Policy Classification: A Key to the Comparative Study of Foreign Policy

I. Introduction

 Harold and Margaret Sprout consistently have drawn a distinction between foreign policy analysis and capabilities analysis—the latter is a necessary perspective for the study of international politics. In their own teaching and research they have sustained a balanced approach between the two areas of inquiry. The same cannot be said for the discipline as a whole. A decade ago Sondermann concluded that students of international politics devoted most of their energies to foreign policy analysis. The pattern, however, has changed remarkably in the last ten years; now one can justly contend that—despite the evenhanded treatment of the Sprouts and a few others—it is the study of foreign policy that has become largely stagnant.

This contention does not imply a dearth of recent research on foreign policy. Continuation of old deficiencies, though, mars the contribution of such writing to any theoretical advance. A significant proportion of the literature remains devoted to the study of individual policy events, that is, to case studies. All too frequently this work substitutes a fascinating account of some historical occurrence for systematic insight into the general nature of foreign policy. Others have provided descriptive accounts of United States policy toward a given country or region. Still other analysts of foreign policy have joined those elsewhere in political science who “have focused their professional attention mainly on the processes by which public policies are made and have shown relatively little concern with their contents.” These studies seldom connect variations in processes with variations in policy. Critiques of policy makers and their policies together with prescriptions for the future comprise another part of the literature on foreign policy. Regardless of the particular kind of study, the overwhelming majority concern foreign policy of these foreign policy studies scientific theory. Those scholars committed to the development of generalizations appear to neglect foreign policy; in foreign policy display little awareness.

Advocates of the comparative foreign policy study into this void. Although not only two characteristics: (1) They studied types of nation-states and other to develop theories about foreign policies; generalizations. In other words ways—to indicate the scope or necessity for using the comparative foreign policy study. Some recent efforts by the Sprouts to consider the effects of environments (i.e., policies) of different nations, also appears in the work of recent efforts by the Sprouts to establish meaningful ways of.

More specifically, scholars construct in theories about policy identifying kinds of policies. Or theyships incorporate foreign policy in the effect of elements both internal to the consequences of different kinds of national system including those policy on the processes by which the absence of well defined for policy analysts, students of ors who taken some important first steps in interrelations of potential theories of quantitative indicators of policy will draw upon the development example the scholar who wishes the factors on various kinds of for comparative literature as to what are considered salient. How already collected on selected dinosaurs. But what about theorey policy or the existence of sets of faces a high probability that
majority concern foreign policies of the United States. Whatever the merits of these foreign policy studies, they contribute little to the development of scientific theory. Those scholars in international and comparative politics committed to the development of networks of empirically reliable propositions appear to neglect foreign policy. Conversely, those scholars active in foreign policy display little interest in theory-building.

Advocates of the comparative study of foreign policy have stepped into this void. Although not entirely new, the current proponents possess two characteristics: (1) They seek to orient the study of foreign policy to all types of nation-states and other international actors; and (2) they wish to develop theories about foreign policy which yield empirically verifiable generalizations. In other words, the concept of comparison is used in two ways—to indicate the scope of inquiry is cross-national and to suggest the necessity for using the comparative method of analysis in scientific investigation. Some recent research of the Sprouts fits into the small group of comparative foreign policy studies. They employ the ecological perspective to consider the effects of environmental deterioration on resource allocations (i.e., policies) of different states. One of their former students, James Rosenau, also appears in the vanguard of those exploring the comparative study of foreign policy. In a recent article, he asks whether such studies are afad, a fantasy, or a field. It is the contention of this chapter that the answer to his question, and in turn to the questions about the significance of the recent efforts by the Sprouts and others, depends upon our ability to establish meaningful ways of classifying different kinds of foreign policy.

More specifically, scholars who seek to include foreign policy as a central construct in theories about politics must offer theoretically relevant ways of identifying kinds of policies. One can conceive of various intriguing relationships incorporating foreign policy as a salient variable, for example, the effect of elements both internal and external to a nation on its policies, or the consequences of different kinds of policies on various actors in the international system including those that originated the action, or the effects of policy on the processes by which it is formed. The critical weakness lies in the absence of well defined foreign policy variables. In contrast to foreign policy analysts, students of comparative and international politics have taken some important first steps in their respective fields toward identifying interrelations of potential theoretical significance and toward the development of quantitative indicators. Presumably, hypotheses about foreign policy will draw upon the developments in these two fields. Consider as an example the scholar who wishes to look at the impact of domestic political factors on various kinds of foreign policy. He can find some leads in the comparative literature as to what political variables in what types of systems are considered salient. He may even be fortunate and find some data already collected on selected domestic variables for a substantial number of nations. But what about theoretically meaningful ways of classifying foreign policy or the existence of sets of data using such classifications? The scholar faces a high probability that he will find nothing; he must begin from
II. Current Types of Classification

Various ways of describing and classifying foreign policies have been utilized for some time. Although a number of studies of foreign policy neglect the output or product almost completely, others have not. As a point of departure, we will review some of the most frequent kinds of classifications for distinguishing foreign policy as well as others that have been advanced, but less often used.

Geographical Region/Political Entities—One frequent means of classifying foreign policies rests upon the geographical region or political entities involved. Thus, we have studies of the policy of country X toward country Y or the policy of country X toward region Z. The foreign target, or occasionally the initiating nation, provides the organizing concepts with little reference to the substance or content of policies. One common typology of foreign policies is formed by relating policies toward the countries in a region across several distinguishable periods of time. Analysts undoubtedly find geographical and political categories attractive for numerous reasons. They are fairly easy to identify; they can be assembled into an exhaustive set; they have been used by policy makers and journalists to the point that they seem a “concrete and natural” way of organizing the world. More abstract variations of these categories would permit analysis of classes of states rather than the individual cases. The classic distinction between authoritarian and democratic politics has provided the basis for some studies of foreign policy, but in these instances more attention has been devoted to differences in processes than policies. Abstract geographical categories, such as insular or landlocked, receive even less systematic use as ways of distinguishing types of policies.

Strategic or Grand Designs—Like the previous categories this system finds wide use by both policy makers and scholars. Unlike the prior classifications, the present one deals with the substance of policy conceived in terms of broad objectives or intentions of the initiating states. Each category in this scheme encompasses numerous discrete foreign policy actions. Examples include “containment,” “Brezhnev Doctrine,” “disengagement,” “socialism in one country,” and for strategic policies give rise to “wars of liberation,” and “flex of such concepts for discussing gain more currency as political for distinguishing types of policy of categories that locate all for used to characterize the domains.

Skills and Resources—Another rests upon the differentiation of associated with various foreign with modifiers like military, econ and so on. In other words, the policy military will involve ind employing particular kinds of necessary for, say, an economy may fall into more than one central difficult at the boundaries of each can classify most policies into some books have been devoted to on.

Action Properties—In sharp in the preceding classifications in discrete moves or actions made that policy requires action, it be different types of acts. North a analysis of hostile and nonhostil classifications of foreign policy accord by McClelland whose scheme out headings like yield, grant, der regard the loss of the larger con behaviors as a serious limitation.

Relational Attributes—This is by establishing categories base and some aspect of the context i of continuity and innovation in Deutsch and Pruitt both refer to Spiro proposes a classification us “fundamental versus circumst categories include duration, relat By definition, action cannot be to past action or some other asp Some of the recent explorations applications to foreign policy clas.

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Doctrine,” “disengagement,”
“socialism in one country,” and “maintenance of empire.” Similar labels
for strategic policies give rise to designations like “massive retaliation,”
“wars of liberation,” and “flexible response.” Despite the widespread use
of such concepts for discussing foreign policy, these descriptions often
gain more currency as political symbols than as rigorous categories
for distinguishing types of policy. They seldom constitute an inclusive set
of categories that locate all foreign policies; instead one or two terms are
used to characterize the dominant themes in a nation’s foreign affairs.

Skills and Resources—Another means of identifying the substance
rests upon the differentiation of capabilities and the specialization of tasks
associated with various foreign policies. This procedure results in categories
with modifiers like military, economic, cultural, propagandistic, diplomatic,
and so on. In other words, the classification rests on the assumption that a
military policy will involve individuals with special types of training and
employing particular kinds of resources which will be different from those
necessary for, say, an economic policy. Of course, many specific actions
may fall into more than one category. Furthermore, distinctions become
difficult at the boundaries of each grouping, but many analysts believe they
can classify most policies into some set of these categories. Indeed, numerous
books have been devoted to one or the other of these categories.

Action Properties—In sharp contrast to the broad scope of categories
in the preceding classifications, this method uses categories that codify
discrete moves or actions made by actors within a nation. If one assumes
that policy requires action, it becomes possible to group policies according
to different types of acts. North and his colleagues select this method for the
analysis of hostile and nonhostile acts. One of the most extensive classi-
fications of foreign policy according to action properties has been developed
by McClelland whose scheme contains 63 categories grouped into major
headings like yield, grant, deny, seize, and demand. Some scholars
regard the loss of the larger context which results from classifying discrete
behaviors as a serious limitation on coding by action properties.

Relational Attributes—This system reduces the problem just described
by establishing categories based on the connection between an action
and some aspect of the context in which it occurs. Waltz uses the categories
of continuity and innovation in comparing British and American policies;
Deutsch and Pruitt both refer to the responsiveness of a state’s policies; and
Spiro proposes a classification using “procedural versus substantive” and
“fundamental versus circumstantial” dimensions. Other relational
categories include duration, relative cost, reversals, and frequency of action.
By definition, action cannot be codified by this scheme without reference
to past action or some other aspect of the larger setting in which it occurs.
Some of the recent explorations of program, planning, and budgeting
applications to foreign policy involve the use of relational attribute
classifications.

Basic Values—The great debate among many political scientists in the
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Interest in foreign policy illustrates the debate generated efforts to identify the state’s foreign policy. This means of classification (described below) and strategic or explanatory purposes consist of categories derived from traditional or national goals. Efforts to state’s policies offer an example as do the values: power, respect, rectitude, affect, lightenment. With some modification tied to foreign policies, they represent the principles that ought to be translated into the ends toward which policy goals represent abstract end-states or strategies or grand designs consist of ular nation. Wolfers’ familiar three-way self-extension, national self-preservation-illustrates a simple set of categories by siified. The Sprouls are developing a strategy based on national goals. Categories in this classificatory system which a policy is conveyed from the The fundamental distinction between that Schelling describes as the difference cation, illustrates the type of classifi-loyed to convey a message offer another is according to their communication sory could be applied to foreign policy of information contained in a partic-Osgood identifies still another potential regardless of culture, he finds that all lyzed on three dimensions: evaluation, and activity (active/passive). All the examination of extremely discrete Parsons and Shils “a pattern variable must be chosen by an actor before the is for him, and thus before he can act ions contends that there are five basic

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Although not necessarily adhering to the formulation of Parsons, others introduce the concept of pattern variables as a means of classifying policies. Such schemes bear considerable resemblance to what we described as relational attributes. At least in Parsons’ work, however, pattern variables purport to constitute an exhaustive set of interrelated dimensions. Relational attributes, on the other hand, are theoretically limitless and ad hoc.

Issue-Areas—Dahl suggests that the elites engaged in the governing process vary with the field of public policy involved. Rosenau has developed this approach with respect to foreign policy. Policies are placed in the same or different categories depending on whether the actors and the processes used in formulating the policy are similar or different. He tentatively advances issue areas for policies dealing with status, territory, human resources, and nonhuman resources. Though he does not refer to them as issue-areas, Huntington’s distinction between strategy and structure rests upon two separate processes concerned with different types of issues in military affairs.

Other means of classifying foreign policy could be added, but the present list reveals the diversity evident in current studies. In addition to the variety of classifications based on the substance of policy, our review identifies classifications derived from the initiating state or the recipients, the processes and principles for establishing policy, and the purposes toward which policy is directed. With this wide range of options for classifying foreign policy, why is the examination of kinds of foreign policy so retarded? To answer that question we must consider the requirements for classification schemes.

III. Requirements for Classification

Like most social scientists, students of foreign policy know that requirements for classification include mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories as well as they know the techniques for skirting these standards. A set of categories can be exhaustive by adding a catch-all, miscellaneous category labeled “other.” Nonexclusive classifications can be excused because they are exploratory. The neglect or casual treatment of these standards seriously undermines the utility of some of the classification systems in current use. Beyond these logical standards, an examination of requirements depends on the purpose for which a classification is undertaken.

Many classifications act as organizational devices; they enable users to locate a single item or a kind of item from a much larger number with a minimum of search. The classification system of books in a library offers an example. The usual practice of arranging most bureaus or departments of a foreign ministry according to geographical areas most likely results from organizational considerations and long tradition. Although bureaucratic politics may intrude upon the logic of the geographical arrangement, such divisions provide a mutually exclusive and exhaustive system for the
delegation of tasks. Thus, the geographical origin of an incoming cable provides a foreign ministry's communication center with a relatively unambiguous indicator as to which bureau should be assigned the "action" copy.

The development of theory serves as another broad reason for establishing classifications. A classification entirely satisfactory for organizational requirements may have little to offer in the generation of theory. Studies of foreign policy, even those that profess some theoretical interest, have tended to rely on means of classifying policy that were originally introduced as organizational devices.

If we specify that our interest is in scientific theory, then further requirements for classification take form. Two of major significance are the identification of relationships and the establishment of measures. The categories in a classification system should relate to numerous other characteristics. Kaplan treats the categories of classification as concepts and then distinguishes between those classificatory concepts that identify many relationships (natural) and those that do not (artificial).

A significant concept so groups or divides its subject-matter that it can enter into many and important true propositions about the subject-matter other than those which state the classification itself. Traditionally, such a concept was said to identify a "natural" class rather than an "artificial" one. Its naturalness consists in this, that the attributes it chooses as the basis of classification are significantly related to the attributes conceptualized elsewhere in our thinking. Things are grouped together because they resemble one another. A natural grouping is one which allows the discovery of many more, and more important, resemblances than those originally recognized. Every classification serves some purpose or other (the class-term has a use): it is artificial when we cannot do more with it than we first intended. The purpose of scientific classification is to facilitate the fulfillment of any purpose whatever, to disclose the relationships that must be taken into account no matter what.24

One cannot insure in advance that the classification scheme he constructs will yield numerous valid relationships with other concepts or variables. Therefore the development of a scientific classification becomes an act of formulating hypotheses. "Any decision as to which classification scheme is best is itself a hypothesis, which subsequent investigations may lead us to reject." Copi continues this argument for treating scientific classifications as hypotheses by noting that the position applies to human events in social sciences: "Just as the biologist's classification scheme embodies his hypothesis as to which characteristics of living things are involved in a maximum number of causal laws, so the historian's decision to describe past events in terms of one rather than another set of properties embodies his hypothesis as to which properties are causally related to a maximum number of others."25

The treatment of classifications as hypotheses that must be tested with empirical data leads to the requirement of putting them to the most rigorous forms of measurable tests of systematic ratings, ranking the typologies, and simple quantitative measures of the effects of the objects under consideration. The reference by Lazarsfeld and others to any categories, but rather to any investigator who applies them in such a way that the same item cannot be classified in more than one way or less of when the sorting occurs or how they are operational.

In concluding this section, it should be noted that some alternative uses of classification may have little to do with the development of theory. A significant distinction between living organisms and artifacts would group bats with birds and mammals because categories in which many more theoretically important classifications have organizational utility of such a sort. Of course, such an assertion comes to phenomena we seek to explore. Theories relating climate, physical geography, and social phenomena to foreign policy are needed. Categories indicate much interest in policy topics. And those that do, like those geographical concepts.

IV. Alternative Methods of Classification

Having examined requirements for classification relevant to the development of these alternatives apply to any broad range of topics. Nominal Categories—This is the "list" method of classification. Two important types of foreign policy categories interest. These types of policy belong to a system. Although he knows that the researcher has no knowledge of political events would wish to have a system of foreign policy categories to be operational.
Theoretical Problems

Charles F. Hermann

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In concluding this section, it is well to reiterate the implications of the alternative uses of classifications. Such systems devised for organizational purposes may have little theoretical worth, and may even obstruct the development of theory. A simple organizing classification which distinguishes between living organisms that fly in air and those that swim in water would group bats with birds and whales with fish. Biologists employ another classification scheme which identifies both bats and whales as mammals because categories in the latter system appear to be associated with many more theoretically important characteristics. To return to the example of geographical bureaus in a foreign ministry, it may be that the organizational utility of such a scheme exceeds its value for theory-building. Of course, such an assertion contains little merit until we establish what phenomena we seek to explore. Geographical categories may be useful for theories relating climate, physical location, contiguity of borders, or spatial distance to foreign policy. But few political scientists who use such categories indicate much interest in theories dealing with these and related topics. And those that do, like the Sprouts, tend to employ more abstract geographical concepts.

IV. Alternative Methods of Classification

Having examined requirements, let us consider some alternative methods for classification relevant to the construction of scientific theory. Presumably these alternatives apply to any content, but we shall discuss them with special reference to foreign policy.

Nominal Categories—This approach might be labeled the "shopping list" method of classification. The researcher recognizes a number of distinctive kinds of foreign policy which he believes to have theoretical interest. These types of policy become nominal categories in the classification system. Although he knows the categories create mutually exclusive classes, the researcher has no knowledge of whether, or how, the categories relate
to one another. Moreover, he may be able to divide some or all of the categories into subcategories, but the subcategories cannot be ordered or scaled in any meaningful way. Most likely, the categories result from an inductive process during which the investigator observes a large number of policies and notes that they differ with respect to some properties.

Many classifications follow this approach. It appears satisfactory for organizational purposes and possesses an undeniable attraction for initial explorations in theory-building. For example, one might define one category for policies involving the use of military forces, another for policies that involve the exchange of nonmilitary goods, a third for meetings between diplomatic representatives, and so on. Presumably, the scholar has a hunch that such categories lead to important differences in the processes by which policies are formed, or in the impact on other countries, or some other set of variables. The categories need not be derived on the basis of accumulated observations. For instance, one might try to classify foreign policies using the zero-sum and nonzero-sum concepts from the theory of games.

Even if nominal categories are mutually exclusive, we often have no assurance that the concepts are parallel or deal with the same level of analysis. As an obvious example consider the following set of mixed-level categories: Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, the United States, and Canada. Mixed-level categories become a problem when drawing theoretical generalizations about the classificatory scheme. More important, the multiple-levels problem indicates a more basic difficulty with nominal categories; namely, we have extremely little information about the set of defining concepts. We do not know how the categories may be ordered with respect to one another. Often with ad hoc categories we do not know if they exhaust the universe of phenomena under examination unless we affix a remainder (i.e., "other") category. With more information another method of classification would likely be used. The minimal information requirement makes nominal categories good candidates for exploratory inquiries, but minimal information also makes theory development more difficult.

**Single Dimension**—This form of classification assumes that the researcher has information that will allow him to arrange all phenomena of interest at different values along a single variable. The underlying dimension provides the basis for sorting out the policies according to "more" or "less" or some other ordering principle. The variable may be discontinuous, in which case separate categories along the dimension will be discernible, or it may be continuous. A continuum might have categories or scale points for purposes of reference or organization, but they would be intrinsically no different from any other location on the dimension except for value.

Scholars concerned with the problems of war and peace have been among the users of the single-dimension method of classification. Some have classified foreign policies according to the amount of conflict or violence. In an effort to overcome the large number of policies clustered at or near the

"no conflict" end of the dimension of positive or negative affluence, policy statements. Economic form of the cost of various unit.

The single-dimension approach at least of which is the statistician's and beyond nominal categories. He can concentrate his attention on a given amount of time and not on the investigator using assets must be weighed again. Coverage plagues several measures in the single-dimension "zero" or in some neutral category. (The users of nominal definitions by adding new categories in the same basket make method given the present state of the investigator have enough information about the possible theoretical cases, single-variable formulation can be raised as to whether the policies. Often the effort to generate empirical generalizations which span dimensions.

**Multiple Dimensions**—This form of classification applies to more than one variable. If we establish classifications located on each dimension, the method is the familiar multidimensional field theory. The familiar variables represents the simplex, a point in that space located in the author illustrates such an example decision time, and surprise. 2 dimensions. Of course, cross-classifications are located on all dimensions so that distributions across each variable dimension. In addition, the dimensions. Although the concepts may seem to be highly interrelated, they become unwieldy. Even thou
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"no conflict" end of the dimension, other researchers have used the degree
of positive or negative affect (hostility-friendship) expressed in foreign
policy statements. Economics provides another potential dimension in the
form of the cost of various policies in dollars or some other monetary
unit.

The single-dimension approach offers a number of benefits, not the
least of which is the statistical advantages offered by forms of measurement
beyond nominal categories. By selection of a single dimension, the researcher
can concentrate his attention on the careful refinement of his variable. With
given amount of time and resources, he should be able to collect more data
than the investigator using numerous dimensions or categories. These
assets must be weighed against certain liabilities. The problem of adequate
coverage plagues several methods of classification, but it appears most
severe in the single-dimension approach. Some policies may cluster at
"zero" or in some neutral category; they may not even be classifiable on the
dimension. (The users of nominal categories can usually surmount this
problem by adding new categories.) The old problem of placing all one's
eggs in the same basket may be an acute difficulty for this classificatory
method given the present state of knowledge about foreign policy. Does
the investigator have enough anecdotes, analogies, and speculative hunches
about the possible theoretical significance to risk the investment in a
single-variable formulation of foreign policy. Finally, the question must
be raised as to whether the proposed dimension actually is unidimensional.
Often the effort to generate broad, comprehensive dimensions leads to
conceptualizations which constitute fragments of many different
dimensions.

Multiple Dimensions — This approach is a logical extension of the single-
dimension classification where policy is conceptualized in terms of more than
one variable. If we establish dimensions that permit every policy to be
located on each dimension, then we create the opportunity for various cross-
classifications. The familiar four-fold table involving two dichotomized
variables represents the simplest form. Cross-classification of continuous
variables produces a multidimensional space in which each policy represents
a point in that space located by its position on each dimension. Elsewhere
the author illustrates such an arrangement using the dimensions of threat,
decision time, and surprise. 28 Wright gives a dynamic quality to his multi-
dimensional field theory by tracing the movement of nations across time with
respect to a series of policies. 29

Of course, cross-classification is possible only when the same policies
are located on all dimensions. The problem of inclusiveness and adequate
distribution across each variable exists with this method as with the single
dimension. In addition, the danger of nonindependent dimensions exists.
Although the concepts may seem different to the researcher, analysis may
reveal them to be highly intercorrelated. Finally, too many dimensions can
become unwieldy. Even though computer-assisted means of data analysis
reduce the mechanical difficulty, the desire for parsimony in theoretical development remains. 30

Progressive Differentiation 31 — A fourth approach to classification, which extends the nominal category method, remains unused in political science, but has played a significant role in biology. Beginning with a broad subject like organisms or foreign policy, one divides the subject into a small number of distinct classes such that each class has a characteristic shared by all members of that class but by none in any of the other classes. Each of the classes is then subdivided using the same procedure. The dividing or branching may continue through a number of levels. Students of biology and zoology will recall that biological classification begins with the broadest category, kingdom (plant and animal), and proceeds through the increasingly differentiated categories of phylum, class, order, family, genus, and species. For example, the animal kingdom divides into the subkingdoms of Protozoa (one-celled animals) and Metazoa (many-celled animals). One of the phyla into which Metazoa are classified is Chordata which in turn contains three subphyla including Vertebrata. The vertebrate subphylum contains seven classes one of which is Mammalia and so on. Strictly for purposes of illustration an extremely tentative classification of foreign policy using this same method appears in Figure 1. The broadest heading of policy is divided into positive, neutral, and negative classes. A negative policy is hostile to the intended recipient, whereas a positive policy is friendly and a neutral policy is indifferent to the recipient. Explanations of further divisions appear below the figure.

The striking characteristic of this method of classification is not the presence of subclasses, but rather the distinctiveness of a class from those in other branches together with its commonality with all broader classes in the same branch. Since each class yields a number of statements about its similarities and differences with other classes in the system, progressive differentiation represents a significant theoretical exercise in a way not required by other approaches. As one moves down in the classification, the homogeneity of class members increases and the scope of theoretical assertions decreases. This approach also deals explicitly with the level of analysis problem by identifying one or more characteristics which differentiate each level from those above it.

Of the four methods of classification this one requires the most information about the subject. The distinctive characteristic of each class, subclass, sub-subclass, and so on, demands extensive knowledge about the properties of all elements in the system. Students of foreign policy may discover that they can conceive of numerous first divisions of policy: verbal-physical, unilateral-bilateral-multilateral, procedural-substantive, and so on. Before going very far, however, they are likely to find the necessity for more information than is available or the creation of classes that apply equally to several divisions already formed. Further, the differentiation is limited by the use of nominal scales. Some attributes do not appear as sharply defined
FOREIGN POLICY

NEGATIVE

NEUTRAL

POSITIVE

OBSTRUCT

OBJECT

INDIFFERENCE

DECLARATION

APPROVAL

SUPPORT

FORCE

THREAT

DEMON-

PROTEST

ENVIRON-

DIRECT

IMPAR-

PROCEDURE

RESPOND

VOLUN-

CHANGE

TEER

EX-

LOAN

GRANT

Figure 1. A classification of foreign policy using progressive differentiation. Note: Categories are defined in terms of the recognized intent of the initiating state and not the perceptions of the recipients or the actual effects as judged by independent observers. Items not defined below are discussed in the text: Obstruct: measures to block an objective of the recipient; Threat: obstructive actions warning of conditional future measures to block an objective of the recipient; Object: measures indicating disapproval of the objectives or actions of the recipient; Demonstrate: objections accompanied by hostile physical behavior which is not obstructive; Protest: objections involving only verbal statements of disapproval; Indifference: measures involving no discernable effects to specific political actors; Environment: indifferent actions directed at non-human environments; Non-Direct: indifferent actions addressed to unspecified or vaguely defined other actors; Declaration: measures deliberately designed neither to aid nor to hinder recipients; Impartiality: declarative actions designed to maintain neutrality by noninvolvement or by just compensation for any damages; Procedure: declarative actions considered to be devoid of any substance having a significant effect on other actor's objectives; Approval: measures affirming the desirability of other actor or its goals; Respond: approval actions elicited by sources external to the initiating state; Volunteer: approval actions that originate within the nation; Support: measures endorsing another actor or its objectives through the commitment of resources; Exchange: support actions involving trade in which resources are paid for in money or goods by the recipient; Loan: support actions for which the recipient promises to repay in the future; Grant: support actions for which no payment is required.
groups, but as a matter of degree or "shading." Although arbitrary categories can always be formed, this has the ironic effect of discarding information that would permit more sophisticated methods of measurement and analysis.

V. Research Considerations Influencing Classification

Even though we can describe the requirements and methods of classification, we cannot specify rules to ensure that a particular system will assist in the development of theory. Other factors than the desire to be theoretically significant will influence the construction of a classification. This final section interprets these factors in a manner that promotes research preferred by the author. We must emphasize that other research interests will lead to alternative choices in building a classification system. Whatever his decision, the social scientist intending to classify foreign policy must confront these issues.

Definition of Foreign Policy—By now many readers must impatiently wonder in what sense this chapter uses the concept of foreign policy. It is an important concern because no agreement exists on the meaning of foreign policy. The serious investigator must stipulate his own definition which, in turn, influences his system of classification. A review of definitions indicates the range of choice and the issues involved.

Concerned specifically with an evaluation of United States' external activities, Seabury contends: "American foreign policies comprise the totality of purposes and commitments by which the United States, through its constitutionally designated authorities, seeks by means of influence, power, and sometimes violence to deal with foreign states and problems in the international environment." Models offers a more generalized definition which reflects his interest in systems analysis. "Foreign policy is the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behavior of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment. Within it, two types of activities may be singled out for special attention: the inputs flowing into it, and the output it produces." In contrast to Models' conception of foreign policy as the product of a system's processing of inputs, Furniss and Snyder emphasize the decision-makers within the system and their selective attention to the external setting.

Decision makers must be thought of as acting upon, and responding to, factors and conditions which exist outside themselves and the governmental organization of which they are a part... Relevance will depend primarily on the attitudes and purposes of the decision makers, on the problems and threats which confront them—in short, on the perceptions and judgments of the decision makers... To have a policy means that a course of action or set of rules or both have been selected with respect to some problem, contingency, or event which has occurred, is occurring, or is expected to occur.

Finally, consider Rosenthal's policy as an undertaking. "A policy is an action that duly constituted or designed to preserve or alter a situation in a way consistent with a goal or goals of predecessors." A comparison of critical questions.

1. Who are the foreign policy decision-makers, the nation's foreign policy body? Can other than government policy makers, interest groups, etc., be actors?

2. What occasions foreign policy commitment, an input from the foreign policy makers of something that makes national goals?

3. What is the unit of analysis, a taking, or a course of action?

4. Who is to be affected by foreign policy actions in other sectors of foreign society or situation, or the community, particularly intriguing. Is it actions addressed to external or changing all or part of the group?

5. Is foreign policy more effort to deal with selected roles and unintended, that follows?

Beyond these questions lie the inquiry. Is foreign policy actually public policy? With increasing doubts about the validity of domestic and foreign policy.

Other than reaffirming the consensus of past students of the subject, that foreign policy differs from previously believed. For example, the difference between foreign policy and domestic policy depending on the nature of development, and so on. Alter is one of degree and that funda system make the distinction grounded in the emphasis asserts the commensalism this position might note that and foreign policy resulted all in the United States. As one western, industrialized democracies multiply rapidly.
Finally, consider Rosenau who defines the unit of analysis in foreign policy as an undertaking. “An undertaking is conceived to be a course of action that duly constituted officials of a national society pursue in order to preserve or alter a situation in the international system in such a way that is consistent with a goal or goals decided upon by them or their predecessors.” A comparison of these definitions raises a number of critical questions.

1. Who are the foreign policy actors? Are they constitutionally designated authorities; the national community, the decision makers, or somebody else? Can other than the constituted officials, for example, elites, interest groups, etc., be actors in foreign policy?

2. What occasions foreign policy? Is it the fulfillment of a previous commitment, an input from the external system, the perception by decision makers of something that may or may not exist, or the achievement of national goals?

3. What is the unit of analysis? Is it an output of the system, an undertaking, or a course of action together with rules for action?

4. Who is to be affected by foreign policy? Can it be foreign states, other sectors of foreign societies, the international environment, a problem or situation, or the community initiating the policy? (The latter option is particularly intriguing. Is it appropriate to designate as foreign policies actions addressed to external actors but initiated solely for the purpose of changing all or part of the government’s own society?)

5. Is foreign policy more than intended effect? Is foreign policy the effort to deal with selected recipients or the actual results, both intended and unintended, that follow from action?

Beyond these questions lies another—perhaps even more fundamental—inquiry. Is foreign policy actually different from other kinds of domestic or public policy? With increasing frequency scholars have given voice to their doubts about the validity of the long proclaimed distinction between domestic and foreign policy.

Other than reaffirming the uniqueness of foreign policy in the tradition of past students of the subject, several positions are possible. One can argue that foreign policy differs from domestic policy, but not in the ways we previously believed. For example, the specific property that accounts for the difference between foreign and domestic policy may vary from nation to nation depending on the nature of the political system, the level of economic development, and so on. Alternatively, one can contend that the difference is one of degree and that fundamental changes in nations or the international system make the distinction greater or smaller. Of course, the null difference position asserts the commonality of the two kinds of policy. An advocate of this position might note that in the past the distinction between domestic and foreign policy resulted almost exclusively from observations of policy in the United States. As one enlarges the study of foreign policy beyond western, industrialized democracies, the exceptions to the observed differences multiply rapidly.
This chapter rests on the premise that it is theoretically useful to distinguish foreign from domestic policy. In part this decision is based on the apparent inadequacy of current classifications of other kinds of public policy for foreign affairs. In part it is based on the subject matter of interest to the author and which he seeks to understand. Several caveats with respect to this position must be noted. Certainly the similarity or difference between foreign and other policies depends upon the properties to be examined and the level of generality of the constructs. Furthermore, with reference to a given property or set of properties, the final determination of difference depends upon empirical investigation.

In response to the other questions about the nature of foreign policy, the following definition is offered: Foreign policy consists of those discrete official actions of the authoritative decision makers of a nation's government, or their agents, which are intended by the decision makers to influence the behavior of international actors external to their own polity. The recipient international actors are individuals acting on their own behalf or as decision makers or as agents for organizations (governmental or private) including the governments of other nations. Foreign policy results from the decision makers' perceptions of present or expected problems in the relationships between a nation and its international environment (both human and nonhuman) including the consequences of the initiating state's own prior actions.

This definition contains a number of implications for the five questions raised earlier. A bias toward the decision-making and problem-solving approaches appears throughout the definition. All actors are individuals although only the authoritative decision makers of a nation (the state) initiate foreign policies. Certainly actors other than states act directly in international affairs, but the contention is that their behavior should be sharply distinguished from state behavior. Although the perceived consequences of state behavior serve as feedback, the distinctions noted by the Sprouts are maintained as critical (see footnote 2); therefore, foreign policy actions concern the intended influence, not the actual effect. The choices in the definition reflect judgments (perhaps "hunches" would be less presumptuous) about theoretical significance and about the practical problems related to empirical research. Because this definition is proposed for a particular kind of research rather than as a reference point for all those who study foreign policy, we need not review it here point by point. Consideration of one feature, however, will illustrate the interplay between the definition of foreign policy and classification.

Policy as Discrete Actions—We contend research on foreign policy is needed that treats policy as an operational concept on which empirical data can be gathered for all nation-states. This means that the unit of analysis must be defined so that it can be reliably identified by any careful analyst and that it occurs with sufficient frequency to permit statistical analysis. Therefore, we want cross-national foreign policy data which are publically accessible for all nations. This should be sufficiently limited so that for each nation incorporating a policy data is collected for each year. (More will be said about the nature of that initially our classification of actions (e.g., the announcement of a policy or the breaking of diplomatic relations) are frequently associated with the commencement of a new regime in power, or the totality of undesired political system. In short, we recognize the discrete action as an analysis.

A number of problems arise from the definition of actions. An argument against the definition is lost by consideration of an isolated discrete sequence of events of which it is a part. Although some individual discrete acts into sequenced sets of actions, lumping the acts into larger units of analysis are separated by the decision maker into sets of acts only when they involve some resources between international states.

In all likelihood the application of this problem is the separation of wars and other states. Does one count as a single act when it is one of several acts by one state or each individual session or a separation of acts by different states? The contentions of this paper are based on the assumption that any state's behavior can be separated into its components, but this difficulty. Possibilities for more closely related to constructing guidelines and research into this matter. In both cases, the results of this study have implications for the formulation of international relations policies and the theoretical and methodological development of research into international relations.
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Charles F. Hermann

publicly accessible for all nations. Moreover, the basic unit of analysis
should be sufficiently limited so that we can construct a profile or distribution
for each nation incorporating a period of time not much in access of one
year. (More will be said about this point below.) These requirements suggest
that initially our classification should deal with discrete foreign policy
actions (e.g., the announcement of a trade agreement, an official state visit,
or the breaking of diplomatic relations) rather than broader formulations
frequently associated with the concept of policy (e.g., all actions designed
to obtain a Middle East settlement, the various efforts to maintain a friendly
regime in power, or the totality of measures to prevent the expansion of an
undesired political system). In short, our definition of foreign policy should
recognize the discrete action as the fundamental building block or unit of
analysis.

A number of problems arise from the use of discrete foreign policy
actions. An argument against this choice maintains that most meaning is
lost by consideration of an isolated act separate from the context and se-
quence of events of which it is a part. Without doubt this argument contains
substantial merit. Although some nuances may be lost, one would hope to
assemble discrete acts into sequences or larger groupings (moving up in
progressive differentiation classification, for example). It is easier to
assemble discrete actions into alternative broader clusters than to de-
compose a larger unit of analysis; unless, of course, all the individual acts
are separately recorded in the larger unit, in which case one actually is
beginning with discrete actions.

Although the concept of action has received considerable attention, it
cannot be accepted as a primitive, undefined term. A practical aspect of
this problem is the separation of acts or the level at which acts are defined.
Does one count as a single action the entire Paris Peace talks on Vietnam
or each individual session or each point at a given session? It will be nec-
essary to construct guidelines based on some criteria of relevancy to cope
with this difficulty. Possibilities include the exclusion of redundant acts
involved in administering the same decision, or alternatively, the inclusion
of acts only when they involve some redistribution of human or nonhuman
resources between international actors.

In all likelihood the application of these or comparable criteria still
will yield extremely large numbers of foreign policy actions. From the
perspective of statistical analysis the quantity is desirable, but beyond some
point the task of recording actions may become unmanageable. Systematic
sampling procedures could be used to limit the problem. Sampling pro-
cedures also provide a means of coping with the overreporting of actions for
some states. Most American sources of foreign policy report actions of
the United States more completely than they do for other countries. In general,
closed societies and less developed countries receive less attention regardless
of the source. Use of supplemental regional sources and national newspapers
may provide some assistance, particularly in establishing baselines for states
underreported in more general materials. With baselines established, nations for which actions are less frequently reported in the basic sources can be oversampled. Not only types of nations, but also certain kinds of actions are underreported. We can speculate about the kinds of actions that appear less regularly in public sources—intelligence-gathering activities, sensitive political negotiations, and so on—but we cannot reliably ascertain their frequency of occurrence. This problem remains a significant one in constructing profiles of a nation’s foreign policy actions.

Profiles of Foreign Policy Actions—The previous references to profiles or distributions of foreign policy actions introduce a basic purpose of the research envisioned in this chapter. The researcher records the frequency of occurrence of every kind of policy in the selected classification scheme using a systematic sample of all foreign policy actions initiated by a state in a given period of time. He forms additional profiles for the nation using different time periods. For example, he might construct frequency distributions for the Soviet Union at five-year intervals since the end of World War II—1945, 1950, 1955, 1960, 1965. Alternatively he might elect to examine profiles for consecutive years. Similar profiles using the same classificatory scheme and time periods would be prepared for other states. With data collected and classified in this manner, the investigator could answer questions like the following:

1. What does the configuration or profile of a given state’s foreign policy actions look like? For a given state and time period are some kinds of actions initiated far more frequently than others?

2. How does the profile of a given state vary through time? Does a given state’s frequency distribution change gradually over a number of years or does it shift abruptly?

3. How do the profiles of different states compare? What states appear to have approximately equivalent kinds and distributions of foreign policy behaviors and which states contrast sharply with one another? What states experience parallel changes in their distributions?

4. What is the combined configuration of foreign policy actions for all states in the international system at a given time? Does this over-all pattern change across time? What is the profile for different blocs or alliances?

These are essentially descriptive questions. They provide the bases, however, for a major theoretical undertaking which begins with the inquiry “why”? Why do states A, B, and C experience frequent and sudden changes in their dominant kinds of foreign policy action? Why do seemingly dissimilar states E, J, and Q have similar patterns of foreign policy? Some may protest that this highly inductive approach to theory building is less likely to be successful than a formal mathematical model that establishes relationships between a small set of constructs from which one derives propositions that can be tested against reality. As a rejoinder one might observe that a descriptive phase—mapping the terrain of a subject area—provides a necessary first step through which almost every field of science has passed.

In addition one should note that the skills and temperament of

The character of the proposed method of classification to be used in the study, the single dimension approach, focus. We want to canvas the range of quality of action. The exploratory, nominal categories. If we are concerned with unrelated substantive attributes to be the best we can do. However, with nominal categories, it seems as a minimum fallback position. For cross-classification and contribution certain advantages. Since the accumulation of distinguished differentiation method have significant information for progress could be collapsed into a nominal for the research discussed in this alternative classifications, each classification might use multiple differentiation.

The critical point remains that we have not gathered data on pos-sificatory systems and the collection and first step, not for the purpose of coloca- a “pigeon hole” for all possible parative theory about foreign policy. testing of relationships selected for explanations for the profiles of
Theoretical Problems

Charles F. Hermann

In addition one should note that the inductive-deductive choice reflects the skills and temperament of the investigator. 39

The character of the proposed research contains implications for the method of classification to be used. Given the survey quality of the needed study, the single dimension approach offers a system with too narrow a focus. We want to canvass the range of actions not one particular kind or quality of action. The exploratory nature of the research invites the use of nominal categories. If we are dealing with a wide variety of seemingly unrelated substantive attributes of foreign policy action, that method may be the best we can do. However, given the restrictions on theory building with nominal categories, it seems desirable to hold the approach in reserve as a minimum fallback position. Its ordering properties and the possibilities for cross-classification and correlation give the multiple dimension approach certain advantages. Similarly the clear delimitation of levels and the accumulation of distinguishing characteristics in the progressive differentiation method have significant value in theory building. Should the needed information for progressive differentiation prove too difficult, it could be collapsed into a nominal categories approach. An initial strategy for the research discussed in this section might involve the use of several alternative classifications, each offsetting the weaknesses of the other. One classification might use multiple dimensions and another progressive differentiation.

The critical point remains that we now have no adequate classification of the kinds of foreign policy actions pursued by various states. Accordingly, we have not gathered data on policy actions. The development of such classificatory systems and the collection of data on policy remains an essential first step, not for the purpose of organizing the array of actions (viz., finding a "pigeon hole" for all possible actions), but for the construction of comparative theory about foreign policy. This step must be followed by the testing of relationships selected to investigate the hypotheses advanced as explanations for the profiles of foreign policy actions.
Notes and References

1 In addition to the Sprouts, a number of individuals influenced the ideas expressed in this chapter. These include my former colleague, Harry Eckstein, the graduate students who participated in my seminar on the comparative study of foreign policy (particularly Norman Frohlich, Edward Morse, and Stephen Salmore), and my associates in the project on the politics of adaptation headed by James N. Rosenau. Upon completing this manuscript, I received a copy of David H. Blake’s “The Identification of Foreign Policy: A Neglected But Necessary Task” (Midwest Political Science Association, Ann Arbor, Michigan, April 24–26, 1969). Although it came too late to be commented upon in the body of this chapter, Blake’s paper constitutes an important companion to the present work.


8 For example, see John W. Spanier, American Foreign Policy Since World War II (New York: Praeger, 3rd edition 1966).


For example, see John W. Spanier, American Foreign Policy Since World War II (New York: Praeger, 3rd edition 1968).


Rudolph J. Rummel treats conflict as an action property, but his unit depends upon the interaction of two or more parties and, therefore, has significant limitations as a foreign policy category. See his “The Relationship Between National Attributes and Foreign Conflict Behavior” in J. David Singer (ed.), Quantitative International Politics (New York: Free Press, 1968), pp. 187–214.


15In a preliminary classification of goals, the Sprouts organized them under three broad headings: (1) promoting the national entity; (2) promoting subunits within the nation; and (3) promoting goals pertaining to areas or entities external to the nation. The Sprouts further reflection on national goals is in their forthcoming text, Toward a Politics of the Planet Earth, to be published by Van Nostrand Reinhold.


21James N. Rosenau, “Pre-theories and Theories of Foreign Policy” in R. Barry Farrell (ed.), Approaches to Comparative


23Although most foreign ministries have some functional sections—administration, legal services, and public-press relations—geographical divisions dominate the arrangement in most countries. The Soviet Union makes use of geographical bureaus in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but a more basic division occurs between sections handling affairs with communist party states as opposed to those dealing with non-party states. See Jan F. Triska and David D. Finley, Soviet Foreign Policy (New York: MacMillan, 1968), pp. 35–38.

24Abraham Kaplan, The Conduct of Inquiry (San Francisco: Chandler, 1964), pp. 50–51. The terms “natural” and “artificial” are frequently used in discussions of classifications, but they can be misleading if one assumes that “natural” refers to systems that have an existence in nature independent of the observer. See A. Broadfield, The Philosophy of Classification (London: Grafton, 1946).


27My thinking on this subject has been influenced considerably by Harry Eckstein. I have adapted one of his conceptions of alternate methods of classification; and although we might differ on the evaluations, I am indebted to him for aspects of the other three.


30Emphasis on parsimony, however, is not always justified. Other things being equal, a classificatory system with the fewest categories to cover the largest number of observations and relationships is to be desired over a classification with many categories. But in classification, as in theories, premature insistence on parsimony may substantially limit the utility of the system. Furthermore, “categorizing a given population into a few types or subtypes may reduce validity if the variance within single categories or types is thereby unduly increased.” Edward A. Tiryokian, “Typologies,” International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 16 (New York: Macmillan-Free Press, 1968), p. 178.

31The term is Harry Eckstein’s. In his graduate seminar on comparative politics, where he develops alternative methods of classification, Eckstein compares “progressive differentiation” with “progressive generalization.” The latter method reverses the former by beginning with the smallest or most homogeneous class and by becoming more inclusive at each subsequent level. A somewhat similar discussion of classification as alternative processes of subdivision or accumulation appears in Baruch A. Brody, “Glossary of Logical Terms,” The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 5 (New York: Macmillan-Free Press, 1967), p. 60.


38Of course, the selection and organizing of a classification system is a subjective process that involves value judgments. 

39Charles F. Hermann
Theoretical Problems

Charles F. Hermann

Policy (Chicago: Markham, 1968), p. 222.


40Of course, the selection and organization of the time units depends upon the research design. Most likely, time periods will be chosen to permit the investigation of some prior hypotheses about variables expected to affect the distribution of foreign policy actions. For example, time periods might be selected to determine the influence of changes in a country's regime, shifts in the level of international tension, or the configuration of the international system.

41A pair of barnyard analogies, which the author somewhat reluctantly attributes to a conversation with Harold Sprout, remarks us of the pitfalls present in excessive use of either approach. On the one hand, the excessive user of the inductive approach can be likened to the foolish farmer who piles manure higher and higher in the hopes that this action alone will cause a rose to spring forth. On the other hand, the excessive use of the deductive approach can be likened to the inefficient farmer who seeks to feed the sparrows by feeding the cows.