

IGNORANT ARMIES: THE STATE, THE PUBLIC,
AND THE MAKING OF FOREIGN POLICY

ABSTRACT: *A state's foreign policy is constrained by parameters that inhere in the structure of the international system and in the nation's own political-constitutional, social, and economic systems. The latter, domestic parameters, include "public opinion." Because the public is largely ignorant of foreign affairs, policy-making elites have wide scope for acting more rationally than would otherwise be possible, although public opinion operates on the second-order effects of foreign policy (e.g., taxes, casualties)—inviting mismatches of objectives and means. The prevalent nonrational theories of foreign-policy derivation are themselves largely ignorant of the dominantly rational processes of the state, particularly in its foreign and military functions.*

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

—Matthew Arnold, *Dover Beach*, 1867

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I. PUBLIC OPINION AND FOREIGN POLICY

How one evaluates of the impact of public opinion on the state depends not only on observations of public opinion per se, but also on perceptions of the role of the professionals (mostly bureaucrats) who are in charge of this or that function of state. It will make some difference whether one thinks that these professionals proceed (1) seriously, deliberately, honestly, and competently, in a process that depends on aggregation and weighing—as I will later say, objectively and rationally—or (2) merely through bureaucratic infighting, surreptitious power-grabbing, or even venality. The latter views of policy making as subjective and nonrational animate the prevailing theoretical models. Whatever one's view of the state, however, certain state processes, such as foreign policy (where external factors are important) and especially military policy (where technical expertise is important), sit uneasily with the operation of "public opinion."

The analysis of public opinion is a well-developed area of political science, marked, in one dimension, by a division between theorists who see public "ignorance" as being so extreme that it entails a lack of structure or temporal stability in public opinion, and theorists who search for stability, sometimes structured by the "heuristic" influence of partisan identification and various symbols and character traits. In another dimension there is the question of whether public opinion has much of an impact on public policy.

For present purposes, the key issue—which links the questions of ignorance and impact—is *how* public opinion *operates*: At what points might public opinion be said to "enter" a dynamic model of the derivation of the state's foreign policy, and at what points does it affect the policy process? In this respect public ignorance has a somewhat contradictory—and practically frustrating—set of effects: (1) The function of making foreign policy is especially relegated to experts ("bureaucrats"), whose expertise legitimizes their autonomy—that is, autonomy from the pressures of public opinion. Yet (2) public ignorance of primary aspects of foreign and military policy (such as their costs), as well as ignorance of the essentially rational and objective nature of the bureaucratic process, focuses public opinion (mostly in a negative mode) on the "second-order" effects of foreign policies and defense programs, and tends to deny, in critical cases, the means to implement the programs and ultimately the policies rationally developed by bureaucrats.

It has been suggested (in these pages)¹ that the mass public's igno-

rance precludes it from conveying useful policy guidance to policy-making elites, and may even preclude it from imposing effective policy constraints on them; and that this situation prevails regardless of such devices as polling to elicit expressions of public opinion. Here I will elaborate and restate that thesis, primarily so we can examine the bearing of public ignorance on foreign (and associated military) policy, study the more general question of how public opinion affects the derivation of a state's foreign policy, and draw some larger conclusions about the entire process by which the state makes foreign and military policy, and about the way that this process can be appropriately "modeled"—both descriptively and prescriptively.

A good deal of the contemporary literature on the formation of foreign policy has emanated from observers and analysts of the belief systems not only of the general public, but also of elites. There is a sort of standoff among the various observers about whether mass belief systems and elite belief systems substantially differ—a question that depends in large part, of course, on whether one views mass opinion as so ignorant as to be almost random, or at least unstable (the view of Gabriel Almond [1960] and Philip E. Converse [1964]), or perhaps just infinitely malleable; or as coherently and intelligibly structured (the position of such scholars as William R. Caspary [1970], Eugene Wittkopf [1990 and 1994], Ole Hosti [1992], and P. J. Powlick and A. Z. Katz [1998])—even if it is nonetheless "ignorant" [Friedman 1997 and 1998]). A related question is the extent to which foreign policy stances are conditioned by images of specific "enemies"—images that may have their origins in the enemies' objective actions, but that are, depending on the degree of mass and elite ignorance, subject to exaggeration, error, and manipulation. There is no doubt that the theorists of public and elite ideology—ideology being the chief heuristic used by the less-ignorant elites—are on to something, and that, even if the debate is unresolved, mass and elite opinion have real effects on the making of foreign policy. But the consuming interest in cognitive-moral factors (beliefs, values, preferences, ideologies, opinions, perceptual schemes and screens—in general, "constructivist" notions) as the ultimate and dominant independent variables in explaining state policy may lead to some incomplete and premature conceptions of how foreign policy is made.

In particular, I will be concerned with the extent to which public and elite perceptions of "threat" represent *objective* features of a real situation, and are therefore inescapable, or are escapable only by fools and only at some risk (as "Realist" scholars of international relations hold);

or represent what I take the entire school of constructivists to mean when they say that, in some social, political, or moral way, such threats are “constructed”—that is, that such threats are “what we make of them,”² that they proceed from our self-generated “images,” that these images are generic and related less to the apparent external phenomena themselves than to characteristics of our own cultural and psychological makeup, and that they constitute types of constraints that can, to various degrees, be “moved” by our understanding and by our supervening will, since supposedly external and immovable threats are actually projections of our own attitudes onto a more-or-less blank screen.

I will be less concerned with (even statistically accurate) “horizontal” or “vertical” correlations of one to another aspect of a belief system or a value system, than with the correct conceptualization of the entire derivation of a state’s foreign policy, and the appropriate modeling of a comprehensive theory of the state in its international context. My metatheoretical persuasion is that partial explanatory insights, relationships, and correlations, in order to be understood, must be set in their “field”—not the narrow field of the study of the origin of opinions, but some appropriately larger field. Beyond that, it does no good to oversimplify the lines of foreign-policy formation, whether from constructivist or Realist motives.

The problem with belief-based, or value-based, explanations of policy formation is that they avoid the further question—the truly determinative question—of how (or, in a quasispatial model, “where”) values and beliefs are represented in a more comprehensive model of the derivation of a state’s foreign policy. Such a larger model inevitably emphasizes that making foreign policy is a *process*: a process at the state, or “unit,” level; a complex process that contains sequential and transitive considerations and actions, sets of parameters (constraints) of various kinds and effects, and feedback loops; and above all, a *rational* process: one that exhibits, not perfect rationality, but recognizable rationality; yet also a “complex” rationality that is capable of encompassing, in some way, a variety of nonrational factors.

I take it as understood that the quality or condition of “ignorance” applies to the public’s misapprehension of (or lack of any apprehension of) the empirical situation that envelops a potential set of state policy directions. (However, it is conceivable that, despite any degree to which the public is ignorant of the empirical realities germane to a potential set of state policy decisions, the public might harbor *prescriptively* constructive and useful opinions about the actual or contingent moves that

the state should make. This situation could come about by coincidence; or it could occur through some kind of heuristic³—which could include a more general existing sentimental orientation or ideological fixation, or assent to the “leadership” of some political figure, or some explicit or indirect process of education.)

I myself would add a second possible dimension of policy ignorance: namely, misapprehension of the nature and workings of the *derivation of policy*. The way you think policy is made has more than a little to do with what you think about the appropriateness of that policy, and about the situation that surrounds it. In this regard, the public is systematically—albeit not, for the most part, deliberately—misinformed by academic theorists, journalistic analysts, and public officials; for the theorists, analysts, and policy makers themselves are in the grip of false models of the very policy process to which they devote, in various ways, their working lives.⁴

The essential aspects of foreign policy making, of which even practitioners, let alone theorists, seem unaware, or at least unappreciative, are its overall *rationality* and its respect for the influence of *parametric conditions* (which itself is a hallmark of rationality). These are the aspects that should be represented in a proper model of the derivation of a state’s foreign policy, and especially its defense policy. Instead theorists depict foreign-policy planning as willful, as heedless of constraints, and as non-rational (especially in the sense of *subrational*—e.g., characterized by “rent-seeking,” pursuing shallow bureaucratic advantage, or optimizing the profits of a particular interest group or congeries of such groups—the “military-industrial complex”).

Foreign-policy practitioners tend either to be (understandably) impressed by the bureaucratic features of government life, or to be (more typically) nearly atheoretical, disdaining even a first-level consistency by asserting that all decision making is “case by case,” or by denying the intellectual constraints of an operational policy even as a set of “if-then” propositions that would contingently predict their own disposition to act.⁵ Of course, Defense Department bureaucrats in particular are more keenly aware of at least several of the parameters that affect their operation: principally cost (of individual weapons systems, at least in the next fiscal year’s authorizations); often the overall amount of money allocated to their own military service; and usually the “top-line” aggregate amount authorized for their entire department—say, “\$310 billion.” Usually, however, even they are *not* (as I have pointed out elsewhere)⁶ aware of the “full-slice” costs of military components and activities,

once support and overhead are accounted for. And while they do tend to be aware of the quantifiable capabilities of the weapons systems and types of forces required for various kinds of combat situations, at least into the 1970s the Joint Chiefs of Staff submitted plans that were “fiscally unconstrained”; a then-recently retired Supreme Allied Commander Europe could not, within 50 percent, identify the amount of money that the United States was spending on the defense of NATO.⁷ This relative ignorance of the essential parameter of cost extends down the line, of course, to lesser and more restricted levels of command and civilian responsibility. Only small pockets of Defense Department analysts, such as are found in the department of Program Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E) (formerly called “Systems Analysis”),⁸ operating according to the methodology of “program budgeting,” *could* cost out the elements of the U.S. defense program.

The Effect of Public Opinion

In providing part of an answer to the question of how the state’s foreign policy (particularly its defense policy) is derived, I will focus on a misconception (an instance of “ignorance”) on the part of publics, elites, and even theorists, about both the *way* that various influences enter the policy-formation process, and the structure and dynamics (the “model”) of the process itself. This form of ignorance has two baneful effects. First, it distorts the actual shaping of foreign policy, because the public, and legislators, have been “taught” to impute to foreign-policy and defense-policy initiatives inaccurate motives and causal influences. Second, it corrupts the models that theorists of foreign policy entertain and promote; and this corrupting effect is abstracted and generalized into entire epistemological and even ontological stances toward the world.

To begin at the beginning, there is a trilogy of influences on public policy, including foreign policy:

1. *The public*, which can be segmented, somewhat arbitrarily, into the informed (perhaps the “attentive”) public (which is influenced, in turn, by organized interest groups, and even by the efforts of government), including the journalistic establishment. Though many prominent defense correspondents are brilliant investigative reporters (real “beavers”), generally they are credulous and selective, mostly because they lack a

theoretical framework within which, and through which, to evaluate the material that they receive.

2. *Interest groups*, which can be divided between those that are “outside” government and those (factions) that are inside government.

3. *Professionals*, virtually all “bureaucrats” inside the formal government departments, but perhaps also those hired by the government for specific or general projects. This category includes elected leaders and appointed cadres, mostly in the executive branch, but also members of the legislative branch, particularly its virtually permanent staff.

It would be fair to say that, of the three sources of influence on *foreign* policy, the professional echelon is the most apt to take into account external factors, such as the intentions of foreign states, new foreign threats, and adverse balances of power. Indeed, such foreign influences could be considered an independent fourth source of impact on a state’s foreign policy. In the case of some states, even their own foreign policies are made under the corrupt influence, or the direct pressure, or even the effective control, of foreign sources.⁹

The range of questions that are asked about “public opinion” reflects whether we are talking about “elite images” (including elite misperceptions);¹⁰ the “attentive” public (which is virtually the same as the “vocal” public, the public that finds its way into the mailbag of congressional representatives and thus is given disproportionate weight by legislators); the public as defined by the electoral process; the public as identified in public-opinion polls, to whatever extent these are technically proficient and accurate—a question not only of statistics but of interview strategy and questionnaire design (here might lie the largest source of substantive error, since it is, to various degrees, impossible to predict the entire future, the product of so many contingencies, that would confront the survey respondent). And any consideration of public opinion *should* reflect the fact that the public’s attitudes might shift critically during the course of an action—say, a war—that the public might originally have supported.

The usual (Conversean) questions that have been posed *about* “public opinion” have to do with how, and to what extent, it is articulate (or blunt), univocal (or contradictory), stable (or fickle), sensible (or stupid), active (or inert and manipulable), engaged (or uninvolved). Those do not even reach some further questions, which are whether public opinion is powerful (or impotent), legitimate (or arbitrary and thus ignorable), and ignorant (or informed).¹¹ I would add that (what I would re-label) the “inefficacy” (rather than, or in addition to, the incompetence)

of public opinion, especially in the area of foreign policy—that is, a combination of its invalidity, impotence, and illegitimacy—might stem, in part, from *the way in which foreign policy questions are framed and debated*, at least within the American polity (and, I suspect, elsewhere as well): that is, as alternative attractive *end-states*, rather than as more complex and operational *processes*. Contemporary examples (oversimplified, to be sure) would be:

Engagement with the world, versus isolationism.

Cooperation with other nations in multilateral enterprises aimed at protecting human rights and diminishing human suffering and deprivation, versus callous and selfish disregard.

Helping to safeguard the security of countries with congenial political systems against aggression, versus letting them fend for themselves in their own regions.

Devoting some of “our” national product and assets to promoting the economic development of disadvantaged nations, versus maximizing our own national welfare, probably at the expense of other nations.

Such examples could be multiplied. They assume that the mentioned action or remedy will be successful. They also tend to suppress the tangible requisites entailed by the actions or policies in question. Indeed, the fact that the very idea of entailments is missing from these statements indicates the absence from public debate of the factors that constitute the “logic” (and the logistics) of foreign policy, such as: the probable course of events without the contemplated action (a sort of baseline); the amount and kind of effect, and within what amount of time, that could be brought about by “our” action; the cost (in several dimensions) of “our” action;¹² and, of course, the array of alternative policies (each with its potential benefits and costs).

In other words, what is missing from foreign-policy debate (and especially military-policy debate), and from whatever might be the public’s consideration of the issues, *and* from the models of theorists of international relations, are the complexities of the “problem situation” (including, notably, the existence, identity, and location of parameters of various kinds). Recognizing such complexities would give rise to a view of policy derivation as a process that has several stages; that is a result of deliberate—even rational—discussion among experts or professionals and institutions; and that is, moreover, a process that can, and typically does, create feedback and consequent policy change (from the initially favored policy). Instead, what we usually find, among international relations theorists, is what might be called the heuristic¹³ of par-

tial, simplistic (though often mathematically or statistically advanced) models, which portray a direct (associative or causal) arrow from certain expressions of values or preferences (including those held by the public) to certain foreign policies or actions of state. Thus, public-opinion theory (whether in the empirical form of depicting the impact of public opinion, or in the prescriptive form of advocating forms of governance that allow or enhance the role of public opinion) often takes its place among those pervasive policy models that posit “preferences” (typically at the collective-cognitive level but also at the individual-cognitive level) as the cause (or correlate)¹⁴ of the foreign-policy actions and orientations of a state.

This is not to say that the topic of the *impact* of public opinion on public policy is not recognized, and addressed, by foreign-policy theorists. Indeed, in the prospectus for the year-2000 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association (1999, 674), the division devoted to “Public Opinion and Political Participation,” chaired by John Hurwitz of the University of Pittsburgh, highlighted, as a key issue for discussion, “the linkage between public opinion and public policy, particularly studies examining the degree to which the mass public exerts influence over elite decisions.” Another indication of political scientists’ detailed attention to the operation of public opinion is a review article by Richard C. Eichenberg (1998), “Domestic Preferences and Foreign Policy: Cumulation and Confirmation in the Study of Public Opinion.” Eichenberg reviews works on public opinion and foreign policy in the European Union (by Matthew J. Gabel), in the United States (by Ole R. Holsti), and in Germany (by Andrei S. Markovits and Simon Reich); and he remarks: “Unlike earlier work on linkage politics, which asked simply if domestic factors exerted any impact on external behavior, these newer works attempt to model specifically the impact of domestic preferences on discrete types of behavior, including defense budgeting . . . cooperation and conflict . . . and the ‘two level’ bargaining behavior of international actors.”

My admittedly impressionistic survey of the overall direction of contemporary public-opinion theorizing suggests, however, that the *kinds* of “linkage” that are asserted in research devoted to this topic tend to be too simple, and, above all, too direct; and that this fault is the result, not so much of inadequately measuring public opinion in itself, but, rather, of overlooking the encompassing process by which foreign policy is derived.

To remedy this defect, the questions that are usually asked about

public opinion—e.g., *Who* is the “public” (i.e., Who among the populace has consistent foreign-policy “attitudes”)? What is the public *saying* about foreign policy? What does this expression of opinion *mean*? and How “legitimate” is public opinion as a factor that should be taken into consideration in the policy process?—should, in my estimation, yield to the more operational question of “where” and “how” public opinion enters the process of deriving foreign policy. In particular, How is public opinion reflected in (1) the “values” that shape the initial foreign policy stance of a state; (2) the share of national income devoted to defense; and (3) attitudinal constraints on the design of military missions (which could be abbreviated as “casualties”) that form part of the parameter that one could characterize as the “sociology of war”?

“Locating” public opinion within the policy-making process also requires that we inquire into what might be considered the opposite of public opinion, namely the opinions and actions of foreign-policy “elites.” What are these attitudes and activities, how are they institutionalized—that is, where are they “located” in the process—and, above all, how “rational” are they?

In other words, much of what we want to know about public opinion is not “operational” in itself; determining what is operational requires setting public opinion in a comprehensive model of the derivation of the state’s foreign policy. The failure to do so can be found in some of the best studies in the literature. For example, research on the American public’s attitudes toward “isolationism” and “casualties” tends (a) to take public opinion as a thing in itself, and (b) to take public “preferences” (and their sources), in turn, as virtually all that we need to know about the derivation of (American) foreign policy. In this sense, public opinion is a kind of surrogate for the “preferences” that are so much the object of interest, concern, and research among constructivist theorists of international relations. As a result, public-opinion research often shares the disabilities of constructivism, such as: positing direct and immediate effects of thought and expression (in “civil society”) upon the policy outputs of “the state”; concentrating on entirely ideational, rather than substantial, causal factors in state policy; focusing entirely on the “impetus” side, to the neglect of the “constraint” side; becoming absorbed in expressions of cultural identity; and, further, taking raw expressions of identity as if they are final expressions of the institutionalized preferences of the entire national society. One might even say, therefore, that a reconceptualization of the role of public opinion could help to rescue public-opinion research from constructivism,

by “putting public opinion in its place”: that is, as one of many parts of the derivation of policies by (democratic) states. Having “brought the state back into” our understanding of (at least democratic) polities, we need to subsume the question of “what” a society’s values are under the question of “how” the broader values held by, or among, the public of a given society are transmuted into the policy outputs and actions of the state.

The Specification of Ignorance

What this indicates is the need to go beyond public-opinion analysis as such, and move to a discussion of *where* public opinion “enters” a more comprehensive and articulated model of the derivation of a state’s foreign policy. This discussion must describe the antipodal opposite of public opinion, namely the explicit deliberative process conducted by policy planners—in particular, the defense planning process, in which the foreign policy of the state is translated into its tangible, mostly military, requisites, and in which the resource consequences are “presented” to the nation’s “political economy”; that is, the required budgetary costs and military personnel requirements become the subject of legislative action, and thus engage, to some extent, the attention, scrutiny, and criticism of the press and the public.

Public opinion enters the model where a nation’s values originate; but these values *only in the first instance* inspire the *state’s* “preference” for a certain role in the international system, and, further, this role is only a part of the nation’s overall foreign policy “stance” (which is a combination of its role and its *situation*).

Public opinion also enters the model as a factor in the nation’s “political economy”—that is, as one of a number of parameters or constraints on the political support and (mostly fiscal) resources needed to implement and sustain a particular foreign and military policy.

Public opinion also enters the model as another set of parameters or constraints, comprising the sociology of war (attitudes toward casualties, modes of warfare, and the treatment of other countries). The sociology of war combines with military technology (in which public opinion is barely a factor) to compose what might be called “the future of war,” a set of parameters that can force the redesign of military missions, and even cause a change in the national strategy.

The public can also affect policy choices of state in two other, rather

different, ways (which constitute, in my overall model, two supplementary accounts of the derivation of foreign and military policy): (a) by influencing perceived costs and cognized stakes, in a cost-benefit calculus that determines a state's "propensity to intervene"; and (b) by constituting several of the constraints (some political, some fiscal) that apply to the microeconomic ("linear program") process of allocating various blocks of resources to the different elements in the national society's total "objective function."

In this view, public opinion operates most effectively on second-order factors (such as the entailed costs and consequences of a state's policies); it operates dynamically, at various points in a state process; and it operates most characteristically on the constraint side. By contrast, the standard view of public opinion has it contributing directly to the formation of the state's "preferences"; and as constituting a *static* configuration (taken at any given time, in any given situation). Nowhere in the theoretical schemes of the established public-opinion analysts are explicit (and rational) state processes and real (objective) parameters (that apply to the foreign policy process) taken into account. Thus, both the "logic" and the "logistics" of foreign policy derivation are ignored.

Since, in my model, public opinion affects policy "existentially" (that is, in ways that are indirect yet substantive), it matters less (or, rather, it matters *in different ways*) whether this opinion, in itself, is ignorant and therefore unintelligible (e.g., Converse 1964) or "structured" and therefore meaningful (e.g., Wittkopf 1990). Though (I believe) primarily ignorant (of the relevant factors of the nation's situation, and of the way that foreign and, especially, military policy is derived), public opinion constitutes an effective constraint that must be—and ultimately *is*—taken rationally into account by the proximate "makers" of foreign and military policy. Even though public opinion sometimes (and sometimes at crucial junctures) nonrationally denies policy makers the necessary means to implement a publicly "preferred" policy (demanding "bricks without straw"), that, too, is part of the systemic logic, and therefore the more encompassing rationality, of the larger policy-making process.

Perhaps another, summary, way of putting it is this: Public opinion, seen as an aspect of "social construction," fails. Public opinion, seen as a set of parameters, "works," though often perversely.

So far, I have identified "public ignorance" primarily with the "mass" public, though ignorance also, to degrees and in certain respects, characterizes elites (including the practitioners of foreign and military policy)

and theorists of political science (and even analysts of “public opinion”). And I have qualified “ignorance” to comprise, not only lack of specific knowledge of a country’s situation in all its international circumstances, but also distorted notions of *how* a country’s foreign and military policies are actually made (including the cost of elements of the defense program), and therefore *why* this policy is, or should be, what it is or what it is not. Since foreign policy is also constrained, even from the beginning, by the parameters of the international system (of states), and then is constrained further by other sets of parametric factors within the national system, it is subject to feedback and adjustment. Public opinion, then, has its principal (and sometimes crucial) impact on the second-order effects entailed by the state’s foreign policy, such as the defense budget as it engages fiscal policy; the size of military forces as this affects conscription; and the nature of warfare as it shapes the design of military missions.

In a *theoretical* vein, this reconceptualization of public opinion (as well as a proper conceptualization of other factors) requires that public opinion be considered, not as an instance of how a nation generates its “preferences” and thereby “socially constructs” its world, but rather as a set of specific inputs (mostly parametric) into a larger, more comprehensive, more complex process of foreign-policy derivation—a process that is necessarily characterized as (a) rational (in its entirety) and (b) objective (in its recognition of the reality of sets of parametric factors).

There are two *practical* consequences of this conception of the operation of public opinion. One is the large scope that is accorded to expert professionals or bureaucrats, working within rather formal and well-defined concrete institutions and procedures, to shape a state’s foreign and military policy, mostly by receiving (explicitly from political authorities, and amorphously from the entire political system) general directives and indications regarding the nation’s foreign-policy “stance” or orientation toward the international system (its “role,” in terms of its foreign-policy concerns, within the setting of its situation), and translating¹⁵ these into their entailments, or “tangible requisites,” in a rational and even quasideductive process that I call “the defense planning process” (consisting of a hierarchy of concerns from foreign policy, through national strategy, military missions, and forces–weapons–operational doctrines, to the resources of budgets and military personnel).

A second practical consequence is the large mismatch that occurs (often enough in a nation’s history) between the foreign policy that is

(initially) demanded by “public opinion” and a state’s political structure, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, either constraints imposed on the way the state is to implement that foreign policy or constraints that are imposed on the resources necessary to implement that foreign policy.

The Role of Experts and the Logic of Systems

The role of “experts” or “professionals,” or, if you wish, “bureaucrats,” in the derivation of the state’s foreign and military policy, bears directly upon the question posed by Theda Skocpol and other bringing-the-state-back-in theorists: How *autonomous* is the state—that is, how independent in its operation from “civil society”? One of the props of this autonomy, the expertise that is imputed to specialized bureaucrats, also raises the question, first, of the rationality and objectivity of the state’s performance of its foreign and military policy function; and, further, of the rationality of the entire policy-derivation system.

This rationality is usually achieved piecemeal, and often grudgingly (especially in the notable historical cases of the loss of empire, or of subordination to the will and power of another state). But however much it proceeds by fits and starts, the rationality of the policy process is likely—given the public’s essential ignorance of the objective requisites of projecting and sustaining a foreign policy, and of the true nature of the policy-formative processes of the state—to produce a comprehensive contradiction, a grand mismatch, between an electorate’s preferences for a certain role in the world, or for certain general and specific outcomes, and the constraints incorporated in the operation of the system, including constraints imposed by the same electorate, or by various elements of “the public,” on the tactics and resources available to achieve those preferred outcomes. For example, military intervention that is ostensibly desired by the public, according to competent survey researchers, may be denied by the public the necessary voluntary or conscripted personnel or the entailed tax revenues (or congressional budgetary allocations).

In this example, the rationality of the system both *consists in* its accommodation of constraint and is *frustrated by* the nonrationality of the constraint. This complex yet realistic account of the operation of the system contrasts with international-relations constructivism, which essentially posits the self-referential choice of policies (which is partially

true, but at best a truism), but also the self-gratifying “choice”—indeed, invention—of the (otherwise external, and real) foreign-policy environment: the state and its situation are (in the constructivist construct) one, so there can be no mismatches; and public opinion creates its own realities, rather than, on occasion, its own inconsistencies.

A gauge of the defense professionals’ expertise may be gained by first cataloguing the public’s lack of it.

First, the public does not know how to cost anything, especially the building-block components of forces. Here, civilian critics, particularly those on the liberal-left—whose twin biases are to fixate on destructive weapons and to consider any notable defense spending as “obscene” or “bloated”—tend to talk about the unit costs of individual big-ticket weapons systems, or the lifetime cost of an important weapons system. But *forces* are the important components in a cost-evaluation of a country’s defense program; that is, the design of military missions requires certain numbers and kinds of forces, and those forces must be appropriately equipped with weapons systems; the weapons systems do not “drive” the forces. (See Ravenal 2000a.) Defense costs what it costs. But you have to *know* what it costs, and you have to know *why* it costs what it does.

Second, the public does not know how to plan a military mission. This function includes setting the criteria of victory, which, in an age of increasing asymmetrical and informal and indirect warfare, are becoming elusive. Missions are the heart of the defense planning process. Planning missions involves the particular force requisites, the logistics, and the time-lines of deployment. Of course, determining the criteria of “victory”—and thus when, and whether, to get out—is partly the province of political leaders; to the extent that they, too, are autonomous from public opinion (except as a partial constraint), they can be counted as members of the state.

Third, since the public does not know how to determine, and to design for, the mission requirements of weapons systems needed by the forces that will carry out missions, it cannot judge the probable outcomes of combat situations, at any level of combat.

Fourth, the public does not know how to integrate technology into next-generation weapons systems.

Fifth, the public does not know how to judge—and meet—the criteria of readiness. For instance, civilian critics, who often make proposals to “depend more on” the military reserves (which are ostensibly cheaper), have no basis for this recommendation.

Sixth, the public does not have a grasp of the obsolescence of weapons systems and “platforms.” Thus it cannot judge whether to stretch out a system’s life or replace it.

Seventh, the public does not have a “feel” for the morale and the ethos of fighting forces. Consequently, it cannot judge where to draw the line on the micromanagement of defense programs by legislators.

Conversely to all these disabilities of the public, the peculiar expertise of the military service staffs and the Joint Staff resides precisely in those “middle” reaches of the planning process that implement foreign policy and national strategy:

First, they contribute judgments of the comparative efficacies of alternative national strategies in the pursuit of given foreign-policy objectives; this includes assessing the risks to overall national security of alternative national strategies, including gross comparisons of, say, ground-force intervention versus “strike warfare.”

Second, they derive military missions (regional, functional) from national strategy; this includes assessing threats and evaluating the contribution of allies.

Third, they design military missions, including force requirements, weapons systems (with their “mission requirements”), and operational doctrines. In this function, the military takes cognizance of the parameters of the sociology of war and military technology.

Fourth, they derive forces, weapons systems, and operational doctrines from the planned missions. (Admittedly, some deference is paid to the organizational requirements, real and idealized, of the individual military services, and sometimes branches of those services).

Fifth, when it comes to costs of forces and, particularly, weapons, in terms of money and personnel, the military can influence techniques of acquisition and recruitment. But, to a large extent, forces and weapons “cost what they cost”; these cost factors are virtually parametric, though eventually subject to the (sometimes expensive) deliberate parametric shifts of investment in technology, and changes in the organization of defense industry.¹⁶

These elements of expertise not only constitute the professionalism of the cohort of decision makers and planners in a particular reach of the processes of a state; they also, to a significant degree, validate the autonomy and immunity from popular politics of the process, conferring a certain legitimacy upon it. Of greater importance to the topic of this paper, they serve as indicators of the essential rationality of the process.

Non-Rational Theories of Foreign Policy

The theories, or models, that I characterize as “nonrational” constitute challenges to the ascription of rationality in the state-level making of foreign and military policy of the sort that I have set out thus far.

Most of such nonrational theories or models decompose—and thus make unintelligible—the very concept of “state” action. One category of nonrational theory, which I call “*subrational*,” is a set of quasitheoretical versions of virtually anecdotal accounts of the operation of self-interest within the processes of government, to the effect that supposedly “national” officials are really perpetrating suboptimal outcomes, for the sake of themselves.

There are several variants. One is the “organizational politics” model (described, not favored, by Graham Allison [1971 and 1999]),¹⁷ wherein organizations favor their own entrenched methodologies (“standard operating procedures”), and, when confronted with a problem, scan only as far as the nearest convenient solution (Herbert Simon’s “satisficing”), instead of seeking to optimize the interest of the state. Thus, one can predict that the organization’s behavior at time *t* will be more or less the same as that at time *t-1*.¹⁸

Perhaps the most familiar of the subrational models is “bureaucratic politics” (Allison’s “Model Three,” the one that he espouses), wherein participants in the decision-making process seek to maximize their own personal or narrowly drawn organizational advantage, with only minimal respect (in the form of “shared values”) for the “national interest” (and then only as an outside constraint on their dominantly self-serving behavior).

A surprising variant of bureaucratic politics is comprised in the ostensibly economic theory of “public choice,” as in the work of James Buchanan (e.g., 1979 and 1980) and Robert Higgs (1987)—surprising because it is the analytic vehicle mostly of conservatives (whereas the bureaucratic-politics model represents predominantly liberal sentiment). Actually, “public choice” is not really economics, but is more a theory of politics. More to the point, it is not even about “public” choice, since, like the bureaucratic-politics model, it repudiates the very notion that bureaucrats make truly “public” choices; rather, they exhibit typically “rent-seeking” behavior, abusing their public positions in order to amass private gains, or at least to build personal empires within their official niches.

Perhaps the most prevalent of the subrational models is the “military-

industrial complex,” which grew out of propositions first put forward by C. Wright Mills in the 1950s.¹⁹ This theory asserts that virtually all ostensibly national-security decisions—whether about strategy, the level of defense spending, the design of weapons systems, or the award of defense production and development contracts—are really, fundamentally, “pork,” to serve a corporation, a locality, a particular military service, or an interest group within that service (such as naval aviators). The Pentagon, and the country, get, not the objectively appropriate measures or equipment, but rather what the “complex” foists upon them.

Subrational theories actually explain very little. Of course, there has to be *some* truth to them, in that they describe the behavior of some people, at some times, in some circumstances, under some conditions of incentive and motivation. But the factors that they posit operate mostly *as constraints* on the otherwise rational optimization of objectives that, if for no other reason than the playing out of official *roles*, transcend merely personal or parochial imperatives.

My treatment of “role” differs from that of the bureaucratic-politics theorists, whose model of the derivation of foreign policy depends heavily, and acknowledgedly, on a narrow and specific identification of the role playing of organizationally situated individuals in a partly conflictual “pulling and hauling” process that “results in” some policy outcome. Even then, it has been pointed out—for instance, in Houghton 2000 (particularly on pp. 167 and 171)—that historical *evidence, including* examples claimed by Allison himself to validate the bureaucratic-politics thesis, does not support that thesis. Indeed, in the second edition of *Essence of Decision* (1999), Allison and Zelikow themselves admit: “Some players are not able to articulate [sic] the governmental politics game because their conception of their job does not legitimate such activity” (311). This is a crucial admission, and one that points, empirically, to my own, broader and generic, treatment of role.

Why Bureaucrats Tend to Behave Themselves

Roles (all theorists state) give rise to “expectations” of performance. My point is that virtually all governmental roles, and especially national-security roles, and particularly the roles of the uniformed military, embody expectations of devotion to the “national interest,” to rationality in the derivation of policy at every functional level, and to objectivity in the treatment of parameters, especially external param-

ters such as threats and the power and capabilities of other nations. Evidence of such generically loyal, rational, and objective behavior of (at least) national-security elites is pervasive—indeed, so pervasive that it would be otiose, and certainly inefficient, to present a panoply of case studies to illustrate this point (a point that is, of course, crucial to the argument of my paper). To be sure, ample allowance must be made for the partial, or occasional, influence of such nonrational factors as bureaucratic politics (and, for that matter, individual cognitive dispositions)—and a comprehensive and “complex rational” model would make such allowance, in ways and in places that are appropriate to the degree and the “location” of such nonrational factors (such as the influence of casualty-aversion on the design of military missions, or the “filters” of probability discounting, remoteness perception, and risk-aversion/acceptance on the state’s “propensity to intervene.” (See Ravenal 2000c.) Empirical demonstrations of the dominant rationality of both the conduct of governmental elites and the “total system” can be found in each annual Secretary of Defense’s “Posture Statement,” as well as in many accounts of defense decision making, such as Enthoven and Smith 1971. If one is “counting” single “cases” that support the thesis of rational policy making, it should be noted that *each* of the hundreds of items presented in these official reports and secondary studies constitutes a case of empirical evidence.²⁰

Subrational models fail to take into account the possibility of bureaucrats’ dedication to the “national interest,” or the possibility that the national interest is honestly misconceived in more parochial terms. Moreover, subrational theories cannot factor in such obvious and essential aspects of the real world as the international system and, more specifically, threats and challenges emanating from outside one’s own country.

In a way, “role” connects the individual to the state-level process, and moderates his (perhaps otherwise) self-seeking impulses, when he is constrained by his formal and official position. Role-derived behavior tends to be formalized and codified; relatively transparent and at least peer-reviewed; stable and consistent with others’ expectations; longer-lived than any particular individual and transmitted to successors and ancillaries; measured against a standard, and thus corrigible; defined in terms of the performed function, and therefore derived from a state function; *un*corrupt, because personal cheating and egregious aggrandizement are conspicuously discouraged; and therefore likely to be rational, especially over time; and at least deliberate, not random.²¹

Thus, we find defense decision makers attempting to “frame” the structure of a problem on the basis of the most accurate intelligence. For example, they seek to know “what *drives* what,” and they perform “sensitivity analysis” to see how the results are moved by various hypothetical actions. They naturally want to know whether dependent variables are directly or inversely proportional to independent variables. They make it their business to know *where* the threats come from (i.e., threats are not “socially constructed”).

A major reason for the rationality of this process is that much security planning is done, not in vaguely undefined circumstances that offer scope for idiosyncratic, subjective behavior, but rather in structured and reviewed organizational frameworks. This does not lead to the widely accepted psychodynamic hypothesis of “groupthink” (Janis 1982), but rather to an insistence that proposals be rationally presented. Nonrationalities (which are bad for understanding and prediction) tend to get filtered out. People are fired for presenting skewed analysis and for making bad predictions. This is because something important is riding on the causal analysis and the contingent prediction.

To those who have participated in processes of defense decision making, nonrational (including subrational) theories do not have the “feel” of reality. Given the roles that participants in the process are expected to play, obvious, and even not-so-obvious, “rent-seeking” would not only be shameful; it would present a severe risk of career termination. Therefore, ironically, even efforts to conceal such self-seeking, through the construction of objectively convincing advocacy arguments (so-called “rationalizations”), lead to an improvement in the quality of the debate.

At a more primal level, it is unclear why people predisposed to seek rents would choose to enter the foreign service or the defense bureaucracy, since the opportunities for personal profit there are minuscule compared to those in the commercial world. The very self-placement in these reaches of government testifies either to a sincere commitment to national values or to a lack of imagination sufficient to exploit opportunities for personal profit—which suggests that rent-seeking would no more characterize such bureaucrats once they were in a position to make policy than when they chose to enter public service in the first place.

A final point is that the truly important policy decisions—“large-scale foreign policy change” (see Ravenal 1989), or acute crisis action—are, and must be, observably rational in their overall design and purpose.

They must be, because they produce testable results: States lose and fail. Leaders are voted or forced out of office.²²

Nonetheless, it should go without saying that what we observe in the foreign-policy process is not pure rationality, but “bounded” rationality. Most theorists²³ define “bounded rationality” (and anything short of pure rationality) as *nonrationality*. But this seems to me to be over-rigorous, to the point of being misleading. According to so rigorous a definition of rationality, it would be virtually impossible to find a case of it in reality. To me, bounded rationality (unless, of course, multiply bounded to the point of nullification) means seeking objectives in a recognizably efficient way, and having, as an overall objective, the optimization of some quality or entity. “Boundedness” itself, then, must be interpreted to mean observant of some constraints that are not *themselves* “rational” (though they need not be flagrantly irrational; they may just “be,” existentially, neutral). Heeding such nonrational constraints does not make one’s entire set of operating principles, taken as a whole, “nonrational”; one is simply seeking to achieve the maximization of one’s “objective function” in the most efficient way, *subject to* nonrational parameters—that is, “facts.”

II. THE RATIONALITY OF SEMI-AUTONOMOUS MILITARY POLICY

Most journalistic critics of defense (and surprisingly many academic critics, too) work on the level of metaphor and crude numerology. Actually, their critical dispositions constitute a kind of prototheoretical stance, one that almost invariably takes policy to be the result of some nonrational compulsion, attitude, or parochial self-interest.

Typical of this critical slant is what I call the “Ben and Jerry’s” analysis, after some remarks by the chief executive officer of the ice-cream company at a meeting of sympathetic businessmen who call themselves “Business Leaders for New Priorities.” At this meeting Ben Cohen offered his special flavor, “Totally Nuts,” as a metaphor for the U.S. defense program. (“Who will have the first bowl?” Ben screamed; *Washington Post* 1996.)²⁴ To these critics, current U.S. defense budgets look unreasonably large, because, say, “the U.S. and its strong military allies are responsible for some 80 percent of total world military spending today”; or because “in 1996, America will spend more than twice as much on its military as the combined total of potential adversaries

China, Russia, Iran, Iraq, Syria, North Korea, Cuba, and Libya” (Center for Defense Information 1996).²⁵

Such comparisons are worthless and even misleading. First of all, no other country would fight the United States on U.S. terms; other countries, and groups, will fight “asymmetrically,” taking advantage of their peculiar strengths and advantages. Second, each other country would be defending on its own ground, imposing disproportionate logistical and rotational demands on U.S. intruders, as well as force-on-force disparities. Third, the United States must fight with outsize, as well as apparently oversophisticated, forces and weapons; “the American way of war” has deep sociological roots and will not be displaced. Thus, *if* it is to fight with other states at all—particularly if there are several states that it might have to oppose simultaneously—the United States must maintain large and expensive standing military forces and deployment capabilities.²⁶

What such comparisons overlook is the logic in the derivation of defense policy, the recognizable rationality in the almost deductive procession of reasoning from one to another of the levels of the hierarchy of concerns (from foreign policy, to national strategy, to military missions, to forces-weapons-doctrines, to the resources of money and military personnel). This logic is accurately—you might say empirically—reflected in the series of annual “posture statements” of successive Secretaries of Defense. Contrary to the persistent sniping from uninformed sources, these reports are characterized by intelligence (in the solutions and adaptations), openness (in the layout of facts and considerations), clarity (in expression), and rationality (in adjusting means to ends). The emphasis is on: (1) what things cost; (2) the missions of U.S. forces (in terms of battlefields and tasks, capabilities and functions); and (3) the mission requirements for U.S. weapons systems. The Secretary’s report provides (if one looks, and sometimes digs, for it) “connectivity” between these three concerns and the higher levels of policy that shape them. These linkages not only facilitate the Secretary’s own argument, but also allow for objective criticism and the positing of alternatives.

Such documents, then, are rational responses to the military *missions* that are generated by the higher levels of policy: national strategy and foreign policy. Note that only when one reaches the level of “military missions” does one encounter a level of policy that is “95 percent” the province of military planners. National strategy (the next higher level) could plausibly be considered a 50-50 split between White House/State Department and Pentagon determination. The highest level, foreign

policy, is recognized to be almost entirely the province of the White House and the State Department.

Of course, to some extent the Pentagon must intuit the tangible significance of such foreign-policy guidance as it receives, which is entirely verbal and is also often obscure and even partially self-contradictory. But that does not mean that foreign-policy pronouncements are merely rhetorical, or (as in the frequent idle complaint) that, in the absence of some succinct phrase or designation of “doctrine,” an administration “has no foreign policy.” First of all, in the “operational” sense, foreign policy is a *prediction* of a state’s contingent responses over a range of future situations; thus, a state will always have a foreign policy, whether or not anyone affects to notice it. And second, it is the function of the state’s external security organizations, particularly its military organizations, to “operationalize” foreign policy. Thus, for example, the cost of America’s foreign policy is not its roughly \$23-billion “international affairs” budget, but rather that plus its roughly \$310-billion defense budget.

Somewhat more systematically, the point here is this: Gross, static comparisons of overall U.S. forces, or defense budgets, with those of other countries (whether all, or just adversaries or potential adversaries) might be interesting; but they are not relevant to forming a military posture and defense program for the United States. A defense program (the strategy, the forces, the weapons) must meet necessary, or probable, *military missions*. Military missions are the pivotal element in the defense planning process—in designing the force structure and the major weapons systems (and the operational doctrines).

The hierarchy of concerns of which at least the U.S. defense-planning process consists, starting with foreign policy and proceeding through national strategy, to military missions, to forces-weapons-doctrines, to the resource-requisite level of money and military personnel (which is constrained by the nation’s political economy), is so rational (though, of course, interwoven with some nonrational human and organizational impulses and behavioral characteristics; yet, within the “inner loop” of the planning process, these are far from dominant) as to be virtually *deductive* (with feedback if initial goals cannot be met or sustained).²⁷ Military missions are derived from “higher” levels of policy, notably national strategy and ultimately foreign policy: the “stance” of the state, as a combination of its role, in terms of the objects of its foreign policy, and its situation in the international system.

Thus, perhaps even more misleading than demotic journalism are the

academic theories that attribute the defense program (aggregate spending, what is bought, what it is to be used for) to organizational momentum, bureaucratic aggrandizement, corporate greed, perceptual panic, and other nonrational independent variables. These explanatory models, in all their diversity, not only ascribe the foreign-policy outputs of the state to nonrational causes, but also, in positing a *direct* relationship between such causes and those policies, bypass the causal function of the entire process, the defense planning process, that translates initial policy orientations or even proposals or intentions into their tangible requisites, and thus provides a point of entry to several kinds of constraints (among them, those that arise from public opinion), while also providing linkages between foreign policy and its resource requirements, and between the structure of the international system and the domestic political economy. The various nonrational theories cut these linkages, thereby (in my view) rendering foreign and military policy both unintelligible and incorrigible; such theories suggest that, since there is “no reason” for what a state is now doing, it can make, with impunity, arbitrary cuts in, and transfers from, the defense budget.

Of course, in defense planning, as in any human enterprise, there is some distortion of cause and effect, but, in a comprehensive, complex rational model (such as the one that I am putting forward here), that constitutes the “noise,” not the signal. And how do we know that this model resembles (at least U.S.) reality? Because it is consistent with the observed behavior of real-world defense bureaucrats; and with the case made annually by the reports of the Secretary of Defense; and with the description of the defense-planning process given in Enthoven and Smith 1971, which itself is a compendium of dozens of individual empirical case studies of how rational analysis—to be precise, “systems analysis”—is brought to bear on the generation of forces and weapons systems and even operational doctrines. I could also cite virtually every case that I personally observed, in my experience as a participant in the defense planning process (as a division director in the department of Systems Analysis, in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, from 1967 to 1969).

Once one cuts through the noise, the signal is a set of propositions, which go in both directions: (1) To achieve effects of national strategy and foreign policy, a state must pay for what it gets, more or less at the going rates. And (2) if a state tries to save considerable amounts from the defense budget, it will have to slight some elements of its national strategy, and thus give up some objects of its foreign policy. This is because

projected—that is, contingent—military missions drive the need for quantities and types of forces and weapons, and for the operational doctrines to use those forces and weapons, in various regions, against various adversaries, to various effects. And those military missions are not things unto themselves, but rather proceed from the national strategy and foreign policy—the “stance” that the state assumes toward the rest of the international system. But that stance is not merely a wishful reflection of a society’s “values,” fueling those stupefying great debates about (for example) America’s role in the world; they are, rather, the balanced result of the role *and the situation* of the state, in the midst of the actual and impending configuration of power in the international system. And all this, finally, is tempered and constrained by the tangible and intangible support that a society’s “political economy” will provide for the generation of the real, hard military requisites of its state’s foreign policy.

What I have laid out here is an expression of the *logic* of defense policy, almost a theory of the derivation of military missions, perhaps a clue to the “operationalization” of foreign policy. When certain “specifications” of the actual situation of a state are added to the model, it will indicate whether a state will try to accomplish certain objectives in the world, and then whether the state will succeed or fail.

Constraints on State Power, Invisible and Logical

Earlier, I defined public ignorance as having two components: (1) negligence of the factors and circumstances (including costs)—the logic of the situation—that pertain to a society’s military security; and (2) a distorted view, to the extent that it is a view at all, of the way that foreign and military policy are made—their applied logic, if you will.

The first form of ignorance, which might be compared to blindness, tends to relegate security planning to the province of official and professional elites, who are likely to be much more informed and competent—much less blind—than the public; and who are also likely to be dedicated to performing an objective and rational process in the interest of the state, characteristically transcending their own personal or parochial utility. On the other hand, blind ignorance also shifts the attention (and often the opposition) of the public to the “second-order” effects of the state’s foreign and military policies, such as casualties (actual or projected), high defense budgets and significant taxation, and

possibly conscription—thereby constraining in several ways the otherwise-autonomous decisions of the policy-making elites.

The second form of ignorance, which might be compared to a pair of spectacles that distorts sight, tends to slight the factors that actually influence the making of defense programs. This tends to cut any perceived linkage between the public's own (initially and overtly) "preferred" foreign policies and the means that are entailed to implement these policies, so that the constraints on second-order effects such as defense budgets and casualties—which actually must affect the generation of forces and the acquisition of weapons systems, and sometimes the fashioning of operational doctrines—are not seen to provide any feedback to help adjust foreign policy and military strategy.

These facets of public ignorance have the combined effect of handing the nation's policy elites ambitious goals in the world but denying them the means to implement these goals. This is the ultimate mismatch of ends and means, and it is also why simplistic theoretical explanations, which trace a direct line from initial, overt societal "preferences," however these are held to be generated in various theories, to the state's foreign policy outputs, are deficient and even mischievous. In effect, the public is unwittingly requiring its leaders (in the Biblical image) "to make bricks without straw."

Americans—and, I suppose, the citizens of any country that is enough of a power that its actions have consequences in the world, making its foreign policies worth studying and analyzing—learn late that foreign policies have entailments. They tend to think (to the extent that they pay the matter any mind) that their nation's role in the world, its choice of "objects" of concern and, particularly, intervention, can be the pure expressions of its "values" and sentiments; that foreign policies can be debated, and compared, in terms of the attractiveness of their putative end-states ("engagement" vs. "isolation"), because any of the putative entailments (costs, risks) can be manipulated or postponed or entirely avoided, as they are disconnected from the policies themselves and their intended ends. All of these "beliefs" (which are almost always implicit) produce a series of political actions—vetoes, protests, refusals, withdrawals of support, rebellions against such imposed costs as taxes and restrictions—by which the public responds (remotely, indirectly, eventually) to the entailed costs and risks that are the tangible requisites of given policies. In this disconnect—between endorsement of the goals of policy, and resistance to its entailments—lies the great "mismatch" of American foreign policy.

The bottom line of this is that, even when there is a public opinion toward a particular foreign policy, that policy is not made by the public. Rather, mostly by means of two parameters—the constraints of a country’s “sociology of war” and of its “political economy”—public resistance, say, to a significant foreign-policy engagement or military initiative (or, rather, to the second-order effects of such a policy) may force the governing leaders and planners to work around those parameters (or even force a change in those leaders or planners), not necessarily in the most efficient way, and sometimes, ironically, to the regret of the public, which “willed” the end (say, victory over communism) without the means (say, military effort).

The history of the ongoing standoff with Saddam Hussein of Iraq illustrates one such mismatch. On the one hand, the public was induced to oppose his continued reign, especially when it was persuaded that he threatened “us” or our “friends”—particularly with weapons of mass destruction. On the other hand, there were, at least before September 11, 2001, many indications that the American public would not support actions necessary to end the threat (such as full-scale ground-force intervention and lengthy occupation), and that therefore the American state was constrained from taking such actions.

Thus, the American public often prefers (at the affective-rhetorical level) commitments to defend “sympathetic” countries and polities around the world (and there is a large supply of these), but (on the level where causality and entailment reign) it would reject the defense-military costs and sacrifices that are objectively required for such foreign-policy commitments. This is partly because the public does not understand those risks and costs and sacrifices, and partly because many opinion leaders purvey misleading and false explanatory models that suggest the possibility of getting something for nothing: a “leaner, meaner” military; “reliance on diplomacy rather than military force”; “collective security”; the influence of America’s “soft power.”²⁸

III. BRINGING THE STATE BACK INTO FOREIGN POLICY

In comparative politics, where “state theory” per se originated, the state should never have dropped out (and never really did drop out), since this subfield of political science is *about* the state (and other phenomena on the same “level” as the state). State theory seems to have been a reaction against comparativists’ tendency to focus on the *components*, or

constituents, of the state, or on “society” (and components of society) as distinct from the state (as the more formal apparatus), in order to establish independent variables that either might be revealing explanations of the (nominal) outputs or character of a state, or might be, simply, interesting subjects of study in themselves.

In comparative politics, “bringing the state back in” means raising the “level” of observation and description to a higher, and more “formal,” plane. Contrastingly, in the study of international relations, “bringing the state back in” has meant lowering the level of observation and description, from the macro-systemic level that has been emphasized by such (structural) Realists as Kenneth Waltz (e.g., 1979). Such Realists contend that the underlying anarchy of the international system is virtually the sole necessary condition of any state’s foreign policy, as well as being a sufficient condition to bring about the “appropriate” (and essentially unchanging) foreign policy of a state. In its drive for extreme explanatory parsimony, structural Realism fixates on one element (which some might take as an independent variable, and others as a set of parameters) that is held to be determinative; yet that element is often treated only as bluntly associative, not even “causal” in a fully articulated way, probably because the detailed, proximate causation of a state’s foreign policy lies on the “unit level” (in Waltz’s terminology), which structural Realist theory deliberately avoids. Thus, “bringing the state back in” really means specifying *how* the “international system” exerts its effects.

A continually burgeoning literature purports to address the linkage—the “pathways” (of “diffusion”)—by which “international norms” become embedded and accepted as legitimate (that is, what is called “salient”) in domestic state politics and wider social “discourse” and action.²⁹ However, virtually all of this literature treats the construction of international regimes and value systems, and states’ accession to international regimes and value systems, as a function of domestic norms. Some analysts see somehow already-popular norms as altering state and societal institutions and thereby becoming “embedded.” Other analysts see state and societal institutions as, in effect, “choosing” the norms that then become embedded. But, in either case, the predominant research in “norm diffusion” (as that title suggests) begins and ends with “norms” and (state) “preferences” (which are a kind of transmuted norms); though it purports to “link” phenomena at the international and state levels, the linkage remains on the subjective dimension. It overlooks real state processes, such as an articulated, institutionalized

“defense planning process” that deals with objective “threats,” whether specific or generic, to the state’s situation in the international system, and that deals with objective constraints, such as a society’s political economy.³⁰ Moreover, the “process” that norm-diffusion research does identify as the mechanism by which the initially existent international norm becomes a part of the state’s “preferences” (which, as I have said above, are merely transmuted norms, reflected outwards toward the international system) is usually described *statically*, as a mere “intervening” variable. In other words, the predominant research (which is sometimes described as a movement to “bring the state back in”) is an exercise in deriving the “*salience*” of this or that norm, not in either (a) seeing how such a norm plays against the (structural) realities of the international system, or (b) seeing whether such a norm even survives the “process” of its translation into its tangible requisites, which are, in turn, played against the constraints of a country’s “political economy.”

In an oblique, yet recognizable, sense, then, the entire exercise in the “diffusion of norms”—even taking cognizance of the depth of research and mid-level theory-building involved, and of the diversity of theoretical orientations of the scholars concerned with this topic (some explicitly constructivist, some liberal-institutionalist)—is a species of social constructivism: and arguably, therefore, an *overreaction* to structural Realism.

This may also be the place for a brief discussion of two other theoretical notions that are often invoked in treatments of the diffusion of norms. One is “path dependence,” which asserts the determinative, and usually unique, influence of a country’s history—both its prior experiences and its evolving values and institutions—upon its domestic and foreign policy.³¹ Without objecting to this approach, I would remark only that a sufficiently *underspecified* comprehensive theoretical framework (such as the one that I offer here) can accommodate the *various* values and institutions that are produced in the various path dependencies of different countries.

The other idea is “process tracing.” This technique is designed to supplement, and underpin, the mere correlation of two (or more) variables—say, across geographical space (or even across different times arrayed in a nontemporal format, such as a regression)—by demonstrating the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable over time: for instance, by observing the conditions that, at various successive periods, shaped the emergence and evolution of some particular institution. Unfortunately (in my view), the term

“process tracing” is slightly misleading. The establishment of a temporal sequence of relationships might indicate causation of a sort, and that is useful. But such a sequence is not a process in the immediate and usual sense of the word, in which institutionalized procedures take a given policy objective and translate it into its tangible requisites, and calculate its actual costs, and play these costs against constraints such as the political economy.

Theda Skocpol (1985) is generally credited with having led the movement to “bring the state back in.” That description is commonly, and cursorily, taken to mean “the state” as “an autonomous actor,” though Skocpol herself takes care to define “autonomy” as the degree to which “governmental institutions and administrative and military institutions [are] sites of independent action, of independent interest articulation, interacting with social movements and classes.” Therefore, in her view, states are (only) “potentially autonomous actors,” *not* “invariably autonomous” (since “sometimes, in fact, states [or parts of states] are captured by classes or social or interest groups”) (1999, 17).

Skocpol (1985, 9) elaborates that “states conceived as organizations claiming control over territories and people may formulate and pursue goals that are not simply reflective of the demands or interests of social groups, classes, or society. This is what is usually meant by ‘state autonomy.’” Expressing her essentially institutionalist, rather than ideational, conception of state autonomy, she argues that “states matter not simply because of the goal-oriented activities of state officials. They matter because their organizational configurations, along with their overall patterns of activity, affect political culture, encourage some kinds of group formations and collective political actions (but not others), and make possible the raising of certain political issues (but not others)” (*ibid.*, 21). Skocpol (1999, 17 and 1985, 8) also invokes “path dependencies” as partial explanatory variables to account for the evolution and the present identity of a given state’s policy goals and patterns of action. In sum, Skocpol (1985, 4, 20) intends her emphasis on the formal state as an explicit corrective—albeit not a substitute—for what she has characterized as “society-centered” explanatory models of state action.

Skocpol happens not to cite military policy and action (or even the broader category of security issues) as a *leading* example of state autonomy, but she does note that “states necessarily stand at the intersections between domestic socio-political orders and the transnational relations within which they must maneuver for survival and advantage in relation to other states.” But, rather than settling for a single model of a generic

“state” lodged within the structure of an international system (as in structural Realism), Skocpol emphasizes “the various ways in which state structures and actions are conditioned by historically changing transnational contexts” (1985, 8). She goes as far as to attribute state autonomy significantly to “the linkage of states into transnational structures and into international flows of communication,” noting that “collectivities of career officials relatively insulated from ties to currently dominant socioeconomic interests are likely to launch distinctive new state strategies in times of crisis,” folding such initiatives into the more generic “need of states to maintain control and order” (*ibid.*, 9).

In this formulation, Skocpol does not refer to the ongoing functions of making security strategy and making defense programs and budgets. My view is that these functions exhibit relatively autonomous state behavior at its peak. She is guardedly complimentary of Stephen Krasner’s state-elite account (Krasner 1978) of the formulation of at least one area of foreign policy—namely, the supply of raw materials from abroad—which cites “the high degree of insulation” of the White House and the State Department—“for U.S. foreign policy the central state actors”—“from specific societal pressures.” “A set of formal and informal obligations,” according to Krasner (1978, 11), “charge” these actors “with furthering the nation’s general interests.” As Skocpol herself puts it, this insulation of the state from society has tended to occur “precisely when distinctively geopolitical issues of foreign military intervention and broad ideological conceptions of U.S. world hegemony have been involved” (1985, 13).

Krasner’s account correlates raw-materials policy making with the active and explicit determinative influence of political and professional elites; this could be seen as indicative of a larger theory of foreign-policy making as relatively expert and dominantly rational (though such an account would have to be more revealing of the *process* that generated the state’s foreign and security policy). Similarly, Samuel DeCanio (2000) points out that state interests are implemented characteristically in cases where the state is defending its territory and integrity, and where the state is exacting the requisite resources from “its” society—attributing the state of affairs to the *interaction* of a high degree of state competence in these areas *and* an especially severe public ignorance: “The focus of state theory has been to attribute this autonomy to the . . . degree of control it has over the policy and military organs of the state. . . . State theory is focused on explaining the variables responsible for

state autonomy that are *not* [emphasis added] connected with civil society. Hence the focus on military and taxation capabilities.”

Skocpol, Krasner, and DeCanio develop and apply state theory in the field of comparative politics. In the field of international relations, the state has never been absent. The principal reason for the recent fielding of state-level approaches to the derivation of foreign policy—norm diffusion, path dependence, and process tracing—was the resuscitation of Realism, in the shape of “structural Realism” (or neo-realism), which, typically in Waltz’s uncompromisingly parsimonious scheme, attributed all the (important or distinguishable) foreign policies and actions of a state directly to the structure—or, in an even more stringent interpretation, to the axiomatic “anarchy”—of the international system.³² Structural Realism treated whatever variety might be found in the description of states’ foreign-policy styles and outputs as, literally, beneath analytic notice, since it posited that all states’ foreign policies were virtually compelled, automatic, and unintermediated responses to the imperatives of the encompassing international system.

“Preferences” vs. Parameters

Thus, in international relations theory, “bringing the state back in” has meant renewing attention to the “actor” and “actor variables,” in contrast to “structure” and the determinants that percolate down from the structural condition of the international system. This tendency is not only an inevitable recentering of the pendulum, but a desirable one, in one crucial respect: it recognizes the *proximate causation* of a state’s foreign policy as lying at the “unit level”—that is, the level that comprises formal state behavior, informal state behavior, and even non-state but societal and partly societal behavior.

But beyond that, what does it mean to “bring the state (back) in” to international relations? Once one has identified the state as the repository of legal (Westphalian) sovereignty, and as (or “as-if”—i.e., analytically) a unitary actor, and as the constituent member of the international system, how should we describe the *way* in which the state (or parts of the state, or other actors on the level of the state) “makes” policy and “decides” to act, in its characteristic realm of foreign (including military) policy? In other words, what constitutes a correct model of the derivation of a state’s foreign policy?

Constructivism has offered a widely accepted answer, as the pendu-

lum has swung away from structural Realism. Constructivism is a cognitive-based theoretical disposition that elevates the actor (a state or a national society) to a status that engulfs its environment, since even (otherwise) parametric factors are taken to be self-constructed. The systemic error that underlies constructivist accounts of the derivation of a state's foreign policy is the fixation on "preferences" (and, underlyingly, their "origin"). Here, the fault is not with the enterprise of identifying the (policy) "preferences" of a state or a state's elites or a national society, and, in turn, correlating those preferences with a set of norms and values, or with a characteristic institution. The fault is in (mostly implicitly) tracing those norms and institutions, and the ensuing policy preferences, directly and immediately and finally into actually resulting policies.

In some theorists' models, "*public opinion*"—which is, after all, an expression of society's "preferences"—is thus traced directly into a state's foreign policy: That is, these models assume that public opinion can predict (or even precisely and completely constrain) the state's foreign policy. But even if there *is* a public opinion on a given foreign-policy issue, and even if it is initially taken into account by policy makers, they will then have to derive the tangible requisites of the public's "preferences" by engaging in a *process* such as "the defense planning process," comprising a "hierarchy of concerns" ranging from foreign policy goals, through national strategy, through military missions, through forces-weapons-operational doctrines, and finally to resources of money and military personnel—which are then tested against the parameter of the country's "political economy." If this test fails, the resulting "feedback" will occasion the alteration of one or another of the levels of concern, possibly up to the point of forcing the alteration of the initially "preferred" foreign policy itself. Overall, this *process* is instrumentally rational.

Constructivist accounts not only impart an air of "willfulness" to the making of foreign policy, by denying both the objectivity of parameters and the rationality of the process; they cut the linkages between, on the one hand, foreign policy and its tangible requisites—notably its resource impositions—and, on the other hand, the possibility of rejection and failure in the arena of the nation's political economy. They also cut the linkages between a country's political-economic situation in the international system (roughly, "geopolitics") and the country's own "political economy."

This is hardly surprising, since constructivism is a reaction against

structural Realism's exclusive positing of macrosystemic (that is, the international system's) causal influence, and against its hyperrational positing of an individual state's "appropriate" foreign-policy response to the encompassing structure of the international system—say, a balance-of-power situation (though, ironically, structural Realism is almost deterministic in its insistence on the state's inevitable and uniform response to this structure).

The Realist position has in its favor the objectivity of such parameters as external structural constraints—and internal societal constraints, too; plus the rationality of the state's decision processes, which allow the translation into policy of the factors that Realists hold to be determinative: the structure of the international system, its axiomatic "anarchical" condition, or some particular threats. Yet Realist theory otherwise lacks an explicit proximate-causal mechanism that would link states to the international system. Oddly, constructivism "collapses" this problem, by denying the objectivity of external parameters, and by characterizing the foreign policy of states as self-generated—not a rational response, because not really a response to anything.

From an epistemological (and ontological) standpoint, the constructivist position can be sustained only if reality is translated into (nothing but) what we (or whole societies) "think" about reality, and if what we think about reality is further translated into the symbols (mostly linguistic) in which we express the thoughts that we have about reality. Without pursuing this matter in philosophic depth, however, even ostensibly "symbolic" change, say, in another state's behavioral output, may signify a real and possibly threatening or at least inhibiting circumstance; and therefore it is as "objective" and as "given" as any admittedly "hard" factual condition, such as the state of technological knowledge, or the availability of natural resources, or the array of international power.³³ Constructivism has been posited as a kind of "middle position," between the extreme tendencies, in contemporary epistemology, of positivistic radical empiricism and post-positivistic linguistic reduction (see Patomaki and Wight 2000). My own reading of constructivism is that it *is* the extreme position, and *it* is an example of the linguisticism of taking things by their signs or symbols, and thus thinking that there is no (significant) ontological difference between the stuff of the self (whether personal or social) and the stuff of the environment, and then concluding that self and environment are equally (or similarly) manipulable or "constructed."

How Universal Is State Rationality?

The ascription, here, of objectivity and rationality to the agents of the state's foreign policy function raises the question of the scope or "domain" of applicability of theoretical models that claim these qualities. (Of course, the question of the scope of applicability is intricately related to the question of the empirical evidence for such behavior.)

The answer falls into several categories, and in each of these, there is a descending degree of applicability of objectivity/rationality—but in virtually all cases, even the slightest, I would affirm that objective and rational consideration and choice and action pertain, to some degree, at least "implicitly" (though "implicitly" may be the last refuge of theoretical scoundrels!).

First, by function: the security function may be the area where the most rational behavior is found, for various reasons, among which is the fact that serious and possibly terminal consequences ride on the decisions.

Second, by type of polity and organization of governance: from the "post-McNamara" Pentagon, to the post-World-War-II United States, to the United States throughout its history, to similarly constitutional states, to bureaucratic states (whether constitutional or not), to "formal" states, to all states (regardless of formality), to all state-like entities.

Third, by the nature of the problem: from weapons specification, to the design of military missions, to force planning, to national (or grand) strategy, to crisis behavior, to such "politicized" issues as base closure and the choice of contractors.

Fourth, by the kind of "process": from the "defense planning process," to the choice among substantive alternatives (such as intervention or not), to the overall microeconomic allocation of inputs (subject to constraints) to achieve the optimal value of the country's "objective function."

Another part of the answer is that rationality must be understood broadly and permissively, as exhibiting the characteristics of deliberation, purpose, weighing, and a "transitive" decision process that moves from one "level" to another. Of course, in specifying and delimiting the application of rationality to these "domains," one is in some danger of verging on tautology—that is, defining rationality itself in terms of the actual behavior of some segment of a "population" that exhibits those aspects of rationality. Nevertheless, it should be possible, even intu-

itively, to distinguish the kind of behavior that we are referring to from its opposite: random, or impulsive, or corrupt, or chaotically inconsistent, or heedless of constraints and risks. On my reading, the foreign-policy function of state exhibits (not only ideally but empirically) two qualities: (1) Observance of and respect for various kinds of parameters, as if those parameters were (to various degrees, but significantly) *objective*, and therefore either “binding” in some way; or at least, if movable, movable with remarkable difficulty and at “meta”-cost—thereby confuting the familiar varieties of subjectivism, that assert, not only that the choices (in the sense of the *acts* of choice) are virtually entirely at the will of the actors, but that the choices (in the sense of the alternatives themselves, and the total context in which those alternatives are presented) are also virtually entirely “constructed” by the actors. (2) (Itself partially because of the acknowledgement of the objective character of such factors,) *rationality*, in several recognizable senses and ways that transcend overly narrow definitions of rationality such as those implicit in theories that come under the rubric of “rational choice.”

None of this would matter, of course, if constructivism were *true*. But we judge the validity of a theory of the derivation of foreign policy by the way that it takes account of the actual decision processes that are acted out by the participants in the decision, and that are *felt* by the participants to be the determinative elements in their own decision making. Such an actual decision process provides the mechanism or the proximate cause of the emergent foreign and military policy of the state. Without such correspondence, a model (however impressive its apparent predictive power, or however striking the regression curve that expresses the correlation of the posited independent variable with the dependent variable being explained) nags—or ought to nag—at us, because it could as well be an interesting story or an opaque coincidence as a valid explanation. A model lacking this Weberian, *Verstehende* correspondence may lack causality, and therefore—simply put—be wrong.

In various ways, the prevalent theoretical orientations—not only constructivism, but also structural Realism and “rational choice”—lack, or scant, this correspondence. Constructivism represents external realities, as well as some internal societal constraints, as the idiosyncratic reflection of the social actor’s own preferences or cognitive makeup, and obviates the consideration of any process (especially a formal state process) that includes these realities and constraints in the production of a policy. Thus, because the (state) actor does not so much choose a strategic response and thus affect its situation, but rather “constructs” its

situation and derives its foreign policy stance directly from its (society's) norms and institutions, constructivism represents a form of compulsion (ironically, even if "willful"), not choice—let alone the type of choice that decision makers think they face.

Structural Realism, in its extreme parsimony, deliberately excludes the consideration of the "unit-level" processes of state, and takes the structure and characteristic dynamic ("anarchy") of the international system as almost mechanistically determinative of the security decision making of any kind of state. Of course, structural Realists distinguish between a theory of international politics and a theory of foreign policy; but the point is that structural Realism not only misses, but *denies* the very process of state (which, in my model, I characterize as "the defense planning process") that transmits the impulses and constraints of the macrosystem to the decision-making unit and constitutes the proximate cause of the state's foreign and military policy.

Oddly, "rational choice" theory, which purports to be uniquely behavioral and descriptive of actual choice, both scants and misinterprets the kind of choice that produces state action. In a sense, "rational choice" presents a "*hyper*rational" model, based, as it is, on game-theoretical assumptions about strategic motivation—along with the more arguable "expected utility" calculus. Even the expected-utility schema is taken to inhere in the individual (say, an authoritative elected official, or a controlling ruler, or, at most, a tight ruling clique), and thus "rational choice" lacks a mechanism for sorting out and aggregating values at the level of state choice and action. Beyond that, its game-theoretical formalization of behavior can occur only *after* the nature of the game situation (the "name of the game," e.g., "chicken" "prisoner's dilemma," etc.) has been specified; and that specification depends on the values of the payoffs in the various, say, quadrants of the game matrix. But those payoff values depend on an array of parametric factors, including the players' own macrostrategic orientation to the game problem (minimax, maximin, minimax-regret, etc., or even some perverse orientation). (Perhaps this is what gives game-theoretical explanations their faintly tautological scent.)

Bringing Public Opinion Back In

The attribute of rationality, which can be shown to characterize, dominantly, the functioning of the foreign-policy elites of any advanced con-

stitutional state (and, to some degree, of any formal state), tends to validate such elites' authority to perform that function—especially in the face of the substantial ignorance of the mass public. In a larger sense, the overall systemic rationality of the foreign policy *process*, when correctly conceived and “modeled,” confers a certain legitimacy on that process of state. It is that systemic rationality—or “logic”—that supplies intelligibility and, above all, corrigibility, to the process, (1) by linking foreign policy to its ultimate resource requisites, and linking the state's situation in the international system to the state's “political economy,” and also (2) by illuminating “mismatches” between levels of planning (say, between military missions and the force structure, or between the force structure and the budget, or even between the foreign policy itself and its draw upon public support), and thus instigating “feedback” and alteration of planning and policy.

These assertions dispute the premises of virtually all of the nonrational schools of explanatory theory (arational, irrational and subrational), as well as such paradigms as constructivism, which not only denies the actual attribution of rationality and objectivity to the work of foreign-policy makers, but denies even the possible relevance of the notions of rationality and objectivity to the function of foreign policy-making. One must depart especially from the category of subrational theories, such as bureaucratic politics, “public choice,” and the “military-industrial complex.” The hallmark of these subrational models is the supposed identification of a dominant impulse to accrue gains (material or status) to an individual or subgroup or interest group situated within the state or national society. From an obvious practical standpoint, and from a not-so-obvious theoretical standpoint, rationality (the operation of rationality in the actual policy process, and the ascription of rationality in the theoretical model that describes the policy process) provides the “causal” force that holds the process together and makes it intelligible.

If the nonrational models were to hold, the process would lose the force of its causation, as well as the sense of its logic. The “logic” of requirements would cease to be linked to the “logistics” of the material requisites. Mismatches could hardly be identified, let alone specified, since the concept would not have meaning. There could be no prescriptive call for the correction or realignment of such large elements as national strategy and foreign policy. Indeed, the entire model would lose its ability to “speak” in the prescriptive mode; and it is the instru-

mental matter of prescription (“better” or “best”) that begins to lead to the normative matter (“ought”) of legitimacy.

Claims can be advanced that the operation of the state’s foreign-policy function, and especially its external security functions, requiring a high degree of technical proficiency, rationality, objectivity, and dedication to an overall “national interest,” not only is, empirically, but should be, prescriptively, the province of expert governmental (and associated commercial) professionals, and thus largely insulated from and beyond the political reach of a public that is likely to be especially ignorant of this function of state. But any empirical demonstration of, or normative justification for, the autonomy of state processes in the area of foreign and military policy bears more generally on the question of the autonomy of the state (and ultimately the sovereignty of the state). This is because foreign policy (which, in my view, is essentially security policy) is both *the* characteristic state function and (ironically) sufficiently distinctive to constitute a peculiarly interesting function in its own right.

It also happens to be the area that best illustrates (though only in a correct theoretical model) the operation of public ignorance on the derivation of state policy. Thus, the problem of public opinion is close to the heart of the theory of the state and the question of the competence of democracy as a framework for governance.

NOTES

1. See, notably, Friedman 1998 and 1997, who draws on Converse 1964; similar to Converse’s seminal article are Almond 1950 and Lippmann 1927.
2. I borrow this redolent and emblematic phrase from Wendt 1992.
3. On this point, see Friedman 1998 and 1997 and DeCanio 2000. Friedman and DeCanio are, apparently, even more pessimistic about the accuracy of heuristically shaped public opinion than about plain, unformed, unmediated public ignorance.
4. As Keynes (1936, 383–84) famously opined: “Practical men . . . are generally in the thrall . . . of the ideas of . . . defunct economists.”
5. Note, in contrast, my operational definition of policy as a prediction of one’s own future contingent response. E.g., Ravenal 1978, 11.
6. See, for example, the alternative (and, I think, more truly expressive) costing of the components and activities of the defense budget in Ravenal 1984, particularly the chapter “A Note on Methodology,” pp. 18–21; Ravenal 1991, the section “A Note On Methodology,” pp. 49–51; and Ravenal 2000a, particularly the section “A Consideration of the Brookings ‘Atomic Audit,’” pp. 29–37.
7. I have treated the issue of cost as an essential parameter, and as a historical mea-

sure of U. S. foreign-policy and national-strategy ventures as broad as the entire half-century containment of Communism and the half-century deployment of nuclear weapons, in Ravenal 2000a.

8. For a description—still, after 30 years, an accurate picture—of the functions of Systems Analysis, see Enthoven and Smith 1971. For a short review of this book, making a few critical points, see Ravenal 1971.
9. Another, somewhat (necessarily) confused segment of “society” is the (professional) military. In certain respects (and in response to certain kinds of questions), the military can be seen as part of the general public. But, in certain aspects, the military constitutes a set of interest groups. And in other respects the military constitutes a group of professional (in-uniform) “bureaucrats.” An interesting series of studies of the “gap” between military and civilian opinion has been conducted by Ole R. Holsti; see, particularly, Holsti 1998/99.
10. Note the work of Robert Jervis, particularly Jervis 1968, 1977, and 1970. The bibliography on elite perceptions, images, operational codes, and cognitive screens is enormous.
11. Is “ignorant” the same problem as “unstable”? This, I think, is the crux of the pathbreaking argument of Philip Converse (1964). Friedman 1997, 455, sees it this way:

Converse drew on survey data to reveal that the public’s grasp of political affairs was so meager that it was questionable whether many people could be said to have what amounted to stable political attitudes at all. Unfortunately, the “nonattitudes” thesis prompted a methodological debate that distracted attention from the most disturbing implications of Converse’s findings for democracy: the sheer ignorance of public opinion (a finding implicit in the earlier work of the Columbia and Michigan schools of public-opinion research), and the fact that the “constraint” on ignorance exercised by the relatively well informed was something that is, arguably, even worse than sheer ignorance: ideology.

Converse’s (and Almond’s) demonstration of public attitude “instability” did not pass unchallenged in the political science literature. For example, William R. Caspary reports that the “attitude structures” of the public are “much more stable and coherent than Almond had asserted.” This quotation is in the words of an article that makes informative reference to theories of public opinion: Bjereld and Ekengren 1999. This article points out that in the more recent scholarship of such theorists and Eugene R. Wittkopf and Ole R. Holsti, “citizens were now seen as more engaged and informed than was the case during the 1950s and 1960s.”

My own point, in the face of—and somewhat beyond—these contending observations is that they are not dispositive in more comprehensive (and thus more accurate) models of policy derivation—just as, underlyingly, public opinion itself is not *directly* dispositive in the *generation* of the foreign policy.

The implications of Converse’s findings to which Friedman refers are that the

- public, because of its inattention, fickleness, and lack of information, cannot support correct, or even rational, public choices, and thus sustain democracy as a legitimate form of rule. Is this a temporary phenomenon? Dick Morris (2000), in the words of one reviewer (the truth of which the reviewer, himself, however, doubts), “argues that modern technology has made voters better informed than ever and thus better qualified to take a more direct role in law-making” (quoted in Nelson 2000).
12. In short, the “so-what” factor: the differential stakes, in a cost-benefit equation, of intervening or not intervening. See the description of this factor in Ravenal 2000c.
 13. I am identifying a “heuristic” that is suggested by, but different in kind from, that which is mentioned by Friedman, DeCanio, and indeed Converse and Almond: substantive “ideology.” The public, in my view, inaccurately follows theorists and journalists in attributing state policy choices more or less directly to the distortive mindsets and “codes” of policymakers, or even to pathologies of personality or group interaction. This is the public’s way of “understanding” the (otherwise) complex, elusive, and parameter-encased process of policy derivation.
 14. The invocation of correlation, rather than causation, suggests another kind of inadequacy in many social-science models that purport to explain the derivation of public policy. Not only do such models leave the *nature* of the correlation or “association” ill defined (or perhaps “underspecified”), but they cannot provide a satisfying account of agency; and, worst of all, they must evade a description of process.
 15. Allowing, of course, for some personal and organizational “interpretation.” But my model, while emphasizing the “large scope” of agencies of the state, particularly in the security function, is not a theory of the autonomous (let alone “rogue”) behavior of individual bureaucrats or governmental organizations. It is an integrated theory of how an *entire national society* generates “the state’s” foreign policy. Within the confines of this article, there is no occasion or need either to criticize every type of nonrational model of policy derivation, or to set forth, in complete detail, my own comprehensive rational model. I do those things elsewhere in several places, including Ravenal 1998 and 2000c.
 16. For an interesting survey of current trends in the organization of the defense industry, see Markusen and Costigan 1999. I would dissent from the implication, in various chapters, of the dominant influence of the “military industrial complex.”
 17. A particularly searching review of Allison 1999 (the revised version of Allison 1971), and, indeed, of the entire “bureaucratic politics” thesis, is Houghton 2000. This review also contains (p. 152) a useful compendium of articles critical of Allison’s favored bureaucratic politics model. The review also remarks that, in Allison’s 1971 edition, there is a certain “fusion” of his Model Two (organizational) and his Model III (bureaucratic).
 18. I have, here, characterized the organizational politics model as an instance of the “subrational” category. Perhaps a stronger case could be made for listing organizational politics (with its “standard operating procedures”) as an instance of

the *arational* category (which includes various cognitive models emphasizing the mindsets, operational codes, and perceptual screens of individuals, groups, and organizations).

19. Mills 1956. See also Barnett 1969 for some characteristic, and particularly redolent, statements of the thesis: "There is no way to fix a rational limit to defense spending other than by the application of old-fashioned political judgment and moral insight to the mindless expansion of the war machine." "The institutions which support the Economy of Death are impervious to ordinary logic or experience because they operate by their own inner logic. Each institutional component of the military-industrial complex has plausible reasons for continuing to exist and expand. Each promotes and protects its own interests and in so doing reinforces the interests of every other. That is what a 'complex' is—a set of integrated institutions that act to maximize their collective power" (59). "The problem, then, is not that those who make up the military-industrial complex act improperly, but that they do exactly what the system expects of them" (62). "Each [military] service embellishes 'the threat' to serve its bureaucratic interests" (63). (Here the military-industrial complex model overlaps the bureaucratic-politics model.) "The Secretary of Defense issues a Posture Statement each year which explains why the Department of Defense wants so much money and what it plans to buy with it. The statement neither identifies adequately the cost of particular forces nor gives an accurate picture of what current procurement decisions will cost in future years" (140). On the logic of official Defense Department statements, see below.
20. For a scholarly discussion of bureaucracy and rationality in foreign-policy making, see Hollis and Smith 1986.
21. The "rational-choice" school, pitching its case (typically, though not exclusively) on the level of individual behavior, and on the basis of material utility, tends to miss the implications of role-dictated behavior, let alone generally altruistic behavior. Quite ironically, "rational choice" lets *nonrationality* in by the back door, in the sense that it endorses the prevalence of subrational behavior within nominally collective, goal-oriented organizations, particularly the agencies of state.
22. The latter effect leads us back to the partial validity of rational-choice explanations. See, for instance, Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow, Siverson, and Smith 1999. This article derives some important features of various kinds of nations' foreign policy from their leaders' need to satisfy a winning domestic (electoral or otherwise political) coalition. State motivation is thus brought down, after all, to the individual level, which, however, *is* rational. Rational-choice theory is not wrong or totally misguided; rather (a) it defines "rationality" in too restrictive a way; and (b) it leads, in its extreme methodological individualism, to a kind of skewed reductionism, which must attribute national goal-seeking to individual "rent-seeking" (thus embracing a "public-choice" variant of rational choice).
23. Theorists who themselves espouse various kinds of nonrational models of the derivation of state policy (e.g., cognitive models, psychodynamic models, bu-

reaucratic-politics models) are, of course, happy to categorize any supposed deviation from pure rationality (whether overall or merely instrumental) as nonrational, thereby proving their point. Even most proponents of rational models, and notably adherents to the rational-choice school, seek to characterize various degrees and kinds of bounded rationality as nonrationality; and here they have a further, branched, choice: They may accommodate some aspects of nonrationality, say, by seeing a particular norm or goal within a larger scheme of decision making as nonrational, *but* seeing the implementing decision as at least instrumentally rational, thereby preserving their favored rational explanatory model. Or they may accept an opposing theorist's characterization of either an alleged norm/goal or an alleged motive (or nonmotive) for an action as nonrational, *but* deny that such a characterization represents a correct explanation of either the overall action/decision/policy or the true/underlying/implicit motive of the actor, thereby preserving their favored rational explanatory model. (For some suggestions on this point, see Elster 2000).

My own take on "bounded rationality" is this: Hardly any behavior (individual, collective, organizational) is purely rational, using a tight definition of rationality. Most intrusions of nonrationality can be accounted for (and are, in fact, generally accounted for) as constraints of various kinds. Depending on the degree and the kind of intruding nonrationality, divergent characterizations of the overall decision/policy could be seen merely as "half-full/half-empty" propositions. But there is more to it than that. In my account, the foreign and military policy of states (subject to stated qualifications on the scope of this account according to the nature of such states) is (a) broadly and recognizably ("dominantly") rational, in the normal sense of that term; and (b) more importantly, from a theoretical standpoint, rational in the overall sense of (what one may call) "total systemic logic"; such logic defines not only the purported implementation of norms and goals, but also *the accommodation of the constraints* ("parametric factors"), in a *process* that is both explicit/deliberative and implicit/existential.

24. Some other elements in this syndrome are: attribution of apparently high defense spending to the "military-industrial complex," campaigns for government-subsidized "conversion" of the defense industry, calls for the transfer of military resources to domestic government programs, an open-ended commitment to United Nations decision making, faith in the self-executing nature of regimes such as nonproliferation, and subscription to "revisionist" explanations of the origins of the Cold War.
25. Such pronouncements are far from unique; they are ubiquitous, at least over a large reach of the American political spectrum. In *The Defense Monitor* for August 2001, the Center for Defense Information similarly reported that these eight countries, plus Sudan, "together spend \$116 billion, roughly one-third of the U.S. military budget."
26. I do not mean to suggest, in the foregoing observations, that the United States *should* (in an absolute act of policy) accept these burdens, in the pursuit of political-military control of large areas of the world. In fact, just the opposite: I anticipate that the American projection of force to other regions of the world

will be progressively constrained by an array of parameters, both external (arising in the international system) and domestic (arising from public opposition to the probable casualties and the high cost of continually maintaining standing military forces) that pertain to a stance of extraregional intervention. My point here is that an *objective* understanding of these factors, and a *rational* processing of them, will be likely to produce the appropriate shift in America's national strategy (from ground-force intervention to "strike warfare") and foreign policy (from virtually global intervention for balance-of-power as well as humanitarian reasons, to sustaining U.S. domestic security). See Ravenal 2000b.

27. Such feedback is evident in program adjustments resulting, in the first instance, from stringent review by the "budget examiners" of the Office of Management and Budget in the White House, and, subsequently, from the "markups" of several congressional committees.
28. "Soft power" is the phrase of Joseph P. Nye (1990), referring to such American national assets as the attractiveness of its political system, the prowess of its economy, and the global pervasiveness of its culture. The implication (if Nye's reference—which is crucial to his thesis of the continuance of American hegemony in every important region of the world—is to have any meaning) is that such "soft power" is significantly substitutable for "hard" military power. What Nye is driving at may be gleaned from an example that he offered at a Cato Institute conference on March 31, 1992, when he suggested that "USIA libraries" might be a feasible tradeoff, for the United States, against the preparation and possible use of military force in the enterprise of establishing and enhancing American influence over the actions of various nations and governments around the world. After all, in Nye's example, one USIA library costs only about \$80,000 a year (and you can imagine what the somehow equivalent U.S. forces and weapons might cost). To such a presumption, one can only say: "Put the first library in Baghdad."
29. An especially neat, while comprehensive, treatment and review of this literature—also drawing some general conclusions about these "pathways"—is presented in Cortell and Davis 2000.
30. The security function could be explained *away* by "norm diffusion" theorists, who do not deal adequately with security (except, of course, in the insubstantial apparition of "security norms")—explained, that is, as a special case apart from the usual issues involved in norm diffusion (justice, immigration, environment, intercommunal tolerance, human rights, democracy, racial equality, and so forth). But security policy is both central to, and the largest part of, foreign policy. A theory of policy derivation should apply to this important area.
31. For a recent, and effective, presentation of the idea of path dependence, see Pierson 2000. Note also the comment of Gary Goertz and Paul F. Diehl (1992, 653): "Although Britain and France may face the same international norms . . . the *unique national experience* of a country will make its propensity to follow that norm different." (Cited in Cortell and Davis 2000, 74.)

32. Ironically (in my reading) Waltz felt that he had to bring the *international system* back in after several decades of the dominance of subsystem explanatory schemes, whether (in what he called the “first image”) personality-based models, usually cognitive or psychodynamic; or (in what he called the “second image”) state-based or society-based models, including organizational, bureaucratic-politics, interest-group, ideological, and some rational-choice theories.
33. In this respect, one should take note of a recent, full-scale critique of constructivism: Copeland 2000. This critique is in the form of a review essay of Wendt 1999. In his latest writing, Wendt seems partly to correct—or supplement—his own earlier exclusive positing of ideational and actor-generated causal factors. Copeland makes the point—which should be threatening for constructivists—that a state’s leaders must be uncertain about, and therefore must hedge against, other states’ *future* motives, precisely because those other states can “construct” a different, and possibly aggressive, nature.

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