



Comparative Foreign Policy: Fad, Fantasy, or Field?

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REVIEWS AND OTHER DISCUSSION

*Comparative Foreign Policy: Fad, Fantasy, or Field?**

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All the signs are pointing in the same direction: as a television commercial might describe it, "Comparative Foreign Policy is coming on strong for the 1970s!" A few undergraduate and graduate courses with this title are now being taught.¹ Several conferences on allied topics have recently been held² and a couple of these have even resulted in the appearance of publications on the subject.³ Occasionally a paper is delivered⁴ or book published⁵ which

* An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Conference Seminar of the Committee on Comparative Politics, The University of Michigan, on March 10, 1967. My gratitude to the Research Council of Rutgers University and the Center of International Studies of Princeton University for the facilities that made possible the preparation of this paper is exceeded only by my indebtedness to my wife, Norah, who provided substantive suggestions, editorial advice, and moral support under the most trying conditions.

¹ For example, at Northwestern University during the 1965-1966 academic year.

² The most recent being the occasion at the University of Michigan for which this paper was written.

³ Cf. R. Barry Farrell ed. *Approaches to Comparative and International Politics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966); Vernon McKay, ed., *African Diplomacy: Studies in the Determinants of Foreign Policy* (New York:

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are devoted to the subject, and a perusal of recent lists of dissertations in progress reveals that other research findings along this line are soon to become available.⁶ Then there is perhaps the surest sign of all: textbook publishers, those astute students of trends in Academe, have discerned a stirring in this direction and are busily drumming up manuscripts that can be adopted as texts when the trend achieves discipline-wide acceptance by political scientists.⁷

In sum, it seems more than likely that in the coming years something called "Comparative Foreign Policy" will occupy a prominent place in the teaching of political science and in the research of political scientists. But is such a development desirable? Is the phrase "comparative foreign policy" a contentless symbol to which students of international politics pay lip service in order to remain *au courant* with their colleagues elsewhere in the discipline? Does it stand for a scientific impulse that can never be realized because foreign policy phenomena do not lend themselves to comparative analysis? Or does it designate an important and distinguishable set of empirical phenomena that can usefully be subjected to extended examination? Is comparative foreign policy, in short, a fad, a fantasy, or a field?

In some respects it is all of these and the purpose of this paper is to identify the fad and fantasy dimensions in order to minimize confusion and contradiction as the field evolves. Although the field is barely in its infancy, hopefully an assessment of its inception

Frederick A. Praeger, 1966); and James N. Rosenau, *Of Boundaries and Bridges: A Report on a Conference on the Interdependencies of National and International Political Systems* (Princeton: Center of International Studies, Research Monograph No. 27, 1967).

⁴ Cf. the papers prepared for the International Relations panels at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 1966.

⁵ See, for example, Kenneth N. Waltz, *Foreign Policy and Democratic Politics: The American and British Experience* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967), and Wolfram F. Hanrieder, "Compatibility and Consensus: A Proposal for the Conceptual Linkage of External and Internal Dimensions of Foreign Policy," *American Political Science Review*, 59 (1967), pp. 971-82.

⁶ In the 1966 listing (*American Political Science Review*, 60, pp. 786-91), nine dissertations carried titles that suggested research on topics involving the comparative study of foreign policy.

⁷ During a recent two-week period the present writer received such invitations from three different publishers, each of whom was unaware of what the others were doing.

and an attempt to identify its boundaries and problems will, even at this early stage, lessen the growing pains that lie ahead.

I. *The sources of reorientation*

That the fad, the fantasy, and the field are all of recent origin can be readily demonstrated. Traditionally, the analysis of foreign policy phenomena has consisted of a policy-oriented concern with particular situations faced by specific nations. Thus the single case, limited in time by its importance to the relevant actors and in scope by the immediacy of its manifest repercussions, has dominated the literature for decades.⁸ Attempts to contrast two or more empirical cases have been distinct exceptions and have been narrowly confined to the problem of whether democracies or dictatorships are likely to conduct themselves more effectively in the international arena.⁹ Even those political scientists in the early postwar era who explicitly sought to render foreign policy analysis more systematic by focusing on decision-making processes did not move in a comparative direction. The decision-making approach to foreign policy called attention to a host of important variables and greatly diminished the long-standing tendency to posit national actors as abstract entities endowed with human capacities and qualities. But, in demanding that foreign policy be analyzed from the perspective of concrete and identifiable decision-makers, the approach also tended to preclude examination of the possibility that the perspectives of decision-makers in different societies might be similar, or at least comparable. Thus, throughout the 1950s and well into the 1960s, the newly discovered decision-making variables served to improve the quality of the case histories rather than to replace them with new modes of analysis.¹⁰

To be sure, the immediate postwar period did not lack attempts to generalize about the processes whereby any society formulates and conducts its foreign policy. In addition to the efforts of Richard

⁸ For an elaboration of this point, see my "Pre-Theories and Theories of Foreign Policy," in R. Barry Farrell, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 31-37.

⁹ See, for example, Carl Joachim Friedrich, *Foreign Policy in the Making* (New York: W. W. Norton Co., 1938) Chaps. 1-4.

¹⁰ For an extended attempt to assess the impact of the decision-making approach on the study of foreign policy, see my "The Premises and Promises of Decision-Making Analysis," in James C. Charlesworth (ed.), *Contemporary Political Analysis* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), Chap. 11.

C. Snyder and others who pioneered in decision-making analysis,¹¹ several more eclectic observers sought to specify the variables that operate wherever foreign policy phenomena are found,¹² and a few textbook editors also undertook to bring together in one volume analyses of how different countries made and sustained their external relations.¹³ In none of the more abstract formulations, however, was the possibility of engaging in comparative analysis seriously considered. Foreign policy variables were identified and discussed as if they operated in identical ways in all societies and the hypothetical society abstracted therefrom was described in terms of a multiplicity of examples drawn largely from the "lessons" of modern international history.¹⁴ The appeasement at Munich, the betrayal at Pearl Harbor, the success of the Marshall Plan—these are but a few of the incidents that served as the empirical basis for the traditional model in which nations were posited as serving (or failing to serve) their national interests through foreign policies that balance ends with means and commitments

¹¹ Cf. Karl W. Deutsch, "Mass Communications and the Loss of Freedom in National Decision-Making: A Possible Research Approach to Interstate Conflicts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 1 (1957), pp. 200-11; Joseph Frankel, "Towards a Decision-Making Model in Foreign Policy," *Political Studies*, 7, (1959), pp. 1-11; Edgar S. Furniss, Jr., *The Office of Premier in French Foreign Policy-Making: An Application of Decision-Making Analysis* (Princeton: Foreign Policy Analysis Project, Princeton University, 1954); Richard C. Snyder, H. W. Bruck, Burton M. Sapin, *Decision-Making as an Approach to the Study of International Politics* (Princeton: Foreign Policy Analysis Project, Princeton University, 1954).

¹² However, the list of works of this nature is not a long one. The main entries are Feliks Gross, *Foreign Policy Analysis* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954); Louis J. Halle, *Civilization and Foreign Policy: An Inquiry for Americans* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952); Kurt London, *How Foreign Policy is Made* (New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1949); Charles Burton Marshall, *The Limits of Foreign Policy* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1954); and George Modelski, *A Theoretical Analysis of the Formation of Foreign Policy* (London: University of London, 1954), later published as *A Theory of Foreign Policy* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962).

¹³ The only textbooks with such a focus published prior to the 1960s were Roy C. Macridis, ed. *Foreign Policy in World Politics* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1958), and Philip W. Buck and Martin Travis, Jr., eds., *Control of Foreign Relations in Modern Nations* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1957).

¹⁴ London also presented separate descriptions of policy-making in Washington, London, Paris, Berlin, and Moscow, but these were not then subjected to comparative analysis (*op. cit.*, pp. 99-153).

with capabilities. That the lessons of history might be variously experienced by different policymaking systems was not accounted for in the abstract models and thus, to repeat, they were no more oriented toward comparative analysis than were the case histories that constituted the mainstream of foreign policy research.

Nor did the textbook editors take advantage of the opportunity afforded by the accumulation of materials about the external behavior of different countries and present concluding chapters that attempted to identify the similarities and differences uncovered by the separate, but juxtaposed, analyses of several policymaking systems. Ironically, in fact, the one text that used the word "comparative" in connection with the study of a foreign policy also explicitly raised doubts about the applicability of this form of analysis: in the first edition of this work the introductory chapter on the "Comparative Study of Foreign Policy" was written by Gabriel A. Almond, who noted the "lack of the most elementary knowledge" about foreign policy phenomena and concluded that therefore "it will be some time before rigorous and systematic comparison becomes possible."¹⁵ Even more ironically, the comparable chapter of the second edition of the same text, written four years later by Kenneth W. Thompson and Roy C. Macridis, went even further and rejected the premises of comparative analysis on the grounds that foreign policy variables involve a "complexity [that] makes a mockery of the few 'scientific' tools we have," thereby rendering any attempt to generalize on the basis of comparative assessments "a hopeless task."¹⁶

The existence of this attitude of hopelessness and of the traditional inclination toward case histories raises the question of why pronounced signs of a major reorientation have appeared with increasing frequency in the mid-1960s? The answer would seem to be that two unrelated but major trends, one historical and the other intellectual, have converged at this point, and while neither alone would have stimulated the impulse to compare foreign policy phenomena, their coincidence in time has served to generate strong pressures in this direction.

¹⁵ Macridis, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁶ Roy C. Macridis, ed., *Foreign Policy in World Politics* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962, Second Edition), pp. 26-27.

Let us look first at the intellectual factors. It seems clear, in retrospect, that the rapid emergence of a heavy emphasis upon comparison in the analysis of domestic politics served as a potent impetus to reorientation in the study of foreign policy. The turning point for the field of comparative politics can be traced to the mid-1950s, when structural-functional analysis was first applied to political phenomena,¹⁷ an event that in turn led to the formation of the Committee on Comparative Politics of the Social Science Research Council¹⁸ and the publication of its many pioneering volumes.¹⁹ These works highlighted the idea, explicitly set forth in the first chapter of the first volume, that certain key functions must be performed if a political system is to persist, and that these functions can be performed by a wide variety of structures.²⁰ Whatever the limitations of structural-functional analysis—and there are many²¹—this central premise provided a way for students of domestic processes to compare seemingly dissimilar phenomena. Until structural-functional analysis was made part of the conceptual equipment of the field, the most salient dimensions of political systems were their unique characteristics and there seemed to be little reason to engage in comparison, except perhaps to show how different governmental forms give rise to dissimilar consequences. Indeed, prior to the mid-1950s it was quite commonplace to show

¹⁷ Cf. Gabriel A. Almond, "Comparative Political Systems," *Journal of Politics*, 18 (1956), pp. 391-409.

¹⁸ Gabriel A. Almond and James S. Coleman (eds.), *The Politics of the Developing Areas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960); Lucian W. Pye, ed., *Communications and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963); Joseph LaPalombara, ed., *Bureaucracy and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963); Robert E. Ward and Dankwart A. Rustow, eds., *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964); James S. Coleman, ed., *Education and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965); Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, eds., *Political Culture and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965); Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner, eds., *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

²⁰ Cf. Gabriel A. Almond, "A Functional Approach to Comparative Politics," in Almond and Coleman, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-64.

²¹ For a succinct review and assessment of these limitations, see Ernest Nagel, *The Structure of Science: Problems in the Logic of Scientific Explanation* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1961), pp. 520-35. Also see Robert E. Dowse, "A Functionalist's Logic," *World Politics*, 18 (1966), pp. 607-22.

that even similar governmental forms can give rise to dissimilar consequences: "Look at this Western parliament and contrast it with that non-Western legislature," a student at that time would observe with a sense of satisfaction. "They both go through the same procedures, but how diverse are the results!"

Then the breakthrough occurred. Structural-functional analysis lifted sights to a higher level of generalization and put all political systems on an analytic par. Thereafter, tracing differences was much less exhilarating than probing for functional equivalents, and students of domestic politics were quick to respond to the challenge and reorient their efforts. Since the mid-1950s political scientists have turned out a seemingly endless series of articles and books committed to comparative analysis—to a delineation of similarities and differences upon which empirically based models of the political process could be founded. A spate of comparative materials on governance in underdeveloped polities was the vanguard of this analytic upheaval, but its repercussions were by no means confined to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. No type of system or area of the world was viewed as an inappropriate subject for comparative analysis. Even the two systems which an earlier generation of political scientists viewed as polar extremes, the United States and the Soviet Union, were considered as fit for comparison and as apt subjects to test a "theory of convergence."²² Similarly, while the West non-West distinction had been regarded as representing mutually exclusive categories, it was now treated as descriptive of two segments of the *same* continuum of whatever class of political phenomena was being examined.²³ Nor was there any reluctance to break systems down and look at only one of their component parts: political parties were compared,²⁴ and so were political cultures,²⁵ oppositions,²⁶ revolutionary movements,²⁷ Communist

²² Zbigniew Brzezinski and Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Power: USA/USSR* (New York: The Viking Press, 1964), pp. 3-14 and *passim*.

²³ For example, see Samuel P. Huntington, "Political Development and Political Decay," *World Politics*, 17 (1965), pp. 386-430.

²⁴ LaPalombara and Weiner, *op. cit.*

²⁵ Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

²⁶ Robert A. Dahl (ed.), *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

²⁷ Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966).

regimes,²⁸ bureaucracies,²⁹ constitutional subsystems,³⁰ military elites,³¹ and so on, through all the major institutions, processes, and personnel of politics. As the comparative movement gained momentum, moreover, it generated efforts to clarify the methodological problems posed by the new orientation³² and, more importantly, to provide comparable data for most or all of the politics extant.³³ Like all major movements, the trend toward comparative analysis also evoked protests and denunciations of its legitimacy.³⁴

If the ultimate purpose of political inquiry is the generation of tested and/or testable theory, then this upheaval in comparative politics had already begun to yield solid results by the mid-1960s. One could look only with wonderment upon the progress that had

²⁸ Robert C. Tucker, "On the Comparative Study of Communism," *World Politics*, 19 (1967), pp. 242-57.

²⁹ LaPalombara, *op. cit.*, and Ferrel Heady, *Public Administration: A Comparative Perspective* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966).

³⁰ Herbert Jacob and Kenneth N. Vines, eds., *Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1965); Frank Munger, ed., *American State Politics: Readings for Comparative Analysis* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1966); and Lewis A. Froman, Jr., "An Analysis of Public Policies in Cities," *Journal of Politics*, 29 (1967), pp. 94-108.

³¹ Morris Janowitz, *The Military in the Political Development of New Nations: An Essay in Comparative Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); John J. Johnson, ed., *The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962); and Sydney Nettleton Fisher, ed., *The Military in the Middle East: Problems in Society and Government* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1963).

³² Cf. Richard L. Merritt and Stein Rokkan, eds.), *Comparing Nations: The Use of Quantitative Data in Cross-National Research* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), *passim*; Arthur K. Kalleberg, "The Logic of Comparison: A Methodological Note on the Comparative Study of Political Systems," *World Politics*, 19 (1966), pp. 69-82; Sigmund Neumann, "Comparative Politics: A Half-Century Appraisal," *Journal of Politics*, 19 (1957), pp. 369-90; Sigmund Neumann, "The Comparative Study of Politics," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1 (January 1959), pp. 105-12; Michael Haas, "Comparative Analysis," *Western Political Quarterly*, 15 (1962), pp. 294-303; and Harry Eckstein, "A Perspective on Comparative Politics, Past and Present," in Harry Eckstein and David E. Apter, eds., *Comparative Politics: A Reader* (New York: The Free Press, 1964), pp. 3-32.

³³ See Arthur S. Banks and Robert B. Textor, *A Cross-Polity Survey* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1963), and Bruce M. Russett, Hayward R. Alker, Jr., Karl W. Deutsch, and Harold D. Lasswell, *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964).

³⁴ Leslie Wolf-Phillips, "Metapolitics: Reflections on a 'Methodological Revolution,'" *Political Studies*, 12 (1964), pp. 352-69.

occurred in a decade's time: not only were data being gathered and processed in entirely new ways, but a variety of stimulating, broad-gauged, systematic, and empirically based models of domestic political processes in generalized types of polities had made their way into the literature.³⁵ Curiously, however, foreign policy phenomena were not caught up in these tides of change. None of the new empirical findings, much less any of the new conceptual formulations, dealt with the responses of polities and their institutions, processes, and personnel to international events and trends. For reasons suggested elsewhere,³⁶ everything was compared but foreign policy phenomena, and only belatedly have students of comparative politics even acknowledged the need to make conceptual allowance for the impact of international variables upon domestic processes.³⁷

³⁵ For example, see Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., *Comparative Politics: A Development Approach* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966); David E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); Louis Hartz, et al., *The Founding of New Societies* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964); Robert T. Holt and John E. Turner, *The Political Bases of Economic Development: An Exploration in Comparative Analysis* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1966); and A.F.K. Organski, *The Stages of Political Development* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965).

³⁶ James N. Rosenau (ed.), *Linkage Politics: Essays on the Convergence of National and International Systems* (New York: Free Press, forthcoming), Chap. 1.

³⁷ The conference that occasioned this paper, along with the one that led to the volume edited by R. Barry Farrell (*op. cit.*), is one of the few efforts to examine national-international relationships organized by students of domestic political systems. For another belated acknowledgment of the relevance of international variables, see Almond and Powell (*op. cit.*), pp. 9; 203-04. Actually, in all fairness it should be noted that some years ago Almond did acknowledge that studies of "the functioning of the domestic political system . . . have commonly neglected the importance of the international situation in affecting the form of the political process and the content of domestic public policy We do not know until this day whether the differences in the functioning of the multiparty systems of the Scandinavian countries and those of France and Italy are to be attributed to internal differences in culture, economics, and political and governmental structure, or whether they are attributable to the differences in the 'loading' of these systems with difficult and costly foreign policy problems, or whether both and in what proportions" (in Macridis, *op. cit.*, 1958, pp. 4-5). In his ensuing pioneering works on domestic systems, however, Almond did not follow the line of his own reasoning. Not even his highly general structural-functional model of the political process, presented two years later in *The Politics of the Developing Areas*, made conceptual room for the impact of international variables or the func-

The recent signs of interest in comparative foreign policy, in other words, arise out of the work of students of international politics and foreign policy and not from an extension of the models and inquiries of those who focus on national or subnational phenomena. As indicated, however, it seems doubtful whether the former would have become interested in comparative analysis if the latter had not successfully weathered a decade of upheaval. This spillover thus constitutes the prime intellectual source of the reorientation toward comparative foreign policy: in large measure the reorientation stemmed from the desire of students of international processes to enjoy success similar to that of their colleagues in an adjoining field.³⁸

The other major source of the reorientation is to be found in certain postwar historical circumstances that coincided with the upheaval in the field of comparative politics. At least two trends in world politics would appear to have attracted the attention of students of foreign policy to the virtues of comparative analysis. Perhaps the most important of these involves the proliferation of national actors that occurred during the 1955-1965 decade as a result of the withdrawal of colonial powers from Africa and Asia. Not only did foreign policy phenomena also proliferate at a comparable rate during this period (there being more actors engaging in foreign policy actions), but, more importantly, the recurrence of similar patterns was far more discernible and impressive in a world of some 120 nations than it had been when half this number of actors comprised the international system. Conversely, the more the international system grew in size, the less did concentration upon unique patterns seem likely to unravel the mysteries of international life. Stated differently, as more and more nations acquired independence and sought to come to terms with neighbors and great powers, the more did contrasts among two or more of them loom as the

tions served by political activities oriented toward a system's external environment.

³⁸ For evidence that the foreign policy field was not the only one to experience the spillover from the comparative movement initiated by students of national and subnational politics, see John Useem and Allen D. Grimshaw, "Comparative Sociology," *Items*, 20 (December 1966), pp. 46-51, which outlines developments that have recently culminated in the appointment of a new committee on comparative sociology by the Social Science Research Council.

route to comprehension of world politics. The decolonization of sub-Saharan Africa was especially crucial in this respect. The resulting national actors were so similar in size, cultural heritage, social composition, political structure, and stage of economic development, and the problems they faced in the international system were thus so parallel, that the analysis of their foreign policies virtually compelled comparison. At least this would seem to be the most logical explanation for the fact that many of the early efforts to derive theoretical propositions about foreign policy from the comparative analysis of empirical materials focused on Africa in particular³⁹ and underdeveloped polities in general.⁴⁰

The advent of the thermonuclear era and the emergence of Red China as a budding and recalcitrant superpower are illustrative of another historical trend that has fostered a reorientation in foreign policy analysis, namely, the emergence of problems that are worldwide in scope. As more and more situations have arisen toward which all national actors must necessarily take a position, analysts with a policy-oriented concern have become increasingly inclined to juxtapose and contrast the reactions and policies of nations that they previously treated as single cases. Many analyses of the 1963 nuclear test ban treaty, the continuing problem of nuclear proliferation, and the Chinese acquisition of a nuclear capability are obvious examples. Indeed, the worldwide implications of China's emergence recently resulted in what is probably the first work to focus on an immediate policy problem by analyzing how a number of different national actors are inclined to respond to it.⁴¹

II. *The study of comparative foreign policy and the comparative study of foreign policy*

Reorientation of analytic modes never occurs without a period of transition and adjustment that is often slow and difficult. Apparently the study of foreign policy is not to be an exception. Some

³⁹ See, for example, McKay, *op. cit.*, and Doudou Thiam, *The Foreign Policy of African States: Ideological Bases, Present Realities, Future Prospects* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965).

⁴⁰ For a particularly stimulating effort of this kind, see Henry A. Kissinger, "Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy," *Daedalus*, 95 (Spring 1966), pp. 503-29.

⁴¹ A. M. Halpern, ed., *Policies Toward China: Views from Six Continents* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1965).

of the early changes suggest that the reorientation is based partly upon a headlong and ill-considered rush to get aboard the comparative bandwagon. Perhaps because the intellectual and historic factors that have fostered change converged and reinforced each other in such a short span of time, little thought has been given to what comparison entails in relation to foreign policy phenomena. "After all," some students of foreign policy seem to say, "the comparative people are doing it, why shouldn't we?" What "it" is in this context, however, is rarely examined and is often assumed to involve no more than the juxtaposition of the foreign policy phenomena of two or more systems. What aspects of foreign policy should be compared, how they should be compared, why they should be compared, whether they can be compared—questions such as these are not raised. Rather, having presumed that simply by juxtaposing such phenomena an endeavor called "comparative foreign policy" is established, many analysts proceed in the accustomed manner and examine each unit of the juxtaposed materials separately as a case history.

A good illustration of the continuing predisposition to settle for juxtaposition without comparison is provided by the aforementioned work on how more than sixteen different national actors are inclined to respond to Communist China.⁴² Despite the abundance of comparable material made available by the common focus of the various chapters, neither the editor nor the authors saw fit to contrast systematically the relative potencies of the variables underlying responses to China. Instead, each of the sixteen substantive chapters deals with the policies of a different country or region toward China, and the editor's introductory and concluding chapters are concerned, respectively, with presenting an overview of China itself and summarizing all the differences that were revealed to underlie policies toward it. In effect, the work consists of sixteen separate studies conveniently brought together in one place.⁴³

In short, comparative foreign policy has to some extent become a new label for an old practice. It is in this sense—in the sense that reference is made to comparative analysis without adherence to the

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ For an elaboration of this assessment, see my review of the book in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 26 (1967), pp. 287-88.

procedures it requires—that some of the recent signs of reorientation are essentially no more than a passing fad, an emulation of form rather than of substance. Even worse, to the extent that the label is more than an empty symbol of modernity, it has been invested with misleading connotations. An unfortunate tendency, perhaps also stemming from ill-considered emulation, has developed whereby comparative foreign policy is viewed as a body of knowledge, as a subject to be explored, as a field of inquiry. Scholars and textbook publishers alike tend to refer to the study of comparative foreign policy as if there existed in the real world a set of phenomena that could be so labeled. Scholars speak of engaging in research on comparative foreign policy and publishers talk of issuing eight or ten paperbacks as their comparative foreign policy series. Such nomenclature is unfortunate because the benefits of comparative analysis cannot be enjoyed if it is conceived in terms of subject matter rather than in methodological terms. Comparison is a method, not a body of knowledge. Foreign policy phenomena—and not comparative foreign policy phenomena—comprise the subject matter to be probed and these can be studied in a variety of ways, all of them useful for certain purposes and irrelevant to other purposes. The comparative method is only one of these ways and it is not necessarily the best method for all purposes. It is most useful with respect to the generation and testing of propositions about foreign policy behavior that apply to two or more political systems. Only by identifying similarities and differences in the external behavior of more than one national actor can analysis move beyond the particular case to higher levels of generalization.⁴⁴ On the other hand, if the researcher is concerned with the processes of only a single system, then the comparative method may not be as valuable as the case history.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ For a discussion of the different levels of generalization at which the comparative analysis of political systems can be undertaken, see Tucker, *op. cit.*, pp. 246-54.

⁴⁵ Under special circumstances, however, it is possible to apply the comparative method to a single system. If certain conditions remain constant from one point in time to another, then variables pertinent to the one system can be contrasted and assessed in terms of their operation at different historical junctures. For an extended discussion and application of this procedure, which has been designated as "quantitative historical comparison," see my "Private Preferences and Political Responsibilities: The Relative Potency

Strictly speaking, therefore, it makes a difference whether one defines oneself as engaged in the comparative study of foreign policy or in the study of comparative foreign policy. The former, it is argued here, is a legitimate and worthwhile enterprise that may well lead to the formation of a disciplined field of inquiry, whereas the latter is an ambiguous label that serves to perpetuate a fad rather than to establish a field.

Still another kind of confusion has arisen out of the initial burst of enthusiasm for a more systematic approach to the analysis of foreign policy phenomena, namely, a tendency to posit such phenomena as encompassing the entire range of actions and interactions through which the interdependence of nations is sustained. Just as this ever-increasing interdependence has stimulated analysts to look more carefully at foreign policy, so has it spurred a greater concern with linkages between national and international political systems. Also referred to as "transnational politics" or "national-international interdependencies," these linkages are seen as comprising all the ways in which the functioning of each type of political system is a consequence of the other.⁴⁶ While the foreign policy and linkage approaches overlap in important ways, they are not identical. The latter is broader than the former and can be viewed as subsuming it. Foreign policy phenomena comprise certain kinds of linkages, those in which governments relate themselves to all or part of the international system through the adoption of purposeful stances toward it, but there are other major kinds in which the links may be fashioned by nongovernmental actors or by the unintentional consequences of governmental action. These other kinds of linkages can, of course, be highly relevant to the formulation, conduct, and consequences of foreign policy, but they emanate from and are sustained by a set of processes that are analytically separable from the processes of foreign policy. Yet, impressed by the extent to which national systems have become pervaded by external stimuli, some analysts tend to emphasize the fact that in responding to these stimuli the national system is responding to

of Individual and Role Variables in the Behavior of U.S. Senators," in J. David Singer, ed., *Quantitative International Politics: Insights and Evidence* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), pp. 17-50.

⁴⁶ For an elaboration of this conception, see my *Linkage Politics*, *op. cit.*, Chap. 3.

elements "foreign" to it, an emphasis which leads to the erroneous equation of national-international linkages with foreign policy phenomena.⁴⁷

III. *Tracing the outlines of a field*

To note that foreign policy phenomena involve governmental undertakings directed toward the external environment neither justifies treating them as a separate field of inquiry nor indicates where the boundaries of such a field lie. While it is possible to argue that the comparative study of foreign policy is a subfield of political science because many political scientists research such matters and see themselves as engaged in a common enterprise when they do so, plainly a field must have an intellectual identity apart from the activities of its practitioners. For a field to exist, presumably it must have its own discipline—its own subject matter, its own point of view, and its own theory. In the absence of a subject matter with an internal coherence of its own, of a viewpoint that structures the subject matter in unique ways, and of a body of theoretical propositions that have not been or cannot be derived from any other way of structuring the subject, researchers can never be sure whether in fact they are engaging in a common enterprise. Under such circumstances, they may actually be working on highly diverse problems that share only the labels that are attached to them. What is regarded as "the field" may be no more than a composite of several different enterprises that overlap in some respects but that have distinctive subject matters, viewpoints, and propositions of their own.

Thus it is conceivable that the comparative study of foreign policy is not a field at all. Perhaps the search for its subject matter, viewpoint, and propositions will yield the conclusion that it is best viewed as a composite of national and international politics—as the appropriate concern of two fields, one treating foreign policy phenomena as dependent variables in the operation of national political systems and the other as independent variables in the operation of international political systems. Needless to say, it would make matters much easier if a separate field could not be delineated and

⁴⁷ See Hanrieder, *op. cit.*, and my critique of this article, *American Political Science Review*, 59 (1967), pp. 983-88.

comparative studies of foreign policy could be assessed in terms of the concepts and standards of either the national or international politics fields. Much preliminary conceptualization and argumentation could thereby be avoided and analysts could push on to the main task of gathering data and advancing comprehension.

Tempting as such a conclusion may be, however, it must be rejected. The fact is that the national and international fields do not encompass all the phenomena to which the label of "foreign policy" might be attached. No matter how much the viewpoints of these fields may be stretched, some phenomena remain unexplained. Reflection about the nature of these phenomena, moreover, reveals a subject matter that is internally coherent, that is distinctive in its point of view, and that is at least capable of generating its own unique body of theory.

Stated most succinctly, the phenomena that are not otherwise accounted for, and that we shall henceforth regard as the subject matter of the field of foreign policy, are those that reflect an association between variations in the behavior of national actors and variations in their external environments. The distinctive point of view of this field is that inquiry must focus on the association between the two sets of variations and that this association can only be comprehended if it is examined and assessed under a variety of conditions. The theoretical propositions unique to the field are those that predict the association between the two sets of variations rather than only the behavior of the national actor or only the events in its environment.

Let us first look more closely at the subject matter of the field and indicate those aspects which render it internally coherent. Thus far we have loosely referred to foreign policy phenomena as if their nature was self-evident. Obviously, an enumeration of the major phenomena encompassed by this loose terminology is necessary if an assessment is to be made of whether they constitute a coherent body of data. Such an enumeration seems best begun with the premise that at the heart of foreign policy analysis is a concern with sequences of interaction, perceptual or behavioral, which span national boundaries and which unfold in three basic stages. The first, or *initiator*, stage involves the activities, conditions, and influences—human and nonhuman—that stimulate national actors to

undertake efforts to modify circumstances in their external environments. The second, or *implementive*, stage consists of the activities, conditions, and influences through which the stimuli of the initiatory stage are translated into purposeful actions directed at modifying objects in the external environment. The third, or *responsive*, stage denotes the activities, conditions, and influences that comprise the reactions of the objects of the modification attempts.⁴⁸ The three stages so defined encompass, respectively, the independent, intervening, and dependent variables of foreign policy analysis.

The independent variables can be usefully divided into two major types, those that are internal to the actor that initiates a foreign policy undertaking⁴⁹ and those that are external to it. The former include any human or nonhuman activities, conditions, and influences operative on the domestic scene that stimulate governmental officials to seek, on behalf of the national actor, to preserve or alter some aspect of the international system. Examples of internal independent variables are elections, group conflicts, depleted oil reserves, geographic insularity, demands for higher tariffs, historic value orientations, a lack of societal unity, executive-legislative frictions, and so on, through all the diverse factors that contribute

⁴⁸ This three-stage formulation of foreign policy sequences derives from a conception, elaborated elsewhere, which posits certain kinds of efforts to modify behavior, together with the modifications that do or do not subsequently ensue, as the essence of political behavior. Cf. my *Calculated Control as a Unifying Concept in the Study of International Politics and Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Center of International Studies, Research Monograph No. 15, 1963).

⁴⁹ The use of the word "undertaking" throughout is intended to emphasize that by "foreign policy" is meant considerably more than mere pronouncements indicating present or future lines of action. Such a designation helps to remind us that foreign policy can arise out of complex sources and require the mobilization of complex resources as well as lengthy and continuous efforts to bring about modifications of situations and conditions in the external environment. Stated differently, it seems insufficient to describe foreign policy solely in decisional terms. The central unit of action is too multi-dimensional to be seen as merely a choice that officials make among conflicting alternatives. By the time officials have mobilized resources in support of their decisions and coped with the responses of those toward whom the decisions are directed, decision-making is no longer enough to describe the action in which the analyst is interested. For officials to translate the stimuli to external behavior into behavior intended to be effective externally requires a vast undertaking that encompasses many decisions by many people. Hence it seems desirable to use nomenclature that is descriptive of the complexity and scope of the behavior being examined.

to national life and that can thereby serve as sources of foreign policy. External independent variables also include human and nonhuman activities, conditions, and influences, but these occur abroad and operate as foreign policy stimuli by serving as the objects that officials seek to preserve or alter through their undertakings. Diplomatic incidents, deteriorating economies, crop failures, military buildups, elections, and historic enmities are but a few of the many diverse circumstances abroad that might stimulate official action. Obviously, foreign policy undertakings cannot be completely divorced from either the society out of which they emanate or the circumstances abroad toward which they are directed, so that some external and internal independent variables will be present in every undertaking albeit the mix of the two types may vary considerably from one undertaking to the next.

The intervening variables in foreign policy analysis are hardly less extensive. They include not only any attitudes, procedures, capabilities, and conflicts that shape the way in which governmental decision-makers and agencies assess the initiatory stimuli and decide how to cope with them, but they also embrace any and all of the resources, techniques, and actions that may affect the way in which the decisions designed to preserve or modify circumstances in the international system are carried out. The priority of values held by officials; their tolerance for ambiguous information; their capacity for admitting past errors; their training and analytic skills; the hierarchical structure of their decision-making practices; the rivalry of agencies for money, power, and prestige; the administrative procedures employed in the field; the readiness to threaten the use of military force and the availability of men and material to back up the threats; the appropriateness of propaganda techniques; and the flexibility of foreign aid programs are examples of the many intervening variables that can operate in foreign policy undertakings.

The dependent variables comprising the responsive stage are equally complex and extensive. They include the activities, attitudes, relationships, institutions, capacities, and conditions in the international system that are altered (or not altered) or preserved (or not preserved) as a result of the foreign policy undertakings directed toward them. As in the case of the independent variables,

the dependent variables can be divided into two major types, those that involve an alteration or preservation of behavior internal to the object of the foreign policy undertaking and those that pertain to the object's changed or unchanged external behavior. Again a number of obvious examples can be cited. The readiness of another actor to enter into and/or conclude negotiations, the inclination to comply with or resist demands for support on issues in the United Nations, and the strengthening or weakening of an alliance exemplify external dependent variables. The ability or inability to put armies into the field as a consequence of military assistance, the continuance or downfall of a hostile government, and the emergence of a new social structure or the persistence of an old one as a result of a multi-faceted foreign aid program are illustrative of circumstances that would be treated as internal dependent variables whenever they become the focus of foreign policy undertakings.

The field of foreign policy is thus seen to cover a vast range of phenomena. Circumstances can arise whereby virtually every aspect of local, national, and international politics may be part of the initiatory or responsive stage of the foreign policy process. Indeed, the foregoing examples indicate that students of foreign policy may often be led by their subject matter to move beyond political science to investigate phenomena in the other social sciences. They may even find themselves investigating phenomena in the physical sciences. This might occur, for example, if the foreign policy undertakings of interest aim to modify the external environment by compensating for depleted oil reserves. To comprehend the behavior of the national actor and the resistance or compliance of the actors abroad whose oil deposits make them the objects of modification attempts, investigators must acquire some familiarity with the geology, technology, and economy of discovering, mining, and transporting oil.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Of course, all of this is not to say that the individual student of foreign policy should or can be so broad-gauged as to be able to handle all the phenomena that fall within his purview. We have been tracing the outlines of a field to be probed by many persons and not of a research design to be implemented by one. Plainly the diversity and range of materials encompassed by the field are too great for one analyst to master fully. On the other hand, presumably the individual researcher must be capable of communicating with the many types of specialists to whom he may have to turn for guidance on those aspects of undertakings that lie outside his competence.

Yet, despite its breadth of coverage, the subject matter of the foreign policy field is internally coherent. All the phenomena of interest to foreign policy analysts acquire structure and coherence through their concern with the three stages of the interaction process through which national actors purposefully relate themselves to the international system. If individual, group, organizational, or societal phenomena are not relevant to one of the stages of a particular foreign policy undertaking, then the analyst does not investigate them. A vast range of phenomena may fall within the scope of his concerns, but they always do so in a specific context—that of whether variations in the initiatory and implementive stages can be related to variations in the responsive stage. Often, to be sure, the analyst may find that the two sets of variations are unrelated to each other. Some, perhaps many, foreign policy undertakings are totally ineffective and thus do not reflect an association in the two sets of variations. However, the internal coherence of the subject matter of a field derives from logical possibilities and not from empirical realities. It is the legitimacy of the search for, not the fact of, association between the two sets of variations that renders foreign policy phenomena internally coherent.

This is not to deny that the subject matter of the foreign policy field overlaps many other fields at many points. As already indicated, the phenomena encompassed by the initiatory and implementive stages can be of considerable concern to students of national politics, just as those comprising the responsive stage can be highly relevant to the analysis of international politics. Furthermore, variations in any one of the stages may also be related to variations in sequences of behavior that span national boundaries but are not part of either of the other two stages. Foreign policy undertakings do have unintended consequences for social, economic, and political life, and, to the extent that they do, the phenomena of the field become central to these other disciplines. Yet notwithstanding such overlap, the foreign policy analyst structures his subject matter in such a way as to distinguish it from that of any other field. He is interested in the entire relationship that national actors establish with their external environments and not in only a segment of it. None of the three stages has any meaning for him by itself. The characteristics of each stage hold his attention

only insofar as they may be associated with the characteristics of the other two. For him foreign policy becomes intelligible only to the extent that its sources, contents, and consequences are considered jointly. This is the distinctive viewpoint of the field. No other field concerns itself with the association between variables on both sides of national boundaries. The phenomena embraced by this association are the ones that always remain unexplained even after the fields of national and international politics are stretched to their limits. Students of national (or comparative) politics have no theoretical justification for sustaining an interest in foreign policy once the behavioral sequences it initiates are extended into the external environment. Although slow to make theoretical allowance for the point, they do have a vital concern with the internal consequences of the processes of foreign policy formulation and with the feedback effects that may result from the alterations which foreign policy undertakings bring about in the external environment. The responsive stage itself, however, lies outside of the scope of their field. Similarly, nothing in the theoretical foundations of international politics provides students of that field with justification for probing the sources of foreign policy that are located within national actors or the response to foreign policy undertakings that are confined to the target society and do not become foreign policy initiatives on the part of that society. Theories of international politics focus on the interactions of national actors and not on the sources or consequences of interaction which are not part of prior or subsequent interactions.

Although the problems posed by the third requirement for the existence of a field, a unique body of theoretical propositions, are discussed at greater length in a later section, it can be seen from the foregoing that the study of foreign policy also meets this condition. Propositions about the association between variations in the behavior of national actors and variations in their external environments cannot be derived from any other field of inquiry. Foreign policy theory necessarily borrows from theories of local and national politics in order to manipulate properly the internal independent variables of the initiatory stage, the intervening variables of the implementive stage, and the internal dependent variables of the responsive stage. It must also rely on theories of international

politics for guidance in manipulating the external independent and dependent variables of the initiatory and responsive stages. Yet, by virtue of combining theory about domestic and international processes, foreign policy theory is neither domestic nor international theory. It bears the same relationship to these allied fields as social psychological theory does to psychology on the one hand and sociology on the other.⁵¹ Like social psychology, it alone consists of propositions that relate the behavior of an actor both to its own functioning and to its environment. The list of foreign policy theorists is not long and contains no names comparable to Lewin, Hovland, Newcomb, Asch, or Festinger in social psychology, but presumably this is due to the fact that the reorientation toward the comparative analysis of foreign policy has just begun rather than to an inherent inability of the field to support its own unique body of theory.

IV. *Some underlying assumptions*

Having traced in bold strokes the outline of the field, some finer touches are in order. A number of problems require further discussion. Perhaps the most important of these is the question of why the responsive stage must be part of foreign policy analysis. Why not treat governmental decisions as the dependent variables and bypass the responsive stage? After all, it might be argued, aspects of the international system are being taken into account as external independent variables—why must they also be regarded as dependent variables? If the focus is on the national actor in relation to its environment, why is it necessary to investigate the consequences of foreign policy undertakings for other actors? Furthermore, how is one to know whether the presumed or modified behavior that constitutes the responsive stage is in fact a response to the foreign policy undertaking being examined? Are there not insurmountable methodological problems inherent in the task of separating responses to external influences from behavior generated by other factors?

⁵¹ For a discussion of how the distinctiveness of social psychology is not diminished despite the large extent to which it borrows from psychology and sociology, see Theodore M. Newcomb, *Social Psychology* (New York: The Dryden Press, 1950), Chap. 1; and Morton Deutsch and Robert M. Krauss, *Theories in Social Psychology* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1965), Chap. 1.

A similar line of questioning can be pursued with respect to the initiatory and implementive stages. Since foreign policy undertakings are being treated as purposeful, why not regard the governmental decisions that launch them as the independent variables and bypass the initiatory stage? Why not focus on the purposeful behavior directly, rather than positing it as an intervening process? If the interaction of national actors and their environments constitutes the subject matter of the field, why does not its scope include unplanned actions as well as purposeful ones? How does one assess the relative potencies of all the independent variables that may be operative as a source of a foreign policy undertaking? Indeed, how does one determine whether the undertaking is a consequence of the external and internal independent variables being examined rather than of the decision-making process that launched it?

Another set of problems posed by the suggested outline concerns the nature of foreign policy theory. What are the main questions that such theory is designed to answer? Are not all the uninteresting questions answered by other fields? Do not national and international political theory, respectively, cope with the ways in which foreign policy phenomena are functional or dysfunctional for national and international systems? Posed differently, theories of national and international politics deal with the fascinating questions of why systems endure or collapse and how they do or do not achieve equilibria—but what kinds of systemic questions can be asked about foreign policy phenomena? If foreign policy analysis does not pose functional and systemic questions, what theoretical challenges does it have to offer? To repeat, is it a fantasy to aspire to the construction of generalized theories of foreign policy that are viable and relevant? If so, why compare? Why not simply examine the particular relationships that particular national actors establish with their particular environments?

Obviously this is not the place to develop full answers to all these questions. However, an explication of some of the basic assumptions underlying our delineation of the foreign policy field should clarify some of these problems and point the way to a more formal and extended attempt to resolve all of them.⁵²

⁵² For a more detailed discussion of the problems posed by the independent and dependent variables of the field, see my "Moral Fervor, Systemic

The centrality of the responsive stage is unquestionably the most radical conclusion of our effort to trace the outlines of the foreign policy field. Probably because of the enormous methodological difficulties they pose, responses to foreign policy are usually examined with much less care than are the variables comprising the initiatory and implementive stages. Ordinarily analysts tend to settle for a brief account of the international environment in which the national actor is located, noting any limitations and opportunities that the environment may impose and offer, and then moving on to examine what the actor seeks to accomplish in this environment and why.⁵³ The problem of sorting out the consequences of foreign policy undertakings from the events that would have occurred anyway is so awesome that, in effect, the responsive stage is ordinarily viewed as consisting of constants rather than variables. Yet, here we are insisting that it cannot be bypassed, that it is a central aspect of the field, and that the methodological obstacles must be confronted and surmounted.

Several reasons and one assumption underlie this insistence. The assumption—perhaps better called an article of faith—is that the methodological problem is at least theoretically solvable. Differentiating between responses intended by political actors and those that would have occurred anyway is the central problem of political analysis and haunts research in all areas of the discipline. Yet it has not deterred inquiry into the responses of voters to candidates, of legislatures to interest groups, of bureaucracies to leaders. Why, then, should it block the analysis of attempts to modify

matic Analysis, and Scientific Consciousness in Foreign Policy Research," in Austin Ranney, ed., *Political Science and Public Policy* (Chicago: Markham, 1968), Chap. 9.

⁵³ Interestingly, and perhaps significantly, works concerned with national actors passing through periods of dynamic readjustment to the international system stand out as exceptions to this general tendency. Recent works on postwar Germany, for example, are notable for the equal attention that they pay to the interaction of all three of the stages comprising the foreign policy field. Cf. Karl W. Deutsch and Lewis J. Edinger, *Germany Rejoins the Powers: Mass Opinion, Interest Groups, and Elites in Contemporary German Foreign Policy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959); James L. Richardson, *Germany and the Atlantic Alliance: The Interaction of Strategy and Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966); and Wolfram F. Hanrieder, *West German Foreign Policy, 1949-1963: International Pressure and Domestic Response* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967).

behavior that span national boundaries? To be sure, the crossing of national boundaries renders foreign policy situations more complex than other types, but this is a difference in degree and not in kind. More variables may have to be examined in foreign policy analysis, but the problem remains that of identifying behavior that would not have occurred in the absence of a specified stimulus. The fact that the methodological equipment presently available rarely permits a satisfactory solution of the problem does not mean that it can never be solved. For political scientists to abandon inquiry on these grounds would be the equivalent of astronomers having long ago ceased theorizing about the far side of the moon because it could not be observed through telescopes. Old methodological techniques do get perfected and new types of equipment do get developed in political science as well as in astronomy. Political science is still a long way from having the equivalent of the space capsule, but recent progress with simulation and other procedures for tracing the flow of influence indicates that methodological innovation is far from over. Hence what is important is whether it is at least theoretically possible to translate responses to foreign policy undertakings into observable behavior. The answer seems to be clearly in the affirmative and is the basis for the assumption that the methodological obstacles to treating the responsive stage as a set of dependent variables can be surmounted.

As for the substantive reasons for insisting that the responsive stage cannot be bypassed, one is the simple fact that a concern for foreign policy cannot be sustained without the question of its effectiveness and consequences arising. Some conception of the receptivity of the international system to the behavior of the national actor being examined is necessary even if the degree of receptivity is treated as a constant rather than a variable. Whether their research is oriented toward the solution of practical policy problems or the building of theoretical models, foreign policy analysts cannot avoid assessing the likelihood of one or another type of undertaking bringing about the desired modifications in the structure of the external environment. All their conceptual tools lead to such assessments. If one examines any of the standard concepts of the field, it soon becomes clear that what we have called the responsive stage is a central element. To refer, say, to "foreign

policy attitudes" is to denote judgments about general or specific conditions abroad that ought to be preserved or altered; to describe "foreign policy issues" is to depict either conflicts at home about what constitutes effective action abroad or conflicts abroad that may have adverse consequences at home if attempts to modify them are not undertaken; to study "foreign policy decision-making" is to analyze what officials hope to preserve or alter through their external behavior. Since the responsive stage thus cannot be bypassed, it seems only prudent to treat its variability as a central aspect of the field.

But there is an even more important reason for placing the responsive stage on an analytic par with the initiatory and implemmentive stages. Not only do the responses that unfold in the environment provide a means of assessing the effectiveness of foreign policy undertakings, but they also lead the analyst to treat the foreign policy process as dynamic rather than static, since many of the dependent variables that comprise the responsive stage of one undertaking operate as independent variables in the initiatory stage of a subsequent undertaking. For example, having fostered viable social and political institutions abroad through an effective foreign aid program, the aid-giving nation may then be faced with a changing alliance system as the newly strengthened recipient societies are able to follow more independent foreign policy lines of their own. Neither the national actor nor its environment, in other words, ever remains constant. Both are in a state of flux, altering in response to each other in a dynamic fashion that serves to maintain the distinction between the actor and its environment. The foreign policy process is thus marked by continuity, and it is only for analytic convenience that undertakings are examined separately. The ultimate goal is comparison across many undertakings, since only then can higher levels of generalization about national actors in their environments be attained. Treating each undertaking as an analytic unit facilitates movement toward this goal, while the inclusion of the responsive stage serves as a means of bridging the artificial discontinuity to which such a procedure gives rise.

There is another important advantage in the notion that the dependent variables of the responsive stage may operate as inde-

pendent variables in the initiatory stage of subsequent undertakings. It provides a basis for drawing a boundary beyond which the student of foreign policy no longer needs to analyze the consequences of attempts to modify behavior abroad. If the foreign policy analyst were to examine all the repercussions of an undertaking, eventually he would become, in effect, a student of the society toward which the undertaking was directed. Such a transformation from foreign policy analyst to national politics specialist, however, is prevented by utilizing the distinction between those dependent variables that are and those that are not likely to serve as independent variables in subsequent undertakings. That is, having examined the responsive stage with a view to establishing whether it is associated with variations in the initiatory and implementive stages, the foreign policy analyst loses interest in the responses if they do not emerge as stimuli to further action on the part of the national actor whose undertakings are the focus of his attention.

Much the same line of reasoning underlies the inclusion of the initiating stage as a major aspect of the field. While the analysis of foreign policy would be greatly simplified if pre-decisional determinants were treated as constants and governmental policymaking processes as independent variables, such a procedure would omit from consideration an important body of phenomena of interest to students of the field. As in the case of the responsive stage, both policy-oriented and theory-building analysts have substantive concerns that lead them to inquire into the factors that give rise to foreign policy undertakings and to assess the relative potencies of the factors they identify. In his effort to improve the quality and direction of undertakings, the policy-oriented analyst must examine their sources or he cannot account for the variation in their degrees of success and failure. Likewise, his theoretically-oriented colleague must differentiate among the many domestic and foreign influences acting upon decision-makers in order to construct models that are both susceptible to empirical proof and capable of explaining an even wider body of phenomena. To be sure, both types of analysts could follow the precepts of the decision-making approach and analyze the pre-decisional determinants in terms of the stimuli to which government officials see themselves as reacting.⁶⁴ In doing

⁶⁴ Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

so, however, they would nevertheless be treating the antecedents of decision as independent variables. They would still be asking whether variations that occurred prior to decision were associated with those that occurred subsequently. Hence it seems preferable to examine the initiatory stage directly rather than indirectly through the perceptions of officialdom. That is, since assessing the strength of causal factors is at best extremely difficult, it seems unnecessarily complicating to make the task that of first determining how others (officials) assess the relevant factors and then assessing these assessments.⁵⁵ Besides, officials may not reconstruct the world in such a way as to highlight the variations in the initiatory stage that the analyst is interested in correlating with variations in the responsive stage, in which case he would have to forego the decision-making approach anyway. The procedure of focusing on the initiatory stage directly does not, however, neglect the fact that the way officials perceive and experience the world is crucial to the action they take. It will be recalled that the dimensions of purpose, timing, and style given to undertakings by the way in which decision-makers experience the initiating stimuli, are treated as intervening variables in the implementive stage. Furthermore, those aspects of the decision-making process itself that operate as initiatory stimuli (e.g. competition for prestige, power, or appropriations among agencies and their personnel) are regarded as independent variables and analyzed accordingly.

Turning to the question of why purposeful behavior serves as an organizing focus of the foreign field, it must first be emphasized that by "purpose" is meant nothing more than the fact that officials do not act at random. They always have some goal in mind, some notion of how the action they take will help to preserve or modify one or more aspects of the international environment. The goals need not be highly concrete or rational. Nor need they be integral parts of an overall plan. On the contrary, our conception of goals allows for them to be ambiguous, tentative, and not fully formed. They might amount to no more than "stalling for time" or be no clearer than an effort to "muddle through."⁵⁶ They might well be

⁵⁵ For an elaboration of this point, see my "The Premises and Promises of Decision-Making Analysis," in James C. Charlesworth, ed., *op. cit.*

⁵⁶ Although policymaking designed to "muddle through" situations is

unrealistic goals and give rise to a host of unintended and undesirable consequences. Imprecise, ineffective, and counterproductive as they may be, however, foreign policy undertakings are launched for some reason. They do envision some future state of affairs as being served and it is in this sense that they are regarded as purposeful.

The emphasis on the purposefulness of foreign policy undertakings serves two needs. One is obvious. Without the presumption of goal-oriented behavior, there would be no basis for knowing which variations in the external environment should be examined in order to determine whether they are associated with variations in the behavior of foreign policy actors. The variable circumstances in the environment are so numerous that many are bound to be associated merely by chance with the foreign policy undertakings being considered. The student of foreign policy, however, is interested in systematic associations and not in those founded on happenstance. The goal-oriented nature of foreign policy provides the analyst with a reference point for selecting associations around which to organize his inquiry. To be sure, he may be interested in associations involving variations in the initiatory stage that officials do not formally include among their purposes; and he may also wish to probe associations involving variations in the responsive stage that are unintended consequences of the purposeful undertakings. But, even in cases where his focus extends beyond the goal-oriented nature of foreign policy, such orientations still serve as a baseline for his assessments.

A second reason for emphasizing the purposefulness of undertakings is that it helps to distinguish foreign policy from the total set of interactions that occur between a society and its environment. As previously indicated, foreign policy phenomena constitute only one kind of linkage that a society establishes with its environ-

here conceived to be goal-oriented behavior, some analysts tend to posit it as lacking this characteristic. (Cf. Charles E. Lindblom, "The Science of 'Muddling Through,'" *Public Administration Review*, 29 [1959], pp. 79-88.) The latter position arises out of the unnecessarily narrow view that only behavior directed toward long-range, well planned, and duly considered ends can be goal-oriented. Ends may be short-range, poorly planned, and impetuously considered, but action designed to serve them is nonetheless goal-oriented. Even the "muddler" hopes to get "through" and thus it is difficult to conceive of his behavior as purposeless.

ment. Others are established by businessmen, scientists, artists, and tourists, to name but a few of the many types of private individuals and groups whose interactions span national boundaries. These cultural, social, economic, and scientific linkages can be so relevant to the processes of foreign policy that the analyst may often find it appropriate to treat them as independent and/or dependent variables operative in undertakings. In themselves, however, such linkages are not of interest to the foreign policy analyst. He is interested in the national actor, not in subnational actors—in public individuals or groups, not in private ones. Stated in another way, the foreign policy analyst is concerned with the linkages that the entire society, rather than segments of it, establishes with the external environment. Only governments can link the personnel and resources of the entire society to situations abroad and this, to repeat, governments always do for some purpose. On the other hand, whether nongovernmental linkages are or are not intended by those who sustain them, there is a limit beyond which they cannot be controlled by governmental purposes. Up to a point travel can be forbidden, and so can trade and scientific and other types of exchange. But, if only because some of the interaction is perceptual, government cannot arrogate to itself total control over external ties. Hence, from the perspective of the national actor, the linkages established by subnational groups or by individuals are not purposeful. From this perspective, the actions of governments are the only goal-oriented external undertakings of the entire society. This characteristic distinguishes foreign policy from all other national-international linkages.

V. *Why compare?*

There remains the problem of what questions foreign policy theory is designed to answer. As implied earlier, the foreign policy analyst is not faced with the kinds of systemic and functional challenges that impress his counterparts in the national and international fields. Foreign policy theory can never in itself explain why and how a national system manages to persist or why and how it collapses. Such theory can shed light on one of the functional requirements of all national systems—the necessity of adapting to the environment—but it does not pretend to deal with the full range

of integrative mechanisms through which national systems maintain their internal coherence. Thus it can never provide more than partial answers to the intriguing questions of systemic persistence. Similarly, the endurance or deterioration of international systems lies outside the competence of the foreign policy theorist. By explaining why and how one or more national actors interact with their environments, foreign policy theory provides some of the material needed for a functional analysis of international systems, but it does not address itself to the sum of the separate patterns of interaction maintained by different actors and thus the student of foreign policy must again stand aside when the fascinating questions of systemic stability and change are posed by his colleagues in the international field.

It is exactly at this point that foreign policy theorists run the risk of engaging in unrealistic fantasy. Those whose aspirations for foreign policy theory include the capacity to explain and predict systemic coherence and collapse are bound to be thwarted. The fantasy is enticing and the aspiration is worthy, but neither can ever be realized. Foreign policy is the only field that relates the behavior of a national actor both to its environment and to its own functioning, but the price of such a focus is that the boundaries of the field do not correspond to those of any empirical political system. While a foreign policy undertaking can be judged as functional or dysfunctional for the national system that undertakes it and functional or dysfunctional for the international system with respect to which it has consequences, there is no concrete "foreign policy system" for which its functionality can be assessed.

What, then, are the theoretical challenges posed by the foreign policy field? The answer is that the challenges are endless if aspirations are scaled down to the level of middle-range theory and not cast in systemic terms at the highest level of generalization.⁵⁷ The question is paralyzing only if the foreign policy analyst wants to construct broad-gauged models that account for the dynamics of

⁵⁷ The distinction between middle-range and general theories is best described by Robert K. Merton, who notes that the former are "intermediate to the minor working hypotheses evolved in abundance during the day-by-day routines of research, and the all-inclusive speculations comprising a master conceptual scheme from which it is hoped to derive a very large number of empirically observed uniformities of social behavior," in *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1957, revised edition), pp. 5-6.

concrete systems of action whose boundaries are rooted in historical experience and political authority. Once he accepts the fact that his subject matter does not permit emulation of colleagues in allied fields who employ functional analysis and systems theory, a host of theoretical tasks come into view that enliven thought and compel inquiry.

Before identifying these tasks, it is useful to note that the act of identification is itself important. Too many first-rate theorists have forsaken the foreign policy field because of its failure to excite their imaginations. For example, two of the most distinguished empirical theorists in the modern era of political science, Almond and Dahl, started their careers with important works dealing with foreign policy⁵⁸ and subsequently turned their talents to phenomena that originate and unfold within national boundaries. Neither ever returned to the study of foreign policy, apparently finding the construction of theory about units bounded by a common system of authority more challenging. Hence the drama of foreign policy undertakings, of national actors coping with their environments, needs to be emphasized if the field is to recruit and keep theorists capable of exploiting the re-orientation toward comparative analysis.

The many challenges inherent in foreign policy phenomena are most succinctly identified by calling attention to two main types, those that derive from the truly political quality of the field's unit of analysis, the undertaking, and those that are posed by the adaptive function of national systems. The former set of challenges are rarely appreciated. Many political scientists do not seem to recognize that while comprehension of foreign policy undertakings may not explain or anticipate systemic stability and change, it will provide fundamental insights into the dynamics of politics. For the attempt to modify behavior across national boundaries is perhaps the purest of all political acts. Unlike their domestic counterparts, foreign policy officials cannot appeal to the common ties of culture and history to secure the compliance of those whose behavior they are attempting to modify. Unlike domestic officials, they cannot

⁵⁸ Gabriel A. Almond, *The American People and Foreign Policy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1950), and Robert A. Dahl, *Congress and Foreign Policy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1950).

merely rely on the structures from which their own authority is derived to induce compliance. The foreign policy official is the only politician whose actions are directed toward persons and situations that are normally responsive to cultural standards, historical aspirations, and sources of authority that are different from his own. Hence the foreign policy undertaking is the most delicate of political actions and the most fragile of political relationships. It involves a degree of manipulation of symbols that is unmatched in any other political situation. It requires a balance between the use of persuasion on the one hand and the use or threat of force on the other that is more precarious than it is in any other kind of politics. It reveals the limits of legitimacy, the sources of loyalty, and the dynamics of bargaining. It demonstrates the inertia of habit as well as the continuities to which habitual behavior gives rise. It exposes the universality of resistance to change and, correspondingly, the large extent to which change can be introduced only in small increments at the margins of organized life.

In short, the field of foreign policy contains the promise that virtually every dimension of politics will be examined in its purest form. In a profound sense the challenge of foreign policy theory is at the middle-range level hardly less than that of empirical political theory itself. There is no problem that the empirical political theorist confronts—whether it be that of authority, law, influence, responsibility, federalism, rationality, order, sovereignty, community, leadership, communications, or revolution—that cannot be fruitfully investigated in the foreign policy field.⁵⁹

The other clearly identifiable set of theoretical challenges arises out of the aforementioned notion that foreign policy undertakings perform an adaptive function for national systems. General systems analysis may lie beyond the scope of the foreign policy theorist, but the functional problems posed within the area of his concern are nonetheless compelling. Even though national systems may collapse for strictly internal reasons, they cannot persist without coping with their environments and this never-ending effort to

⁵⁹ For an elaboration of the notion that the quintessence of politics can be found in the foreign policy field, see my *Calculated Control as a Unifying Concept in the Study of International Politics and Foreign Policy*, p. 16, and my "Foreign Policy as an Issue-Area," in James N. Rosenau (ed.), *Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy* (New York: Free Press 1967), *passim*.

maintain boundaries and achieve an accommodation with the environment commands attention and provokes inquiry. It is just as dramatic as a newborn child's effort to make the transition to an oxygen-filled world, an adolescent's search for identity in a world that seems to engulf independence and demand acquiescence, a marriage's endeavor to survive in a world of possessive relatives and tempting lovers, a business firm's struggle to keep up with technological change and a world of aggressive competitors, a minority group's fight to bring about a world of fair and equal treatment, a political party's striving to extend its popularity and create a world that it can govern. For none of these—or for any of the many other actors that could be listed—is accommodation with the environment easy or predetermined. At any moment the boundaries separating a system from its environment can give way and suffer drastic revision, if not elimination. At no point can an actor assume that a permanent accommodation has been attained. Performance of the adaptive function is never completed. It must be continuously serviced. Thus foreign policy undertakings are inherently intriguing, both in the basic emotional sense that they are rooted in human efforts to survive and prosper and in the theoretical sense that it is no simple matter to fathom why and how national systems manage to remain differentiated from their environments.

But why compare? Granting the challenges inherent in the study of foreign policy undertakings, why is it also necessary to reorient the field toward comparative analysis? Although a full discussion of the reasons would constitute an essay in itself, they can be asserted simply and concisely here. Comparison is necessary because the two major theoretical challenges we have identified cannot otherwise be met. Comprehension of the external activities undertaken by one national system is not sufficient to answer the questions of systemic adaptation and political process that are inherent in foreign policy phenomena. The repeated experiences of two or more systems must be carefully contrasted for an answer to such questions to begin to emerge. Only in this way can the theoretically oriented analyst begin to satisfy his curiosity and the policy-oriented analyst begin to accumulate the reliable knowledge on which sound recommendations and choices are made. Only in this way will it be possible to move beyond historical circumstance and comprehend the continuities of national life in a world of other nations.