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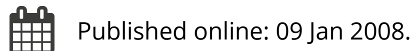
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Alternative Criteria for Evaluating Foreign Policy

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The problem of establishing criteria for evaluating foreign policy is critical, particularly given the dynamic of revolutionary change which will characterize the next decade. Too often, in the past, the sole criterion used in judging the appropriateness of foreign policy has been its "rationality," or its "efficiency" in maximizing its goals. This purported rationality has served only to camouflage the underlying value preferences which determine decision maker's policy objectives. Thus, the debate over policy goals, while guised as a technical problem of goal maximization, is really concerned with value choices. An alternative criteria is advanced involving the "national interest" as understood within the accepted boundaries of the international system. Finally, the debate on world order values would benefit from an awareness of value imperatives as requisite to any fundamental global transformation.

I. INTRODUCTION

To address the problem of establishing criteria in evaluating policy and in particular foreign policy, does not seem to require a special justification in an election year in which the campaign for the presidency promises to turn on foreign policy issues.

But despite considerable interest in the problem of policy evaluation, most discussions focus narrowly on two issues: first, the problem of the "rationality/irrationality" of choice i.e. on the question of how to improve the "efficiency" of foreign policy making and second, on the problem of "implementation" and its various pathologies. Without even wanting to touch the second issue area I will argue below that the conventional stipulation of "rationality" criteria is

misleading as it misrepresents the problem of choice as a merely "technical" problem of "goal maximization" to be "solved" by increasing efficiency. Consequently, the political "scientist" or "expert" is supposed to profess his agnosticism as soon as value choices involve problems exceeding such narrow bounds. Needless to say this is not what happens as a cursory look at the host of foreign policy journals shows in which our "scientists" and "experts" alike argue their particular point of view with varying degrees of vehemence and skill.

The political observer has now two choices: either to refuse to participate in such a debate since value choices are "irrational" and therefore beyond discussion or to try the more arduous task of specifying yardsticks or grounds, in virtue of which, a particular position is "reasonable" and that means justifiable in terms of interpersonally adducable standards. The latter position seems to me the more interesting one which I try to explore below.

By giving reasons we are forced to go beyond our simple likes, to invoke interpersonal standards which serve as rules for inference and to appeal to evidence "backing" our assertions. In other words, reasons provide grounds upon which agreement can be reached despite differences of "tastes" among the debaters. It was the task of the often maligned rhetorical "proofs," by means of which adherence to an argument could be obtained, to establish a discourse and mediate between conflicting value positions. Indeed, most arguments in our policy oriented journals are based upon the standard rhetorical devices, often without being aware of it. But, as I will try to show, such type of analyses could be greatly improved through closer attention to the classical requirements for a meaningful political discourse. In this sense the present paper is an attempt to specify criteria for a discourse on the "national interest" which go considerably beyond "efficiency" and systems analysis and to see what can be learned from such a clarification for a world order discourse which is in the process of formation.

In elaborating these themes my argument will take the following steps: In the next section I will focus on various evaluation criteria and try to show why most proposals intending to improve foreign policy decision-making fail: they define the problem of policy evaluation too narrowly in terms of an implicit or explicit efficiency criterion. The third section will be devoted to the criteria of a discourse on the public and the national interest and there I intend to demonstrate that this discourse, far from dealing with nebulous phrases and generalities, has a specifiable "logic" which is important. Last but not least, the fourth section will take up the problem of "imperatives" as guides for decision making and test some of the recommendations made within the world order discourse in terms of the imperative guidance they generate for decision making.

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II. THE EFFICIENCY (MAXIMUM UTILITY) CRITERION

The narrowest but also the clearest decision-criterion is that of efficiency. A decision maker efficiently allocates given resources necessary for achieving a given goal if he attains the agreed upon goal at the least possible cost. Conversely, an actor makes the "best" or most efficient choice when he chooses the goal contributing most to his utility at a given level of costs. In either case what seems necessary for such a criterion to be applicable is a goal (treated as a given), plus an exhaustive set of transitively ordered alternatives and possible strategies for any given cost level. The term "exhaustive" in the previous sentence refers to the condition of complete and costless information. It is easy to see that in the real world these conditions are hardly ever met. Even if we assume transitivity, all alternatives never come to mind and strategies for attaining a given goal contain important uncertainties. The weakened efficiency criterion therefore suggests that "best" choices are made according to "expected utilities" i.e. utilities of outcomes multiplied by the probabilities assigned to them. Similarly, instead of searching for the best possible alternative, the introduction of costly search changes the "synoptical ideal" of classical decision theory which assumes the existence of a exhaustive set of transitively ordered alternatives. "Satisficing" means now to examine the alternatives in sequence until a "good enough" possibility has been located (Cyert, March, Lindblom).

Although both modification substantially transform the conditions of rationality—one can now speak of a merely "bounded" rather than strict rationality—the stated goals of the decision maker are still treated as givens and evaluation takes place solely within the framework of the decision maker's preferences.

Particular problems are raised in the context of "expected utility" calculations for the cases in which the choice considered does not amount to a settled practice but, as is common in international affairs, concerns rather a "one shot" affair. Thus, in crisis situations it is difficult to assign probabilities to alternatives. Since, e.g., confrontations involving a significant risk of nuclear war have been fortunately infrequent and rather dissimilar in circumstances there is no class of events from which frequency distributions could be calculated. This has led some theorists to argue that either the concept of probability is misapplied here or that we deal with in this case a quite different concept of probability, i.e., that of psychological states of mind, or degree of subjective belief (Toulmin, 1964, p. 69f).

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There is a second way in which the efficiency criterion as an evaluative yardstick becomes problematic, as soon as one drops the "synoptical ideal" (Lindblom, 1968). Since the environment is too complex, "rational" policies should not only be "satisficing" but also should take merely incremental steps (rather than bold new departures) in order to utilize the feedback provided by the environment. Two objections against this modification of the "rationality"/ efficiency criterion come readily to mind. First, since policy, particularly foreign policy, is not always subordinate to the international system as economic decision making is to the market (note the assumption of *independence* of choice in a competitive market!) but can transform the environment, the appropriateness of this criterion can be doubted. Second, a policy pursued according to these maxims might become contradictory given certain circumstances. As Jervis points out:

> As long as the basic beliefs about the other's side intentions are wrong, policy will lead down a blind alley. Not only are minor changes insufficient but the information produced by them will be of slight value and will exact a high price. Marginal adjustments in a conciliatory policy toward a state that is incorrectly believed to support the status quo will eventually provide self-correcting information, but only after a number of values have been sacrificed. (Jervis 1976 p. 13)

Since the effects of such a course of action might not have been anticipated by the decision maker and are perhaps silently accepted as "externalities," an alternative criterion of evaluation which focuses on the effects of policy on yet unspecified values could be called "value rationality."

Value Rationality

As opposed to the efficiency criterion, which can be said to underlie operations analysis, value rationality is associated with the technique and practice of systems analysis.

> Unlike the operations analyst, the systems analyst does not take the decision-makers' initially stated goal/objective as fixed, as a given for policy analysis. Rather the systems analyst is free to question whether the decision maker's understanding of the problem is adequate and whether he has recognized the full range of political values and interests engaged in the situation . . . He may reformulate the policy problem in a way that differs from the conception of it initially formulated by the decision maker; and this in turn, may suggest that the latter should adopt a goal/objective different from that which he had initially started. (George 1980 p. 13)

Systems analysis is, in short, a sophisticated *accounting scheme*, that tries to explicitly address the problem of "externalities" of a decision and the value trade-offs that occur within a given value orientation but which might not have been perceived by the decision maker.

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A historical example which demonstrated the usefulness of this tool is Wohlstetter's RAND study concerning the location of air bases. This study fundamentally changed strategic thinking by drawing attention to the need for an invulnerable second strike capability (Wohlstetter et al. 1954). Nevertheless, despite the potential usefulness for "discovering" important new insights one has to realize that the value system which is at the basis of the analysis is provided by the decision maker and no attempt is made to subject the assumption made to criticism from an *external point of view.* As James Schlesinger pointed out quite correctly, there is a tendency among systems analysts to transform the question of incommensurable values (which has to be settled by a authoritative decision) into one of measurable efficiency (Schlesinger 1965). Given the "law of the instrument"–you give someone a hammer and he will find things to nail down–problems of choice between competing objective are often represented as operations research problems for which some of the necessary quantitative data have "not yet" been discovered. Although,

> Information on costs is highly desirable in decision making . . . the rational decision maker may be no better advised to alter his strategy on the basis of costs than the rational consumer would be to buy brewer's yeast (or candy) instead of vitamin pills because of their seeming cheapness. The rationality of the purchaser in determining his wants is in both cases a more fundamental question than accuracy in manipulating quantitative data. (Schlesinger 1965 p. 96).

Incidentally, this tendency to claim more credibility for proposals resulting from "systems analysis" than from other deliberative techniques is not limited to weapons systems planners as the great popularity of integrated world systems models shows (Mesarovic 1974).

Normative Evaluation

The distinctive characteristic of this type of evaluation is that the single value or the value system within which a decision maker operates is no longer taken for granted but in itself becomes a matter of concern. As Alexander George points out:

> The external value standard applied as a criterion for this purpose may be a personal, idiosyncratic one subscribed to by the investigator or it may be one that is grounded in one or another philosophical-ethical theory. (George 1980, p. 14)

Although this might be an adequate description about the *origins* of various values advanced as adequate criteria for a particular case, the political debate and the justification of policies would indeed be barren if that were all one could say about this matter. After all, people *do* argue about value choices,

they advance "reasons" for their decisions, and they try to persuade each other (which obviously must entail more than simply pointing out where one's values "come from"). To investigate this process a bit closer is therefore of considerable importance, particularly since gaining adherence to a valued point of view will obviously have something to do with our ability to defend and to justify our position. True, such a defense might not be possible in a purely "objectivist" language familiar from the "scientific discourse" but unless one makes the assumption that an "objectivist language" is the only allowable one—a position which in turn would depend on a justification going beyond the objective language—there is no need to limit oneself *a priori* to such a one-dimensional view of human life. But before we can address this problem fully, a preliminary objection needs to be refuted.

Against the position outlined above one could argue that most, if not all, disagreements about values can be shown to be fundamentally conflicts involving the proper assessment of the "facts" of the case and differential guesses about the likelihood of success of a given policy. Actually, the proposal to institutionalize "multiple advocacy" in the policy formulation process derives much of its persuasive character from the recognition that more information or a different reading of the facts at hand often might solve an assumed value conflict (George 1972, Destler 1972, Allison and Szanton 1972). This is best demonstrated in the debate about the appropriateness of deterrence.

Proponents of disarmament have sometimes argued that the basic difference in the respective stances boils down to different value orientations. But that might be a questionable way of putting the problem as Jervis showed.

> Because defenders and critiques of deterrence policies disagree about probable outcomes if deterrence is continued or dropped (e.g. war, communist expansion), disagreement about policies is not evidence of differences in the values accorded these outcomes . . .
>
> . . . J. David Singer's claim that "Apparently Mr. Kahn dislikes the possibility of an occasional Soviet diplomatic victory than he dislikes the possibility of nuclear war while I would–given these two alternatives–opt for the other," is misleading because Singer and Kahn differ in their estimates of the probability that various policies will in fact lead to war. (Jervis 1976 p. 108f)

In this view most value conflicts should be susceptible to complicated but logically straight-forward procedures, and the difficulty we face in value choices derives more from our ignorance of the many relevant facts than from the dilemma of valuation (Petrie 1971). The fact that the practical experience with multiple advocacy was much less spectacular, particularly in the case of preventing "surprises," is for this position a bit disquieting but still could be seen as a mainly "technical" failure of not having paid attention to the "right facts" (Betts, 1978).

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There are, however, good reasons to believe that this account is a bit too simplistic. The demonstration of why this is so will be somewhat involved as it will deal with the question of an appropriate model for practical reasoning. In particular I will try to show that the above argument can hold only under very special circumstances in which the "practical syllogism" outlined by Aristotle can be unequivocally bound to an agreed "ultimate value," or a value chain. But since these conditions can hardly be met in real life the "good reasons" model proposed by Baier (Baier 1966), Hare (Hare 1961) and Flathman (Flathman 1966) throws a good deal more light upon the "normal" case of value choice. It allows for the specification of certain criteria and relieves us from the agnostic stance that value questions are "beyond debate."

The practical syllogism (enthymeme) of which Aristotle speaks in the *Rhetoric* consists of argument in which the major premise is a general value principle, the minor premise a factual assertion and the conclusion a less general, or even particular value claim. To quote Aristotle's example,

Dry food is good (major premise)
This is *dry food* (minor factual premise)
Therefore this food is good (particular value claim)

Now it is obvious that in this case the justification for the particular value judgment is the strongest possible one, i.e., logical entailment, but that the confidence in the conclusion is only as strong as my commitment to the major value premise. Naturally, the major value premise in this enthymeme can become again a minor premise in another syllogism so that we can justify our value claims through a particular chain of value judgments ascending to ever higher principles. The particular objection that this would involve logically a *regressus ad infinitum* is usually countered by postulating a highest value which takes its justification from a particular kind of (intuitive) "evidence." The Aristotelian goal of "happiness" or the utilitarian argument about pleasure as the ultimate justificatory principle all fall in the same class of arguments. However, as soon as one admits that conflicting value hierarchies can be constructed which are internally consistent the hoary problem reappears since the choice now is between competing value systems and no longer between conflicting factual assertions backing a value claim. Furthermore, as public choice theory tells us, a common preference ordering cannot be logically constructed out of three divergent value hierarchies.

How is an evaluation of policies possible under these circumstances (i.e., when the advocated alternatives are seen as parts of conflicting value hierarchies)? It is clear that this is the concern underlying the adversary-advocacy argument but it also should be obvious that the institutionalization of a "devil's advocate"—that is, someone who does not share the prevailing value system—

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is not likely to be very effective unless the conditions for persuasion are respected.

> For the devil's advocate to work effectively . . . it is not enough to appoint them and then to tolerate with ill-disguised impatience their questioning of agreed assumptions and their challenges to conventional wisdom. Unless they are actively supported and encouraged by the people at the top and are seen to be supported and valued, their views carry little weight, and their colleagues will conclude that the only safe position is that which confirms what leaders are presumed to prefer. (Shlaim 1976, p. 375)

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Although this short passage describes more the pathology of organizational decision making than the problem of a justification of choice, it nevertheless highlights the problem of persuasion in cases where the strength of an argument will have much to do with whether or not it falls within the parameters of common acceptance. Indeed, as a cursory look at the scholarly foreign policy debate shows, much of our "commentary" on foreign affairs derives its force *not* from the demonstration of the superiority of an alternative in terms of a scientific model—the nearly total absence of appeals to scientific explanations in the relevant foreign policy journals can be considered as a fault or blessing but is surely surprising for our scientistic age—but rather from the conventional rhetorical devices (Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969). The argument from accepted "truths" (topoi), the utilization of analogies to "explain" not only similarities but structural relationships, the use of irony, the dissociation of concepts (the dichotomy of form/substance is an ever-recurring topos in Hoffmann's criticism), and the employment of metaphors are the standard ways by which adherence to an argument is sought (Burke 1969). But, as in the case of the "behaviorists" who often had the instruments of quantification run their analyses, many policy analysts allow the careless use of figures of speech and witticisms, rather than argumentative rigor, to characterize their ongoing "commentaries" on foreign policy. How else could one explain the following "argument" of a scholar considered otherwise to be quite serious; in criticizing Kissinger's foreign policy Stanley Hoffmann writes:

> In the contest of primadonnas the Irishman (Moynihan) beat the Bavarian. Running so closed a shop, so concentrated an office, inevitably did little to replenish the drying pond of the foreign policy elite. And when, on land, silence was superseded by high turbulence, Kissinger found himself in possession of too few transmission belts. (Hoffmann, 1977 p. 73)

This is indeed illumination by low wattage! Metaphors as conjunctions of dissimilar but mutually illuminating concepts are supposed to open up new insights. But following these metaphors means simply to elevate confusion to an explanatory device. The above misuse of metaphors makes clear that one needs to locate better tools by which competing policies can be debated, evaluated

nd justified. For this purpose one has to transcend the level of technique, be
: that of institutionalization or that of verbal proficiency, and specify *criteria*
which particular value claims have to satisfy. These criteria will have to be
ormal in character; they could not be identified with any particular value or
alue hierarchy since their main function will consist in facilitating a discourse
bout the desirability/undesirability of various policies embodying conflicting
alues. In short, as language philosophy has shown, we must transcend the
objectivist" language which implies that terms have a clear designatum in the
uter world and inquire into the *use of* terms such as "good," or the "Public in-
erest," which do not stand for objects or their properties but serve to "com-
nend" things and to make possible a discussion of the "merits" of a com-
nendatory claim. It will be the task of the next section to explore further the
logic" of the national interest discourse and draw some tentative conclusions
bout the conditions of the possibility of a critical world order discourse.

II. THE PUBLIC AND THE NATIONAL INTEREST DISCOURSE

The rejection of the "public interest" or the national interest as evaluative
andsticks has been a commonplace in political science. Two assertions are sig-
ificant in the "standard treatment" of the ambiguous or "nonsensical char-
cter" of the term national interest. First because its non-operational character
revents the construction of a utility function and second, precisely because
he national interest discourse allows for a variety of conflicting values to be
egitimized by the term "the national interest," the designatum of the term
as then to be identified with the actual decision of the national decision
naker. But this assertion holds true only if we assume that there exists some-
hing in the "objective world" for which the term national interest can be em-
loyed analogously to the term "dog" for a canine pet. This view of language
 obviously based on the assumption that language pictures or "imitates" re-
lity. There are, however, several problems with such a Cartesian correspondence
heory. Given this particular approach it is not quite clear what e.g. conjunc-
ions within a sentence "refer" to although their functioning is extremely im-
ortant to the meaning of any sentence. Modal terms such as "cannot" also
aise puzzling questions as "cannot" "refers" to a whole host of different im-
lications. "You cannot weigh fire" is obviously different from "You cannot
o by this poor beggar without giving him a quarter" or "you cannot make his
vife testify against him," or even "You cannot lift a ton." What seems clear
 that "cannot" always provides an injunction to rule out something or dis-
niss it from consideration.

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What counts as ruling out the thing concerned varies from case to case; the implied grounds for ruling out, and the sanction risked in ignoring the injunction, vary even more markedly . . . (Toulmin, 1964, p. 29)

In short given the much greater complexity of language than the correspondence model suggests it would make sense to distinguish between the force of the terms (i.e., the practical implications of its use) and the criteria by reference to which we decide in any context that the use of a particular modal term is appropriate.

The implications of this for the public interest discourse are significant. Rather than denoting a particular attribute which could be measured–or indicating an object in the outer world–the functioning of the term "public" or "national interest" within its discourse has to be understood along the lines of "force" and "criteria" or, commendatory and descriptive meaning. Only if we are able to specify criteria does the utilization of the term become meaningful. Furthermore, only in that case can any *critical* function be ascribed to the public/national interest criterion as it is no longer simply identifiable with the decision outcome of a particular authorized institution.

Two questions become relevant in this context. First, is it possible to specify criteria for the use of the term "national interest"? Second, what can be learned from these considerations for the construction of a world order discourse? It will be the task of this section to explicate the logic of the national interest discourse in analogy to the public interest discourse. Finally, in the fourth section some tentative conclusions will be advanced for a discourse on world order.

What do we mean when we say that something is in someone's interest? On the most general level we could argue that we want to indicate some preference, wish or want. Further, reflection discloses however that the "grammar" of interest does not coincide with the usage of the term "preference," "desire," etc. as we can easily think of a case in which it makes sense to distinguish between the two–as in the case of a person wanting to sit down in a snowstorm which is not in his/her "interest." Similarly, when we argue that something is in the public interest we do not want to state solely that something happens to please our fancy, lest we misuse the term, but that something is to be preferred and ought to be chosen because certain reasons marshall support for this claim when challenged (Kratochwil 1980). It therefore makes sense to distinguish the primary or commendatory meaning of the word from its secondary or descriptive meaning which provides us with intersubjective grounds for backing our commendations. But as we said not all "reasons" will do in specifying the descriptive meaning–otherwise we are back in the trap of either enumerating mere preferences or asserting a common underlying dimension of "goodness," appropriateness or whatever. The criteria, which "reasons" have to

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satisfy order to be valid, are first the logical requirement of "universalizability" which states that "what is right (wrong), desirable (undesirable) for one actor, is right (wrong) for any actor in similar circumstances (Singer 1960, p. 5f). Although this principle is "formal" in that it does not provide a substantive answer to value questions it stipulates a *logical* requirement that any substantive answer has to meet, thereby ruling out capricious or purely idiosyncratic exceptions. Second, an additional formal requirement for a public interest claim is embodied in the *principle of consequences*, which involves us in the arduous task of providing "data" for assessing various policies in their impact upon community values. This imposes a burden of proof upon the claimant to demonstrate how a particular policy furthers a given value. Last but not least, there is a substantive moral rule which instructs the decision makers to "serve community values" unless doing so violates the formal principles (Flathman, 1966, p. 87).

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In applying these insights from the public interest discourse to our discussion of the "national interest" we can draw upon the following observations. First, we said that for a public interest claim to be sensible, some sort of validating system must exist. This does not mean that the decision of the established authority charged with the determination of the public interest is always identifiable with the public interest, especially since decision of the decision makers are assessed in terms of their contribution *to* the public interest. Rather, we said there must be at least an established discourse within which a public interest claim can be located through the specification of criteria uniting the governing and the governed. Second, from our remarks it also became clear that such a validating system would be somewhat indeterminate if the "community" remained undefined since the selection of the relevant values as well as the scope of the universalizability principle could not be ascertained. In other words, different from general moral precepts which assume true universality for any actor in a given situation, the public interest discourse is addressed to public authorities and this in turn means that it has as a determining feature a distinction between relevant "ins" and "outs." A classical passage which sheds light on the link between a meaningful public interest discourse and the existence of an identifiable community is Thucydides' description of the revolution in Corcyra, where the disintegration of the community is paralleled by "change in meaning" of certain key words of the political discourse.

> . . . The leading men in the various states each heading a party with a specious slogan, one allegedly being in favor of democracy and equality of the people, the other professing to adhere to the rule of the best elements, actually played booty with the public interests they so loudly professed. In their frenzy to compete with each other and to outdo each other shirked to direct excesses! In their acts of vengeance they went to even greater lengths, not setting any limits in justice or the interest of the state but only in the capriciousness of the moment . . . (Thucydides, Bk II, 10)

This quotation makes several points which deserve further attention. First is Thucydides' observation that slogans of the public interest become hollow phrases in the face of "treason," i.e., the abolition of the value in maintaining a community.

The inability to define a public interest in the face of other powers is thus destructive not only of the state itself but also of the minimum order in international relations. Intervention and counter-intervention proceed, or the "division" or the incorporation of the contentious state results, as shown by the example of the Polish division in the 18th century. Second, the Corcyraean example also demonstrates that the question of the public interest is transformed into the "interest" of the "state" as soon as the question of boundaries dividing various "publics" comes into focus or the advanced policy deals with the question of the relations of the body politic vis-a-vis other polities. This has important implications for the evaluative criteria proposed for the public interest discourse. Since external policies by definition universalize the consequences of a given policy "internally" since the "citizens become liable for it," (de Jouvenel, 1963, ch. 2) the generalization principle in this fashion provides little guidance in the *domestic* debate to distinguish genuine from spurious claims of the national interest. The principle of consequences, on the other hand, attains ominous importance as it introduces a whole host of considerations concerning the "environment" of the polity which impose particularly exacting informational requirements upon the claimant. Furthermore, since "ought" implies "can" the constraints imposed by the nature of the arena serves as an important yardstick in assessing moral responsibility for actors in international relations. A "theory" which tries to come to terms with the resulting complexities then gives rise to a "systemic" conception of inter-unit politics in which the contingent character of the policies pursued by the various states becomes the dominant theme, as can be shown in the teachings of the *raison d'ètat* school. Two things deserve to be mentioned in this context. First, rather than identifying the "national interest" with the decision of the authorized agent of a body politic, the "reason of state" literature clearly tries to distinguish between "decisions" and "interests" (which ideally but not necessarily coincide) (deRohan, 1640 passim). Second, the justifiability of a national interest claim is clearly tied to a systemic conception of international politics so that the states' individual preferences have to be assessed in terms of the repercussions for all participants of the system. To that extent, we could say, a weaker form of the "universalizability" principle begins to operate as soon as a system of conventions comes into existence and the various decision makers start to think of themselves as members of a (distinct) class of actors. "Through this process they subsume their interests under a larger precept or maxim and thereby begin to transform them into "claims" which can be legitimately

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pressed in the public forum" (Flathman 1966 p. 142). One might be inclined to dismiss such considerations as propaganda were it not for the fact that such conceptions *did* influence policy, as Gulick's study showed (Gulick, 1967). Furthermore, our discussion made it clear that the conception of the national interest was neither solely a honorific label nor simply another name for choices which were made on essentially arbitrary grounds. As I tried to demonstrate, the discourse had a discernible logic and the arguments sustained by it had to satisfy certain criteria. As a matter of fact, the decline of the *raison d' état* tradition in the second half of the 19th century when the national interest became imbued with social darwinistic overtones considerably heightened the tensions and reinforced the reliance on alliances rather than on the concert structure, a circumstance crucial for the breakdown of the European state system in World War I (Calleo, 1979 passim).

Having made that point, it nevertheless remains true that the acceptance of such yardsticks of justification did not prevent the outbreak of large scale violence though it contributed to the moderation of its severity. But what can be learned from all this and what are the implications for the possibility of a "world order" discourse within which alternative criteria could be employed as justificatory devices?

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IV. WORLD ORDER IMPERATIVES?

Our discussion concerning the clarification of the status of criteria in evaluating policy and, in particular, foreign policy started with the specification of relatively unequivocal yardsticks such as efficiency and proceeded to the elaboration of more complicated devices which are utilized in reaching and defending foreign policy decisions. Although we agreed that the "national interest" for example, was not susceptible to "operationalization" or to clear specification in terms of an unequivocal utility function, the need for a national interest claim to satisfy criteria made the elimination of certain claims possible. This discourse operated with certain inference guidance devices, i.e., two formal principles and one substantive rule. Furthermore, we also stated that the "national interest" is able to generate guidance only within the accepted boundaries of an "international system" whose rules of the game are understood and shared by the participants. This leads to three further problems. First, what is the status of these rules of the game in the inference process of decision making and in the justification of a decision? Second, does it really matter to "play by the rules" especially if one wants these rules changed? Third, since the acceptance of world order values depends upon their persuasive power or—as it is sometimes argued—their "necessity," to what extent does the world order dis-

course base its speculation of "preferred" futures on "imperatives" i.e., rules of particular stringency?

Since we maintained that the logic of the term "national interest" follows that of the word 'good,' the remarks of language philosophers concerning the problem of "reasoning with rules" will be also of particular interest for this problem.

Rules have a place in moral reasoning because there are discoverable regularities in the consequences of our actions and in our evaluation of those consequences. Rules are defeasible and cannot be applied without reflection about consequences, because in moral life our regularities are imperfect, and we must be alert to morally significant departures from regularities, and imaginative and creative in adapting our conduct to the departures. (Flathman, 1966, p. 142).

Although these remarks seem to suggest the reason why we cannot follow a rule blindly, moral reasoning attains its stringency through another element which usually plays only a minor role in political decision making: the existence of rules whose justification is *deontological* rather than merely utilitarian. The advantage of deontological rules is that the rightness or wrongness of an act can be assessed through the examination of matters of fact (e.g., "Was it a lie?" "Was there a contract?") without speculating about the possible beneficial or detrimental consequences (Held, 1975; Sartorius, 1971). This does not eliminate disagreement, especially in cases where intentions play a decisive role in characterizing an act, but it does simplify the problem of evaluation and justification. Legal rules in particular exhibit this feature and the often decried "conservative bias" of law is to a large extent due to the fact that radical departures from the prevailing rules, although often demanded by the circumstances, is usually in need of a legitimizing act external to the deontological set of rules (i.e., "the law").

From this short discussion it is also clear why rules of the game that develop out of interactions in the international arena and that are based on the need of a certain stability of expectation, are so fragile. Since international actors vary widely in their ability to influence outcomes the constraints imposed by such rules depend almost solely on utilitarian considerations. Moreover, the universalizability principle which draws our attention to the consequences of what would happen "if everybody behaved like we did when in such and such a situation" loses much of its strength when special categories can be invented—with some justification incidentally—which dispense from the adherence of the rules of the game. "Great Powers" are notorious for their claim that certain rules do not apply to them due to their special status (Bull 1977). Thus unless the rules are endowed with a certain aura of "legitimacy," international politics tends to degenerate into a "game" where one makes the rules as one goes along.

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This makes relevant the question of whether or not the explanation and justification of action in terms of rules really matters. If political "behavior" is our subject, "outcomes" rather than reasons count. But this position is plausible only when we assume what needs proof i.e., that reasons and the justificatory principles we invoke do not matter, i.e., observed regularities are sufficient for understanding human action (Hart 1961, Ch. 4; Schutz 1970 passim). True, moral arguments based on "reasons" are not clubs with which one can beat an actor into submission. The strongest possible guide we can hope for is to discover an "imperative," i.e., a rule directing us to perform a particular action under certain specified circumstances. Applied to our question of the public and national interest this means that we must distinguish between the assertions that

> A) that it would be in the public interest for an aspect of national life (x) to be regulated by public policy, and B) that policy Y would be in the public interest in X. Within A we must further distinguish between a showing 1) that it would be good or desirable for X to be regulated by public policy and 2) that to regulate X would be the *right thing* to do or that it ought to be done. (Flathman 1966 p. 187)

Only A 2 would result in an "imperative" as we have described it, and most public interest claims are rather of the A1 category simply because the complexities of A2 type claims are enormous.

The discourse on world order faced with the complexities of the "ought"-implies-"can"-problem exacerbated by the constraints of the international system, utilizes usually two simplifying assumptions which relax the informational requirements necessary for a proper justification. There is first the assumption that the proper reference group for an assessment of claims of justice and "interests" should be nothing short of the whole humanity (Johansen, 1980 ch. I). But this "humanity" remains somewhat "abstract." It does not come in organized groups which jockey for position vis-a-vis each other and which make guesses about their position in "future rounds." Therefore the incentives to deviate from the impartial principle of justice as "fairness"—which results from the Rawlsian construction of the "veil of ignorance" among radically equal actors—are not properly reflected upon (Barry 1971). To that extent the vision remains strangely non-political but it is easy to see how this perspective can create and reinforce *ethical* imperatives. After all it is to *man in general* that the categorical imperatives are addressed. The problem gets considerably more difficult, however, when we endow *groups* with rights and thereby impose obligations on individuals and other groups to respect them. What are the "trade-offs" and who is entitled to have his claim heard before what forum? (The individual conscience, world public opinion, the individual states?).

Second, given these strongly individualistic orientations prevalent in much

of world order thinking it is not surprising that "war" is nearly exclusively attributed to the nation state system whose abolition is often considered an "imperative."

Without denying that the nightmarish quality of the present strategic environment is indeed the outcome of the particular power configuration, it is still worth debating whether a world made up of some other units would be more peaceful given the spread of technology for the production of weapons of mass destruction, the availability of a resort to violence as an option for the most determined contender, the particular experiences with disintegrating states and the nature of non-territorially based conflict (Bull 1977 part III).

The clearest imperative perhaps can be derived from the threat of ecological decay. Particularly in its most radical form the ecological perspective visualizes politics

> as a part of a vast natural system, a biosystem. Therefore all past units of analysis we became accustomed to–territorial units and functional relationships–are subsumed under the biosystemic perspective. All units and all relationships become relevant; and perhaps they can be ordered as well. The criterion of order and relevance is the key concept of both evolution and ecology: survival . . . While there can be many human or social purposes beyond survival, collective survival must be considered the minimum purpose; all others depend on its realization. Evaluation has a purpose in this sense only. (Haas 1975, p. 342)

Action, political or otherwise is then evaluated in terms of its contribution to survival of the species, toward a more harmonious or at any case "better" fit with nature. However, it should be clear how this "imperative" was generated. Having postulated a highest value any other value had to be fitted in the gigantic system analytical framework called ecosystem for which integrated world models provide very explicit examples. But since man is not determined by nature but transcends nature by transforming it, the question of "survival" depends upon a prior specification of the *way of life* that the species called man is supposed to choose for its survival and this in turn leads us right back to the hoary problem of value choices.

These remarks might sound excessively critical and defeatist as I am unable to offer a clear and viable alternative to the pressing problems of today. But if it is true that every therapy has to be preceded by a diagnosis, as hard and disappointing this might turn out to be, then this essay has hopefully contributed to setting aside some of the deeply, but uncritically held positions concerning the impossibility of an intersubjective discourse on values in the political realm. Yet if my line of argument ascending from technical criteria to a normative discourse on the national interest was correct, then it is obvious that a further clarification of the nature of the world

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order discourse is necessary in a time when the prescriptions of the state system are hardly adequate in guiding our choices. To that extent nothing would be more practical than a discourse on world order that embodies a new "vision" of politics and thereby provides standards for persuasion and justification of action in the global community.

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