
EVALUATING THE EFFICACY OF FOREIGN POLICY: AN ESSAY ON THE COMPLEXITY OF FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

John F. Clark

Florida International University

For those rejecting the idea of an objective "national interest," the problem of evaluating the efficacy of foreign policies begins with establishing foreign policy goals. Yet the full complexity of foreign policy goals is frequently underestimated. As a standard for evaluating foreign policy, such goals must be specified in geographical and conceptual scope, temporal range and ranking. A further methodological difficulty lies in deriving such goals from the words and deeds of national leaders. Among the problems in this area are deciding whose goals are national goals, and at what moment one should identify them. Collectively, these difficulties probably doom any truly scientific evaluation of foreign policy, but it is not certain that they render any objective judgment impossible, as some post-modernist analysis suggests.

[I]n the last analysis, it is the goals pursued by the actors and the way they go about pursuing them that determine whether and to what extent the potentialities for power struggle and war are realized (Wolfers 1962, 67).

Foreign policies may be judged both in terms of their justice and their efficacy. While it is easy to understand the lack of consensus about the justness of various foreign policies, the ferocity of debates about the efficacy of policies, which appears to be an empirical consideration, is harder to fathom. This paper proposes that a major part of the answer lies in the complexity of foreign policy goals (FPGs), and seeks to underscore the methodological difficulties of evaluating foreign policies by exploring this complexity.

The evaluation of the efficacy of foreign policies involves three stages: setting the standard by which outcomes may be judged; determining what

impact policies actually have in the real world; and, finally, comparing the outcomes of policies against the standard. This enquiry addresses the first of these three processes. The first section of this paper briefly revisits an old debate about whether an objective standard (the “national interest”) can usefully be invoked in the evaluation of foreign policy. While a full exploration of this topic cannot be undertaken here, it is important for the overall argument that the “objectivist” approach be acknowledged.

Those who reject the idea of an objective standard for evaluating foreign policy will agree that a full exploration of FPGs is warranted. Thus, the second section outlines the intrinsic complexity of FPGs, and the third discusses the difficulties in identifying and presenting them. The distinctions about FPGs made here will be useful in analyzing the observations of policy-makers, who often list the international goals for countries with little attention to the complexity of goals (e.g., Lugar 1994). More important, the complexity of goals in foreign policy discussed here reveals the roots of the disputes over the efficacy of foreign policies, contributing to the theoretical understanding of foreign policy analysis.

The final section deals with some of the methodological and epistemological implications of this analysis. Specifically, it addresses the extent to which the complexity of FPGs undermines our ability to meaningfully evaluate foreign policies.

THE EVALUATION OF FOREIGN POLICY

In making an assessment of foreign policy, one must begin by identifying the various ways in which foreign policies may be evaluated. First, one may judge foreign policy in the normative sense, which is perhaps the most fundamental sense in which policy is evaluated. That is, one can ask whether a given set of FPGs are designed to serve ends that one takes to be morally appropriate for a given state. In making this sort of judgment, one gives only secondary consideration to whether the policies adopted will in fact serve the goals sought. The judgment is of the righteousness, or moral validity, of the goals in terms of the values of the analyst, or the perceived values of some national people. Though of vital concern to us as citizens, and of increasing scholarly interest, judgment in the moral sense is not addressed in this paper.

Confusingly, though, some post-war realists used the putatively neutral and objective concept of the “national interest” as a transcendent standard by which both the prudence **and** righteousness of FPGs could be judged (e.g., Morgenthau 1960a). While the “national interest”—if it exists as an objective reality—is a logical standard by which to evaluate the prudence

of policy, its normative roots are more obscure. Nevertheless, many early realists were intensely interested in moral concerns, despite their reputation for cold-blooded power calculation (Rosenthal 1991). Moreover, Morgenthau, at least, believed that the “national interest” was as much a moral as prudential guide to policy.¹ One recent study has made the normative content of the term “national interest” more explicit than ever before (Clinton 1986).

The attractiveness of the “national interest” as an objective guide to evaluating the utility, or efficacy, of foreign policy is obvious: if one can make the philosophical case for an objective national good, upon which all rational and informed observers could agree, then one can, by extension, render an objective evaluation of foreign policy. That is, one could not only estimate the extent to which a foreign policy promotes the goals of national leaders, but one could actually argue whether policies served the common good. Moreover, some very capable scholars still claim that such an objective standard exists, at least in the non-normative sense. Claude (1991), for instance, argues that the national interest for states is analogous to “good health” for individuals, i.e., an indisputable, fundamental and objective “good” of life, towards which all goals should contribute.

From the 1960s forward, however, the objectivity of the “national interest” as an analytical concept came under heavy attack (Rosenau 1971; Burton 1972; Frankel 1969; Tonelson 1991).² Merely pointing to the fact that rational, well-informed individuals *disagree* about the content of the “national interest” begins to strip the term of its mythical objectivity. Partly, they have *disagreed* because they have different notions of “the good” for individuals. To engage Claude’s analogy, many individuals are willing to sacrifice some or all of their good health, either to indulge themselves (e.g., by drinking good scotch) or for some noble cause (e.g., by risking death to save a child from a burning building). Similarly, some individuals see their more transcendent interest as achieving other-worldly salvation, and not to enjoy good health on this (forsaken) planet. Thus, “interest” becomes, in the words of Hedley Bull, “an empty or vacuous guide” to individual human needs, and by analogy,

the criterion of “national interest,” or “interest of state,” in itself provides us with no specific guidance either in interpreting the behavior of states or in prescribing how they should behave—unless we are told what concrete ends or objectives states do or should pursue (1977, 66).

It is when one fills the empty vessel of “national interest” that values re-enter the picture, which explains how this putatively neutral concept could be used as a normative standard for FPGs.

What Morgenthau was really asserting in his 1950 book was that the U.S. **ought** to adopt FPGs that would protect American security, but **not** pursue other goals such as promoting human rights, as more normative thinkers of the era argued (e.g., Cook and Moos 1954), or indulge in ideological “crusades,” as he feared some anti-communists desired. The real argument, then, was over how to balance competing values, and not, as Morgenthau claimed, for an objective “good” represented by the “national interest.”³ One might be tempted to venture that, for Morgenthau, state **power** was the one indisputable and objective value that states will and must seek (like health for individuals) and hence, is the standard against which foreign policy must be judged. Yet, insofar as the maximization of power by one state implies virtual slavery for the rest of humanity, it is unthinkable that Morgenthau would have made such a claim. While this brief discussion is unlikely to change the minds of convinced “objectivists,” it serves to remind us of this perspective and to outline the range of possibility in evaluating foreign policy.

Nevertheless, as a result of this evolution in thinking, today, even those using a “statist” approach to foreign policy have been content to define national interest as “goals that are sought by the state,” (Krasner 1978, 11) acknowledging that “interests” are subjectively defined. In keeping with this approach, Wittkopf (1994) has organized eleven chapters addressing “objectives” as the first of three parts in his popular edited text on American foreign policy. A further subdivision of Wittkopf’s chapters is labelled “Defining America’s Interests,” another tacit acknowledgement of near-total incredulity towards the idea of an objective “national interest.”

Thus, the analyst is left with the less satisfying standard of goals by which to judge foreign policy. That is, one can ask whether or not a given foreign policy will achieve, or has achieved, the ends (goals, objectives) that statesmen set out to achieve in adopting it. This sort of judgment can be attempted both at the time that a policy is adopted (i.e., one can ask whether a policy **will** fulfill its goals) or at indefinite periods after the policy has been implemented. In either case, the first step is to identify and delineate the objectives that the makers of foreign policy adopt for the policies that they design and implement. The second part of empirical judgment, determining the actual effects of policies is fraught with still other difficulties (see Raymond 1987), which are not addressed here.

THE COMPLEXITY OF FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

If one wishes to identify a set of FPGs for the purpose indicated above, the first step is to recognize some of their troublesome complexities. To illustrate some of these complexities, let us consider a recent American foreign policy initiative, the Persian Gulf War of 1991. Limiting the period of time under study to March and April 1991, one could say that the U.S. appears to have had three basic goals: (1) to eject the Iraqis from Kuwait and restore Kuwaiti sovereignty; (2) to weaken Iraq to the point that it could not again threaten to dominate the region; and (3) to undermine the personal rule of Saddam Hussein.⁴

This is a typical and straightforward rendering of a state's goals in a limited and relatively uncomplicated situation. America's stated goals in Desert Storm seemed to be much clearer, for instance, than America's goals in the Vietnam War. Moreover, the policies adopted to meet these goals—the organization of the coalition and, later, the invasion of Kuwait and southwestern Iraq—were also more focused and discrete than other foreign policy issues. (Consider Bosnia, for example.) Hence, the example is not one in which an analyst would immediately expect to find great ambiguity of FPGs. While this will serve as the primary illustration, other foreign policy episodes are also alluded to as needed.

The most commonplace observation about FPGs is that they tend to fall into categories (by object), and, in fact, with minor variations in usage, the categories indicated are surprisingly consistent: security, (economic) welfare and (moral) aspirations. Some analysts discuss this categorization of goals directly (e.g., Spanier 1993) while others speak of the categories of "national interests" (Nye 1991; Nuechterlein 1973). If, however, "interests" are understood in the subjective sense described above, these categories really apply to the same thing, because "interests" in the subjective sense are nothing more than the highest-level goals of a state's leaders (Krasner 1978). Occasionally some other categories such as "national prestige" (Spanier 1983; Morgenthau and Thompson 1985) are added to this short list of categories.

Two of the goals in our primary example, namely (1) and (3), are framed mostly as moral aspiration: i.e., the U.S., in its public policy, was proclaiming that it sought to uphold the principles of self-determination (by restoring Kuwaiti sovereignty) and democracy (by undermining a dictatorial regime). Goal (2) appears to address mostly American security through a classic "balance of power" policy in the Middle East.⁵ In other words, the Bush administration sought to forestall any future challenges to the American military presence in the region by this long-range policy of preventing Iraqi

hegemony in the region. Perhaps, in turn, such an American presence in the Persian Gulf relates back to the physical security of the United States itself. An apparent American goal, but one unstated in the formulation above,⁶ falls into the economic category: the goal of protecting the Western world's supply of oil leaving the Persian Gulf. If one accepts this proposition, then all three categories are filled.

In reality, however, there is a huge amount of overlap among these categories of goals. In this case, for instance, American "aspirations" were an integral part of fulfilling our "security" goal. The chief **methods** of "containing" Iraq would be restoring Kuwaiti sovereignty and undermining the control of Saddam Hussein, insofar as a preoccupation with domestic problems would render him less capable and inclined to engage in international mischief. Similarly, the goal of keeping the oil flowing to the Western world also relates to American security, albeit indirectly. Most directly, of course, a shut-off of oil from the Persian Gulf would have led to some unmeasurable increase in the price of oil on the world market, which would have led, in turn, to an even less measurable deterioration in the performance of the American economy. Ultimately, this deterioration would have reflected in the American standard of living and the size of its Gross Domestic Product. The ultimate linkage between the price of oil and American security, then, is that the U.S. would have had some indeterminate amount **less** income with which to provide for its security had oil stopped flowing from the Gulf in 1991. To the extent that these categories always overlap, they are reduced to a mere heuristic device, helping us to comprehend a complex world, while simultaneously obscuring that very complexity.

Another problem with goals is that they must be ranked if they are to be used as a standard for judging foreign policy outcomes. Again, many analysts discuss the ranking of goals as a central problem of foreign policy making (Nuechterlein 1973; Frankel 1963). Frequently the ranking of goals followed the categories mentioned above, as when Morgenthau insisted that "survival" was the core, irreducibly minimal goal for any state (1960, 74). Usually the "vital," "survival" or "major goals" that were accorded the highest priority had to do with security, while the "peripheral" goals had to do with welfare, prestige or moral aspirations.

Unfortunately for those who hope to identify a neat or simple hierarchy in these goals, however, the idea of objectively identifiable "vital goals" for states has been thoroughly undermined, no less by "traditionalists" (Wolfers 1962, 6) than by "scientists" (Rosenau 1971, 287). As Wolfers noted, whether a state has a "vital interest" in some outcome "depends on the

relative values attached by citizens to these national objectives...” (1962, 6). Since the dawn of the nuclear age, even the maintenance of national independence—once viewed as the most vital of goals—may be ranked lower than the avoidance of war. Indeed, even in 1940, DeGaulle and Petain disagreed on the “most vital” goal for France. Thus any ranking of priorities in goals, like any understanding of national interests, will be interpretive and value-laden, and accordingly, one has to look into the words of the policy-makers for evidence about which goals have priority over others. When doing so, however one should bear in mind the overlap of FPGs, and categories of FPGs, mentioned above.

A different way to speak of the ranking of FPGs would be to employ the terms “minimum” and “maximum” goals. Using the language, a minimum goal corresponds more or less to a vital goal in the language suggested above, while a maximum goal may be only a vague, even unrealistic, hope of a national leader. In the case of the Gulf War, perhaps the notion that democracy could somehow be established in Iraq seems a plausible example of a maximum goal. This language may in fact be preferable since it suggests the unbroken continuum of importance that FPGs have in the real world.

To recap, with reference to our main example, the goals outlined for the U.S. in “Desert Shield” were designed to promote some **perceived** personal, institutional or national interests of Bush, his administration and/or the U.S. In turn, these goals were presumably prioritized by the administration, again in keeping with its own values and perceptions. In this case, expelling Iraq from Kuwait was clearly the most vital goal, though it was hardly one on which America’s **survival** depended. By comparison, the goal of undermining Hussein’s regime was peripheral. If, in fact, keeping the price of oil to a minimum was a goal of the Bush administration, the priority of this goal was unclear. Moreover, as noted above, these latter two goals are clearly linked insofar as the restoration of Kuwaiti sovereignty would eventually restore availability of that country’s oil on the world market.

In the final analysis the single most important American goal remains unclear: Was it to break Iraq’s power or to liberate Kuwait? In the actual event, this issue did not prove troublesome, since both goals were achieved in Desert Storm. If, however, Kuwait had been liberated **without** substantially diminishing Iraq’s power, including especially the crippling of its chemical war capability and nuclear potential, then the whole effort would have been judged a failure by those who thought that breaking Iraq’s power was, or should have been, the first priority. Herein lies the importance of

understanding the hierarchy of FPGs when using them as a standard of judging policy efficacy.

A third area of complexity in FPGs involves what one might call their “range,” or “scope.” These terms subsume a number of other distinctions about FPGs that have to do with their conceptual, spatial and temporal reach. The conceptual reach of FPGs, the most abstract aspect of “range,” has to do with the level of generality in which it is framed. In speaking of foreign policies themselves, for example, Vasquez has usefully distinguished between “Families of Foreign Policy” and “Kinds of Foreign Policy” (1986, 216). Here is a sampling of Vasquez’s families of foreign policies and “kinds” of foreign policies in each family:

Noninvolvement	World Order	Power Politics
Neutrality/ Nonalignment	Accommodation Disarmament	Coercive Diplomacy Balance of Power
Isolationaism	Integration World Federalism	Containment Deterrence

In each of these cases of “kinds of foreign policy” Vasquez gives specific historical examples. The important point to note, though, is that different conceptual levels of FPGs correspond to these different conceptual levels of policy. Indeed, it probably makes more sense to refer to “world order” as a goal than as a “policy,” which is illustrative of the manner in which the concepts of “goal” and “policy” tend to blur at this level of abstraction.

In the case of our example, one could argue that American leadership in the Persian Gulf War was in fact only a particular facet of a much higher-order policy. That high-order policy found vague expression in Bush rhetoric concerning the “New World Order” (Talbot 1992). In turn, the “kind” of foreign policy that Bush was using was one of support for—indeed, leadership of—a collective security policy. In other words, one might say that the Bush administration was trying to create a “New World Order,” partially through revitalizing the West’s commitment to collective security, and the Persian Gulf was only the first place where it applied. If one chooses to see the Gulf War in this way, as does John Norton Moore (1992), then one might posit that the results of the Persian Gulf War should be judged against these larger goals as well.

The “spatial” reach of FPGs, which refers to geographic limits of the target of the goals, can be rather closely linked to its conceptual reach. In the case of Desert Storm, for instance, one could characterize American goals as applying to Kuwait and Iraq specifically, or more broadly to the Persian Gulf or Middle East as regions, or to the world as a whole. As

originally formulated above, the goals apply only to Kuwait and Iraq themselves. However, one could also make a claim that the U.S. had an overriding goal for the middle East as a whole, e.g., to keep any one state from growing too strong, or alternatively, to discourage radical, externally-oriented nationalism in the region. Finally, one could also make a plausible claim that other “targets” of America’s FPGs in the Gulf were would-be aggressors anywhere in the world. To say that the “target” of America’s FPGs in Desert Storm was the world is not unlike saying that the Bush administration or the U.S. sought to bolster the “New World Order” through that policy.

These distinctions about FPGs recall Arnold Wolfers’ well-known distinction between “possession goals” and “milieu goals” (1962, 73), though this distinction is actually different from those drawn here. For Wolfers, the former type goals can be achieved only at some expense to other members of the inter-state system, while the latter could potentially be universally sought and achieved. The simple objective of peace, for instance, is a classic “milieu goal.” Thus Wolfers’ distinction refers not only to the range of FPGs, and to their scope, but also to their relationship with the FPGs of other states in the system. If engendering international respect for the norms against aggression and in favor of self-determination was the milieu goal of the U.S. in Desert Storm, as Moore (1992) appears to believe, then the possession goal at stake appears to have been access to—or control over—Kuwaiti oil. Critics of American policy (Tucker and Hendrickson 1992), on the other hand, dismiss the idea that the U.S. was pursuing any neutral milieu goal in favor of the idea that it had a possession goal of global scope: to maintain or enhance America’s power-political position in the international community at large. Although Desert Storm’s critics obviously differ with its defenders on the true nature of American goals at the global level, or on the highest level of abstraction, both sides acknowledge that the Bush administration at least hoped that the operation would have a global impact on world politics as well as a specific impact on Kuwait and Iraq.

Finally, one should consider two other distinctions about FPGs, those between short-term and long-term goals, and between tactical and strategic goals. Both distinctions concern the range over which policy outcomes are considered. These distinctions about FPGs have also been widely made (Frankel 1969; Holsti 1972) in the literature. Though some analysts have used these two distinctions as if they were the same thing (Gross 1954), these distinctions could be understood in various ways. The terms “strategic” and “tactical” would perhaps be better used if one let them stand for

the same kinds of distinctions one could make about the spatial and conceptual range of goals. That is, "strategic" goals would be those that are global in reach and most fundamental, while "tactical" goals are those that are regional or local and more instrumental. In the case of American FPGs in early 1991, the tactical goals that the U.S. sought to achieve in Desert Storm may have been contributing to larger strategic goals (world order, or greater world power and prestige).

Meanwhile, the U.S. adopted countless short-term goals at this moment in world politics that were designed to contribute to longer term goals. Some, like the destruction of a certain military objective, or the demoralization of the Iraqi people, applied to the particular local setting. The U.S. also had short-term goals that applied to the regional setting, however, such as keeping Syria and Egypt in the coalition, or to the global setting, such as getting Japan and Germany to contribute money, or securing Soviet acquiescence in the coalition's cause. The U.S. also had **long-term** goals that applied to the local setting; for instance, the U.S. is now committed to protecting the sovereignty of Kuwait against an Iraqi take-over. That is, the U.S. has a local but long-term goal for Kuwait itself. In short, then, the tactical/strategic and long-term/short-term distinctions are conceptually different ones.

These latter distinctions raise the issue of ends and means in FPGs. As Wolfers noted, "The objectives a nation seeks can range from the most immediate means to the most remote or ultimate ends..."(1962, 69), and, of course, a great many "ends" are only intermediate goals sought to promote some greater purpose. This is precisely the problem raised by these distinctions when it comes to judging FPGs. To what degree does one judge the Bush policy in Desert Storm a success if, on the one hand, Kuwait does remain independent of Iraq, but, on the other, Iraq invades and subdues Jordan next year? The answer, of course, depends largely on the extent to which one views Kuwaiti sovereignty as an end in and to itself, or alternatively, as the means to some larger goal, such as containing Iraq. This only highlights the point that many FPGs are instrumental goals whose fulfillment is intended to contribute to some larger end.

A fourth problem of FPGs is that specific goals are quite often contingent on the stability of certain conditions or the fulfillment of other goals. Consider, for example, America's FPGs with regard to Kuwait and Iraq in late 1990 in the context of the existing long-term American goal of limiting revolutionary Islam in the Middle East region. That existing goal probably qualified considerably the specific goals that the U.S. had vis-à-vis Iraq; i.e., while the Bush administration sought to undermine Hussein's regime,

it certainly did **not** wish to do so if it appeared that Hussein might be replaced by an Islamic militant from Iraq's Shiite majority. Nor, as was argued above, did the Bush administration desire to weaken Iraq's power to the point that it would not be able to resist an attack from Iran. While these considerations appear to identify **contradictions** in American policy, they really only identify **qualifications**. Nonetheless, these qualifications must be borne in mind when one judges the effectiveness of a foreign policy designed to fulfill some set of FPGs.

A fifth and final dimension of FPG complexity involves the undervaluation of "avoidance" goals. These goals reflect the fact that national leaders typically wish to avoid certain outcomes through foreign policy initiatives even as they achieve others. Such goals, however, are frequently ignored when analysts are identifying the sets of FPGs by which policy will be tested. In the Gulf War, for example, neither the U.S. nor its coalition partners wanted to precipitate the dissolution of Iraq by helping Saddam Hussein's opponents too much (Talbot 1992). This avoidance goal became evident, though, only after the revolts at the end of the Gulf War took shape, threatening that very eventuality. Another avoidance goal in Desert Storm that was recognized from the start was to keep American casualties to an absolute minimum.

In sum, then, FPGs are extraordinarily multi-faceted political constructs. To clearly and fully identify the goals of a state in a specific foreign policy endeavor, one has to account for at least some of the possible permutations of the basic FPG. Otherwise, one risks oversimplification to the point of absurdity. Just as troublesome is that the use of the phrase "specific foreign policy endeavors" obfuscates the complexity of the social world in which FPGs are created. In reality, new FPGs are formulated in the midst of other, continuing FPGs; they are typically fitted into this large and fluid array of existing goals, sometimes without much thought to overall priorities. Thus, when it comes to the more interesting tasks of judging a "complete" foreign policy—for instance, of a specific American presidential administration—including **all** of its foreign policy initiatives, then the task is all the harder. Yet this paper only begins to explore the difficulties of using FPGs as a yardstick against which one may measure the performance of foreign policies.

THE DETERMINATION OF FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

Besides grappling with the breathtaking complexity of FPGs, a second problem of using them in the evaluation of foreign policy is that they must be identified. Just as the problems of capturing the essence of FPGs are

generally ignored, so are the problems of identifying them in the first place. A few of these problems are illustrated here.

One common chimera about the determination of FPGs is that they can be deduced from a state's objective international position or needs. Just as one cannot use the "national interest" (in the objective sense) as a standard, one cannot use it as a guide to the existence or quality of FPGs. If there were a universally recognized national interest, then one might be able to assume or deduce FPGs from it without any reference to the actual words and deeds of policy-makers. Even traditional realists would have to agree with this position, since they sometimes acknowledge that national leaders do **not** in fact always adopt policies which **they** find to be in the national interest (Morgenthau 1950). Otherwise, the post-war realists would have had no prescriptive program at all to go along with their descriptive characterization of the world. This problem is only worth mentioning at all because analysts so often, perhaps frustrated by the difficulties of determining subjective FPGs, yearn for an objective method of deriving them.

If one has to rely chiefly on the words and deeds of national leaders for the elaboration of FPGs, the question **whose** words and deeds arises. The fact that the phrase "national goals" has been avoided here is not accidental. While such a concept might follow logically from "national interests," the use of such a phrase may lead one to the conclusion that the goals adopted by a certain person or government are in fact those of the whole state or society. But this is obviously not always the case. Liberals are quick to argue that the old Soviet government adopted countless FPGs about which its citizens were, at best, ambivalent; Marxists, on the other hand, argue that America's FPGs represent the interests of a particular **class** far more than those of the nation as a whole.

In the American context, some of the relevant "actors" who could be said to have goals would be the president and his administration, Congress, and different branches of the bureaucracy. As the work of Allison (1971) and Allison and Halperin (1972) surely proves, different bureaucracies of the American government including the CIA, State Department, Pentagon, and Commerce Department quite often have differing FPGs, even when they are implementing common policies. Other studies point to the importance of Congress in the foreign policy process (Lindsay 1994). Yet presidents often do not make it clear which goals are more important. In the case of Desert Storm, no one would deny that the Pentagon was more concerned with the "avoidance goal" of keeping American casualties to a minimum than the State Department, which in turn was more concerned about the solidity of the anti-Iraq coalition. Congress, unlike the admini-

stration, was also worried about democracy in **Kuwait** after the war, as well as in Iraq. These same features would apply to other states as well, including totalitarian ones like the Soviet Union, where the KGB, Red Army and intelligence services often adopted, and sometimes pursued, clashing goals all attributed to the Soviet state.

In the American case, though, Congress, far more than any bureaucracy, can actually **implement** policies when it so desires, sometimes in contradiction to goals being pursued by the executive branch (Lindsay 1994). Consider the case of American foreign policy toward South Africa in the mid-1980s, for instance. While there may have been uneasy agreement between Reagan and Congress on the long-term goal of undermining *apartheid*—if one interprets Reagan’s policies generously—there was utter discord on the question of what short- to medium-term goals served that end. Thus, Reagan defended “constructive engagement,” designed to reassure the South African government, while Congress passed the Comprehensive Anti-apartheid Act, designed to shake it. Now that *apartheid* has ended, each side in this dispute can claim that **its** policies were more important to that outcome (though in fact both may be overstating their claims). This complication in identifying a clear **national** goal for the U.S. during this time, then, will prove a grave impediment to evaluating the success of America’s (dual) foreign policies. Very often, even members of the same presidential administration make clashing statements about the goals of American policy.

Even if one limited oneself to the words and deeds of the president *himself*, there would be serious difficulties in determining FPGs in them. In the case of Desert Storm President Bush was **relatively** clear about short-term American goals (Thompson 1991) compared, for instance, with the case of American intervention in Somalia. Would disarming the warlords be a tactical American goal, for example? The president was vague on this point, perhaps because of the political advantage in allowing goals to be vague when it is far less than certain that they can be fulfilled. Curiously the long-term goal of restoring a stable and relatively humane government to Somalia was relatively clear, but the instrumental goals that would contribute to this end were altogether lacking or indecipherable. Similarly, with regard to Iraq, America’s national leaders had a hard time imagining any medium-term goals that might transform the state from a minority Sunni tyranny into an inclusive republic.

To illustrate further the difficulty of interpreting words, consider how the Bush administration sought to achieve one of the goals mentioned above, undermining Saddam Hussein’s rule. To promote this goal, Bush

called on the "Iraqi people" to rise up against their leader in mid-February 1991. Apparently what the president meant to encourage through this call, according to his aides, was a *coup d'état* by some of Hussein's officers or members of the Baath Party (Talbot 1992). Yet this is not necessarily the interpretation that one would infer, nor was it, apparently, that of the Shiites and Kurds living in Iraq.

Among the specific problems of divining FPGs in public policy statements is the lurking danger of hidden goals. One prominent analyst has included protecting the security of Israel in a short list of America's real goals in the Gulf War (Maynes 1991), though one will not find President Bush explicitly declaring this goal in his public statements.⁷ Most analysts, including Maynes (1991), also include the protection of oil supplies to the West as a major goal in the Gulf War, though again, such base goals are lacking in the policy statements of Bush and his secretary of state. Another example is the unacknowledged desire of the White House that Saddam Hussein himself be "inadvertently" killed in a bombing of one of Iraq's "command and control centers" (*U.S. News and World Report* 1992). Often such "hidden" goals may be nearly universally thought to exist, though no public policy statement affirms their existence. This is doubtless an inevitable aspect of such statements in an age when foreign policy pronouncements must satisfy the moral and political sensibilities of alert populations. To put it differently, disingenuousness may be a by-product of foreign policy elaboration in the era of democratic states.

False and distorted goals, others in the family of gremlins that plague foreign policy analysis, also hinder a straightforward reading of public policy pronouncements. Just as some goals may go unmentioned because they are unseemly before public sensibilities, other putative goals, ones that do not really exist, are sometimes included in public statements for the same reason. Take for example Israel's assertion in the midst of Desert Shield that it supported the American goal of having Iraq peacefully withdraw from Kuwait and restore the country's sovereignty. Perhaps Israel really did desire such a withdrawal, but if it did, this must surely have been a **contingent** goal, and it must have been contingent on the hope that Iraq would cease being a menace to its neighbors and Israel. In fact, this was almost certainly a false goal (or hope) of Israel; her real hope must have certainly been that the U.S. would engage Iraq in a serious war and destroy its army and nuclear-chemical capabilities, at least for the time being. In the just-past era of nuclear brinkmanship false goals were as common as the periodic crises between the superpowers, in which the two great pro-

tagonists often sought to convince each other that certain secondary goals were in fact the *sine qua non* of nuclear peace.

The distortion of national leaders' goals is even more common than the enunciation of non-existent goals or the non-acknowledgement of existing ones. The most typical way of distorting goals is to frame prosaic concerns about security or prosperity in terms of the principles of international conduct that are explicitly sanctioned in international law and applauded in international fora. One might legitimately wonder, for example, how important Kuwaiti self-determination **in and of itself** was to Bush administration officials. Critics of Bush's policy in the Gulf War have complained that this formulation, while strictly true, masked the **real** intention of American policy, i.e., to keep cheap oil flowing to the U.S. This goal, then, was distorted in that an intermediate goal was made to appear as if it were in fact an ultimate goal. One should also note here that the ranking of FPGs may be intentionally distorted by policy-makers as well as the nature of the goals themselves. Again, the stress in the public enunciation of goals often goes on the normative or legal goals designated for certain policies, while critics typically believe political or economic goals to be prior in importance for the policy-makers involved.

Finally, there is the problem that Rosenau once called the "main weakness" of the decision-making approach, the problem of changing policies and goals. As Rosenau noted, "most policies undergo a continuous process of evolution and revision as external change and internal demands shift" (1971, 247; Gross 1954). These policy revisions reflect the changing goals of the policy-makers. James Lebovic (1994) argued, quite persuasively, that it was as much "momentum" as calculated strategy that carried the U.S. into the Gulf War once the initial decision to resist the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait was taken. Over the months between August 1990 and February 1991 the military posture of Iraq and the United States, and the political sentiments of the international community were in flux. Thus, it is hardly surprising that American goals were changing (e.g., from pressuring Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait to driving Iraq's army from Kuwait by force) as the situation evolved.

Tactical and short-term goals, in particular, are subject to revision as the facts of a given situation change. One tactical goal held by the Bush administration before the beginning of the ground war in Kuwait and Iraq was the destruction of Iraq's Republican Guard in northern Kuwait and southeastern Iraq, which served the larger end of reducing the Iraqi threat to the region. In the midst of the battle, however, this goal was apparently abandoned because of criticism from America's coalition allies and the

press (*U.S. News and World Report* 1992). One consequence of this change was that the Republican Guard escaped largely intact, and later proved instrumental in the suppression of the Kurds and Shiites in Iraq.

This example, though, is actually unusual in that the policy changed to accord with the new goals; more typical is the case in which goals change, but policies do not, or vice versa. Consider for example how American strategic goals evolved in the last years of the Vietnam War even as America's strategic policies remained largely unchanged. While this kind of change in goals is altogether common, it exemplifies the difficulty of identifying goals for use as a standard by which one can judge the effectiveness of foreign policy. Since FPGs and the policies designed to achieve them, at least at the tactical level, are in near-constant flux, one can scarcely hope to judge outcomes in the real world against the goal standard.

METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The sections above make two important points about using FPGs in the judgment of foreign policy: (1) that FPGs themselves are exceedingly complex, and (2) even if they were simple, it would be exceedingly difficult to demonstrate what they are or the extent to which they exist at all. The complexity of FPGs only reinforces the difficulty of identifying them. Unfortunately, though, this is only the first step in actually judging whether foreign policies have actually succeeded. The second is to try to determine whether or not events that occur (or do not occur) can be traced in some measure to the implementation of the identified foreign policies (cf. Raymond 1987). As Hugh Stretton (1969) demonstrated, this is not a task that one can afford to take lightly.

Considering only the distinctions and other observations already outlined, though, one finds arguments to engage those who cling to the idea that any "scientific" evaluation of foreign policy is possible. The enthusiasm that analysts, such as Steers (1975), had for such scientific evaluations was understandable during the heyday of behaviorism in the early 1970s. Surprisingly, however, other analysts were still hoping for an objective, quantifiable means of evaluating foreign policy in the late 1980s (Vasquez 1986). If this is possible, which seems rather doubtful given the complexity of FPGs and other social phenomena, then the mathematical complexities that reflect these phenomena are daunting. It is far more likely that the scientific analyst would give up long before he got to the point of measuring the effects of foreign policies, however, as he tried to develop operational definitions to let him merely observe FPGs.

On the other hand, this analysis should not be construed to support the deconstructionist claim that the words of the policy-makers have no meaning at all, or the more general post-modernist skepticism about the possibility of any meaningful discourse about the social world. As Pauline Rosenau notes, "Extreme post-modernism is anti-theoretical in many respects and it denies the possibility of truth" (1990, 86). In fact, many post-modernists see "truth" as a subjective weapon of the powerful to maintain power or status. One is left to wonder why the post-modernists bother with scholarly efforts at all, since their work, too, can be dismissed as the futile efforts of hopelessly conditioned minds or power-seeking consciousnesses. Their attempts to understand the social world too often turn into a tortured and self-absorbed preoccupation with our inability to establish any common vocabulary or concepts. Ashley (1986) has already made just this kind of non-contribution in foreign policy analysis.

Thus, for those who press on with the effort to "scientifically" evaluate foreign policy, this analysis may also be useful in the construction of operational definitions. If we make any progress at all in accumulating social knowledge, however, it is probably through the dialectical process of public debate in the scholarly literature. In this sense, this analysis could be very useful for the old-fashioned observer who hopes to make judgments about the efficacy of various foreign policies or foreign policy approaches. It serves to warn him not to settle for a simple, brief listing of the goals of states (or national leaders or governments). He must be aware that many goals overlap one another, and that some are far more important than others; he has to grapple with the spatial and temporal range over which he wishes to make his analysis; and he must acknowledge the hypocrisy of false goals, and seek to make claims for hidden goals that he believes exist.

Only then, if he wants to offer an honest argument, can he turn to the impact that foreign policies have in the real world. Unfortunately, it is far easier to allow ideological predisposition, simple personal animosity or heartfelt normative concern to be the basis for the judgment of foreign policy. When this is the case, as it so often is, it is rather easy to "read" FPGs in a self-satisfying manner, which in turn allows one to make whatever judgment of a policy one wants. Given both the purposeful nature of human beings and the striking complexity of social relations, this is perhaps inevitable. For whatever end, however, the real but problematic complexity of FPGs bears further study and analysis.

NOTES

¹See, e.g., his little-read *Purpose of American Politics* (1960b) which, as the title suggests, explicitly investigates the moral grounding for American foreign policy.

²In fact, others had doubted the objectivity of the "national interest" even in Morgenthau's heyday (Gross 1954).

³This problem of the national interest is extraordinarily complicated, and those who insist on its objectivity will not be convinced by this short discussion. The fact, however, that Bull, who was squarely in the camp of the "traditionalists" in international relations, attacked the national interest as an objective concept seems almost a *coup de grace* for this traditional conception of the national interest.

⁴See the assessments of America's goals in Maynes (1991) with the statements of President Bush, Secretary of State Baker and other senior officials in the *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, 7 January 1991, vol. 2, no. 1:5; 14 January 1991, no. 2:14-25; 21 January 1991, no. 3:37-41.

⁵"Balance of power," like "national interest," is another notoriously slippery concept. Here, though, I am using it to mean a situation in which no one power can dominate the system, or as in this case, a region. This is the main use of Bull (1977, 101).

⁶On "hidden" goals see below.

⁷See note 3.

REFERENCES

- Allison, Graham. 1971. *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Allison, Graham, and Morton Halperin. 1972. "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications." *World Politics* 24:40-79.
- Ashley, Richard K. 1986. "At the Impasse: Epistemology and the Scientific Evaluation of Foreign Policy," in John Vasquez, ed., *Evaluating U.S. Foreign Policy*. New York: Praeger.
- Bull, Hedley. 1977. *The Anarchical Society*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Burton, John. 1972. *World Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Claude, Inis. 1991. (Professor Emeritus of Government and Foreign Affairs, University of Virginia.) Personal correspondence.
- Clinton, W. David. 1986. "The National Interest: Normative Foundations." *Review of Politics* 48:495-519.
- Cook, Thomas, and Malcolm Moos. 1954. *Power Through Purpose: The Realism of Idealism as a Basis for Foreign Policy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Frankel, Joseph. 1963. *The Making of Foreign Policy: An Analysis of Decision-Making*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Frankel, Joseph. 1969. *International Politics: Conflict and Harmony*. London: Penguin Press.
- Gross, Felix. 1954. *Foreign Policy Analysis*. New York: Philosophical Library.
- Holsti, K. J. 1972. *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*. 2d. ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Krasner, Stephen D. 1978. *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Lebovic, James H. 1994. "Before the Storm: Momentum and the Onset of the Gulf War." *International Studies Quarterly*. 38:447-74.
- Lindsay, James M. 1994. "Congress, Foreign Policy, and the New Institutionalism." *International Studies Quarterly* 38:281-304.
- Lugar, Richard. 1994. "American Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Period." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 24:15-27.
- Maynes, Charles William. 1991. "Dateline Washington: A Necessary War?" *Foreign Policy* 82:159-77.
- Moore, John Norton. 1992. *Crisis in the Gulf: Enforcing the Rule of Law*. Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana.
- Morgenthau, Hans. [1950] 1982. *In Defense of the National Interest*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Morgenthau, Hans. 1960a. "Another Great Debate: The National Interest of the United States," in Stanley Hoffman, ed., *Contemporary Theory in International Relations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Morgenthau, Hans. 1960b. *The Purpose of American Politics*. New York: Knopf.

- Morgenthau, Hans, and Kenneth W. Thompson. 1985. *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Peace and Power*. 6th ed., rev. New York: Knopf.
- Nuechterlein, Donald. 1973. *United States National Interests in a Changing World*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press.
- Nye, Joseph. 1991. "Why the Gulf War Served the National Interest." *Atlantic Monthly* 268:54-64.
- Price, James. 1972. "The Study of Organizational Effectiveness." *Sociological Quarterly*. 13:3-15.
- Raymond, Gregory A. 1987. "Evaluation: A Neglected Task for the Comparative Study of Foreign Policy," in Charles Hermann, Charles Kegley, and James Rosenau, eds. *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Rosenau, James, ed. 1971. "The National Interest," in *The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy*. New York: Free Press.
- Rosenau, Pauline. 1990. "Once Again Into the Fray: International Relations Confronts the Humanities." *Millennium* 19:83-110.
- Rosenthal, Joel H. 1991. *Righteous Realists: Political Realism, Responsible Power, and American Culture in the Nuclear Age*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.
- Spanier, John. 1993. *Games Nations Play*, 8th ed. Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press.
- Steers, Richard. 1975. "Problems in the Measurement of Organization Effectiveness." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 20:546-57.
- Stretton, Hugh. 1969. *The Political Sciences*. New York: Basic Books.
- Talbott, Strobe. 1992. "Post-Victory Blues." *Foreign Affairs* 71:53-69.
- Thompson, Kenneth. 1991. "The Decline of International Studies." *Ethics and International Affairs* 5:233-45.
- Tonelson, Alan. 1992. "What is the National Interest?" *Atlantic Monthly* 268:35-52.
- Tucker, Robert, and David Hendrickson. 1992. *The Imperial Temptation: The New World Order and America's Purpose*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations.
- U.S. News and World Report Staff. 1992. *Triumph Without Victory: The Unreported History of the Persian Gulf War*. New York: Random House.

- Vasquez, John, ed. 1986. *Evaluating U.S. Foreign Policy*. New York: Praeger.
- Wittkopf, Eugene R., ed. 1994. *The Future of American Foreign Policy*. 2d ed. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Wolfers, Arnold. 1962. *Discord and Collaboration*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.