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Main approaches to the study of foreign policy : A review

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to present various approaches to the study of foreign policy. In this general context, first, the nature and the definition of foreign policy; second, the impact of main theories and methods of international relations on foreign policy studies; and third, middle-range theories of foreign policy, which are also grouped under the title of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), are discussed.

1. Introduction

The aim of this essay is to review the main approaches to the study of foreign policy. Broadly speaking, foreign policy is the behaviour of states mainly towards other states in the international system through their authorised agents. Nevertheless, the study of foreign policy as a sub-field of international relations can by no means be confined within the boundaries of any given approach. What becomes clear in the field is that the study of foreign policy requires inter- and/or multidisciplinary investigations. This means that foreign policy can be examined at different levels of analysis and be viewed from different perspectives of the family of social sciences. Moreover, philosophical questions which potentially have always occupied a central place in the study of foreign policy increase the complexity of the field.

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The students of foreign policy are confronted with a phenomenon whose boundaries are quite flexible and which allows various kinds of frameworks for study. Accordingly, foreign policy studies undertaken up to now reflect this diversity of interest among the researchers. However, before enumerating these different types of interests, it might be useful to introduce the purposes of foreign policy studies. First of all three broad considerations can be taken into account in the studies of foreign policy. The researcher might employ descriptive, explanatory or prediction-oriented studies or any mixture of these three. In a descriptive study, while the main concern is to establish facts, an explanatory study goes one step further and asks the 'why' question to explain the facts established. A prediction-oriented study, on the other hand, seeks to predict what is likely to happen next through extrapolating prevailing trends into the future. Although a researcher may conduct his or her research at one of these three levels of study, it seems that it is imperative for explanatory studies to use facts, and for prediction-oriented studies to regard both descriptions and explanations in order to predict. As far as descriptive studies are concerned, they are mostly required to answer the 'why' question after establishing the facts. Nevertheless, explanatory studies are given much more weight than the others since the principle targets of foreign policy studies are to understand and explain the external behaviour of states. The explanation of foreign policy can range from the childhood experiences of individual leader to the characteristics of international system depending on the framework in the researcher's mind and what he or she wants to explain.

In this essay I shall first focus on the nature and the definition of foreign policy. Then I shall briefly elaborate on the history and main schools of foreign policy studies. Another concern will be the methodology question. The next and the last step will be to look at the specific approaches that search for an explanation of foreign policy.

2. The nature and the definition of foreign policy

Discussions on the subject matter and the title of a field serve the necessary function of understanding the characteristics and clarifying the boundaries of that field. In this respect, before elaborating on the studies of foreign policy, one should first ask questions like 'What is meant by the term foreign policy?' and 'What kind of activity is it?'.

What is foreign policy? In order to answer this question one should look at where the field of foreign policy is located. First of all, it can be said that foreign policy is a sub-field of international relations. Indeed, within the field of international relations there are two main sub-fields; international politics

and foreign policy. International politics focuses on the structures and processes of the whole international system. In other words, international politics seeks to provide explanations to the working of the international system. The subject matter of foreign policy, the second sub-field of international relations, comes to the fore when one asks the question of 'Who are the main actors of the international system?'. The system concept might simply be described as an interacting group of interrelated and interdependent units. And when it comes to the international system, states appear as the main actors in it. As such, the behaviour of states in the system deserves particular attention. It is at this point that the area of inquiry for the sub-field of foreign policy becomes apparent. It focuses on the external behaviours of governments and more specifically on their authorised representatives since states act almost always through their official agents. To sum up simply, while international politics focuses on international relations in the way that macroeconomics deals with the aggregate behaviour of the entire national economy, foreign policy focuses on the international relations in the way that microeconomics deals with the behaviour of individual actors such as firms and consumers (McGowan, 1973: 11-2). Yet, one should not overlook the interaction between macro and micro perspectives. The influences of structures and processes on the behaviour of individual actors in the international system must be taken into account as well as the influences of the individual actors on the working of the system of which they are a part.

In order to clarify further the concept of foreign policy, it might be useful to look at it in a closer perspective. If foreign policy is a governmental activity, what distinguishes it from other governmental activities? Is there a clear-cut division between domestic policy and foreign policy, or are there close interactions between the two? First of all, it can be said that the latter is directed towards the external environment of a state. In other words, foreign policy is a policy designed to be implemented outside the territorial boundaries of a state. As Clarke and White put it, "[f]oreign policy, like domestic policy is formulated within the state, but unlike domestic policy is directed and must be implemented in the environment external to that state" (White, 1989: 5). Another way of differentiating foreign and domestic politics can be associated with those studies that consider foreign policy as 'high politics' and hence a very differentiated area of governmental activity. This view equates foreign policy with the security and the fundamental values of state in which domestic politics should not interfere. Some others like Wallace see foreign policy as a boundary issue between domestic politics and the international environment (Wallace, 1974: 12-7). According to Wallace, foreign policy is a boundary problem in two respects. First, foreign policy

plays the role of a bridge between the nation state and its international environment. Second, it is the boundary between domestic politics and the government (Political Science) and international politics and diplomacy (International Relations). This means that an understanding of foreign policy requires a mixture of knowledge which covers both political science (domestic politics) and international relations (international politics). Here, the problem is keeping foreign policy at the boundary line (White, 1989: 7). If the researcher looks at it from the viewpoint of political science he or she will pick up domestic determinants, whereas the researcher looking from the perspective of international relations will pick up determinants from the international environment in order to explain foreign policy phenomenon. If we go one step further and investigate the boundary between foreign policy and other academic disciplines the situation becomes more complex. In other words, those who are studying the relationships between foreign policy and its sources (e.g., personality of leaders, policy makers, governmental structures, culture, economic development, geography, international system etc.) will inevitably make use of any one or any mix of the following academic disciplines; psychology, sociology, economics, public administration, history, philosophy, and geography, depending on their units of analysis.

Another issue is related to the term 'policy'. What does 'policy' mean in the context of foreign policy? According to Jones, there is a difference between 'policy as design' and 'policy as practice' (Jones, 1970: 11-32). 'Policy as design' means that policy is something that is deliberately created to achieve specific objectives. In this sense foreign policy becomes a plan of action. On the other hand, 'policy as practice' refers to actions taken to meet practical problems when they emerge in the international system. In this sense foreign policy becomes the action itself. Rosenau offers a similar conceptualisation of foreign policy. According to Rosenau (1976: 16-7). there are three conceptualisations of foreign policy; foreign policy as orientations; foreign policy as plans and commitments; and foreign policy as activities (behaviours). Orientations are the highest guides for action like the constitution of an organisation. In this form, foreign policy refers to general tendencies and principles that underline the conducts of states in international affairs. They are embedded in the experiences, traditions and aspirations of that particular society. Foreign policy in the form of plans and commitments, similar to Jones's conceptualisation, refers to strategies and decisions directed towards specific goals. They are seen as translations of orientations to actual situations. In other words, they represent the translation of principles into norms. Lastly, foreign policy as an activity, again similar to Jones's conceptualisation of 'foreign policy as practice', refers to the concrete behaviour of states *vis-a-vis* the events and situations in the international system in accordance with the orientations, plans and commitments.

After reviewing briefly the nature of foreign policy, let us now look at the definition of the concept. For the time being, putting aside those who consider foreign policy as the pursuit of national interest in terms of power, I shall introduce explicit definitions of the concept. In 1962 Modelski defined foreign policy as the "system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behaviour of other states and for adjusting their activities to the international environment" (Modelski, 1962: 6). And according to Modelski, states deal with this issue through their policy makers who are entitled to act on behalf of their community. Holsti, on the other hand, describes foreign policy from the point of view of the researcher; "the student who analyses the actions of a state towards external environment and the conditions -usually domestic- under which these actions are formulated is concerned essentially with foreign policy" (Holsti, 1983: 19). McGowan in 1973 came up with the following definition: "foreign policy could be defined as the actions of national or central governments taken towards other actors external to the legal sovereignty of the initiating governments" (McGowan, 1973: 12). Wilkenfield develops the following definition: "foreign policy is those official actions (and reactions) which sovereign states initiate (or receive and subsequently react to) for the purpose of altering or creating a condition (or problem) outside their territorial sovereign boundaries" (Wilkenfield *et al.*, 1980: 22). On the other hand, Russet and Starr define foreign policy as the stuff of international relations: "People do not agree on exactly what should be included here, but they are concerned with the policies that states declare, the decisions taken within governmental circles, the actions actually taken by governments, and consequences of the behaviour of governments and their official representatives. Foreign policy is the output of the state into the global system" (Russet and Starr, 1985: 191).

In sum, one can say that foreign policy is an official activity formulated and implemented by the authorised agents of sovereign states as orientations, plans, commitments and actions which are directed towards the external environment of the states. Since foreign policy covers a very wide area it is almost impossible to give a complete definition of it. Nevertheless, a shorthand definition of foreign policy is given by Hill: "Foreign policy is the sum of official external relations conducted by independent actors in

international relations".[1]

3. Theories and methods of foreign policy

Since states are considered as the central actors by almost all perspectives in the field of international relations, theories of foreign policy behaviour of states are intermingled with the theories of international relations. Therefore, let us now look at how major approaches in international relations explain the phenomenon of foreign policy.

3.1. Traditional understanding

Passing through the long corridor of diplomatic history and law, a new discipline known as international relations had begun to emerge steadily between the two world wars. Consequently, immediately after the Second World War the first coherent approach of the discipline of international relations, and therefore of the field of foreign policy, came into existence as what is called today the Traditional Approach. Nevertheless, the traditional approach was divided into two schools of thought; idealism and realism. Their central common point was their focus on the human nature and the nature of international system. According to the traditional approach, "the determinants of foreign policy are to be found in the nature of the international political system" (Smith, 1986: 15). The idealists were thinking that what causes conflict and tension is not human nature which is essentially peace-loving, but political and social mechanisms. For the idealists, in order to prevent the recurrence of conflicts and wars, mechanisms and institutions that could generate peace and democracy should be built within the international society. The activities directed to establish and sustain such an international environment have presumably become the explanation of foreign policy. Idealism was criticised by its opponents on the basis of its focus more on moral principles rather than realities of international relations. In fact, it is the latter perspective which is known as realism, and which has always been identified with traditionalism in international relations. According to realists, politics is governed by objective laws that have their own roots in human nature (Morgenthau, 1978: 3-15). The central beliefs in this approach were that the structural condition in the international political system -which

[1] This definition of foreign policy was made by Christopher Hill in his Foreign Policy Analysis lectures at the London School of Economics.

is made up of sovereign states- is anarchy, and just like a self-interested individual these sovereign states pursue their national interests in an endless process of maximising their power since interest is defined in terms of power. Accordingly, this approach makes explicit assumptions about the foreign policies of states (White, 1989: 10-1; Smith, 1986: 15). First of all, it is the state and not any other entity that could conduct foreign policy. The sovereign state is the prime actor in the international political system. Second, realists assume that states or governments on behalf of states, are unitary entities meaning that like any individual, states have objectives and act purposefully in accordance with these objectives. The realist conception of state and foreign policy assumes that states are rational actors, therefore they do not act haphazardly but deliberately. Foreign policy action according to realists is the product of rational behaviour; it is a kind of calculation, calculation of means and ends and benefits of alternative courses of action in order to maximise the benefits. There must be proportionality between the rational interests and the power of a state in order to pursue rational foreign policy. Thus rationality explains why states act as they do. In this realist picture of international relations power becomes the driving force since, in order to promote their interests, states seek to maximise their powers. This means that foreign policy is nothing but a struggle for power between states.

Two other dimensions of realist thinking in relation to foreign policy might be worth mentioning. The first point is that the realist approach views foreign policy from the environment external to the state. The determinants of foreign policy can only be found in the anarchic international environment rather than in the domestic environment. Accordingly, the balance of power in the international system, and the situation of a state in the system are the fundamental determinants of foreign policy. Secondly, in realism it is 'high politics' that dominates the foreign policy agenda of states. In other words, while military and security issues are overemphasised, economic dimensions of foreign policy, named as 'low politics', are de-emphasised. The realist belief in the autonomy of political sphere is prone to overlook the interaction between foreign policy and other spheres such as economics, law, and ethics.

3.2. Behaviouralism and the challenge of Decision Making Approach

The reaction to the realist interpretation of international relations and foreign policy came from what is labelled as the Behaviouralist School. In fact, the challenge of behaviouralists was more of a methodological revolution rather than a challenge directed to the basic tenets of realism. The behavioural challenge first came under the title of Decision Making

Approach, and applied to foreign policy by Snyder and his associates in 1954 (Snyder *et al.*, 1962). According to the decision making theory, foreign policy was nothing but a series of decisions taken by the official decision makers. Hence, the explanation of foreign policy was the explanation of the behaviour of an individual or a group acting in a structured domestic machinery in order to decide which course of action is going to be adopted. A cursory glance at the decision making approach reveals the fact that it was strongly influenced by the basic premises of the realist school. First of all, despite its identification of state with official decision makers, the state remained the only actor in the international system. Second, the rational actor model of realism was translated into the Decision Making Approach as rational decision maker or rational decision making process. Hence, like the abstract state of realism, the concrete decision maker(s) began to calculate the pluses and the minuses of alternative courses of action, and picked up the most appropriate (beneficial) one that would lead to the achievement of the desired goal(s).

Nevertheless, behaviouralism under the label of Decision Making Approach brought very significant changes to the concept of foreign policy (White, 1989: 13-5). First, it introduced the idea that states or governments are all abstractions, and are not able to behave by themselves. They can act only through concrete individuals known as decision makers. Thus the Behaviouralist School equated the state with the official decision makers whose behaviours, unlike abstractions, can easily be observed and analysed. Second, the Decision Making Approach challenged the 'objectivist' perspective of realism by proposing a 'subjectivist' outlook. According to the Decision Making Approach, the definition of the situation by decision makers is the key to the explanation of the behaviour of states. What counts is not the objective realities of the international environment but the subjective perception of that environment by decision maker(s). Thirdly, the introduction of the impact of the internal setting and societal factors on decision maker(s) and decision making process showed the significance of domestic sources of foreign policy as opposed to realists who focused almost totally on the external sources of foreign policy.

Besides these important departures from the realist thinking, the main controversy between behaviouralism and realism was methodological. The common tendency of the traditional scholars was to study the foreign policies of individual countries. Their beliefs were based on the uniqueness of the foreign policies of states. According to traditionalists, foreign policy could be studied by individualising rather than generalising. Consequently, they have advocated detailed case studies of foreign policies of individual states which

usually employed historical-diplomatic method based on intuition and insight. Yet, for behaviouralists the central aim was to study international relations 'scientifically', and the main concern of the 'scientific' studies was to reach generalisations rather than specifications. In order to achieve this end, according to behaviouralists, one should look for patterns and regularities in the behaviours of states which at the end would lead to theory building. Inspired by positivism and empiricism used in other academic disciplines, behaviouralists advocated the construction of hypotheses about the behaviours of states and the collection of observable 'objective' data for the verification of these hypotheses. Without having an observable data base, according to behaviouralism, the discipline of international relations could not reach a sound general theory. Hence, in order to evaluate the data 'objectively', behaviouralists began to employ quantitative techniques in the explanation of foreign policy. The aim of behaviouralists was to introduce the universal scientific method into the field of international relations.

The advent of the behaviouralist thinking was indeed a breakthrough in the field of international relations and foreign policy. First of all, the publication of David Singer's paper, "The Level of Analysis Problem in International Relations", brought a new feature into the study of foreign policy (Singer, 1961). According to Singer, foreign policies of states could be explained at two different levels; either at the level of nation states or at the level of international system. One could give priority to and overemphasise the impact of either level of analysis in explaining the foreign policy behaviour. Despite its several problems, it can be said that this division has led to the enrichment of foreign policy studies. One of the consequences of Singer's article was the emergence of system analysis which gives priority to the systemic determinants of foreign policy. The aim of these systemic studies were more than the explanation of the foreign policy behaviour. Being loyal to the behavioural understanding of science, they tried to predict the behaviours of states by creating different systemic models (Kaplan, 1957; McClelland, 1966; Rosecrance, 1966). Nevertheless, their understanding of the system was somewhat simple. The system, according to those early system analysts of foreign policy, was the sum of its constituent parts, and they only paid attention to the behaviours and interactions of a few great powers, ignoring the lesser actors of the system. Secondly, at the state level analysis the Decision Making School emphasised the domestic sources of foreign policy. Its impact on the foreign policy studies was remarkable (White, 1989: 14-7). One can say that the Decision Making Approach invited psychology and sociology into the foreign policy analysis in order to understand the subjective world of individual and group behaviour. It also

fostered studies of important foreign policy decisions, namely the study of crisis decisions. Thirdly, the Decision Making Approach led to the study of decision making process. Furthermore, after studying individuals and the governmental process of decision making, the Decision Making Approach came to the point that states and governments are not monolithic entities, and therefore it began to question the rationality assumption.

3.3. Comparative Foreign Policy Approach

Nevertheless, the most striking school of behaviouralism came under the title of Comparative Foreign Policy Approach (CFP). The emergence of the comparative study of foreign policy was the direct impact of the behavioural movement of the 1950s. As mentioned, the central idea in the behavioural movement was to establish social scientific methods of research which meant systematic-empirical data collection, conceptualisation, hypothesis testing, and theory building. The foreign policy studies which were under the strong influence of diplomatic history and international law become acquainted with this new orientation in the 1960s. Parallel to this scientificism, the ultimate aim of CFP was to build a general theory of foreign policy through the use of methods borrowed from natural sciences.

If one looks at the birth and the evolution of CFP (see Hermann and Peacock, 1987) one can see that what stands at the heart of the school is the decision making framework of Snyder (Snyder *et al.*, 1962). The work of Snyder was important for the comparative school in the sense that it was the first attempt to conceptualise how foreign policy is made in a scientific mode. For the first time in the study of foreign policy Snyder and his colleagues were trying to explain the concept through human decision and a series of variables that influence that decision, and moreover they were presenting an operationalisable framework.

The publication of Rosenau's "Pre-theory" more than a decade after the Snyder's framework, marked the foundation of CFP (Rosenau, 1966). In this article Rosenau, after pointing out the lack of scientific studies in the field of foreign policy, was calling for the construction of "if-then" hypotheses. According to Rosenau, the foreign policy analysis has been suffering from lack of testable generalisations of foreign policy behaviour. In other words, foreign policy analysis was devoid of general theory. Having this in his mind, he first identified a series of explanatory variables of foreign policy: (1) idiosyncratic; (2) role; (3) governmental; (4) societal; (5) systemic . These five categories of variables were considered as the main sources of foreign policy behaviour. Nevertheless, according to Rosenau, the degree of the

explanatory power of these variables might well change in relation to the state(s) under investigation. In other words, certain variables could explain the foreign policy of a state better than the others, depending on the typology of the state under investigation. Accordingly, Rosenau introduced three variables into the construction of a typology for states: (1) size; (2) development; and (3) political accountability. Although this study marked the foundation of the school, a clear indication of CFP as a field of inquiry came in with Rosenau's other well-known article: "Comparative Foreign Policy: Fad, Fantasy or Field?" (Rosenau, 1968). According to Rosenau, the field of foreign policy analysis had been occupied by non-comparable, non-cumulative single case studies for decades. Even the Decision Making Approach had not considered the possibility of comparing the perspectives of decision makers of different countries, but improved the quality of the case histories. What is needed, argued Rosenau, was not to enumerate foreign policy variables or discuss them as if they operate identically in all states, rather generate a comparative analysis that could allow relevant generalisations. According to Rosenau, the attraction of CFP was due to two developments; first, the reflection of the increasing importance of comparative studies in the analysis of domestic politics and the foreign policy, and, second, the rapid increase in the number of nation states between 1945-65 and the emergence of worldwide problems. Another important argument concerned the meaning of comparison and comparative foreign policy. In CFP, a comparison had to be conceived in methodological terms rather than in terms of subject matter: comparison was a method. One could investigate foreign policy phenomena in different ways, and the comparative method was only one of them. It was a suitable method to generate and test hypotheses about the foreign policy behaviour which was applicable to more than one state. Thus the aim of the CFP was basically to identify similarities and differences in the foreign policy behaviour of more than one state in order to reach generalisations. Furthermore, it also became possible to study the foreign policy of a single state across different periods (longitudinal study) comparatively. Another important issue that needs to be discussed is the outlook of CFP on the nature of the foreign policy. In the CFP school, foreign policy was regarded as the composite of national and international politics. Studies of foreign policy, therefore, had to focus on the association between variations in the behaviour of nations and variations in their external environment. The inquiry of the association between these two sets of variations was the key point in the study of foreign policy and it should be examined and assessed under a variety of conditions if it were to be well comprehended. Given the national and international dimensions, the subject

matter of foreign policy, according to CFP, would naturally overlap with the other fields of social sciences. When a foreign policy analyst is interested in the sources, contents and consequences of foreign policy as a totality, such analysis would inevitably overlap with other fields of inquiry. In relation to the question of rationality CFP regarded foreign policy behaviour as a purposeful behaviour. Yet the meaning of the term "purpose" in CFP was presented somewhat differently from what is being conventionally accepted. Being purposeful in CFP meant that officials do not act randomly. They always act with some goal in mind, but these goals might not necessarily be highly concrete or rational, or a part of a plan. They might be unrealistic, but they are formulated so as to achieve something. It was in this sense that the foreign policy behaviour is purposeful.

3.4. CFP and Events Data Approach

Because CFP was regarded as a scientific approach based on empirical inquiry, data collection in explaining the behaviours of states has become the primary concern for the researchers. Hence, it is not surprising to find a distinct approach to the process of data gathering in CFP known as Events Data Approach (Kegley, 1975). The Events Data Approach was based on the positivist understanding that in order to explain a phenomenon and to reach empirical generalisations one needs evidence. This approach was a reaction of CFP to the unverifiable hypotheses of the traditional school based on insights and judgements. The growth of scientific knowledge, according to CFP, depended on observational data which could be verified. Starting from this point, CFP contended that in order to explain foreign policy scientifically and comparatively, one must systematically observe the phenomena and classify different patterns of foreign policy actions. These systematic observations and the classification of data derived from these observations would lead to generalisations in the foreign policy behaviour of states. The Events Data Approach, therefore, can be defined as a specific approach that translates the external behaviour of states into an observable level in order to reach generalisation in the field of foreign policy. According to this approach, foreign policy could not be defined in terms of motives and intentions of foreign policy makers since it is not easy to make them observable. Secondly, the foreign policy acts of states had to be operationally defined in order to classify and measure each act. This would make any foreign policy act recognisable and comparable when it occurred. In other words, these operational definitions would lead to the conceptualisation of behaviours under comprehensive groupings. Thus, the data in the Events Data Approach had to be both observable and comparable in order to be counted as verifiable data.

Being informed about the nature of the data that was used in the Events Data Approach, we can now turn to the 'events' side of the story. What are 'events'? First of all the term 'events' means the foreign policy behaviour/action of states. It is what the states do and say to other actors of the international system. Each event is an observable piece of foreign policy. They are the empirical referents of foreign policy and therefore, are considered as units of comparison among foreign policies. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that events are identified only with observable actions; they have nothing to do with the measure of national interests, national goals, or the content of the national foreign policy orientations. Secondly, events are regarded as official behaviours. In other words, unofficial actions are excluded from the Events Data Approach unless they are implemented on behalf of the government. Thirdly, events are non-routine foreign policy acts. In order to be counted as an event, a foreign policy behaviour must be extraordinary and, thus, be newsworthy. The routine foreign policy behaviours are not regarded as 'events'. Fourthly, the underlying motivation behind the 'events' is to influence the behaviour of other state(s), and hence they are essentially political behaviours. Fifthly and lastly, events are purposeful, goal directed behaviours. They are rational, deliberate behaviours undertaken to achieve specific results.

To sum up, one can say that CFP is a reaction to historical, non-comparable, non-cumulative studies of foreign policy. In CFP foreign policy is regarded as a phenomenon common to all states, and hence it searches for common patterns in the behaviours of states. Accordingly, the central argument of the school is to build up a scientific study of foreign policy by adopting comparative methodology. Using extensive cross-national or longitudinal comparisons, the aim is to arrive at generalisations of foreign policy behaviours of states which in turn would lead to verifiable theories of foreign policy.

3.5. Case Study Approach

In sharp contrast to the regularity-seeking nature of CFP in explaining the foreign policy behaviour, the Case Study Approach insists on the uniqueness of the foreign policies of each state. According to the Case Study Approach, there is no state whose foreign policy is the same as others. Each state has its own unique foreign policy since each state has its own unique history and culture. Therefore, it is not possible to explain the foreign policies

of states through a common methodology and a common approach. Rather, what one needs is different approaches and methodologies. In the Case Study Approach, history is the place where the foreign policies of individual states are to be studied. One can explain foreign policy only through the detailed analysis of the individual histories. The central belief in this approach is that any explanation of foreign policy behaviours through generalisations would cause the loss of unique factors that make up a foreign policy action. In other words, creating patterns, models and theories, and trying to fit the foreign policy behaviours of states into these ignore the essence of the foreign policy that is being explained. Another point that concerns the distinction between CFP and the Case Study Approach is that CFP is regarded basically as the American outlook to the study of foreign policy whereas the Case Study Approach is dominated by the British scholars (Smith, 1985).

3.6. The decline of CFP

Nevertheless, comparative studies of foreign policy began to decline in the mid-1970s. The reasons for this decline stemmed both from changes in the international environment and from the problems within the discipline itself (Smith, 1986: 19-22; Rosenau, 1987: 2-4). First of all, in the mid-1970s the role of the economy in international relations and in the conduct of foreign policy increased remarkably. With the advent of nuclear stalemate and the increasing demands of the Third World for economic welfare, the central concerns of foreign policy which were traditionally focused on the political-military matters began to be challenged. As the issues of economic interdependence and political economy became dominant in the global agenda, the traditional assumptions on the role and the limits of the state began to diminish.

The students of foreign policy who used to equate the state with its government or decision makers, when faced with the non-governmental actors both in and outside the state, began to consider the role, competence, and autonomy of the state. The role of the state in international relations as an actor began to decline with the emergence of competent non-state actors in global affairs. Furthermore, with growing interdependence at the global level, the distinction between domestic and foreign policies declined considerably. These changes in the international system naturally created problems for the state-centric and politics-dominated assumptions of the existing approaches.

A second reason for the decline in CFP came from within the CFP itself. In the mid-1970s it became apparent that the ultimate aim of CFP which is

to arrive at a general theory of foreign policy behaviour, was not close. Although a number of CFP-oriented research works were undertaken it could not be managed to generate a theory, and this led to a relative decline of the CFP studies. Nevertheless, CFP continued to survive after the mid-1970s. The projects of *Interstate Behaviour Analysis* (Wilkenfield *et al.*, 1980) and *Comparative Research on the Events of Nations* (East *et al.*, 1978) were the remnants of the CFP approach. In the framework of the CFP approach, these two projects appeared as data collection projects using developed quantification techniques (Smith, 1986: 21). The last collection of the CFP thinking came in 1987 by introducing some modifications in order to compensate for the relative decline of the school (Rosenau *et al.*, 1987). In the introductory chapter of this work, Rosenau, after discussing the problems that CFP confronted in the mid-1970s, comes up with the 'new directions' for the school. According to his 'new directions', it seems that what remains intact is the commitment to scientific methods and comparative analysis. Yet, what seems to have been modified is twofold: (1) the CFP understanding of theory and data; and (2) the interaction between theory and data. In contrast to the early CFP thinking which envisaged cumulation of data in order to reach a general theory of foreign policy, the late CFP argues for theory development that permits empirical investigation. In other words, one might well start from theory construction (rather than collecting observable data to test hypotheses) as long as the theory can be investigated empirically. On the one hand, this shift means that the task of CFP is no longer to construct a general theory of foreign policy. On the other hand, as for the data concerned, events data are by no means the most appropriate or the only data source. Since Events Data count for observable actions, it cannot be used for decisions that do not undertake action, and cannot cover any complex dynamic or any decision of non-governmental actor that affects foreign policy, such as the influence of any global structure or any decision taken by GATT. Therefore, taking the problems with the Events Data Approach into consideration, it seems that the late CFP, on the one hand, disengages itself from the CFP studies devoted to almost nothing but the quantification of foreign policy behaviours, and gives more emphasis to the influence of non-state actors and interdependency on the foreign policy behaviour, on the other.

3.7. Changes in the agenda and new approaches

As mentioned above, by the advent of the detente period in superpower relations and by the emergence of the non-governmental actors in the

international system in the mid-1970s, the agenda of the field of international relations and hence foreign policy began to shift from political-military issues to economics and political economy. The main characteristic of this shift was the dissatisfaction with the state-centric outlook of the existing approaches. Thus the field of international relations and foreign policy came under the influence of what is known as the Complex Interdependence Approach. The main point of this school was centred around the complex nature of the world politics which could best be characterised by transnational relations (Keohane and Nye, 1971; 1977). According to the Complex Interdependence Approach, the role of non-governmental or non-state actors in world politics was as significant as that of states. In other words, transnational corporations and transgovernmental organisations were playing significant roles in world politics. Nevertheless, their roles were somewhat different from those of states; they were involved in economic rather than political-military issues. In the period of detente, according to the Complex Interdependence School, world politics could not be confined solely to the realist view of politics among states. Economic issues arising from the complex web of transnational relations have become important in world politics. Thus, with the increasing importance of economic issues and their interaction with politics, the world has entered into a state of complex interdependence. The challenge of the Complex Interdependence School hit the existing frameworks of foreign policy studies which were basically based on state-centric and politics-dominated assumptions. Nevertheless, the Complex Interdependence Approach remained a contributor rather than becoming a distinct framework to be studied. In other words, either the other approaches tried to integrate its challenge into their own frameworks as it is seen in CFP, or its major proponents tried to synthesise it with realism (Keohane, 1984).

As the Complex Interdependence Approach did not lead to an overall revolution, some new approaches began to offer some advanced frameworks for the study of international relations and foreign policy. The most striking examples of these new approaches, which came under the general title of structuralism, were Neo-realism and World System Analysis. Inspired by the early system theories and the Complex Interdependence Approaches, these new approaches focused on aggregates (systems) rather than particulars (states) in explaining foreign policy behaviour.

The Neo-realist Approach of Waltz (1979) tried to explain the foreign policy behaviours from a structural-systemic perspective. Waltz's systemic perspective was different from those of the early systemic theorists. According to the early system theories, a system was defined as a totality

composed of its parts. In other words, the international system was composed of nation states and their interactions were central to the system studies. Yet, for Waltz, although a system was still composed of interacting units it was indeed more than its parts. Other than the nation states, according to Waltz, the international system has a structure which is distinct from its constituent units. In this way he has clearly established the distinction between the system level and the other levels of analysis. The structure was the system level component of the international system and operating as the organising engine. And it is this structure of the international system that determines the behaviours of states. In Waltz's structuralism, since it seems that the form of the prevailing balance of power in the international system accounts for the understanding of the foreign policy, the balance of power becomes the major reference point of the structure.

The second approach under the general heading of structuralism came from the World System Analysis. Like Waltz, the World System analysts regarded the international system as a totality greater than its parts. The major proponent of this approach is Wallerstein (see Thompson, 1983). For Wallerstein the behaviour of states in the international system is determined by the world system structure and its processes. In this perspective, the world economy is the most important structure in determining the behaviours of states. In other words, there is one single economy in the world system, and the foreign policies of states are determined by the way the states are involved in this economic structure. Yet, in order to understand the foreign policy of any state, one should not only look at the position of the state in the world economy but also the point where this economic structure is standing at the time in the cyclical process in which it continuously circulates.

4. Middle range theories of foreign policy analysis

Having presented the main theories of the discipline of international relations and their intermingled characteristics with the field of foreign policy, now let us look at the middle range theories of the foreign policy analysis.

4.1. Decision making and rationality assumption

At the heart of the foreign policy analysis lies the decision making approach. Broadly speaking, the decision making approach focuses on the principal individuals that take part in the foreign policy making and the

processes in which decisions are reached and become policies. On the other hand, if decision making is at the heart of foreign policy analysis, the issue of rationality is at the centre of the decision making approach. Before turning to how the decision making approach handles the phenomenon of foreign policy, it might be useful to remember the rationality assumption in foreign policy. First of all, it should be repeated that what distinguishes rationality assumption of the decision making approach from the traditionalist thinking of rationality is its focus on concrete decision makers acting on behalf of the state rather than the abstract state as an actor by itself. According to the rational actor model, those who act in the name of government are monolithic units speaking with one voice, holding one view and having one set of goals. The rational actor first sets the goals through careful calculations and identifies possible alternatives to reach these goals. Then, the rational actor compares the consequences of each alternative and decides on the best one that matches the goal or goals. In other words, those who act in the name of the government get full information; take every opportunity into consideration and then decide on the best policy decision (for more information, see Verba, 1969). Nevertheless, as research went on, it has become apparent that rationality assumptions have some serious shortcomings, and hence decision makers could not act rationally, at least in the form that the rational actor model suggested. First of all, there was the impossibility of getting the full information and considering all the alternatives. Accordingly, the rational actor model began to be criticised on the grounds that decision makers do not maximise but satisfice (Simon, 1957). In other words, it was argued that decision makers do not review all the alternatives but decide when they find an acceptable choice, and this was called as 'bounded' or 'limited' rationality.

Armed with a concrete reference point in explaining the foreign policy phenomena, the decision making approach inevitably began to study the human element and its interaction with the environment. Accordingly, in covering a variety of perspectives ranging from individualistic to organisational influences, the decision making approach used insights from psychology, sociology, and public administration in studying foreign policy[2].

[2] Since the central concern of this article is to introduce the "main approaches" of the study of foreign policy, the application of game theoretical models to the field, which may be taken into account in specific studies assessing logico-deductive behaviours in strategic 'rational' decision-making process, is not discussed here. Indeed, it is not surprising to find out direct references to game theory in general foreign policy texts and articles; see Hill and Light (1985: 156-73), Jensen (1982), and Clarke and White (1989). However, the emphasis in this article is placed both on the decision-making theory/rational behaviour and on the main approaches explaining foreign policy decision-making at the individual, group and organisational levels. The readers interested in game-theoretical models and their criticisms are referred to Morgan (1988: 183-6; 198-200), Jones (1970: 48-52), and Hallis and Smith (1991: 119-42).

Let us start with the relationship between foreign policy and the individual.

4.2. *Individual decision maker, "perception and misperception"*

Do the individual characteristics of different decision makers make a difference in the foreign policy of a particular state? The first step to investigate the relationship between the individual and foreign policy is to refer to the personal characteristics of top level individual decision makers or leaders. The kinds of personality traits he or she has may become an important variable in assessing foreign policy decisions. Certain character traits make individuals behave in certain ways. For instance, when faced with a situation to deal with, leaders who have an authoritarian personality will act differently from those who have a democratic personality. Therefore, the personality of a leader - authoritarian or democratic; open minded or close minded; excitable or calm etc. - will most likely influence the nature of his or her policy decisions. Moreover, there might be many motives and drives such as self-satisfaction or self-actualisation, which will easily affect the behaviours of an individual decision maker. Another important personality characteristic of an individual decision maker is related to his or her policy making skills. The intellectual capacity and talents of handling information, analysing it and turning it into concrete policies, will all affect the individual in the process of policy decision making. Therefore, researchers may find significant points in the personality characteristic of leaders or top level decision makers in explaining the certain foreign policy behaviours of states. On the other hand, it can be said that the impact of individual decision maker on the foreign policy matters if one takes into consideration the fact that an individual acts in his or her environment parallel to his or her definition of the environment. Different individuals can derive different meanings from the events occurring in the same environment; can characterise them differently; and hence, behave differently. If an individual can make a difference in the foreign policy of a given state it will stem from how he or she sees the world. Hence, those who study the relationship between the individual and foreign policy will focus on the images, perceptions, beliefs and values of the individual decision maker. In other words, it might seem to the researcher that it is not the power position of a specific state, its domestic conditions, or its position in the international system that determine the choice made in

foreign policy, but how all these factors are perceived by the decision maker.

There is a distinction between what Sprout and Sprout (1956) called the psychological and operational environments of a decision maker. In the operational environment there is objectivity. In other words, in this realm objects and events stand as they actually are and as they actually occurred. Yet, in the psychological environment, on the contrary, objects and events depend upon how the decision maker imagines them to be. There is subjectivity. Individual decision makers select, organise and interpret the incoming stimuli according to their established images, and then act accordingly. Therefore, in order to explain the relation between the individual and foreign policy, and how an individual affects foreign policy, the researcher should go into the psychological world of the decision maker. He or she should collect information about the biography of the decision maker under investigation, searches for facts about his/her world view, values, opinions and personality.

Nevertheless, if a researcher is going to focus on the subjective world of the individuals, he or she is faced with the question of on what criteria one can assume that individual decision maker acts rationally. Indeed, the problem is not only related to the inner worlds of the individual decision makers; there might well be problems outside of them. These problems are relatively independent from the individuals but significantly affect the policy decisions taken by them. First, there is the problem of information; even the most efficient intelligence or information systems are not able to know all the relevant factors in relation to a situation, and hence a decision maker cannot be informed perfectly. On the other hand, there may well be situations where decision makers are confronted either with abundant information or too little information about a situation. Thus, decision makers may have difficulties in selecting the relevant information among many in the former case, and may suffer from lack of information in the latter. Moreover, there might occur problems in the process of information flow due to lack of time, faulty communications, censorship, and lack of competent advisors.

The problem of perception by itself can decrease the power of rationality assumption even if there is perfect information about the external world. It is primarily due to the fact that the interpretation of information will depend on the images and belief systems of the decision maker. In other words, under the same conditions different decision makers can act differently because of their different mental pictures of any phenomenon. There are several problems in relation to perception. The most important is the problem of cognitive consistency. This means that when new information contradicts with the established images of a decision maker, he or she tends to ignore or

reshape it in order to avoid inconsistency. Decision makers tend to perceive what they expect. Hence, they are simply prone to distort and misperceive the incoming information. Jervis gives us a clear picture of misperception in international politics (Jervis, 1976). According to Jervis, there are common patterns of misperception in foreign policy. One of them is the tendency of seeing adversaries as more hostile than they actually are. Decision makers also consider the other states as single-minded and as rational actors. Another common misperception, according to Jervis, is the tendency among decision makers to overestimate their own role in other states when they behave in the way they want. But if the other states do not behave accordingly they tend to consider it not to be their faults. These are some important patterns of misperception in the conduct of foreign policy at the individual decision maker level. Lastly, as far as the relationship between the phenomenon of foreign policy and the individual decision maker is concerned, there appears to be some general propositions on the impact of individual factors on foreign policy (Greenstein, 1967; Jensen, 1982). We can enumerate the important ones as follows: The impact of individual characteristics on foreign policy increases; (1) the higher the interest of a decision maker in foreign policy matters; (2) the greater the decisional freedom permitted; (3) the higher the charisma of the leader; (4) the higher the decision making structure; (5) in non-routine situations; (6) in situations highly unanticipated and remote; (7) when information is overloaded or too sparse; (8) in long range planning rather than in current situations.

4.3. "Groupthink"

Now let us go one step further and try to understand how foreign policy phenomena are analysed at the level of top decision makers as a group. The way individuals act in the context of a small group decision unit is another concern for the students of foreign policy. How can membership of a small group affect the perceptions and the behaviours of the individual? How are policy decisions reached among the members of a small group? Because sometimes important decisions are taken in these small groups, the study of foreign policy decision making has an interest in these questions. According to those who have studied group dynamics, there are strong pressures on individual group members to act in conformity with the other group members and not to oppose to the view of the group even if that view clashes with his or her personal view. Janis's work *Groupthink* is the most famous study in this area (Janis, 1982).

Janis's study focuses on five case studies in the history of the US foreign

policy all of which resulted in policy failures. The main concern of Janis is to show that foreign policy decisions taken in small groups are prone to result in fiascos since the group blocks critical thinking in favour of groupthink. He defines groupthink as follows: "the more amiability and esprit de corps among the members of a policy making group, the greater is the danger that independent critical thinking will be replaced by groupthink which is likely to result in irrational and dehumanising actions directed against out-groups" (Janis, 1982: 13). In other words, the decision making process in small groups demands blindly devoted unity among the group members, and tends to neglect information or ideas which do not fit in the prevailing consensus on the definition of the situation or the action that is going to be implemented. Thus, group members are forced to suppress their doubts on the feasibility or the success of the decision or the action plan taken by the groupthink since critical thinking is not going to be tolerated. Janis (1982: 174-5) enumerates eight common symptoms of groupthink: (1) an illusion of invulnerability which creates excessive optimism and encourages extreme risk taking; (2) an unquestioned belief in the group's inherent morality; (3) collective efforts to rationalise in order to discount warnings; (4) stereotyped views of enemy leaders as too evil to warrant genuine attempts to negotiate; (5) self censorship of deviations from the apparent group consensus; (6) a shared illusion of unanimity concerning the judgements that conform with the majority view; (7) direct pressure on any member who expresses strong arguments against any of the group's stereotypes, illusions, or commitments, making clear that this type of dissent is contrary to what is expected of all loyal members; (8) the emergence of self-appointed-mindguards-members who protect the group from adverse information (see also Smith, 1984).

4.4. "Bureaucratic politics"

A third important middle range theory in the foreign policy analysis focuses on the relationship between organisational and governmental frameworks and foreign policy. It is known as the bureaucratic politics model. The bureaucratic politics model in foreign policy analysis can be considered as the next step after groupthink because this model focuses on the role played by many bureaucrats in the foreign policy making process. The arguments of the bureaucratic politics model start from the point that in the foreign policy making process and during its implementation governments heavily rely on their bureaucrats. They argue that since governments and politicians are temporary, and politicians mostly lack knowledge and expertise on foreign policy, reliance on more permanent and expert

bureaucrats in the foreign policy making process becomes inevitable for governments. In other words, the bureaucratic politics approach asserts that foreign policy is mainly formulated by the bureaucrats rather than by the key decision makers, and this formulation takes place in an organisational process. The top level policy makers are affected by the bureaucratic values and traditions, because they rely on organisational sources of information and they are expected to act in the framework of traditional forms of behaviour. In case of non-conformity with the existing bureaucratic traditions, there might appear resistance from the bureaucracy that could jeopardise the implementation of the policies taken up by the top level policy makers. The organisational process is important in the formulation of foreign policy in the bureaucratic politics model. Even if one accepts that the chief policy makers and even their immediate advisors are transitory and it is indeed the bureaucracy that has acquired experience and essential skills to deal with foreign policy issues, the question as to how this bureaucracy handles foreign policy issues and comes up with policies at the end, becomes an important point to be explained. According to the bureaucratic politics model which was pioneered by Allison and Halperin, policy decisions or choices are usually made as a result of bargaining between several governmental agencies (Allison, 1971; Halperin, 1974). The members of those different governmental agencies try to impose their own views in the process of policy formulation. Thus policy decisions formulated by bureaucrats cannot be seen as unitary decisions. On the contrary, they are the products of various clashing interests of different bureaucratic sections; they are reached through rivalries, bargainings, compromises and adjustments among these governmental units. Naturally, the issue of bureaucratic politics is closely related to the size and the specialisation of the bureaucracy itself. The larger and the more specialised the bureaucracy is, the more the governmental units will be involved in foreign policy decision making. The significant increase in the size and importance of the non-foreign policy bureaucracies in the ministries of defense, economy, trade, labour, agriculture, etc., increases the significance of the bureaucratic politics model in the making of foreign policy.

Nevertheless, the rational model of decision making comes under great attack in the bureaucratic politics model since the decisions are subjected to endless rounds of bargaining and discussions between various agencies concerned with the making of foreign policy. On the other hand, the accuracy of the bureaucratic politics model in explaining foreign policy can also be questioned on the grounds that the bureaucracies are not the major architects of foreign policy, and hence their impacts on the final policy decisions are

not significant. Accordingly, it can also be argued that bureaucracy deals only with ordinary decisions but not with critical ones. It is suggested that the role of bureaucracy should not be exaggerated since leaders and key decision makers select their advisors and the advice they want to hear should confirm their own views. Furthermore, those top level decision makers create different information gathering and processing centres in order to act independently from the governmental bureaucratic structures. (For a recent criticism of the internal logic of Allison's bureaucratic politics model, see Bender and Hammond, 1992.)

4.5. *Role theory, incremental decision making and standard operating procedures*

Besides these middle range theories of foreign policy, researchers who have studied foreign policy in the context of decision making and bureaucratic-organisational model have also pointed out some other dimensions of the decision making process. One of them is the impact of the decision maker's position on his behaviours. In other words, it is argued that the role played by the individual in the foreign policy process is likely to affect his or her perceptions and behaviours. An individual decision maker is expected to act in conformity with the requirements of his or her role which is assumed to be played by any occupant of that position. This view brings significant constraints on the role of individual predispositions in the formulation of policy decisions. Furthermore, it reinforces the view that individuals belonging to different governmental organisations see different sides of the situation which usually cover the narrow interest of his or her organisation. Another important dimension of the decision making process is analysed by the incremental model of decision making (Lindblom, 1959). Incremental decision making asserts that decision makers usually do not act radically but try to build their policies on the existing ones. In other words, they are prone to adjust existing policies rather than formulate new ones. A third significant dimension of decision making process and bureaucratic-organisational model is known as standard operating procedures. It is argued that most decisions are made in a mechanical fashion. Organisations have written and unwritten rules which give clear-cut prescriptions to decision makers about how to handle the job in hand. Hence, in many situations decision makers follow these rules in dealing with foreign policy issues.

4.6. *"Cybernetics"*

Taking these cognitive and organisational processes into consideration Steinbruner has developed a foreign policy decision making model known as the cybernetic decision making process (Steinbruner, 1975). According to Steinbruner, decisions are taken through a programmed and automatic process. Decision makers mostly simplify the complex and uncertain world around them, and create stable images of the world. When a stimulus comes from the complex environment, the decision maker concentrates on this stimulus according to his programmed images in his brain and ignores the complexity of the environment, and then responds automatically through organisationally operating procedures. In other words, decision makers create programmed decisions and operating procedures and put them into practice in case of policy making. Yet, in this process they behave very selectively and concentrate on only one issue, that is, solely on the incoming stimulus.

4.7. *"Crises"*

The last area of interest, in relation to middle range theories in foreign policy studies is the study of crisis situations. Crises are situations where an (unanticipated) threat is directed to high priority goals of a state which in turn require action in a short time. Crisis situations force decision makers to make important choices such as whether to go to war or not. Hence, the study of crisis situations attracts special attention. Basically, during crisis periods decision makers are under great stress and this affects their perceptions and ability to act differently than under normal conditions. The leadership factor and the personal characteristics become very important, and usually the situation is personified by the leaders. Moreover, since crises mostly become turning points either in the history of individual states or in the working of the international system, they occupy an important place in the study of foreign policy.

5. Conclusion

In this essay, I tried to introduce briefly the nature of the foreign policy phenomenon and the main and middle range theories in the study of foreign policy without getting into the discussion of other determinants of foreign policy. Other than the theories and approaches that have been introduced here, researchers are interested in other internal and external factors that might influence the foreign policies of the states. Some are interested in the

influence of political structures on foreign policy. They try to find out general foreign policy trends in both authoritarian and democratic structures. Therefore, they search for the relationship between democracy and authoritarianism and foreign policy. They simply look at whether communism, capitalism, or belief systems of different states play significant roles in foreign policy. Another group of researchers wants to understand the impact of various interest groups on the formulation of foreign policy. Equally, some view the foreign policy behaviour from the point of external environment and put emphasis on how the international system (both in political and economic terms) or the structure of that system shapes the foreign policy of individual states. Some other researchers try to understand the foreign policy behaviour by stressing the study of national capabilities. According to these researchers, geographic conditions and location of states, their size (area and population), military and economic powers are the most important factors that determine the foreign policy. In fact, since the phenomenon of foreign policy stands at the crossroad of many academic disciplines, it seems impossible to reach a clear-cut explanation of it. What influences and what explains foreign policy depends on the situation at hand, on the one hand, and on how the researcher perceives and formulates his explanatory framework, on the other. In other words, different approaches and variables explain the phenomena best in different contexts because what determines the foreign policy behaviour is a complex set of variables and only one or some of them can become dominant in different situations.

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Özet

Dış politikanın incelenmesinde temel yaklaşımlar

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı dış politika çalışmalarındaki temel yaklaşımları göstermektir. Bu genel çerçeve içerisinde; önce, dış politikanın özellikleri ve tanımı; daha sonra, uluslararası ilişkiler kuram ve yöntemlerinin dış politika çalışmaları üzerindeki etkisi; ve son olarak da, aynı zamanda Dış Politika Analizi (DPA) olarak da adlandırılan, orta-düzey dış politika kuramları tartışılmaktadır.