglected either.¹⁸ All of these factors can sometimes be brought together to create a compelling picture of the setting in which a nation's foreign policy is made.¹⁹

Yet many scholars do try to probe more deeply into the way in which policies are made. They tend to do so in two ways. First, they look at the organization of the policymaking process. Second, they turn their microscopes on "decision making."

Political Change," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 82, No. 3 (September 1988), pp. 789–804.

16. Public opinion is, of course, mediated through the various institutions found in quite different democracies. See, e.g., Richard Eichenberg, *Public Opinion and National Security in Western Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Bruce Russett, *Controlling the Sword: The Democratic Governance of National Security* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); and Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Public Opinion, Domestic Structure, and Foreign Policy in Liberal Democracies," *World Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (July 1991), pp. 479–512.

17. On the general role of ideas, using the example of the persistent American commitment to free trade and how it has been filtered through state structures created with particular purposes in mind, see Judith Goldstein, "Ideas, Institutions, and American Trade Policy," *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Winter 1988), pp. 179–218. An effort to calibrate systematically the relationship of goals to policy strategies and execution is John P. Lovell, *Foreign Policy in Perspective: Strategy, Adaptation, Decision Making* (Hinsdale, Ill.: Dryden Press, 1970). On the role of transnational networks of experts, or "epistemic communities," see Peter M. Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Winter 1992), pp. 1–35; Haas, "Do Regimes Matter? Epistemic Communities and Mediterranean Pollution Control," *International Organization*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Summer 1989), pp. 377–404; and Emmanuel Adler, "The Emergence of Cooperation: National Epistemic Communities and the International Evolution of the Idea of Nuclear Arms Control," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Winter 1992), pp. 101–145. For an interesting synthesis of how ideas, epistemic communities, and political structures interact to reshape a national agenda, see Sarah E. Mendelson, "Internal Battles and External Wars: Politics, Learning, and the Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan," *World Politics*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (April 1993), pp. 327–360.

18. A fine summary of the literature on general psychological theories of motivation is in James Dougherty and Robert Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey*, 3rd ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), pp. 272–310; on general psychological theories of perception (which apply to background motivation, cognition of information, and analytical processes), see Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis* (New York: Free Press, 1981); and Thomas Wiegele, Gordon Hilton, Kent Layne Oots, and Susan Kiesell, *Leaders Under Stress: A Psychophysiological Analysis of International Crisis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985).

19. E.g., Hoffmann, *Gulliver's Troubles*; and Michael Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel: Setting, Images, Process* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972).

The policymaking process is undoubtedly important.²⁰ Organizations within it vie with one another for dominance and autonomy. Meanwhile they establish important capacities and routines for policy implementation.²¹

It is striking, though, how often the craft of policymaking is routinely equated simply with the organization of this process.²² This is true for practitioners and academics alike. "How can United States foreign policy be improved?" Roger Hilsman asked, and then answered: "Whenever the question comes up, attention turns first to the question of organization."²³

The other usual method for dissecting policymaking is to dissect the process of "decision making." The implicit image in most writing is of a host of factors that converge upon some climactic moment or period when a great

20. The best album of images, whatever their relative explanatory power, is still Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971) (explanation of Models II and III). See also Graham Allison and Morton H. Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications," *World Politics*, Vol. 24, supp. (Spring 1972), pp. 40–79; Graham Allison and Peter Szanton, *Remaking Foreign Policy: The Organizational Connection* (New York: Basic Books, 1976); I.M. Destler, *Presidents, Bureaucrats, and Foreign Policy: The Politics of Organizational Reform* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, rev. ed., 1974); Morton H. Halperin, *National Security Policy-Making: Analyses, Cases, and Proposals* (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1975); Morton Halperin with Priscilla Clapp and Arnold Kanter, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1974); and Francis Rourke, *Bureaucracy and Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972).

21. See James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), p. 221; and Samuel R. Williamson, Jr., "Theories of Organizational Process and Foreign Policy Outcomes," in Lauren, *Diplomacy*, pp. 137–161.

22. See, e.g., Charles F. Hermann, "Decision Structure and Process Influences on American Foreign Policy," in Maurice East, Stephen Salmore, and Charles Hermann, eds., *Why Nations Act: Theoretical Perspectives for Comparative Foreign Policy Studies* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1978), pp. 69–102; Margaret G. Hermann and Charles F. Hermann, "Who Makes Foreign Policy Decisions and How: An Empirical Inquiry," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (December 1989), pp. 361–388; Henry M. Jackson, ed., *The National Security Council: Jackson Subcommittee Papers on Policy-Making at the Presidential Level* (New York: Praeger, 1965); Amos Jordan, William L. Taylor, Jr., and Lawrence Korb, eds., *American National Security: Policy and Process* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 3rd ed., 1989), Part Two; Roy Macridis, ed., *Foreign Policy in World Politics*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1967); and John F. Reichart and Steven R. Sturm, *American Defense Policy*, 5th ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), chapter 6.

23. Roger Hilsman, *The Politics of Policy Making in Defense and Foreign Affairs* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 151. Zbigniew Brzezinski, recounting his years as national security adviser to President Carter, entitled a section of his memoirs, "Making Policy." This promising title is then followed by the words: "Coordination is predominance." The section speaks only of how the process was organized and who tended to talk to whom and how often, affirming—naturally enough—that Brzezinski's coordinating role conferred upon him dominance. No mention was made of the substance of how policies were crafted. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977–1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985), pp. 63, 63–74.

decision, or a set of related decisions, is made.²⁴ In a discipline dominated by concerns about conflict, the tendency naturally is to focus upon “crisis decisionmaking,” episodes that are laden with the potential for conflict and compressed in space and time. These episodes are then taken apart to see how the policy machinery actually works.²⁵

Experts have concluded that the machinery does not work mechanically. Theorists long ago showed that decision making processes do not match stylized or economic models of synoptic, efficient, and utilitarian choice.²⁶ The next stage was to show how, given the inherent flaws in human perception and cognitive assimilation of information as well as the constrained decision environment, officials could grope for months, even years, down paths that might well seem quite irrational, even “bizarre,” to an outsider.²⁷

24. Literature on negotiations also focuses on a key event—the agreement—and sometimes follows patterns recognizable from the writings on decisionmaking. See, e.g., the descriptions of the “diagnostic phase,” “formula phase,” and “detail phase,” in I. William Zartman and Maureen R. Berman, *The Practical Negotiator* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); but also see Linda P. Brady, *The Politics of Negotiation: America's Dealings with Allies, Adversaries, and Friends* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

25. They have been taken apart in almost every conceivable way, from perceptions of information, to patterns of bargaining, to measurements of interaction between decisionmaking units, the effects of stress and surprise, and styles of “crisis management.” Leading examples are Allison, *Essence of Decision*; Alexander George, ed., *Avoiding War: Problems of Crisis Management* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991); Charles Hermann, ed., *International Crises: Insights from Behavioral Research* (New York: Free Press, 1972); Ole Holsti, *Crisis, Escalation, and War* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1972); Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Glenn D. Paige, *The Korean Decision, June 24–30, 1950* (New York: Free Press, 1958); J. David Singer, ed., *Quantitative International Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1968) (especially cases on 1914 and Berlin); and Oran Young, *The Politics of Force: Bargaining During International Crises* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

26. The groundbreaking studies were Herbert A. Simon, *Administrative Behavior* (New York: Macmillan, 1958); Richard C. Snyder, H.W. Bruck, and Burton Sapin, eds., *Foreign Policy Decision Making: An Approach to the Study of International Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1962); and David Braybrooke and Charles E. Lindblom, *A Strategy of Decision: Policy Evaluation as a Social Process* (New York: Free Press, 1963). For a more nuanced definition of decision makers’ “rationality,” see Paul Diesing, *Reason in Society: Five Types of Decisions and Their Social Conditions* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962). This work formed much of the basis for Allison, *Essence of Decision*; and Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict Among Nations: Bargaining, Decision-Making and System Structure in International Crises* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

27. John Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision: New Dimensions of Political Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 332. See also Yaacov Y.I. Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds: Information Processing, Cognition, and Perception in Foreign Policy Decisionmaking* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990); and note the introduction of the concept of “disjointed incrementalism” in Braybrooke and Lindblom, *A Strategy of Decision*, pp. 81–146. Much of this work in the field of public policy has relied heavily on organization theory originally postulated to explain and describe the behavior of private firms. An excellent distillation is James G. March, *Decisions and Organizations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).

The net result of such examinations is a better understanding of why policies come out the way they do, though adding surprisingly little to the insights that can be gleaned from direct perusal of the better works of diplomatic history. But describing or even explaining outcomes is still quite different from prescribing how policies ought to be constructed. One can understand how a political scientist could confess that “the policy-making process has been like a black box to many of us since we see what comes out but not much of what happens inside. . . . Our habits of inquiry have imprisoned us.”²⁸

The Seven Components of Policymaking

If policies are the settled course of action to be followed by a government, then policymaking is more than the political processes that determine how choices are made. Writing about domestic governance, John Kingdon has pointed out that the “three major process streams in the federal government are (1) problem recognition, (2) the formation and refining of policy proposals, and (3) politics.” Politics includes bureaucratic politics.²⁹ Though much of the time these streams may flow independently from each other, they can interact, or be coupled together, at any point in ways that determine the final outcome.

Policymaking is also different from policy analysis. The policy analyst’s classic approach to policy analysis is to identify a problem, specify alternatives, evaluate them according to some explicit criteria, select the best one, and implement the decision. The components of policymaking described here, however, may in the real world be more disorderly and more fine-

28. Charles W. Kegley, Jr., “Decision Regimes and the Comparative Study of Foreign Policy,” in Charles F. Hermann, Charles W. Kegley, Jr., and James N. Rosenau, eds., *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1987), p. 248. Philip Heymann noted one model for using systematic analysis to suggest how to get results: Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership from FDR to Carter* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1980).

29. John Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (New York: HarperCollins, 1984), p. 92. “Politics,” as I use it here, includes the factors in Allison’s Model III, such as the channel for producing action on the problem, the procedures for reconciling agency views, the players who are centrally involved, the histories and personalities of the players, and the external deadlines forcing the issue to resolution. See, e.g., Allison, *Essence of Decision*, p. 257. The concerns of Allison’s Model II about organizational responsibilities and routines apply here as well, but some Model II elements also feature in the policymaking process itself, in constraints on design choices, and in the separate dimension of policy analysis, such as how organizational capacities constrain the availability of information or evaluation criteria.

grained. While using a simplified diagram of policymaking to help frame his analysis and formulate the right questions, the analyst should not substitute that framework for the more formal methodologies he has developed for answering them, whether his goal is “quick analysis” for immediate, practical application or longer-term “researched analysis” to probe the answers to deeper questions.³⁰

Finally, policymaking is more than just a decision. Choices may be presented to a president, but the resulting decision will only be one aspect of policymaking, a process that began before the decision memorandum reached the president’s desk and continues after it has gone into the out-box.

Policymaking thus bears little resemblance to the commonly encountered model whereby options percolate up through contending bureaucracies to a culminating decision. During the year of American diplomacy associated with German unification, for example, President Bush never received an options paper. But this did not mean that options were not considered, or that Bush did not know about them. Nor do formal evaluations of options find much reflection in the story of the Carter administration’s handling of the Camp David peace process. Even where a choice among clearcut options does take place, that choice is often over just one of the ingredients in the policy.³¹

There have been a few efforts to itemize the components of national security or foreign policymaking.³² Building on elements of prior scholarship

30. There is a large literature on the purposes, nature, and utility of policy analysis. For variations on the “classic” elements of policy analysis, see Percy H. Hill, ed., *Making Decisions: A Multidisciplinary Introduction* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1978), p. 22; Duncan MacRae and James A. Wilde, *Policy Analysis for Public Decisions* (North Scituate, Mass.: Duxbury Press, 1979), pp. 7–12; Carl V. Patton and David S. Sawicki, *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning*, 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1993), p. 3, Fig. 1-1; Edward S. Quade, *Analysis for Public Decisions*, 2d ed. (New York: Elsevier, 1982), pp. 47–62; and Edith Stokey and Richard Zeckhauser, *A Primer for Policy Analysis* (New York: Norton, 1978), pp. 5–6. On the distinction between “quick analysis” and “researched analysis,” see Robert D. Behn and James W. Vaupel, *Quick Analysis for Busy Decision Makers* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), pp. 3–7. On the legitimacy of accepting “political” parameters as part of the framework for valid policy analysis, see Arnold J. Meltsner, *Policy Analysts in the Bureaucracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 307–309. See generally Giandomenico Majone, *Evidence, Argument, and Persuasion in the Policy Process* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

31. See William Quandt, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1986); for other good narratives of policymaking, see, e.g., Leslie H. Gelb with Richard K. Betts, *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1979); I.M. Destler, *Making Foreign Economic Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1980).

32. Charles Hermann has divided the “decision process,” for example, into “(1) initial policy

on both domestic and foreign policy, I suggest that “policy engineering” can be seen as one of three streams, each of which interact constantly with the other. The other two are “problem recognition,” and “politics” (defined as the way choices are made), as portrayed in Figure 1.

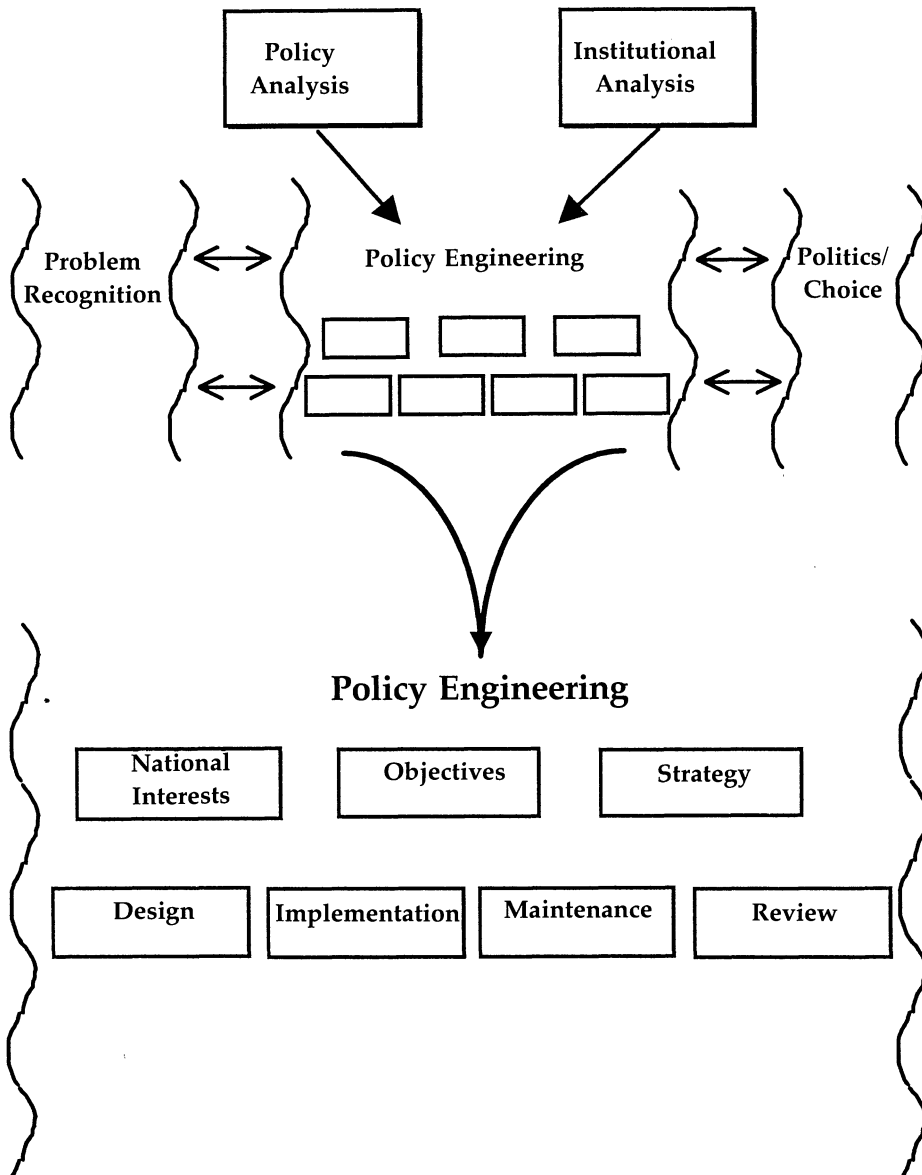
In addition to its interaction with the evolving perceptions or assessments of the problem and the constraints imposed by the realities of politics, the stream of “policy engineering” is informed by two major analytic methods: policy analysis and institutional analysis. A multilateral intervention in Somalia, for example, would require analysis both of the efficacy of certain competing approaches and of the culture, capacities, personalities, and routines of relevant institutions such as the United Nations. The policy would then, ideally, be developed to take advantage of both kinds of analysis.³³

The “problem recognition” stream is fairly well understood, although the literature is thinner on the critical challenge of assessing foreign governments. The roles of both experts and the media have been repeatedly examined and the bulk of “researched analysis” in the academic community

expectations; (2) external actor/environmental stimuli; (3) recognition of discrepant information; (4) postulation of a connection between problem and policy; (5) development of alternatives; (6) building authoritative consensus for choice; and (7) implementation of new policy.” His taxonomy focuses on a particular decision situation and is broken into categories of theoretical inquiry rather than stages in policymaking. Charles Hermann, “Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (March 1990), pp. 3, 14. For a better but too elaborate list of thirteen steps in the policymaking process, see Elmer Plischke, *Foreign Relations: Analysis of its Anatomy* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1988), p. 257. For a list of five stages of the “decision-making process” culminating in a decision, see Paul A. Anderson, “What Do Decision Makers Do When They Make a Foreign Policy Decision?” in Hermann, Kegley, and Rosenau, *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy*, p. 304. Among practitioners, Dean Rusk listed seven items in a 1965 address to the American Political Science Association, “Anatomy of Foreign Policy Decisions,” *Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 53 (September 27, 1965), pp. 502-509; and Theodore Sorensen offered a list of eight steps in *Decision-Making in the White House* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 18-19. To resolve disputes about the nature of arms races, Matthew Evangelista had to categorize the actual stages of policymaking in cases of weapons innovation in both the United States and the Soviet Union. He outlines five stages in both countries, from technocratic initiative to high-level endorsement in the United States, and from stifled initiative to mass production in the USSR. His outline is specific to the process of weapons innovation. But the diagnostic power of the technique was revealing. *Innovation and the Arms Race: How the United States and the Soviet Union Develop New Military Technologies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 52, Table 3; or Evangelista, “Issue-area and Foreign Policy Revisited,” *International Organization*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Winter 1989), pp. 147, 156.

33. Policy analysis is what George calls “substantive theory,” which provides knowledge about standard foreign policy undertakings, instruments of policy, and strategies. At the same time the politics stream should ideally be informed by what George calls “process theory,” which suggests how to structure the management of information and to make the choices in the manner dictated by the politics stream. George, *Bridging the Gap*, pp. 20-21.

Figure 1. Components of Policymaking.



can already be brought to bear on the recognition of problems.³⁴ As mentioned earlier, the processes in the “politics” stream have also been studied intensively.

So this essay concentrates on the “policy engineering” stream, whose components are as follows:

- National interest
- Objectives
- Strategy
- Design, preliminary and detailed
- Implementation
- Maintenance
- Review

This is a schematic, idealized outline. The components will not be found in all policies. These components need not occur in neat chronological sequence. They influence each other and revision can occur. Political failure to achieve agreement on critical design features might, for example, cause the policymaker to amend the policy’s objectives. “Strategy” and “design” also turn out to be practically inseparable, since each shapes the other. The components are treated separately here in order to distinguish reflection about the conceptual relationship between ends and means (as in George’s book) from the assorted questions that always arise about the particular designs to carry forward any chosen strategy.³⁵

34. On participants in problem recognition and how it occurs, see Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, pp. 23–121. For insights into a central dimension of foreign policy problem recognition—foreign assessment—good starting places are Aaron Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline 1895–1905* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), an extended case study in the assessment of global power and adaptation to the changing recognition of Britain’s “problem”; for the synthesis of a number of cases of military assessment, Ernest R. May, “Conclusions: Capabilities and Proclivities,” in May, ed., *Knowing One’s Enemies: Intelligence Assessment Before the Two World Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 503–542; and the template for assessment offered in May, *The Making of the Monroe Doctrine* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

35. This set of components can also be contrasted with Herbert Simon’s three-phase division of intelligence, design, and choice; Herbert A. Simon, *The Shape of Automation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 54; or with Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret’s parallel consideration of identification, development, and selection; Henry Mintzberg, Duru Raisinghani, and Andre Theoret, “The Structure of ‘Unstructured’ Decision Processes,” *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (June 1976), pp. 246, 252. Both conceptions are oriented to a decision setting, not to the process of policymaking as a whole. They also try to be descriptive and explanatory, not normative. Their schemes apply best to understanding only the first three components in the outline presented here.

The "level of analysis" is also important. This essay assumes that the level of analysis is a national government, not particular agencies or officials.

NATIONAL INTEREST

The national interest is a "non-operational goal" which is often used as a general rationalization for whatever preferences actually undergird a policy.³⁶ A nation "never admits it is doing violence to its moral instincts."³⁷

Hence every American administration at least in this century has voiced its solemn regard for world peace, the nation's defenses, America's growing prosperity, and the progress of democracy around the world. In September 1993, in a much-heralded address, President Clinton's national security adviser said that the United States would support the "enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies." One can assume the administration did not linger long over the alternative of "shrinkage."³⁸

Effective statements of national interest separate more important interests from less important ones. It is therefore somewhat surprising that academics have tended to neglect the important task of formulating hierarchies of national interest that can support such judgments.³⁹

36. Alexander George and Robert Keohane, "The Concept of National Interests: Uses and Limitations," in George, *Presidential Decision Making in Foreign Policy*, p. 219. See also Arnold Wolfers, "National Security as an Ambiguous Symbol," in Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), pp. 147–165; Thomas Robinson, "National Interests," in James N. Rosenau, ed., *International Politics and Foreign Policy: A Reader in Research and Theory* (New York: The Free Press, 1969), pp. 182–190.

37. Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1935), p. 73. "According to certain diplomatic officials, the abstract formulation of national goals is the easiest and least demanding step in the conduct of foreign affairs." Plischke, *Foreign Relations: Analysis of its Anatomy*, p. 98.

38. Anthony Lake, "From Containment to Enlargement," address at Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Washington, D.C., September 21, 1993, in *Department of State Dispatch*, Vol. 4, No. 39 (September 27, 1993), pp. 658–664. The explanation of "enlargement" was equally amorphous. The first of four stated strategies to achieve the goal is to "strengthen the community of major market democracies." But one finds the only policy content to be a call for "the major market democracies [to] act together—updating international economic institutions, coordinating macro-economic policies, and striking hard but fair bargains on the ground rules of open trade." No guiding principles for these efforts can be discerned. A possible inference is in the use of the code phrase "open trade" instead of "free trade," yet even this fragile inference appears belied by the free-trade tone of this section of Lake's speech.

39. For two exceptions, see Robert Blackwill, "A Taxonomy for Defining U.S. National Security Interests in the 1990s and Beyond," in Werner Weidenfeld and Josef Jannings, eds., *Europe in Global Change* (Gutersloh: Bertelsmann Foundation, 1993), pp. 100–119; and Donald Nuechterlein, *America Recommitted: United States National Interests in a Restructured World* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1991), pp. 13–33.

Expressions of national interest thus only become a meaningful component of policymaking when the pronouncement tells people something significant that they did not already know about the future direction and commitments of the government. Washington's Farewell Address, the Monroe Doctrine, Wilson's Fourteen Points, Truman's address to Congress seeking aid for Greece and Turkey, the 1950 NSC 68 directive, and President Carter's January 1980 statement that the security of the Persian Gulf ranked among America's vital interests are all examples of declarations that marked out new reference points for the formation of policies.

Statements need not be historical landmarks to communicate important guidance. Bush's unqualified and unequivocal endorsements of German unification in May, September, and October 1989 before the fall of the Berlin Wall were statements about America's national interest, which disappointed some allies while they emboldened another.

When the Bush administration took office in 1989, it questioned the Reagan administration's first efforts to move from détente to rapprochement in its relations with the Soviet Union.⁴⁰ Then the Bush administration rapidly shifted gears, beginning with a May 1989 statement that the United States would move "beyond containment"; with subsequent arms control initiatives, this confirmed the shift to rapprochement while hinting at the possibility for even greater change.⁴¹ Secretary of State Baker's October 1989 speech on "points of mutual advantage" indicated for the first time that Washington was prepared to look beyond rapprochement toward a genuine entente with the Soviet Union.⁴² This entente was a reality by the end of 1990, as treaties settled the fate of Germany and of Soviet conventional arms in Europe, and active cooperation was undertaken in the confrontation with Iraq.

President Clinton has also chosen to emphasize certain goals and priorities, such as the world economy, nonproliferation, and the global environment. It is still too early to tell how these declarations of interest will fare as they are turned into policies, because none of these statements about national interest were operational. They did not, standing alone, establish new policies. To do that more was needed, starting with the specification of the objectives for such policies.

40. These and the following terms for the stages in improvement of relations are drawn from George, *Bridging the Gap*, and in turn from Craig and George, *Force and Statecraft*, p. 250, Fig. 8.

41. President Bush, commencement address at Texas A&M University, May 12, 1989.

42. Secretary Baker, address to the Foreign Policy Association, New York, October 16, 1989.

OBJECTIVES

The formulation of policy objectives should convert a general sense of the national interest, a “non-operational goal,” into a prioritized agenda for action. It is the phase which often gives such expressions of interest their real content.⁴³ The objectives say what the policy is supposed to accomplish. They are concrete and give operational guidance.⁴⁴

Specifying objectives goes beyond mere identification of a problem. It forces policymakers to define what the problem really is by imagining the problem’s solution. In trying to define “success,” policymakers and analysts redefine the problem and at the same time open up the specific tradeoffs between certain objectives and the obstacles likely to be encountered in achieving them.

Objectives are therefore different from mere desires: I may want a new Ferrari automobile and encourage others to buy one for me, but that does not mean I have actually set myself the objective of purchasing one. Desires and objectives are frequently confused. During the conflict with Iraq in 1990–91, the United States deliberately considered whether to extend American and UN policy objectives to include getting rid of Saddam Hussein by moving on to Baghdad and installing a new government. Many observers felt that the failure to remove Saddam meant that “an important political objective” was “not accomplished.”⁴⁵ But when desires are confused with objectives, the result is a brew called “problematic preferences.”⁴⁶

43. “From the Monroe Doctrine to the Carter Doctrine, students of American foreign relations have been puzzled about the meaning of particular doctrines and perhaps the cumulative impact of them collectively for the conduct of foreign affairs. A common feature of these doctrines has been their highly ambivalent and flexible character.” Cecil V. Crabb, *The Doctrines of American Foreign Policy: Their Meaning, Role, and Future* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), p. 394.

44. See Plischke, *Foreign Relations: Analysis of its Anatomy*, p. 111: “Foreign policy objectives are the concrete and actionable aims of the nation, decided upon by governments, in the pursuance of national interests . . . for the attainment of which foreign policies . . . are formulated and implemented.”

45. George, *Bridging the Gap*, p. 91. George later notes, however, that the Bush administration’s “refusal to escalate its political and military objectives” was the result of a deliberate decision to “strictly limit its objectives.” *Ibid.*, p. 95.

46. On “problematic preferences” see Michael Cohen, James March, and Johan Olsen, “A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice,” *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 17 (March 1972), pp. 1–25; Charles Lindblom, “The Science of Muddling Through,” *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 14 (Spring 1959), pp. 79–88; Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, p. 89. For more on the distinction between aspirations and policy objectives, see Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration*, p. 71.

The Bush administration chose not to set the removal of Saddam as one of the concrete requirements of war or peace. Officials undoubtedly hoped Saddam would fall from power. When asked, they admitted this. They encouraged others to bring him down. That did not make it an "objective." If any American president of the last thirty years was asked whether he hoped Castro's dictatorship could be brought down, the answer would be yes. They have regularly encouraged the Cuban people to give the same answer. But no president since Kennedy has set in motion a policy with the operational objective of securing the overthrow of Castro's dictatorship.

Such opportunities for confusion underscore the need for precision in formulating objectives. Precision forces real preferences into the open for timely debate. When the Kennedy administration persuaded Khrushchev to remove nuclear missiles from Cuba in 1962, it was vague about whether nuclear-capable IL-28 bombers were included in the deal. The subsequent clash over removal of the IL-28s almost caused another major crisis in November 1962.⁴⁷

Precision also clarifies the true scope of a policy. Somalia is an obvious example. The original policy objectives set for American intervention in December 1992 were "to establish a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations."⁴⁸ Yet when the UN peacekeeping force was created in March 1993, its policy objectives were breathtakingly broad. The force would "assume responsibility for the consolidation, expansion and maintenance of a secure environment throughout Somalia." The forces would implement an arms embargo on the parties "from within Somalia" and help enforce UN "demands" that all Somali parties, "including movements and factions," disarm and comply with the political promises they had made to each other.⁴⁹

47. Raymond L. Garthoff, *Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis*, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1989), pp. 104–115.

48. U.S. forces would "address a major humanitarian calamity, avert related threats to international peace and security, and protect the safety of Americans and others engaged in relief operations." Letter from President Bush to congressional leaders, December 10, 1992, in *Department of State Dispatch*, Vol. 3, No. 50 (December 14, 1992), p. 877; see also United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 794 (December 3, 1992), para 10.

49. United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 814 (March 26, 1993). The "hunt" for Somali National Alliance leader Aideed, ordered in June 1993 by the UN Security Council, was simply the logical corollary of the objectives established in March, as the Council noted in Resolution No. 837 (June 6, 1993), which affirmed the force's duty to disarm all parties and "establish the effective authority of UNOSOM II throughout Somalia." These objectives were held up as a "model worth promoting" by Undersecretary of State Peter Tarnoff before the Senate Foreign

Close attention to the precise formulation of policy objectives could have opened the way to expert analysis, asking questions such as: What is the past experience with multinational undertakings with similar objectives in a country torn by civil strife? What variables are likely to determine the success or failure in attaining such objectives? Do these warrant renewed attention to other components of the policy, such as coercive strategy and military force design?

The questioner would quickly have noticed that American policy objectives in, for example, Lebanon in 1983, were strikingly similar to those adopted for the multinational force in Somalia ten years later. Other analyses of UN peace enforcement experience could have helped in identifying some key variables.⁵⁰ But even top subcabinet officials reportedly did not bother to deliberate about the March reformulation of objectives, nor did outside experts appear to appreciate the vital significance of this new policy component.⁵¹

Some might argue with this call for precision, and praise instead the virtues of vagueness in avoiding unwanted controversy. Vagueness can indeed serve to deflect both controversy and attention from a passive policy. Leaders may also not care enough about the problem to define its solution, or might have not made up their minds just what problem it is they want to solve. But active policies are endangered whenever governments in their private councils substitute problematic preferences for concrete, explicit objectives.

STRATEGY

Strategies are those mechanisms, those theories of the relation between government action and the behavior of others, by which it is hoped that the

Relations Committee on July 29, 1993. *Department of State Dispatch*, Vol. 4, No. 32 (August 9, 1993), p. 567.

50. U.S. objectives for the multinational force in Lebanon were to facilitate the withdrawal of foreign forces "and to assist the Lebanese Central Government in reestablishing its control throughout Lebanon." Department of State press statement, March 15, 1983, in *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office [U.S. GPO], 1983), p. 747. For fine case studies of UN peacekeeping, including the peace enforcement operation in the Congo, see William J. Durch, ed., *The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping: Case Studies and Comparative Analysis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).

51. "Asked if there were any Cabinet or deputy-level meetings devoted to discussing the March 'nation-building' resolution, or the implications it would have on the ground in Somalia, three senior administration officials could recall none." Thomas W. Lippman and Barton Gellman, "How Somalia Started Biting the Hand That Fed It," *Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, October 18-24, 1993, p. 14.

policy will act upon its object to produce the desired result. They are theories of persuasion. Each strategy, then, is an analytically distinctive pathway toward the policy objectives being sought.

The strategies can include appeasement, deterrence, payoffs or reassurances, tit-for-tat trades of rewards and punishments, marshaling “world opinion” to impose diplomatic isolation, and the use of economic or other forms of coercive diplomacy, and can extend to military compellence or even punitive action. One scholar has catalogued twenty-five different “programs” or “procedures” for international conflict resolution.⁵² The menu of diplomatic strategies also includes the choice of which international norms or decision rules will apply. Although the operation of these channels will then fall into the “politics stream,” officials can use institutional analysis to decide which kinds of political processes are most likely to attain their objectives.⁵³

Designing a policy to carry forward a strategy—e.g., determining the scope and enforcement of economic sanctions—is a different task from the analytical conceptualization of the strategy. Although design and strategic effectiveness are interdependent, separating them analytically allows the expert

52. No one has done more to conceptualize these alternatives than George himself. In addition to *Bridging the Gap*, see George, *Forceful Persuasion*; George, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*; George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*; and Gordon A. Craig and Alexander George, *Force and Statecraft*, Part Two. For the “twenty-five” approaches, see Lynn Wagner, “Processes for Impasse Resolution,” cited in George, *Bridging the Gap*, pp. 161–162, n. 12. For illustrations of other types of strategies, see Ariel E. Levite, Bruce W. Jentleson, and Larry Berman, eds., *Foreign Military Intervention: The Dynamics of Protracted Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Durch, *The Dynamics of UN Peacekeeping*; J.L. Richardson, “New Perspectives on Appeasement: Some Implications for International Relations,” *World Politics*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (April 1988), p. 312; Stephen Rock, *Why Peace Breaks Out: Great Power Rapprochement in Historical Perspective* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); and Janice Gross Stein, “Reassurance in International Conflict Management,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 106, No. 3 (Fall 1991), pp. 431–451.

53. On the influence of international norms and institutions in shaping strategic choices, see Friedrich Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 10–11. On the manipulation of decision settings, see Ze’ev Maoz, “Framing the National Interest: The Manipulation of Foreign Policy Decisions in Group Settings,” *World Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (October 1990), pp. 77–110. Maoz looks at how manipulation of domestic political processes explains national decisions, but his argument can be applied to international diplomacy as well. Examples are the January–February 1990 choice to negotiate German unification through the Two-Plus-Four process rather than Four Power talks (the preference of the USSR and some West Europeans) or a CSCE conference (Genscher’s proposal); or the American decision to bypass the Geneva multilateral forum for negotiating Arab-Israeli peace in favor of reliance on U.S.-Egyptian cooperation and trilateral diplomacy, which culminated in the September 1978 Camp David summit. See Quandt, *Peace Process*; Janice Gross Stein, ed., *Getting to the Table: The Process of International Prenegotiation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); and William H. Riker, *The Art of Political Manipulation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

to ask more fundamental questions about the strategic concept, distinct from critiques about the particular way a strategy's potential is being realized.

DESIGN

With objectives set and a notion of the path the policy should follow toward these goals, the policymaker must decide just what the government is going to do. Design occurs when a strategy is converted into operational plans that specify just what should happen in the real world.

Returning to the case of U.S. policy toward Iraq in 1989–90, the diplomatic strategy for moderating Iraqi behavior through constructive engagement rested almost entirely on a particular design, the extension of credit guarantees for agricultural purchases (CCC). But when an Agriculture Department investigation turned up possible minor irregularities in Iraqi transactions backed by CCC guarantees, the result was that in May 1990 the CCC design foundered in the wake thrown up by the investigations and the turbulence caused by other questionable Iraqi behavior. No alternative design was available that could have carried forward the old strategy of constructive engagement. The Bush administration therefore found itself, during the next two months, standing inertly by an empty strategy.

Thus, the details of design matter. It is no wonder that, in the field of engineering, a large portion of available talent works on the preliminary and detailed design of products. It is surprising, though, that no equivalent recognition exists for the nature of policy design, a challenge which encompasses but extends well beyond the empirical and economic tools highlighted in the policy analysis literature.

The significance of design work is illustrated in the story of the U.S. deployment of intermediate-range nuclear forces to Europe. Responding to the threat perceived from Soviet nuclear forces in Europe, in 1978 U.S. and NATO defense officials chose a strategy of deterrence of the USSR and reassurance of America's allies through deployment of new American military forces to Europe. The preliminary design for this deployment was U.S. long-range theater nuclear forces.⁵⁴

Then detailed design began. By April 1979, this phase of work settled the general nature of the modernization, the kinds of missiles that would be

54. The best accounts are Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1985), pp. 849–859; and David N. Schwartz, *NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1983), pp. 194–225.

deployed (ground-launched not sea-launched systems, and using both cruise and ballistic missiles), the number of missiles to be deployed (200–600), and that a number of allied countries had to accept deployment, not just the Germans.

All NATO allies, and especially the deploying countries, had to approve the final design because they were indispensable to implementing it, given the norms and rules governing NATO as an institution and U.S. deployments in allied countries. The Europeans, led by Helmut Schmidt, persuaded the Americans early in 1979 to modify the original strategy and include an additional concept: parallel arms control efforts.

The new arms control strategy then also had to be filled out with a specific design. The Americans used *ad hoc* NATO institutions they chaired as settings for refining and then consolidating allied agreement upon both the deployment and the arms control elements of the policy design.⁵⁵ They were then able to use the forcing event of a special December 1979 meeting of NATO foreign and defense ministers in order to cement agreement to a complete integrated design: the “dual-track” policy.

The arms control element of the design had another design layer beneath it: five principles were laid out to guide the U.S. negotiating position in talks with the Soviets, specifying the procedures and appropriate outcome for these talks. Each of these principles, in turn, required detailed designs of its own.

Thus policy design, like other policymaking components, can have several layers, just as a general blueprint for a product can be followed by more detailed blueprints of its individual parts. The components of a primary policy can also spawn secondary or tertiary policies, each of which includes all the components of policymaking but on a smaller scale. For example, as it sought to win allied agreement to the overall policy design for deployment of new U.S. nuclear forces, the United States had to craft subordinate policies to deal with the concerns of some of the countries accepting the deployment. One of these was the promise to remove 1000 existing nuclear systems from the NATO stockpile in Europe in order to hold fragile Belgian and Dutch support.⁵⁶

55. These were the High Level Group, chaired by a U.S. assistant secretary of defense (David McGiffert), and the Special Group, chaired by a U.S. assistant secretary of state (Leslie Gelb, then Reginald Bartholomew). See Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, pp. 860–863; Schwartz, *NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas*, pp. 225–232.

56. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p. 866 and note 34; Schwartz, *NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas*,

Not all policy designs are so elaborate. The presentation of designs offered here, with layers laid out so neatly one beneath another, also imposes an appearance of order on a much messier reality. Others might define the layers differently or not even see them at all. Thinking about design, and layers, is no more than an analytical tool to help one see the structure of the policy and the relationship between its parts. This also makes it easier to compare a policy against its rivals or its predecessors.

IMPLEMENTATION, MAINTENANCE, AND REVIEW

Policy, like any product, must be produced, maintained, and eventually either replaced or discarded. Policies are usually made to be implemented. Design ends and implementation begins when those specifying the content of the policy actually begin doing, or delegate the task of doing, what is to be done. Implementation can only begin when all parties who must carry out a policy have agreed to the design—the workplan.

“One of the oldest topics in the study of organizations” is that “policy as implemented often seems different from policy as adopted.”⁵⁷ In 1980, for example, the White House decided to use a military strategy of direct action to end the Iranian hostage crisis. The president and his advisers carefully designed the elements of the “rescue” policy, specifying numerous requirements. Even so, “the decision to attempt the rescue is not the same thing as the plan to employ eight helicopters, train in a certain way, decentralize command, and so on. Decisions on such key aspects of the plan that was to be ‘carried out’ were themselves decided in the process of implementation.”⁵⁸ Similarly, organizational routines may have led Soviet forces deploying to Cuba in 1962 to bring along tactical nuclear weapons may not have been part of Khrushchev’s policy design, but these operating procedures could have had fateful consequences for the entire world.⁵⁹

p. 238. A generic diagram of just such a multilayered “foreign policy complex” is offered in Plischke, *Foreign Relations: Analysis of its Anatomy*, p. 136.

57. Vicki Eaton Baier, James G. March, and Harald Saetren, “Implementation and Ambiguity,” in March, *Decisions and Organizations*, p. 150. The general point is covered well in Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, *Implementation*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Wilson, *Bureaucracy*; and an extensive literature in the domestic policy arena. The comparable literature on foreign policy implementation is modest, although it has been decades since Allison and others highlighted the issue. See e.g., Steve Smith and Michael Clarke, eds., *Foreign Policy Implementation* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985).

58. Michael Clarke and Steve Smith, “Conclusion,” in Smith and Clarke, *Foreign Policy Implementation*, p. 168.

59. Bruce J. Allyn and James G. Blight, “Closer Than We Knew” (letter), *New York Times*, October

Once it is recognized as a distinct component of policymaking, implementation too can be subjected to systematic analysis. Students of domestic policy have already observed that obstacles in implementation tend to arise from: (1) the operational demands implied by a particular design; (2) the nature and availability of the resources used in implementing the design; and (3) the need to share authority with or retain the support of the other actors involved in implementation.⁶⁰

Where implementation fails, the failure may oblige the parties to develop a new design. For example, in implementing the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, the planned United Nations peacekeeping force for Sinai could not be created. So the United States established its own peacekeeping force to take the UN's place.

Once a policy has been put in place, it needs to be maintained. For example, as the war against Iraq ended in 1991, coalition policies continued to evolve. A new set of objectives was formulated for postwar supervision of Iraq and a strategy was selected for winning Iraqi agreement, namely, the coercive use of ultimata credibly threatening the renewal of hostilities. The design for the supervision of Iraq went forward, including the creation of a new UN organization, and then the design was implemented. As of early 1994, it was still being maintained with money, manpower, and the political will and military readiness to keep the coercive strategy credible and effective.

Most activity in bilateral relations or in international organizations falls into the component of maintenance. It is the stuff of routine diplomacy, with the hope of keeping a policy comfortably settled in the "maintenance" mode. Policies that are not effectively maintained might turn into problems that stir national policymakers into developing a new policy. Naturally, top officials hope to avoid such exertions. This is the concept former Secretary of State George Shultz refers to as "gardening." It is, he explains, "one of the most underrated aspects of diplomacy" because "the way to keep weeds from overwhelming you is to deal with them constantly and in their early stages."⁶¹

29, 1992. There is still some dispute about whether the weapons were there, and about what authority local commanders had to use them.

60. This list is adapted from Gordon Chase, "Implementing a Human Services Program: How Hard Will It Be?" *Public Policy*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Fall 1979), pp. 385-435. Chase also identifies fifteen areas to receive special attention and forty-four "factors for consideration" in a model to make predictions about the prospects for implementation of a given program.

61. George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), p. 128.

The final step in a sound policy is periodic review. Problems in implementation, for example, can lead to the development of entirely new policies, not just a new design. The failure to implement the comprehensive peace settlement dimension of the Camp David Accords led the Reagan administration to develop a new policy to deal with the issue of Palestinian autonomy in the late summer and fall of 1982, with a different formulation of national objectives, a different diplomatic strategy, and a new policy design.

Though the need to review policies from time to time is intellectually irreproachable, government policy reviews have a sad reputation. They are usually perceived either as picking up the pieces after a policy disaster or as a plodding way for bureaucracies to assure new political leaders that they are indeed doing the right thing. Henry Kissinger even used "policy reviews" as a way of keeping bureaucracies busy while the "real" policies were being made elsewhere.

There is obviously some need to be able to review policies without waiting for a severe crisis. Policy toward Iraq was reviewed in 1989 and again in the spring of 1990, but the fundamental objectives and strategic concept were not strongly challenged. Yet there are cases of success. Again, disaggregating this component allows for more systematic analysis. An obvious question is: What are the criteria for evaluation?

The characteristic policy review simultaneously reviews the extent of any problems, reflects on the national interest, and considers policy objectives, strategy, and design, in what amounts to a large, almost indigestible, lump. Breaking out all the possible questions only makes matters worse. Review documents containing lists of scores of questions under numerous different headings, usually circulated at the beginning of new administrations, are viewed by bureaucracies (and indeed by the harried new appointees) with varying mixtures of disgust and horror. This is as much because of concern about the inefficient expenditure of scarce energy as fear that cherished policies will be lost. Analysis can therefore help, in this instance, by narrowing the issues to be reviewed, selecting key criteria for evaluation, and giving the policy review a clear set of focal points.

Conclusion

With his new book, *Bridging the Gap*, Alexander George poses a challenge both to policymakers and to academics. Can they find a common and informative medium of communication? It is hard, in the best of circumstances,

for policymakers to step back and think analytically about their work. The number of officials involved in any given foreign policy, from top to bottom, can be surprisingly small. For example, fewer than a dozen people below the cabinet level were deeply involved in managing the U.S. diplomacy associated with German unification. Even if they had known how to ask good analytical questions, none of them would have had the time to write detailed conceptual papers trying to answer them. Analysts of the intelligence community shun such work too, because they see their main job as lying mainly in the stream of "problem recognition," not "policy engineering."

The comparative advantage of academics is that they have the general knowledge, disciplinary training, and opportunity to provide the needed analysis. They may have to look for ways to offer help. "If policy makers are unclear about what they expect from research, researchers have to ferret, guess, and improvise."⁶² But this potential comparative advantage has not been adequately realized in foreign policymaking. Career officials have found too often that, "good social scientists, unless watched carefully, will offer guesses, personal opinions, and political ideology under the guise of 'expert advice'."⁶³

A comprehensive picture of the components of foreign policymaking helps one to spot the opportunities for analytical improvement. The task now is to work these ideas into a broader literature, synthesized into texts, and carried over into academic and professional training. Once both officials and academics have internalized these patterns of thinking, they might ask better questions and receive more useful answers.

The array of questions is not impossibly long. Dean Rusk once spoke wistfully of the idea of a checklist of questions, like the checklist a pilot runs through before launching a plane on its flight. Even combat pilots under pressure for immediate takeoff go through at least a dozen questions; commercial fliers have lists with hundreds of items, and formal procedures for being sure they are asked. Surely it is not too much to ask that policymakers display equal caution before their country "takes off on a policy."⁶⁴

62. Carol H. Weiss, "Improving the Linkage Between Social Research and Public Policy," in Lynn, *Knowledge and Policy*, p. 44.

63. Wilson, "Social Science and Public Policy: A Personal Note," p. 91.

64. Dean Rusk, "The Formulation of Foreign Policy," remarks to officers of the Department of State, February 20, 1961, in *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. GPO, 1961), p. 29.