

## The Comparative Study of Foreign Policy: Perspectives on the Future

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As a field of scholarly inquiry, the comparative study of foreign policy is approximately 20 years old. This essay represents a collective assessment of the field. Its authors engage in an effort to interpret the field's boundaries, review its accomplishments and difficulties, and propose some possible directions for the future.

**Boundaries.** In the effort to discover the sources of foreign policy, scholars search for explanations across a startling range of variables. The shifting nature of the world of foreign policy, particularly the increasing interdependence among actors, complicates the task of constructing explanations even as some of the old structures and processes requiring interpretation remain no less difficult to explain. Despite this continually changing set of relationships, the boundaries of the scholarly field seem relatively fixed. The field's central focus is on the policies and actions of national governments that are oriented toward the external world. Scholars in the field examine this domain of inquiry using the comparative method (either cross-nationally or by observing a single nation under different conditions). This entails the development of falsifiable generalizations and explanatory theory that can be subjected to empirical investigation through the systematic comparison of similar features (variables).

**Accomplishments.** From a review of work of researchers in the field over roughly two decades, a number of advances and developments emerge. Among these are the elaboration and refinement of the core concept of foreign policy and behavior (including the articulation of its dimensionality), the development of measures for a number of variables, and the collection of substantial data bases in some areas (e.g., events data and national attributes). Multiple sources of foreign policy have been examined as possible explanations and numerous hypotheses have been advanced. Scholars increasingly recognize the need to stipulate the context for hypotheses and theories and to be more diversified in the use of units of analysis.

Methodological innovations for comparative research have been widespread in the field.

**Problems.** Nevertheless, serious problems characterize the field. Among these are the recurrent introduction of typologies lacking theoretical import. An excessive dependence on aggregate data of national attributes and events appear to constrain new research initiatives. The conceptualization of the field also may have made the introduction of dynamic processes difficult. Furthermore, substantial findings in the field seem to be framed primarily in terms of ad hoc hypotheses.

**New Initiatives.** Various new initiatives may produce innovations and substantive advances. Possibilities include drawing upon developments in international political economy. The incorporation of some major political economy variables and the creative borrowing of that field's theoretical work on the role of the state in political economy offer specific possibilities. It may also be worthwhile to consider alternatives to a monadic state-centered focus by introducing more interpretations based on dyadic, triadic, or systemic relationships and interactions. Finally, it may be productive to consider complementing event based approaches with other temporal units of foreign policy. Ways of conceptualizing and measuring long-term trends or cycles in foreign policy would enable the comparative foreign policy researcher to pose and explore different kinds of questions.

**Thinking Theoretically.** None of these initiatives enable us to confront the field's seemingly most difficult problem--its relatively impoverished state of theory development. Although no one can offer a method for insuring the production of theory, the essay concludes with some modest strategies that may encourage scholars to think theoretically.

### COMPARATIVE FOREIGN POLICY AS A FIELD

**Scope.** Those who study foreign policy are venturesome scholars. They dare to seek comprehension

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across an extraordinary array of human phenomena. From the calculations of officials to the demands of publics, from the norms of culture to the limits of geography, from the conflicts of bureaucratic agencies to the pressures of recalcitrant allies, from the careful mobilization of resources to the selective application of force, from the behavior of small groups to the dynamics of large collectivities, students of foreign policy seek to fit together the pieces of endlessly challenging puzzles. The whole gamut of human experience falls within their purview. To construct a comprehensive theory of foreign policy, no facet can be ignored or easily held constant. Those who study foreign policy must concern themselves with politics at every level. It is in some profound sense a discipline without boundaries in the search for the sources and effects of foreign policy. Whatever may bear upon the activities of a state abroad is grist for the mill, whether it be the productivity of farm lands, the propensities of new generations, the perplexities of science, or any of the myriad resources, processes, and institutions through which collectivities cohere and cope.

The boundless scope of the field can be seen through the multiple meanings and explanations that underlie even the simplest of foreign policy actions. Consider the announcement of a chief-of-state that he or she will be traveling abroad. A wide range of causal layers can be peeled off to lay bare the sources of such an event. It reflects the decision of an individual, the deliberations of a committee, the outcome of a policy-making process, the sum of clashing interest groups, the values of a dominant elite, the product of a society's aspirations, the reinforcement of a historical tradition, the response to an opportunity or challenge elsewhere in the world -- to mention only a few of the explanatory layers that students of foreign policy must consider.

To all of these complexities must be added the historical dimension. In earlier centuries when change was slower and societies less complex, foreign policy could be -- and was -- the sport of kings. Heads of states were not restrained by active publics, constrained by large bureaucracies, or dependent on elaborate socioeconomic processes. They could act with relative autonomy, and the explanation for their actions could be found in the perceptual and experiential dynamics of individual behavior rather than in multiple layers of causation. In the waning years of the millenium, however, new technologies have greatly reduced social and geographical distances. Today the sport of kings has become the deadly serious business of everyone's life.

As the world has become ever more interdependent, so has the study of foreign policy become ever more challenging and complex. With the growing overlap of groups and nations, the sources and consequences of foreign policy have become inextricably woven into patterns of interdependence. Those who study the subject have had to expand their horizons, enlarge their kit of analytic tools,

and probe for meaning in heretofore unexplored areas of social, economic, and political life.

As the pace of interdependence has quickened, students of foreign policy have had to reevaluate research paradigms. Perhaps the most challenging consequence is the continuing erosion of the distinction between domestic and foreign issues, between the sociopolitical and economic processes that unfold at home and those that transpire abroad. Although it is unclear that this distinction could ever be drawn with much clarity (though many a study in the past purported to do so), the dividing line between internal and external issues has been greatly obfuscated, possibly even erased, by the advent of issues and dynamics that are global in scope. Consider, for example, the large extent to which domestic economies and the politics to which they give rise are conditioned and shaped by the international political economy. It is no longer meaningful to speak of rates of inflation, interest, employment, or currency exchanges as matters of domestic economic policy exclusively. The levels of such rates at any moment in time are as much a response to developments abroad as they are to governmental practices at home. The same is true for labor, immigration, capital investment, reindustrialization, agricultural, and pollution policies, not to mention those pertaining to the utilization of outer space, and terrorism. Each of these issues, some old, others new, have wide internal consequences within countries even though they also unfold on a transnational scale. The jurisdiction of national governments is increasingly out of phase with the problems for which they are held responsible, and this discrepancy renders domestic and foreign policies inextricably intertwined.

An equally important consequence of a more interdependent world is the increasing relevance of economics to the conduct of foreign policy. Issues of economic productivity and distribution are elevated from low on the global agenda to the realm of high politics with the advent of nuclear stalemate, the interaction of alternative national economic systems and the emergence of Third World demands for a greater share of the world's wealth under conditions of scarcity. This shift has required a corresponding expansion of the skills and concerns of foreign policy analysts.

The growing importance of political economy issues has a spillover effect on the role of the state. Its limits, scope, and autonomy emerge as major considerations for the conduct of foreign affairs. This development presents a new challenge for students of foreign policy. For several decades the state has not been treated as a substantive concept. Instead it has been equated with the actions of governmental decision makers. This means that important questions concerning its role, competence, and autonomy have been bypassed. For better or worse, this is no longer tenable. If foreign policy analysts are to engage analysts concerned

with issues of political economy, the state concept and its utility will have to be re-examined.

Interdependence produced a reevaluation of research paradigms, research questions, and research agendas. This both enriched the field and posed difficulties for it. While tackling the new, researchers must be careful to avoid becoming so preoccupied that important old questions are ignored. Though recent decades have witnessed much progress in the study of foreign policy, longstanding theoretical, methodological, and epistemological challenges still exist. Analysts dedicated to uncovering the dynamics of state behavior in world politics must still trace the decisional processes through which foreign policies are framed, measure their direction and intensity, and conceptualize the interplay of forces that impinge upon those who make the policy decisions.

**Boundaries.** To say that foreign policy is complex and that its analysis is complicated does not imply that it is neither a discipline nor that it lacks focus. The central focus of the field is on the policies and actions of national governments oriented toward the external world outside their own political jurisdictions. This focus entails the search for explanatory sources of foreign policy and action and for their effects or consequences. The field's commitment to the comparative method creates a quite distinctive orientation. The comparative method is interpreted to entail either cross-national comparisons or the less common practice of examining one nation through time to determine the effects of observed changes in key variables. In either case the researcher engages in the systematic comparison of similar features in the entity(ies) studied. The comparative foreign policy (CFP) researcher also views the comparative method as a mode of scientific inquiry. Thus a shared task is the development of falsifiable generalizations and explanatory theory and subjecting them to empirical investigation through systematic comparison.

But even as the definition serves to establish boundaries for the field, so does it subsume sequences of behavior that analysts have not typically viewed as expressive of foreign policy. Three are noteworthy. One involves the interaction sequences that are a consequence of a government's actions abroad. These sequences are, by the above definition, integral to the field. Consider the impacts abroad of Government A's foreign policies. They are covered by our definition when they feed back to A to become the sources for what A does at subsequent points in time. Such feedback loops have long been considered the standard action-reaction sequences of international politics. Because foreign policy analysts tend to confine their inquiries to policies as outputs, they tend to ignore the dynamics of interaction through time, making their studies largely static. The incorporation of feedback loops within the domain of comparative foreign policy does not, as some might think, confuse or otherwise erase the important distinctions between the fields of international politics and

foreign policy. The two domains of inquiry are separable not on the basis of feedback loops but rather in terms of the questions asked and the selected unit of analysis. The study of foreign policy concentrates on the perspective of an actor enmeshed in the feedback process. When the feedback process and the multiple actors it connects becomes the prime concern, the study belongs to the international relations arena.

In much the same way, the definition includes approaches that "black box" governmental decision-making processes. These studies are based on the assumption that in response to stimuli, governments either act rationally or without their structures and processes contributing much to the nation's response. Because many comparative foreign policy specialists believe that their field is delineated by the dynamics that occur within the box, inclusion of approaches that ignore such elements may seem unorthodox. To ignore decision processes, they would argue, is to forego a chance to account for much of the variance in foreign policy behavior. The propensity to black box decision processes is why neither the comparativists nor the international systems theorists consider, for example, arms races as appropriate foci for foreign policy analysis. Yet decisions on arms expenditures, whether studied from the perspective of the decision process (inside the black box) or as a function of inputs (e.g., threats) from another nation, are clearly a legitimate problem for foreign policy analysts. When the focus becomes the total set of interactions between two or more arming nations, then we move from the foreign policy domain into the international relations domain. Given this perspective, it is intriguing to note that most of the empirical analyses of the Richardson arms race equations represent studies of foreign policy rather than studies of international politics.

Finally, but by no means least, our formulation jettisons what has long been an artificial, misleading, and counterproductive distinction between foreign and military/security policies (McGowan and Kegley, 1980). Military policies are framed and implemented in the context of a state's foreign policy. They are a form of external behavior and require strategic calculations as to how the policy targets will respond to various inducements and/or punishments. They depend on effective intelligence, adequate information, sound selection among policy choices, and a keen awareness of possible consequences. Military/security policy is in all respects one type of foreign policy. Although the maintenance and implementation of military policies involve special know-how with respect to weapons systems-- manpower mobilization, hardware procurement, etc.-- which may not be of crucial concern to some foreign policy analysts, these essentially technical aspects should not be used to obscure the underlying commonalities of foreign and defense policy studies. By locating these two foci under the same

conceptual roof, our formulation allows for greater clarity by making evident that the use or threat of force in world affairs is but one tool in the armory of statecraft.

#### THE DISTANCE WE HAVE TRAVELED

The advent of the comparative foreign policy (CFP) field can be traced to the emergence of a scientific consciousness and the need to extend the study of foreign policy beyond idiographic accounts of such activity and policy prescriptions (Rosenau, Burgess, and Hermann, 1973). The publication of Rosenau's (1966) "pre-theory" essay suggested how foreign policy might be studied comparatively and encouraged a large number of scholars to pursue the research agenda advocated therein. Thus, the "science" of CFP encompasses less than a quarter century of activity. During that period, CFP researchers made substantial progress both theoretically and empirically. A field that was once data-poor now has substantial data resources in certain areas; vague and imprecise concepts have been replaced by operationalized ones; statistical analyses and their interpretation are far more sophisticated; and there is consensus on why and how hypotheses should be tested (Rosenau, 1975 and 1984). It is possible to list a number of ways in which the field has grown and developed:

**Concept Development.** The dependent variable (behavior and policy) has been specified. Different ways in which foreign policy might be conceptualized and measured have been delineated. (Callahan, Brady, and M. Hermann, 1982.) Types of foreign policy have been empirically distinguished. The theorist now comes armed with a rich set of concepts to analyze the foreign behavior of states.

**Measurement.** Indicators of a wide variety of independent and dependent variables have been developed providing a greater validity for major concepts basic to theory-building.

**Data Bases.** The event data research movement is both a product of and a contributor towards CFP research. This significant symbiotic relationship (Kegley, et al., 1975) has produced creative, broad-based data sets that provide options for measuring specific kinds of external behavior (e.g., trade, foreign assistance, diplomatic representation) within general or particular arenas (e.g., U.N. voting, votes in various international organizations, etc.) and thus make possible the empirical analysis of basic hypotheses about the foreign policy behavior of states.

**Hypothesis Generation.** The data collected on the behavior of nations and the sources that influence those behaviors produced a need for interpretation, leading to the development of novel hypotheses. Bivariate and multivariate relationships have been proposed and analyzed by numerous scholars employing multiple methods resulting in a variety of new insights.

**Contextualization of Theories and Hypotheses.** Though initial arguments and hypotheses were largely bivariate, current research activity escapes this narrow logic. Researchers today explore the conditions under which relationships hold and distinguish circumstances that allow relationships to stabilize from those in which they are modified. Intervening variables have become a major component of current theorizing, with considerable effort now devoted to a more rigorous specification of relationships. The inclination to think in monocausal terms has been replaced by more sophisticated arguments. The search for nomothetic knowledge about foreign policy behavior remains a principal concern, but the attempt to find concepts that are not bound by time or place has been replaced by an awareness of the importance of context and detail. Studies today attempt to capture complexity while seeking simplicity and parsimony.

**Aggregation vs. the Use of Case Studies.** The search for the sources of the foreign actions of nations has been enhanced by an increasing understanding of the appropriate use of the case study. The field has rediscovered how case analysis, given proper controls built into the analytic design (Erikson, 1970), can be used to study and test hypotheses about foreign policy behavior. George's (1979) advocacy of "focused comparison" and Russett's (1970) advice regarding the treatment of "deviant cases" in comparative analysis provided a basis that has allowed CFP to transcend the barriers imposed by cross-national comparisons (i.e., "large N" studies). Tilly's (1984) proposal of comparative strategies has also helped the field resist the temptation to employ macro-quantitative data reduction techniques such as factor analysis, which Tilly (1984:116) sarcastically called the "Great Blender" approach.

**Multiple Sources of Foreign Policy.** The so-called "billiard ball model" of foreign policy causation is largely discredited. Researchers are now aware of the need to look inside "the ball." The question "What causes a state to act the way it does?" is no longer answered by the reference to exclusively external factors. Interdependence has made it necessary to consider both internal and external factors when studying foreign policy behaviors, and to consider how intervening factors alter relationships.

**Dimensionality of Foreign Policy.** Research to date makes possible the differentiation of types of foreign policy activity. This more sophisticated understanding of the dimensionality of foreign policy behavior has led to the replacement of the monolithic variable of "foreign policy" by a set of differentiated variables, making possible analyses of different types of foreign policy behavior (Rosenau, 1984: 252). This has led to more replications and the beginning of convergence across investigations (Kegley, Salmore, and Rosen, 1974).

**Unit of Analysis.** Although the state-centric approach is still important in the comparative study of

foreign policy, the disadvantages of treating the state as the primary or sole unit of analysis are now known. There is an awareness of the potential value of taking into account non-state participants and of disaggregating the "black box" of the state to treat the actions of governments as products of the actions of different sets of foreign and domestic actors. Scholars recognize the need to consider monadic, dyadic, and triadic conceptions of foreign policy (East and Winters, 1976; Kegley and Skinner, 1976; Richardson, 1985).

This summary of the growth of knowledge in the comparative study of foreign policy over the past two decades is neither exhaustive nor definitive. But it does illustrate that the field has been marked by steady progress in the Lakatosian (Lakatos, 1970) sense of a research program. We believe that this is a basis for optimism about the future of the field.

#### PROBLEMS OF CFP RESEARCH: METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

To say that we have come a long way, however, is not to argue that we have arrived. Almost as soon as scholars gained a sense of self-consciousness about the field in the late 1960s, they began to engage in the practice of self-criticism. The concern about the adequacy of the research direction and its products, and the tendency to engage in critiques of methods, frameworks, and data remain a hallmark of the field. To self-criticism is added the voices of others outside the field who bring to their diagnosis greater detachment. An accurate evaluation of the field requires careful attention to these criticisms (for examples, see Ashley, 1976; Faurby, 1976; Munton, 1976; Smith, 1979, 1983, 1986). Some of the major concerns can be summarized as follows:

**Overemphasis on Typologies.** Earlier attempts to bring order to the study of foreign policy resulted in list making. Possible sources of foreign policy constitute a favorite subject for constructing lists. From the introductory chapter of Macridis' popular text to the more recent efforts of Jensen (1982); from the critical decision-making framework of Snyder, et al. (1954) to Brecher's (1972) systemic formulation, the field has devised ways to group and sort elements. The need to classify foreign policy also has been recognized for some time (Kegley, 1973). In addition, repeated efforts have been made to classify issue areas (Potter, 1980) and foreign policy actions (Hermann, 1972). The field is rich in typologies.

Typologies can be an important step for theory construction provided the classification generates surplus information. By grouping variables that share properties and relationships, new ideas can emerge. But if a classification only generates information about its defining characteristics, then its utility is limited to organizing or

"pigeon-holing" information -- not theory building. Sadly, numerous typologies in the comparative study of foreign policy appear limited to this organizing task. Some critics charge that CFP researchers have substituted endless organizing typologies for theory construction.

**Data Dependencies.** As noted above, the emergence of the field of CFP is closely tied to the development of major data sets -- aggregate data on national attributes and events data. The happy co-occurrence of these data sets together with the call for more cross-national, empirically-based, tests of hypotheses about foreign policy (Rosenau, 1966), produced an initial burst of enthusiasm and numerous studies (Rosenau, 1974). Both kinds of data, however, carry dependencies and liabilities. These have become increasingly evident to users and critics alike. National attribute data were too susceptible to correlation, regression and factor analysis, enabling researchers to ignore the need for careful thought about underlying explanations. "Barefoot empiricism" by itself revealed relatively few strong relationships. In addition, despite the fact that the typological efforts suggested the need for a broad and diverse set of explanatory factors in foreign policy, CFP limited its study to those variables that had been measured in the existing data sets. CFP researchers became captive of data sets that in many instances were collected or compiled by comparativists and others outside the field of foreign policy. They used what they found -- aggregate data on national attributes -- rather than collect data on variables suggested by their own typologies. It is not surprising, then, that Wilkenfeld and his associates (1980), attempting to construct a multi-level explanatory model of foreign policy, could not find adequate data for many key variables.

While CFP researchers did not collect attribute data, they did devote considerable energy to the collection and refinement of events data. Events data methodology became a major focus of attention, and a sizeable literature emerged on issues of reliability and validity. Data sources were discovered to have strikingly different coverages of actors and events and their accounts differed in interpretation and detail (e.g., Howell, 1983). Different event data collections covering the same actors and time periods did not correspond due to different definitions of what constituted an event. Conclusions concerning methodological issues were not encouraging, leaving in doubt the significance and meaning of analysis based on them.

Perhaps most discouraging is that the experience with, and knowledge about, event data collection has not, by and large, led to efforts to correct difficulties. Collection continues on several major events data sets, but the conceptualization and methodology are frozen in the late 1960s. The literature suggests how we might be wiser, yet event coding still depends heavily on the grammatical structure of the data source (i.e., the sentence subject is the actor, the action verb is the type of behavior, the direct object is the recipient). Although alternative

conceptualizations exist and computer techniques for handling and analyzing large quantities of textual material have improved enormously, current collection efforts remain unchanged.

**Constraints of Ad Hoc Hypotheses.** To a large extent CFP knowledge is correlational and in the form of discrete hypotheses. Most are bivariate hypotheses that link some source variable to a form of foreign policy behavior, typically conflict behavior. These efforts have, in some instances, led to a set of empirical generalizations -- the importance of a nation's size in differentiating the volume of foreign policy behavior; the tendency for crisis decisionmaking to be concentrated in a small group of high level officials; the prevalence of "maintenance" or "participation" activities among a government's foreign policy actions; the consistent absence of an unmediated relationship between internal conflict and foreign conflict; the distinctions between dyadic behaviors and those addressed to multiple recipients. (Findings such as these are summarized by McGowan and Shapiro (1973) in their inventory of scientific findings.) The quantity and quality of these findings, however, are disappointing when evaluated against earlier promises. The expectations were that rigorous methodological techniques and an explicitly comparative design would yield reliable, important, and comprehensive information about foreign policy phenomena. The findings are largely at low levels of description and often provide no context or frame of reference. (Thus, no answer is offered to the question: Within what epoch, system, or other parameters would one expect this relationship to hold?) The majority of the empirical research remains at the level of what Zinnes (1976) called "ad hoc hypothesis testing."

**Static Conceptualization.** The vision of the foreign policy process that emerges from CFP research is remarkably static. The macro question "When and why do certain foreign policy activities occur?" leads to an enumeration of potential explanatory sources -- the nature of the international system, the immediate policy actions of other actors in the environment, the structure of the actor's society or economy, the nature of the domestic political system, the personal characteristics of leaders. Whether one examines Rosenau's (1966) pre-theory, Brecher's (1972) input-output system or Wilkenfeld and associates' (1980) Interstate Behavior Analysis Project, the assumption is that some combination of explanatory variables leads to foreign policy. But time, evolutionary processes, system transformations, or primary feedback mechanisms are seldom considered. The impact of foreign policy on the subsequent condition of the explanatory variables or the possibility that explanatory variables might respond dynamically to one another is rarely explored. Important exceptions to this generalization are Rosenau's work on adaptation (1970) and Steinbruner's (1974) cybernetic formulation. Neither, however, has inspired much empirical research or changed the field's prevailing conceptualization.

**The Absence of Theory.** Theory has been an illusive object in social sciences. In few fields, however, has the call for it been greater, the necessity of its development been ascribed more importance, and the belief that it would soon emerge held with more conviction. Filled with frameworks, pre-theories, approaches, and rival hypotheses, CFP has yet to produce theories. Though the definition of "theory" (what it should look like) and how it might best be developed have been hotly debated (e.g., Singer, 1971; Zinnes, 1976), there is agreement that whatever it is, it does not exist in CFP and that the way in which CFP researchers have proceeded makes its development unlikely. The field has produced interpretative generalizations and made attempts to cast foreign policy in more abstract terms, but it has been singularly unsuccessful in building theories that can offer an accurate interpretation for the empirical observations that the field has generated.

Embedded in each of these critiques is an implicit proposal for the CFP field. "Typologizing" must provide more than alternative means of organizing the field; it must be integrated with explanatory theory. Requiring CFP researchers to collect their own attribute data may not, at this juncture, be a reasonable request, but it is probably useful to propose that complete dependence on existing national attribute data be mitigated by some careful thought about the appropriateness of these data for the questions asked. The collection of events data should be informed by recent technologies and findings. Hypothesis testing should not be suspended, but it should be broadened to consider multivariate explanations, control variables, and more complex interactions. The static nature of arguments should be replaced by dynamic formalizations. Perhaps most important of all, steps need to be taken to further the development of theories of comparative foreign policy.

#### PROBLEMS WITH CFP RESEARCH: SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

These criticisms and the proposals that flow from them are methodological. They are concerned with how research is done. To propose that typologizing should be modified is to make a recommendation about various approaches to the study of CFP. But what of the substance of CFP research? Have CFP researchers been asking the "right" questions, have they been considering the more important variables, have they examined the key relationships? Although the literature is full of what we are calling methodological critiques, it has been largely silent at the more substantive level except for isolated calls for the addition of presumably neglected explanatory variables (e.g., culture or regional political systems). A thorough evaluation of the field requires attention to these substantive dimensions. What are the substantive limitations of CFP research?

**Potential Contribution of Political Economy.** International Political Economy (IPE) and the

comparative study of foreign policy (CFP) are distinct fields. Each has its central questions, core dependent variables, and favored analytic approaches. Nevertheless, there is much in IPE that could inform CFP analyses.

The economic factors of the foreign policy process have not been ignored (Moon, 1985b). Hirshman (1945) ties both the volume and distribution of foreign trade to key political concepts such as "vulnerability" and "ability to hurt." Hirschman's detection (1945) of a hidden identity between the Ricardian concept "gains from trade" and the realist concept of "ability to inflict damage by withholding trade" proved to be a powerful integrative device for modern IPE. Similarly, the work of Richardson (1978; 1985) and Moon (1985a), as well as Baldwin's (1985) important recent book, incorporate economic factors in their analyses of foreign policy. Nevertheless, the full potential of IPE's contribution has yet to be realized. The compartmentalization of the two fields led CFP researchers to bypass a large body of potentially relevant literature with the result that access to useful concepts, ideas, and findings in the IPE literature has been lost.

IPE could be integrated into the comparative study of foreign policy in many ways. Two, however, are of primary importance. First, CFP researchers would benefit from a greater incorporation of IPE variables. Trade, capital, and technology, for example, should be considered key variables in explanations of political compliance, cooperation, and development. Economic hegemony holds promise as a concept in theories explaining cooperation and public good production at the international level (Keohane, 1982; Kindleberger 1973; Snidal, 1985). External penetration may contribute to theories of dependence-interdependence explaining compliance and resistance (Caporaso and Ward, 1979; Richardson and Kegley, 1980; Baldwin, 1985). Well developed, important theoretical arguments tie these key concepts to outcomes traditionally considered central to CFP research.

Second, CFP research could benefit by borrowing IPE's theories of the state. In some IPE theories the concept of the state figures prominently as a political agent shaping and reacting to various domestic and international economic forces. Although the state has long served as a construct in both international politics and legal studies of foreign policy, it has not figured centrally in CFP research. The reintroduction of the state, therefore, might serve as a bridge for connecting foreign policy theories to important ideas and relationships that have been developed in international political economy.

In a recent commentary, Moon (1985b:7) argues that a partial remedy would be to construct theory "...upon the recognition that CFP is but a branch of the more general analysis of state policy." Should this or some other means of incorporating economic theories of the state occur, several benefits could be expected. First, state policy and the economy would be closely linked and researchers would

be stimulated to explore the intersection between state and economy. Second, the researcher would be put in touch with a major presumption held by many (but not all) theorists of the state; namely, that the state plays a role in the production and distribution of economic output in general and economic surplus in particular. Third, and most important for our purposes, it would be seen that the state's role in production and distribution is not independent of its position in the international system or its actions toward the external environment, i.e., its foreign policy.

Incorporation of a theory of the state would entail major changes in CFP research but the rewards could be great. Important issues of a foreign policy nature would be joined: the nurturing of an external environment favorable to the circulation of "domestic capital" (Gilpin, 1975); the utilization of state power to aid industries abroad (Gereffi, 1983); the formula of industrial policies to enhance international competitiveness (Caporaso, 1979) and the utilization of science and technology policies to develop and make more competitive domestic industries in the global economy.

**Moving Beyond Monadic State-Centered Attributes.** Typically, CFP research focuses on national attributes (such as size, development level, type of government) or properties (attribute or behavioral) of others (e.g., defense expenditure of a rival power) to predict foreign policy behavior. Although there are a few recent exceptions as noted by Kegley (1985) and Richardson (1985), the predominant unit of analysis is the monad (the nation-state). Kegley goes so far as to say that "...our genre of research has become imprisoned...by its overwhelming reliance on a particular kind of data, events and national attribute data" (Kegley, 1985:1). And Richardson, speaking of empirical studies based on the unitary and solitary actor model, puts the point even more sharply: "...they (i.e. the empirical studies) share a slavish devotion to propositions that link foreign policy outputs to national attributes" (1985:2). If the core grammar of CFP theory is contained in the expression "who does what to whom," it is not surprising that attributes enter the argument as an exogenous answer, as a determinant of who does what to whom. We say, "Unit A will behave in the following way (k) because it possesses the properties (x) and (y)." State-centered attributes, however, are only one class of possible variables. A range of other possibilities could be considered: psychological and social-psychological factors (attributes and behavior of other countries), dyadic distance measures (e.g. gaps in levels of development, differentials in war-making capacities, "net" dependencies as in unequal trade reliance), triadic factors (potential for divide and rule, alliance uncertainty), and systemic factors (polarity, power concentration, entropy, alliance aggregation). Once one moves beyond the monadic state centered focus it is clear that the possibilities are rich.

We would like to consider in more detail one set of these variables that is seldom studied by CFP: systemic variables. The fields of international relations and international political economy have long considered systemic factors, explicitly or implicitly, as having explanatory relevance for foreign policy behavior. Keohane and Nye (1977) provide an excellent synthesis of the realist and world order perspectives. Their formulation of power within an exchange framework is a direct invitation to the foreign policy community to think about power (certainly a relevant concept for foreign policy) in novel ways. This invitation has not been accepted perhaps because the book's formulation of power is at a minimum dyadic, and more accurately, systemic. The focus on A's and B's reliances on one another and their relative opportunity costs of breaking the relationship forces one to look outside the A-B relationship. Both Waltz's (1970; 1979) and Kaplan's (1957) analysis of the relationship between systemic conditions and the global supply of public goods, and studies by Mytelka (1978), Gereffi (1983), and Zysman (1977) of the systemic conditions under which different combinations of state power and foreign capital are likely to exist, further illustrate the potential value of incorporating systemic level variables.

More specifically, three bodies of theory come quickly to mind in suggesting systemic variables of importance for CFP: theories of polarity and power concentration, theories of hegemony and public goods, and dependency theories. Theories of polarity, especially balance of power theories, constitute the core of the realist theory of international relations. Specific foreign policy behavior such as brokerage, mediation, divide and rule strategies, and alliance formation are all thought to flow (at least partly) either from the prevailing structure of the system or the conjunction of systemic structure and variables at other levels. In addition to the extensive literature on the balance of power, there are the contributions of Waltz on bipolarity (1970), of Deutsch and Singer on multipolarity (1970), of Singer and Small (1979) on alliance aggregation and war and Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey (1979) on the distribution of military capabilities and war.

The literature on international hegemony and the supply of public goods is of more recent vintage (see Kindleberger, 1973; Keohane, 1980, 1982, 1984; Snidal, 1985; Gowa, 1984; and Cowhey and Long, 1983). It is similar to the literature on polarity in that a central focus is the distribution of economic power in the international system. To the extent that the distribution is concentrated in one country, hegemony is said to exist. In turn, the presence of hegemony is said to increase the probability that public goods (e.g., a free trade regime, a reserve currency, or political-military goods such as deterrence) will be supplied. Although not all scholars agree on all points, the focus of research lies at the confluence of international economic structure and foreign policy actions. Although a hypothesis

such as "alliance aggregation is associated with higher levels of war" does not necessarily imply that nations joining alliances are more likely to go to war themselves, it does imply that the systemic property of alliance aggregation alters the behavior of some states in the system.

Finally, there is a third stream of literature, more acutely associated with the dependencia school, but extending more generally into IPE. According to these scholars, dependency is closely related to vulnerability and vulnerability in turn is closely connected to two broad types of distributional properties: distributions of international activities and distributions of industrial sector characteristics. The relationship between dependency and vulnerability is seen in Hirshman's (1945) focus on the distribution of foreign trade, and Mahler's (1980) discussion of trade and capital concentration. The relationship between vulnerability and distributional properties is found in the work of Moran (1974), Mytelka (1978), and Gereffi (1983). Moran's (1974) analysis of multinational corporate capital in Chile draws heavily upon industrial organization theory and the effect of concentrated vs. competitive international industrial structures on the bargaining power of the Chilean state. Gereffi's (1983) analysis of the international pharmaceutical industry in a Mexican context draws its power from his ability to link state power (in both Mexico and the U.S.) to evolving systemic properties of the pharmaceutical industry. Mytelka's (1978) study of technological dependence among Andean Group countries also draws heavily on system-wide characteristics of industrial sectors.

The importance of the systemic factors for foreign-policy behavior may not be immediately apparent. System factors may "count" without counting in a way that is directly observed in foreign policy actions. Nevertheless we feel that their potential has been underrated by CFP researchers. It is difficult to read Waltz's *Theories of World Politics*, Keohane's *After Hegemony*, and Keohane and Nye's *Power and Interdependence* without coming away with the feeling that these central arguments are of relevance to the field of foreign policy. Wars, alliances, commercial and industrial policies, cooperation and conflict--these are all policies in either some strict or expanded sense.

**Moving Beyond Events.** The favored time unit for CFP has been the event assembled into patterns or streams; indeed, the study of comparative foreign policy is almost synonymous with the study of events. The focus on events flows naturally from the central substantive question, "Who does what to whom?" Earlier we considered some methodological difficulties in many of the existing forms of events data. Now we wish to probe the substantive consequences implicit in the exclusive reliance on events data. An event is an activity of a particular type. It has a limited time span and a sharp, spatial boundary. If an activity, such as an asymmetric trade pattern, is smoothly distributed over a long period of time, so that its beginning



and end points are scarcely detectable, we do not speak of an event. If, however, an activity is sharply punctuated so that it is carved up into a series of radically discontinuous segments, we speak in terms of events.

The French historian, Braudel (1980:3) notes that the overwhelming kind of history practiced by historians, is "*l'histoire evenementielle*" -- the history of events. It is a "...history of short, sharp, nervous vibrations... according to which ... the slightest movement sets all its gauges quivering." But Braudel notes another type of history. The past also has its "gentle rhythms," its tides (cycles), its trends, and its more or less permanent structures which Braudel (1980:27) terms the "*longue duree*." Without too much distortion, Braudel's (1980) categories can be translated as events, processes (cyclical and secular), and structures. Each has a place for the historian and provides information and perspectives that the others cannot. Certainly terms such as "mercantile capitalism," "free-trade imperialism", and "Pax Britannica" carry a reality that cannot be reduced to the myriad of events that provide the grist for the daily news. These terms are not empty markers of historical time, they are not formal beginning and end points of arbitrary stretches of the past. They refer to historical periods within which immense numbers of variables jell into a configuration stable enough to call a structure. These structures become the "givens" of any particular historical era and, for this reason, are typically treated as constants by those who focus on the short-term, more variable aspects of international politics.

The sociological critique of the pluralist studies of community power --- studies based on the use of power in overt decisions --- suggests further the limitations inherent in a focus on events. By ignoring the structure within which behavior takes place, the event analyst fails to see the significance of events which do not occur, or to systemically assess the severe editing that takes place in determining the population of manifest events. Power may be exercised by confining the arena of decisional conflict to safe issues (agenda-setting). Similarly, in the foreign policy and international environments structural configurations (e.g., a hegemonic distribution of power, an asymmetric pay-off matrix, a bipolar system) encourage the generation and suppression of certain classes of events. An international system populated by a large number of roughly equal actors encourages perpetual balancing, coalition formation, and divide-and-rule stratagems. A bipolar system with a large group of non-member countries encourages brokerage, mediation, and neutral posturing among non-bloc members. An extremely hegemonic system encourages paternal acts of "leadership" by powerful members, activity to produce public goods, as well as passivity and deferential behavior among weaker members of the system. A country that sees itself as powerless to affect certain outcomes, or capable of achieving only

moderately desired outcomes at extraordinary costs, is likely not to act at all. These observations come from international relations theory, exchange theory in sociology (Blau, 1964) and social network analysis (Marsden and Lin, 1982).

How might one complement the use of the aggregation of discrete, time-specific events by the introduction of other temporal units of foreign policy? There are at least two answers: through a consideration of processes and of temporal structures (also called periods, epochs, eras). Processes of potential relevance include the movements of terms of trade over time, the slow (and sometimes fast) accumulation of the industrial capital of various countries, the creation of dependency structures in the international system (e.g., by widening the opportunity costs of specific countries, making it more or less costly for them to break relations), and the diversification or concentration of one's (or another's) external relations. Although these processes do not fall under the direct control of government decision-making, they are brought about by explicit foreign policy choices. As such they are critically relevant to the concerns of the CFP researcher.

It must be emphasized that decisions are not always temporally abrupt, as the decisions to blockade Cuba or to freeze Libyan assets. Nor is it the case that only temporally abrupt decisions, i.e., events, can be observed. Adopting a longer time horizon and allowing the concept of a decision to reach beyond one-shot policies to include the monitoring of processes over greater reaches of time will permit observation of other foreign policy outputs. The literature on East Europe and the Soviet Union (Marrese, 1985; Bunce, 1985), the works of Burns (1973), Baumgartner, Buckley, and Burns (1974), and Baumgartner and Burns (1975) provide suggestions for how longer time frame decision-making can be incorporated usefully into the study of foreign policy.

If an event is an abrupt action, and a process a smoother unfolding of activity over time, a structure is a compound of activities sufficiently stable to present itself as a setting, context, or epoch. Although temporal structures are "simply there," evidencing little variability, the researcher ignores them at risk. These givens do change, and when they do they can wreak havoc with the stability of short-term results. Singer's finding that alliances and wars relate differently in the 19th and 20th centuries is a case in point (Singer and Small, 1979), as are the many temporal parameter shifts found by Choucri and North (1975). Temporal structures condition laws and govern the parameters; they determine the relations among the variables. Scholars in comparative politics have developed contextual models to handle spatial effects. A comparable approach might be used by CFP researchers to incorporate these epoch effects.

## WHERE TO GO FROM HERE?

In this last section we return to several issues discussed earlier, but from a different perspective. Unquestionably the most severe of the criticisms leveled against CFP is that it is relatively rich in simple hypothesis but theory poor. The corollary concern that CFP propositions are static is also relevant. Some of the proposals of the last section partially speak to these difficulties. Moving away from discrete events to the ebb and flow of processes through incorporation of some of the theories from IPE might begin to answer these complaints. At least they offer a different orientation that could be explored.

It is useful in this concluding section to consider whether a more general response to these fundamental criticisms can be found. It is too easy to cry we need more theory. The question is how do we get it. How does one do theory, or how does one enhance a researcher's capacity to move beyond simple hypotheses? Neither the question, nor its standard answer, are new to political science. The standard answer is to cite chapter and verse from the texts of the philosophy of science. Somehow it is felt that if one knows the defining ingredients of a theory, together with descriptions of how other disciplines have managed to do it, it will be possible to go and do likewise. Unfortunately, this does not seem to happen. Definitions of theory and historical analyses of how other disciplines have done it are useful as first steps. But something else is needed. Something like a recipe for how one might begin to think theoretically.

Our first proposal concerns the use of hypotheses. Whereas the philosophy of science has important contributions to make in certain contexts, its strength does not lie in helping us to think theoretically. Recall the problem noted in section 3 --- the constraints of ad hoc hypotheses. What is dissatisfying about "if then" hypotheses is not that they do not tell us something. The problem is that we tend to think that they tell us more than they do. Findings generated by "if then" analyses are numbing, a kind of narcotic. They seem to suggest that we know a great deal, thereby eliminating the motivation to go any further, unless it is to replicate the study, or add a new variable. Thus the results from ad hoc hypotheses carry with them the seeds for destroying theory development. Yet intriguingly, hypotheses also contain the germs for theory development.

Consider a recent study by Rummel (1983). Referring to democratic states as "libertarian," Rummel hypothesized that: (1) states with libertarian governments have no propensity for violence among themselves; (2) the more libertarian the states, the less their mutual violence; and (3) the more a state's government is governed by libertarian principles, the less is its propensity to engage in foreign violence. These hypotheses were tested using scaled data on international warfare for the period between 1976 and 1980,

for wars between 1816 and 1974, and for threats to use force from 1945 to 1965. Rummel finds that the data support each of the hypotheses. These findings represent a challenge. If we do not accept these results as simple facts of nature, they can push us to ask the critical next question: why? What is it about democracies, or "libertarian" governments that makes them less conflict or war prone? To think theoretically is to attempt to answer the question "why?" Clearly, then the first step is to realize that empirically supported hypotheses are descriptive facts waiting for explanations. The second, much more difficult step, is the construction of an answer. Here the recipe reads: "one cup brilliance, two cups imagination, and large dash of guts." Theory building is creativity, and if we knew the ingredients we would make more Mozarts. Nevertheless, a few suggestions can be made. Rummel's findings concerning libertarian governments are the beginning of a mystery story. The descriptive fact is the dead body lying on the living room floor in a pool of blood. We are the detectives charged with the task of explaining how and why it got there. To solve the mystery we must produce a story. Thinking theoretically is the realization that the answer to the question "why" is the solution of a mystery. Solving a mystery requires a story.

Detectives typically solve murder mysteries by looking for clues. So the next step is to assemble evidence about democracies and the conflict behavior of nations. What else do we know? Wright (1942 and 1965), one of the first to study the democracy-conflict relationship in his classic encyclopedic study, found little evidence in its favor. However, Wright (1965: 158-159) qualifies his findings by noting that "constitutionalism is more favorable to peace than is absolutism" and that changes in governmental structures from autocracy to democracy tend to be associated with those states' greater involvement with warfare. Moore (1970) discovered that in 1973 the degree of political accountability of a society, as measured for a sample of 119 nations, was one of the three most potent variables associated with its foreign policy behavior. His study does not identify war initiation as a particular type of foreign policy behavior; however, it does suggest that political accountability is instrumental as a determinant of a nation's actions abroad. Gregg and Banks (1965) spoke more directly to the notion that regime type predicts war involvement. They found that (1) no correlation exists between the degree to which the citizens of a country have access through political channels to their leaders and their foreign policy performance, but that (2) the degree to which their governments permit interest articulation and interest aggregation covaries with the degree to which those societies engage in violent foreign conflict. Finally, Haas (1965) presented evidence to imply the existence of a relationship between democratization and war.

But these are not the only clues available. Salmore and Hermann (1969) also investigated the accountability factor

in a regression analysis of 76 nations in the period between 1966-1967. Unlike Moore they discovered that for this period of time political accountability bears little relationship to foreign policy behavior. Small and Singer (1976) examine all wars between 1816 and 1965 and find that democracies are no more nor less involved in wars than governments of other types. More frontal assaults on the proposition are provided by two recent studies. Chan (1984) analyzed Rummel's hypotheses using different analytic techniques, operational indicators, and time periods. Chan found that if the propositions are examined monadically, then it is difficult to show that greater war involvement is experienced by countries with comparatively less political freedom. On the other hand, Chan found that Rummel's findings were confirmed in those cases where (1) the focus is on only dyadic relationships, if (2) reference is made only to the recent period, and if (3) extra-systematic wars are excluded from the analysis. Chan also found that a relationship exists between the degree of political freedom and the amount of war if a longitudinal analysis is performed--one in which a country's democratic institutions are examined over time. Chan suggests that the discrepancies emerging in the literature can be explained by these different analytic choices.

This probability is suggested also by Weede's (1984) investigation. Testing Rummel's hypotheses using various definitions of war for data covering the 1960s and 1970s he found that democracy and war involvement are not consistently and significantly correlated even though support was generated for Rummel's conclusion that democracies have succeeded in avoiding involvement in wars during the late 1970s. Weede notes, however, that this period seems "rather exceptional." Indeed, Rummel's findings "constitute nothing more than an aberration from the close-to-zero relationship between democracy and war involvement," Weede (1984: 653) asserts. Finally, in a book length review of the more speculative literature Blainey (1973) reaches a similar conclusion: the beginning, continuation, and end of war is determined almost exclusively by the decisions of leaders of rival nations, not by the institutional factors and governmental variables that define the domestic political environments in which they reach those decisions. The type of government itself, he concludes, is not a potent factor in explaining either the recourse to, or entanglement, in war.

Of course, it is not always clear what constitutes evidence. The finger prints on the doorknob may or may not be related to the dead body. Not everything we know about democracies or foreign conflict processes is relevant. One of the problems is sifting through the information to determine which pieces should be considered and which pieces ignored. Even more difficult is the question of how to interpret the evidence/clues. The above cited works appear to contain contradictions. But are these contradictions? Moore (1970), for example, seems to contradict

Salmore and Hermann (1969), but note that the time periods are different. Small and Singer (1976) appear to contradict the Rummel (1983) results, but note that the unit of analysis is different: for Small and Singer the unit is the war, for Rummel it is dyads. Chan's (1984) analyses further demonstrate the importance of the unit: monad versus dyad. Weede's (1984) study demonstrates the significance of operational definitions. Across the studies there are differences in the way in which the key variables are conceptualized and measured. What we have then, are multiple clues pointing in seemingly different directions. But they must be imaginatively assembled and creatively interpreted if they are to be the basis for a story about how the structure of governments relates to the foreign policy process in general and conflict behavior more specifically.

From these bits and pieces we must develop a story. Who committed the murder, what was the motivation, and how was it done. As Lave and March (1975) have suggested, we need to stop and think about what leads to what and how the process works. Thinking theoretically is developing the underpinnings that would make sense out of the facts that are generated by empirical ad hoc hypotheses. This suggests two maxims. Existing empirically tested hypotheses can play an important role in the initiation of theory if they are seen as evidence, things to be explained, clues for story-telling rather than as explanations in and of themselves. Second, one approach to explaining is through story telling.

There are a number of important ingredients to the story telling or story constructing process. A critical but often overlooked ingredient of storytelling is that it is dynamic. It is hard to think of a story without thinking about a sequence of events, or as Lave and March (1975) suggest, a process. Unfortunately, political scientists spend so much time learning how to describe --- what are the types of governments, what is the structure of the United Nations, what are the attributes of developing societies --- they are often baffled by dynamics. This is probably why they are so much better at postulating hypotheses that relate variables to each other --- a static, descriptive way of thinking --- than they are at building theories. But if we are to explain what it is about democracies that makes them either more or less conflict-prone we must think in terms of sequences of events, in terms of dynamics, in terms of process.

A second important ingredient to story telling is to recall the level of analysis problem. We noted in an earlier section that CFP researchers tend too often to think in terms of one level of analysis, the monad. The last section proposed that system-level analyses could be invaluable for understanding the foreign policy process. Storytelling need not be confined to a single level. Narratives can switch from the first person to the third person and in so doing create a far richer tale. It may be, for example, that it is democracies embedded in certain types of world market

systems that enhance, or restrict, the foreign policy process.

Finally, a caution is needed concerning evidence. Above we indicated the value in searching for clues. But one must be careful about evidence. It is not always what it may seem. It is probably counterproductive to construct stories that directly contradict empirical evidence. But the creative researcher is not constrained by evidence. This means several things. First, if evidence is not at hand this should not stop the construction of the story. We must dream a bit, use our imaginative and creative powers to postulate assumptions. Second, in order to construct an argument, i.e., to put forth a sufficient set of assumptions such that a given conclusion emerges, it may be necessary to make assumptions that appear "strange."

Suppose, for example, that we postulate that the decision to go to war is made by decision makers choosing balls from urns containing red and black balls. If a red ball is chosen the decision is to go to war, if black is chosen then the decision is not to go to war. Such a conceptualization may seem preposterous. How can one sanely argue that decision makers choose balls from urns to determine whether or not they should go to war? When have we ever seen such a thing happen? On the other hand what have we seen, i.e., what evidence, suggests that we should not use this to help us construct the story? If such a wild assumption in fact produces a number of empirically verified results, then it has been a very useful device. Theory building often requires making bold leaps. Many of the breakthroughs in science have come because researchers made wild leaps of imagination, taking bold risky steps. The theory of relativity or the double helix of recent times, were such imaginative leaps.

We have attempted in the last few pages to indicate what it means to think theoretically and provided what we hope are some useful guidelines for how to begin. Before concluding we must note that while story telling is a key to the development of theory, it is only the beginning. It was suggested that story telling can be initiated by empirical findings. But the story should do more than just provide a reasonable backdrop against which an empirical result makes sense. It must go on to suggest additional empirical results that must be true. The extent to which the story can account for multiple empirical results is the extent to which one can have confidence in the story.

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## ENDNOTES

*"The Comparative Study of Foreign Policy"*  
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1. James N. Rosenau, "Pre-Theories and Theories of Foreign Policy," in R.B. Farrell, ed., *Approaches to Comparative and International Politics* (Northwestern University Press: 1966), 27-92.

2. C.F. Hermann, C.W. Kegley, and J.N. Rosenau, eds. *New Directions in Foreign Policy Research* (Allen & Unwin: 1987).

3. For a more complete discussion of these points, see M. East, "Assessing Comparative Foreign Policy Research: Another Perspective," a paper presented at the 1987 International Studies Association meetings, Washington D.C., April 1987.

4. Charles W. Kegley, "Decision Regimes and Foreign Policy Behavior," a paper presented at the conference on New Directions in the Comparative Study of Foreign Policy, Columbus, Ohio, May 1985.

5. G.T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Little, Brown: 1971).