

*The Evolution and Future  
of Theoretical Research  
in the Comparative Study  
of Foreign Policy*

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What has been accomplished through the comparative study of foreign policy? Is there a future for the field? Researchers engaged today in the comparative study of foreign policy (hereafter CFP)<sup>1</sup> must confront serious questions about past intellectual products of this field as well as engage in serious examination concerning reasonable expectations for its likely future. It is no longer sufficient to advance rosy predictions about the field, about the scientific approach to CFP, or about the payoffs of comparative methodology. As an area of inquiry moves from infancy to adolescence, people begin to form judgments about its present and future based on the performances, not the promises, of those involved. Profound and diverse challenges must be met, if desired CFP performances are to be realized. In the spirit of self-reflection, this essay provides an interpretation of the past and present in the comparative study of foreign policy with an emphasis on the central problems to be confronted.

**Assessments of the Field**

The comparative study of foreign policy as a field of inquiry was given an early definition in Rosenau's now well-known "fad, fantasy, or field?" article (1968a). Voicing dissatisfaction with previous work in the area of foreign policy analysis (particularly reliance on noncomparable,

noncumulative case studies). Rosenau argued for adoption of a more rigorous comparative method producing relevant generalizations and for a more explicit focus on foreign policy phenomena as the object of study. The CFP field, he claimed, could be shown to have a coherent subject matter, a particular viewpoint and potential for a unique set of theoretical propositions, thus qualifying it as an identifiable field of independent inquiry. Implicit in this description, and explicitly stated in an article he published the same year (1968b), was a commitment to a scientific approach to the study of foreign policy phenomena. At this relatively early stage, Rosenau's vision of the future potential of CFP was very optimistic. Of course, this vision was not Rosenau's alone, but was shared by a growing community of scholars.

Subsequent research and writing in the field frequently led to similarly upbeat assessments of the future intellectual potential of the CFP research program. In an article describing the formation and development of the Inter-University Comparative Foreign Policy (ICFP) Project,<sup>2</sup> a cautious, yet still positive assessment of the field was delivered (Rosenau, Burgess and Hermann, 1973). In a reprinting of the "fads" article seven years after the original publication, Rosenau's evaluation of work in CFP, in a new introduction to the essay, is unabashedly positive: "The comparative study of foreign policy, in short, is a serious enterprise, one that seems likely to be around for a long time and to entice an ever larger number of students to its ranks" (1975, p. 33). He added: "In sum, there is still much to be done, but if progress in the next few years is anything like that which has marked the past eight, there is reason to believe that the dynamics of foreign policy will begin to yield rapidly to greater understanding" (pp. 37-8). Finally, at a conference of ICFP participants convened in 1973, Rosenau (1976b) characterized CFP as a Kuhnian normal science whose primary activities could be described as mopping-up operations. Lest it be thought that Rosenau stood alone in these views, note the generally positive evaluations by other conference participants (especially Kegley and Skinner, and Powell *et al.* in Rosenau, 1976a) and by McGowan and Shapiro (1973) in the introduction to their survey of empirical CFP research.

These optimistic pronouncements, however, were not the only positions on the development of CFP research. At the same time that Rosenau and others offered glowing views of the future of the field, other scholars were beginning to have doubts about major components of this research tradition. At the 1973 ICFP conference, gentle, though consequential, criticisms of CFP research were aired (see contributions by McGowan, Harf *et al.*, and Wittkopf, in Rosenau, 1976a). Such perspectives were generally supportive of the goals of

CFP as previously defined, although critical of efforts which had to that point attempted to make good on earlier promises. These were not calls for dismantling of the CFP research orientation, but rather suggestions for reorienting its efforts.

Much more profound criticisms also began to be heard. Ashley's review of the CFP field described it as a "static or degenerating research nucleus" with some potentially useful spinoffs (Ashley, 1976, p. 155). In his thoroughgoing critique of eight "orthodoxies" in the comparative study of foreign policy, Munton cut much deeper by criticizing central assumptions in the field, even going so far as to suggest that "a distinct comparative study of foreign policy ought to disappear . . . by merging with a scientific study of international politics" (Munton, 1976, p. 268). Later, and from the other side of the Atlantic, Smith (1979, 1983) argued that the North American approach to comparative foreign policy studies was only one version of a larger intellectual enterprise and that it was not as appropriately grounded as was commonly believed by its practitioners. Although sympathetic to the comparative and scientific commitments of CFP, Faurby (1976a), another European, advanced similar criticisms in a careful review of published CFP research (1976b). He argued that the CFP conceptions of comparative method and of science were not the only ones available and appropriate for this type of research. As an alternative, he suggested incorporating broader perspectives on these matters into the research agenda in order to increase the likelihood of a more comprehensive understanding of foreign policy phenomena. Each of these critiques of the prevailing CFP program went beyond earlier assessments in suggesting radically different or entirely new directions in the study of foreign policy. In his recent description of a theory of cascading interdependence, Rosenau (1984c, p. 252) appears also to make party with such critiques by denigrating his earlier "narrow preoccupation with foreign policy as the phenomenon to be explained".

This brief march through varying assessments of the development of the comparative study of foreign policy has of necessity emphasized overall judgments. The evaluations referred to above engage arguments at many levels and address problems of theory, methodology, and substantive content. However, our purpose is not to review all these controversies; we have attempted rather to give a sense of the boom and bust quality of writing about comparative foreign policy research in the last two decades. Kegley's (1980) excellent overview of the field provides a useful historical sense of developments and a more detailed listing of perceived problems than is included here. These assessments serve as a backdrop for our interpretation of the past in CFP as well as for our prescriptions for the future of this field.

### The Growth of Knowledge in the Comparative Study of Foreign Policy

Unquestionably, one of the greatest disappointments experienced by early CFP proponents has been their perceived failure to generate intellectual products even roughly commensurate with early expectations. This failure has been particularly debilitating because of the heady epistemological claims made early in the development of the field. It was widely believed that adoption of more rigorous methodological techniques in the context of more explicitly comparative research would yield large quantities of reliable, readily comprehensible information about foreign policy phenomena. This information would both stimulate and substantiate generalizations relating variations in foreign policy outputs to variations in factors relevant to foreign policy undertakings. Accumulation of such generalizations would in turn lead to theories about foreign policy that would be both general and verifiable. Many thought that in this fashion demonstrable growth in knowledge (cumulation) would be assured. Having internalized these expectations early on, the subsequent failure of the program to reach such lofty goals produced a gap between expectation and reality that led to disillusionment among CFP adherents.

Though many explanations of these shortcomings have been offered, suggesting a wide range of problems (see Kegley, 1980), at the heart of most of these accounts have been concerns about the lack of objectively identifiable and focused growth of knowledge in the field. Failure to deliver on this central feature of the research enterprise is an issue that must be addressed by any proposal for new major initiatives in the comparative study of foreign policy.

The central core of this essay consists of a proposal for reconceptualizing the basis for the growth of knowledge in CFP. We believe the two prevailing logics of inquiry that have been applied in evaluating CFP are inappropriate. We argue that by providing a more defensible view of the acquisition of knowledge and the nature of cumulation, past efforts in CFP research can be more appropriately interpreted and evaluated. Further, such a reconceptualization has implications for the direction of current research and for orientations of future work in the field.

In order to establish this reorientation it is necessary to examine more closely the central assumptions of CFP research as commonly defined. Previously we indicated that Rosenau's early definition of the field included two central features: (1) a commitment to foreign policy phenomena as the object of inquiry and (2) a commitment to the comparative method. These have been widely accepted and deserve elaboration.

The study of foreign policy phenomena resulted in a commitment to the concept of foreign policy and the external behavior of international actors (Hermann, 1972b, 1978b). Foreign policy had to be considered not only as a concept but as a variable or set of variables that could assume different discernible values in covariation with other variables. Such requirements opened the way for the exploration of different kinds, types, or scales of policy whose condition at various times and places could be reliably assessed. This need led to considerable fascination with events data as a measurable indicator of policy. Although some CFP investigators experimented enthusiastically with the collection and use of these relatively new forms of data, many scholars attracted to the field (e.g., Brecher, 1972, 1975) recognized alternative ways of measuring foreign policy.

Theoretically the emphasis on foreign policy as a variable resulted in various conceptualizations of its relationship with other variables. The most pervasive orientation envisioned foreign policy as a dependent variable the patterns of which are to be understood by examining various explanatory sources (e.g. see the contributions to Rosenau, 1974; and Wilkenfeld *et al.*, 1980). Other theoretical orientations viewed certain kinds of foreign policy as the source or independent variable for explaining domestic policies of government and other internal features of societies, as envisioned, for example, in linkage politics (e.g., Deutsch, 1966; Rosenau, 1969a) or dependency theories (e.g., Galtung, 1971; Gobalet and Diamond, 1979). Rosenau's (1970) interest in political system adaptation illustrates still another perspective in which foreign policy is represented as one type of mediating variable for regulating among political, economic, and social structures. Action-reaction models (e.g., Holsti, Brody and North, 1964) conceptualized foreign policy as produced in an endless cycle where one actor's policy triggers another's which in turn precipitates new policy by the first actor or perhaps a third party. Despite the prevalence in early CFP research of conceptualizations emphasizing foreign policy as the phenomena to be explained (i.e., the dependent variable), numerous other perspectives emerged from heightened attention to the concept of foreign policy (see Hermann, 1983a).

The second commitment in CFP—to comparative method—though seemingly straightforward, involves at least three related subcommitments. First, it includes a commitment to multi-nation comparisons.<sup>3</sup> This sense of comparative study is, of course, part of the traditional meaning employed by students of comparative politics. In much of the comparative foreign policy research under consideration here, the emphasis is on extensive cross-national comparisons involving a substantial number of nations. Because this differed from prior practice,

the scope of comparison envisioned by CFP researchers is much broader than that assumed in more traditional foreign policy case studies. Through the use of aggregate and events data, an enlarged sense of the comparativist commitment appeared.

A second, more consequential, commitment inherent in the adoption of comparative methodology is explicit, systematic comparison of similar features (variables) in each of the entities under study. Thus, various influences on foreign policy outcomes are conceptualized to exist in greater or lesser degree in all political systems. Variations in the presence or absence of these influences is systematically related to features of the external behavior of each state. Comparison is therefore explicit and grounded in prior conceptualizations of variables and relationships. This view of comparative method can be contrasted to the less-focused comparisons found in some traditional case and country studies.

The final commitment in the adoption of the comparative method entails the use of scientific methods. Scientific methods play an important part in the definition of CFP because of the epistemological claims associated with scientific activities. To proponents of the new field, the prospect of reliable empirical data, verifiable generalizations, and explanatory theory all pointed to the greater promise of expanding bases of knowledge concerning foreign policy phenomena. As Kegley (1980, p. 5) has observed, in adopting scientific methodology, expectations for the growth of knowledge looked exceedingly promising while the risks appeared small. To suggest a commitment to scientific methodology does not, of course, imply the use of any single methodology or technique.

Given this picture of the central commitments of CFP, the overall history of successes and failures in the field might be interpreted in any number of ways. Two conceptualizations of scientific inquiry that seemed particularly prominent in the first years of CFP research were neopositivist inductionism and Kuhnian normal science.

### Neopositivism and Normal Science

The neopositivist vision of science partially adopted by some CFP proponents was rooted in the behavioral orientation of the period. Although few scholars viewed themselves as holding a strict neopositivist view of science (e.g., fact/value distinctions, objectification of human action, empirical commitments, methodological unity of science, and reliance on inductive methods of inference), many of their products reflected some of these characteristics. One result of these

neopositivist beliefs was adoption of a "building block" view of science in which successive layers of empirical findings (i.e., tests of hypotheses) would lead through an inductive process to ever more general theories of foreign policy behavior and hence to a growing body of verifiable knowledge. (See, for example, the propositional inventory of McGowan and Shapiro, 1973.) This neopositivist perspective on scientific inquiry might be characterized as the inductivist approach to the study of foreign policy—hypothesis creation and testing occurring across a wide variety of domains in search of generalized relationships on which to construct theories. Zinnes (1976a) has characterized this approach as *ad hoc* hypothesis testing, and indeed, much early empirical research in CFP reflected this model.

Another common approach viewed CFP as a Kuhnian normal science, with the paradigm for such a science being the set of central assumptions described earlier. Rosenau (1976b) came to favor this conception of the development of the CFP program, as did McGowan (1976) and more recently Kegley (1980).

Each of these interpretations of the development of the CFP field is organized around a logic of inquiry (or meta-methodology) that includes not only a particular perspective on scientific activities (rules, prescriptions, etc.), but also a defence of epistemological claims associated with each approach. Thus claims about the growth of knowledge in any scientific endeavor are ineluctably tied to the logic of inquiry adopted. This connection is important for understanding the widespread discontent with CFP research products. As suggested earlier, at the heart of this dissatisfaction lies the perception that exceedingly little growth in knowledge concerning foreign policy problems has occurred to date. This perceived deficiency, we argue, is due in part to inappropriate conceptualizations of the logic of inquiry relevant to CFP research. Such a thesis may appear trivially true to some and unrealistic to others. A word of clarification is therefore in order.

The linkage between accepted logic of inquiry and judgments about the cumulativeness of research products can be argued at two levels: (1) the impact on day-to-day research practices and (2) the evaluation of the research program as a whole. First, it is unquestionably the case that the intellectual products generated by social science research reflect the structure and content of the logic of inquiry held by the researcher. This may not be an explicitly conscious emphasis of the research process, but for the most part, logic of inquiry concerns are mirrored in the choice of problems, the selection and measurement of variables, and the inference-drawing procedures. More importantly, logic of inquiry commitments are influential in structuring and justifying the conclusions that are drawn and in defending the knowledge

claims advanced by the researcher. Thus although the researcher does not stop at every step in the research process to ask whether he/she is following good falsificationist or positivist or Marxist methodological prescriptions, such considerations do significantly shape the research process.

At a more general level, when evaluating a body of research, logic of inquiry questions always comprise the core of the evaluation. This is so because the logic of inquiry provides the basis for making claims about the acquisition of knowledge. Such claims traditionally propound a view of the rationality of science in which the particular logic of inquiry is shown to provide a rational basis for the practice of science. Thus, logic of inquiry concerns emerge as particularly consequential for *post facto* evaluations of a series of research products. The implications of this discussion for the evaluation of comparative foreign policy research can be summarized in the following question: Relative to the professed goal of growth in knowledge concerning foreign policy, what are the consequences of viewing CFP as a particular type of inquiry (i.e. representing a particular logic of inquiry)? The two conceptualizations of the logic of inquiry frequently applied to the comparative study of foreign policy—the neopositivist view and Kuhn's notion of normal science—each establish different criteria for evaluation.

As noted, the early neopositivist view of research in CFP emphasized discrete empirical findings. Much empirical research has been undertaken in the last two decades, yielding a few fairly well grounded generalizations (e.g., the importance of a nation's size in differentiating the volume of foreign policy behavior; the tendency of decision-making activities to cluster among a small group of top officials in a foreign policy crisis; the prevalence of "maintenance" or "participation" activities in the overall volume of foreign actions of states; the distinction between dyadic behavior and behaviors in which multiple recipients are addressed; the absence of an unmediated relationship between a country's domestic conflict and international conflict). These findings, however, have not been integrated into broader theoretical formulations. Using the model of cumulation inherent in this methodology, precious little has actually occurred. A largely negative assessment of progress in the field has followed. Further, skepticism about the account of science offered by neopositivism is now so profound and widespread as to suggest that this view of cumulation will never guide research in meaningful directions (Popper, 1963; Lakatos, 1970; Fay, 1975; Bernstein, 1978).

The Kuhnian view of CFP would seem to lead to similar negative assessments. As interpreted by Kegley (1980), selected aspects of

policy research do appear similar to some portions of Kuhnian science. For example, until recently a fairly coherent community of scholars could readily be identified. Likewise, CFP adherents deeply-held commitments to comparative methodology. Unforunately, what is lacking in this description is any mention of a set of theoretical commitments. As described by Kuhn, the theoretical component of a paradigm for normal science is absolutely essential (Kuhn, 1970: especially ch. 1 and postscript). Unless investigators share a theoretical perspective, Kuhn's argument is largely hollow. Absence of a common framework undermines any knowledge claims based on reference to his position. Cumulation in Kuhn's normal science model can be seen as an integrated set of solved puzzles that serve as exemplars for new generations of scholars. Because CFP is primarily a set of methodological commitments—as Kegley (1980, pp. 10-16) ably documents—conceptualization of CFP as a normal science misrepresents the past and provides no meaningful guideposts for present and future research. That CFP lacks a shared theoretical paradigm argues against Kegley's paradigmatic criteria and prevents an optimistic view of the field's overall progress from the Kuhnian perspective.

These two approaches to the logic of inquiry, however, do not exhaust the alternatives available for evaluating CFP research. They do highlight how a conceptualization of knowledge growth—particularly if inappropriate—can lead to discouragement and reduction of effort. Against the viewpoints just described, we would argue that the critical focus in evaluations of CFP should be upon efforts at gradually building more adequate theory. The growth of scientific knowledge is the growth of theoretical knowledge. Consequently, assessments of cumulation must first of all consider efforts at providing theoretical statements about foreign policy phenomena. To the extent that past evaluative efforts have focused on cumulating empirical findings or building upon an alleged paradigm, they have misrepresented the significance of past efforts.

In reorienting the focus of CFP assessments, we will provide a new evaluation concerning the achievements of scholars engaging in comparative foreign policy studies. The logic of inquiry described by Lakatos's (1970) methodology of scientific research programs is more hospitable to our proposed reassessment of CFP research than either of the previously described approaches. This methodology emphasizes the interplay of continuity and change in science through the juxtaposition of competing theories within the larger structure of a research program. Growth in knowledge occurs as the empirical content of theories increases. The important referent for cumulation, then, consists of series of theories that compete among themselves on the basis of

their empirical content and the results of empirical tests. Our conviction that growth in theoretical knowledge is essential to progress in explaining foreign policy phenomena prompts adoption of Lakatos's position.

### Theoretical Developments in the Comparative Study of Foreign Policy

We have made the argument for a theoretically based assessment that is also attuned to the necessity for empirical research. Now it is time to re-examine efforts at theorizing in the comparative study of foreign policy. Some observers might argue that in turning towards theory evaluations rather than assessments that are more explicitly based on completed, small-scale empirical research, we have guaranteed a negative assessment of the field (see McGowan, 1976; Kegley, 1980). We would not argue against the relative paucity of comprehensive theories in the study of foreign policy. There have been, however, a small but continuous number of serious attempts at theory building from which much has been learned and which could, we argue, form the basis for more comprehensive theories in the future. Our optimism about the future of CFP rests more on our faith in the ability of scholars to build on this theoretical base than in the adequacy of any of the theories currently known to the CFP community. Hence, we too believe that ours is a theoretically undernourished discipline, but one with a tradition of persistent, if uneven and incomplete, theory building. We would also maintain that the development of the field demonstrates an evolving consensus about the substance of an adequate theory of comparative foreign policy phenomena. To substantiate these claims, we turn to an interpretive overview of six past theoretical efforts and conclude with a review of current CREON work in this continuing stream.<sup>4</sup>

#### Richard Snyder and Associates

The first major effort to theorize in a scientific mode about foreign policy predates the self-conscious emergence of CFP scholars, although its influence on subsequent efforts cannot be ignored. This approach is the decision-making framework of Snyder, Bruck and Sapin (1954). As a reaction to the dominance of *realpolitik* analyses of foreign policy based on power and national interest, Snyder and his colleagues argued that human decision making was central to the interpretation of foreign policy actions. Against the prevailing view, they suggested the importance of decision makers operating in an

organizational context and affected by various elements of the internal and external setting and by the process through which they reach foreign policy decisions. Their very creative analysis suggested a richly differentiated view of foreign policy decision making.

The Snyder framework, at a concrete level, consisted of an extensive listing of potentially relevant factors. It offered few indications of expected linkages or temporal orderings among the variables, nor did it treat foreign policy as a variable having different values or properties that might be expected to change with the identified factors. Even without describing variability in foreign policy action, the framework seemed extremely complex. To apply it empirically required detailed data on numerous variables that the social sciences in the late 1950s had only begun to develop. It is little wonder that the major direct application of the Snyder framework used the case study technique (i.e., Paige, 1968). As an attempt to conceptualize how foreign policy is made, the decision-making framework provided many more potential referents than did previous efforts and thus, together with its emphasis on explicit assumptions and definitions, constituted an important conceptual orientation for scholars disposed to a scientific approach to the study of foreign policy.

The Snyder framework posed a fundamental question: Why do foreign policy officials (not nations) make the choices that they do? The impact of phenomenology emerges in the way this question is treated. Snyder suggested that answers to the central question require the introduction of the entire panoply of theory and research on human behavior from the psychology of perception to organizational behavior, from the analysis of communication networks to the examination of societal norms and values.

#### James N. Rosenau

More than a decade after the original appearance of the Snyder decision-making monograph, Rosenau (1966) presented his "pre-theories" essay. If Snyder's framework invited scientific inquiry, Rosenau insisted upon it. He called for the generation of testable "if-then" propositions and the casting of foreign policy research in a manner that encouraged the location of specific observations of foreign policy activity in general explanatory frameworks. Although a thorough review of the intellectual origins of CFP would properly trace many roots, it is beyond question that Rosenau's pre-theories essay and subsequent writing and organizing activity resulted in the self-conscious emergence of CFP as an area of inquiry. Numerous research articles, doctoral dissertations, and several textbooks drew upon

Rosenau's framework. Although he continued to extend and modify his contribution to the comparative study of foreign policy—linkage politics (1969a), domestic sources (1967a), and most notably his adaptation framework (1970)—Rosenau's initial essay arguably has had the most far-reaching effect on his colleagues.

Rosenau proposed a manageable typology for differentiating among nations. He contended the variables that would be most important in accounting for a country's foreign policy would depend on its nation type. Significantly, the three variables Rosenau selected to construct his typology (size, development, and political accountability) bore a marked resemblance to the underlying factors Rummel (1979a) and others independently discovered through factor analysis. Rosenau also advanced a classification system for explanatory variables that had intuitive appeal. Less successful was the attempt in the pre-theories essay to create a fourfold classification of issue areas, but their inclusion served as a marker for future researchers as an area in need of further conceptualization.

Many of Rosenau's concepts remained quite ambiguous and the external domain of explanatory variables was conceptualized as a single "systemic" category. Although he developed the explanatory variables considerably, what they were supposed to explain (i.e., foreign policy) remained remarkably undifferentiated. Without greater specification of the behavior or policy variables, it is not surprising that, like Snyder before him, Rosenau offered few statements of relationship among variables. Nevertheless, his typology of nations with its postulated implications for the relative importance of different sets of explanatory variables provided a real and manageable agenda to match his call for hypothesis-testing comparative research. Rosenau sharpened Snyder's original question of why do policy makers choose by framing the question: Which kinds of explanatory variables are most potent in accounting for decision makers' choices? That question has structured much empirical inquiry in the field to the present.

#### Michael Brecher

In his original theoretical essay with associates (Brecher *et al.*, 1969), and in his subsequent work, Brecher (1972, 1975) picked up on another theme present in the Snyder work and developed more generally in international relations by the Sprouts (1965). This concerned the relationship between the environment and the decision makers' perception of that environment or what Brecher called the operational environment (external influences) and the psychological environment (the interpretation of those influences by decision makers). Using an

input-process-output perspective, Brecher advanced a more comprehensive classification of the variables that might be expected to play into play in a foreign policy decision-making system. Far more than either Snyder or Rosenau, Brecher classified the potential sources of influence in a country's external environment including its global system, its regional subsystem, and its dominant bilateral subsystem. He introduced a descriptive set of policy issue areas (military-security, political-diplomatic, economic-development, cultural-status), but like his predecessors, Brecher did not offer hypotheses specifically relating the variables in his system. Instead, Brecher demonstrated by example how one might discover discrete propositions from comparative case studies (another useful innovation also being explored by George (1979a) and others including Richardson in Chapter 9). His fuller explication of the network of explanatory and behavior variables and his use of multiple case studies stand as important contributions. Brecher also reinforced the interest in the discovery of *if-then*, empirically investigable propositions. His introduction of the concepts of the decision makers' image structures and attitudinal prisms lacked the refinement to reveal how these features would act as the interface between the operational and psychological environments. Brecher, nevertheless, highlighted the possibility of using selected decision-making variables as the master elements for combining multiple sources of influence. He can be interpreted as asking the question: How do decision makers interpret and integrate the various potential sources of outside influence? The question introduces the assumption that if we can understand those dynamics, decision making can serve as the integrating mechanism for multi-source explanations of foreign policy. As shall be indicated below, we believe this perspective continues to be at the cutting edge of theory-building efforts in the field.

#### Rudolph J. Rummel

Few social scientists have devoted their professional careers with more singularity of purpose than R. J. Rummel. Yet relatively few foreign policy scholars appear to have more than a passing familiarity with his Dimensionality of Nations (DON) project (Rummel, 1972, 1977, 1979a). It may be that they are intimidated by its axiomatic and formal presentation or that they fail to see the applicability of the research to CFP. We believe, however, that Rummel has made several valuable contributions. He has examined how the difference in the characteristics of pairs of nations influences their likelihood of conflict. This inquiry parallels the interest of a number of those in CFP with the

relationship between national attributes and foreign policy behavior.

From the beginning, Rummel carefully specified conflict behavior as the kind of foreign policy activity whose variability he sought to interpret. Moreover, he formulated explicit hypotheses relating explanatory variables to conflict behavior. Initially his investigation of hypotheses appeared to fall in the tradition which both Rosenau and Brecher advocated and which Zinnes (1976a) characterized as *ad hoc* hypothesis testing. The construction of theory through the testing and cumulation of discrete hypotheses, we have noted, has roots in the neopositivist approach to science. In his further development of field theory and his subsequent grafting to it of a nation's status or rank discrepancy, Rummel abandoned the examination of discrete hypotheses for a more comprehensive set of logically connected axioms as the framework for theory.

In contrast to the other theorists we review, Rummel has confined himself to a narrow domain. He has opted to attend only to explanatory variables that can be constructed from national attributes data and has applied them exclusively to conflict behavior. He ignores the question that concerned Snyder and Brecher about how such environmental variables are perceived or misperceived by decision makers. His critics contend that the resulting theory is largely devoid of substantive content; that is, what can be said about conflict from the theory is very limited. But in the evolution of the theory-building enterprise, Rummel's contribution remains substantial. He designated the kind of foreign policy to be explained and implicitly suggested that what might account for one kind of behavior might not do for another. He moved beyond discrete hypothesis testing and consciously developed networks of relationships among variables entering into his theory—a task that escaped many earlier contributors. Although the early interest of CFP in events data owes much to Charles McClelland (e.g., McClelland and Hoggard, 1969) and Edward Azar (e.g., Azar and Ben-Dak, 1975), clearly Rummel was one of the pioneers in its use and one of the strongest advocates of quality control with such data.

### PRINCE

William D. Coplin and Michael K. O'Leary designed and developed the Programmed International Computer Environment (PRINCE) as a heuristic device for the analysis of public policy (Coplin and O'Leary, 1972) and extended its application to the study of foreign policy (Coplin *et al.*, 1973; O'Leary, 1976). Their framework focused on issue areas and the different actors (at any level, not just the state) involved with a given issue. For a particular issue all the pertinent actors must be

identified and then each must be assigned values specifying their position on the issue (degree of support or opposition to the issue), power (capabilities to resolve the issue), salience (importance of issue to the actor) and affect (friendship–hostility between actors). They address the question: How likely is a given issue to be resolved and in what direction? Weighting issue position, power, and salience equally, the PRINCE designers combine the scores for each actor on the three variables, add the resulting product for all actors, and then convert the result to a probability estimate. Affect scores are used to determine movement among actors to form coalitions and, with other variables, it indicates the likelihood of change in an actor's issue position.

PRINCE provides no insight into the impact of subjective estimates of power or position and ignores the possible effects and dynamics that shape issue positions that had concerned Snyder, Rosenau, and Brecher. Whether the relationship among variables as they actually operate can be adequately captured by simple arithmetical procedures involves an assumption whose validity invites inspection. Yet, in the development of foreign policy theory building, PRINCE addresses a previously badly neglected component—the specification of a robust dependent variable. Rummel's work on conflict provided conceptual and empirical work on one kind of policy, but neglected everything else. Brecher offered a fourfold classification of issue areas, as did Rosenau, but neither devoted much attention to their conceptualization or component elements. Coplin, O'Leary and their associates also pose the question whether actors aggregated at the level of national governments or ruling political parties constitute the most appropriate level for determining foreign policy outcomes.

### Interstate Behavior Analysis (IBA)

This project headed by Jonathan Wilkenfeld and involving a number of his colleagues entailed one of the most ambitious theoretical models yet designed for empirical investigation (see Wilkenfeld *et al.*, 1980). Wilkenfeld and his associates included a broad array of explanatory variables at multiple levels of explanation (i.e., psychological, political, societal, interstate, and global). Similarly, they incorporated a diversity of foreign policy behaviors reduced to several underlying dimensions through factor analysis. Nation types—following the vision of Rosenau of his pre-theories essay—served as mediating elements between the explanatory variables and the dimensions of behavior. A statistical technique, partial least squares (modified with a regression to permit the introduction of the mediating variables) not only constituted the empirical procedure to test the model, but also



provided the logic by which the relationships among variables were established.

Permitting the statistical procedure to determine the nature of the relationships linking the model's variables raises serious questions. Unless the researchers can demonstrate that the method of combining variables in the statistical technique approximates that found in the actual world of foreign policy making, then the validity of the operation appears open to major challenge. Also, the slippage between the conceptualization of the model's variables and the empirical indicators of those variables frequently seems substantial. It demonstrates the continuing difficulty of establishing cross-national data sets on a number of variables judged to be important sources of foreign policy.

Whatever the disappointment with some aspects of the Interstate Behavior Analysis project, it undeniably "pushed the edge of the envelope." In some important respects, Wilkenfeld and his associates substantially elaborated the Rosenau pre-theories model and subjected it to an empirical investigation. They adopted his orienting research question about the relative potency of explanatory variables. But they did more than that. They recognized that the multiple sources of foreign policy explanation must somehow be combined or integrated in a fashion permitting empirical inquiry. They recognized that the diversity in foreign policy outputs must be accounted for in a comprehensive model. They share the belief of several earlier theorists that the fashion in which explanatory variables operated might vary considerably in different types of nations.

## CREON

The reader will instantly recognize that the authors cannot review the contribution of the theoretical enterprise of which we are a part in the same manner as we have assessed previous efforts. Acknowledging that our presentation of the Comparative Research on the Events of Nations (CREON) project will not be identical in composition to our account of other efforts, we include it because we view it as building on the previous theoretical efforts and as continuing the development process to which they all have contributed. Although the CREON Project began some years ago (e.g., see Hermann *et al.*, 1973; East *et al.*, 1978), the project continues to evolve as one of the current inheritors of the tradition we trace back to Snyder.

The CREON investigators share a concern with the fundamental question: When faced with a given type of problem in a specified set of circumstances, what kind of behavior (if any)—out of the repertory of possible actions—is a national government most likely to initiate and

why? Thus, the focus is on estimating the likelihood of a particular kind of behavior viewed as one of a series of discrete actions. This can be contrasted with the frequent interests of foreign policy researchers in accounting for general patterns of a nation's policy that emerge across time. The members of the CREON project also have devoted considerable energy to the conceptualization and measurement of the behavior that comprises these discrete actions. Concluding that behaviors are the element of foreign policies most observable on a cross-national basis, we have elected to disaggregate foreign policy behaviors into universal constituent properties. Among these are level of commitment, degree of affect, kind of instrument, and nature of recipient. When combined in specific ways these properties produce the behaviors of various types with which we all are familiar (Callahan *et al.*, 1982; Hermann and Dixon, 1984).

A second fundamental question of primary interest among those in the CREON project is what combination of explanatory variables best accounts for or forecasts the observable behavior? Rather than ask which class of explanatory variables contribute the most to foreign policy (i.e., the relative potency question), we have an ultimate desire to combine variables in a multi-level design. It is our expectation that some integration of source variables—using a substantively based explanation or logic—will yield accuracies in characterizing expected behaviors beyond that obtainable from any source variables used in isolation. We intend to subject this expectation to empirical investigation.

CREON consists of a series of components each of which introduces a set of explanatory variables that are expected to be an important contributor to estimating the most likely behavior. Each component set of variables contains its own set of theoretical expectations that enable us to isolate its effect on foreign policy behavior. The components are: (1) foreign policy problem, (2) external or situational predisposition, (3) domestic attributes and conditions (i.e., political economy), (4) domestic opposition, and (5) decision unit and political choice. Another chapter in this volume describes the decision unit and political choice component (Chapter 16). The chapter (17) by Hagan describes work related to the political opposition component. In the future our intention is to construct one or more integrative or overarching decision-making frameworks that will take into account each of these components as the relevant decision makers would be expected to perceive and synthesize them. Thus, decision making is seen as the integrative control mechanism which, of course, is capable of distorting or misrepresenting some of the component effects as well as, on occasion, producing their accurate integration (Hermann and Hermann, 1985).

## Conclusions

How should we assess the theory-building enterprise in the comparative study of foreign policy over the past several decades? If, in the spirit of neopositivists, we expect continuously growing stockpiles of confirmed hypotheses that ever more adequately describe the world of foreign policy, then the record of achievement may seem disappointing. It is not only the lack of empirically investigated hypotheses that is disappointing (as noted, some do exist); but also the widely shared impression that the collective set of propositions reveals to us no more about foreign policy than each of the individual findings.

If we expected a normal science with a widely accepted paradigm in the Kuhnian sense, then we again must acknowledge disappointment. Kegley (1980) is most likely correct in suggesting that Rosenau's pre-theory came somewhat closer than anything to date in that it organized for a brief period the research agenda of a number of independent scholars. Yet it takes nothing away from Rosenau's achievement to recognize that it lacked the fundamental characteristics of a Kuhnian paradigm.

And yet a well-read and thoughtful scholar starting to work today on theory development in CFP has a significant theory-building heritage that his or her early predecessors lacked. Of course Snyder had important intellectual foundations for his work in 1954, as did Rosenau somewhat more than a decade later. But with respect to theoretical insight into foreign policy, they did not have the advantage of the cumulative theoretical efforts which they and others have gradually compiled for us today. It may be stretching too far to call these various contributions (as well as others we have not discussed) a research program in the spirit of Lakatos (1970). We do not yet have much in the way of competing theories accounting for the same substantive content. Nevertheless, we find evidence in the collective work reviewed, as well as that found in some other contributors, of cumulation in theoretical comprehension and in the conceptual development of foreign policy. Adopting a Lakatos perspective, we believe we can identify in past theory efforts the foundations of a collective research program. We are able to specify some of the building blocks that have been assembled.

Now more than before, there is a broader recognition of the need to specify explicitly the nature of foreign policy behavior to be examined thanks to the progressive efforts of Rosenau, Brecher, and particularly the PRINCE associates. Likewise it has become clear that fuller explanations of foreign policy phenomena require multi-level and multi-variable explanatory frameworks. We have had a series of efforts

trying to address this integrative task more adequately from the early lists of Snyder and Rosenau to the statistical models of Wilkenfeld and his colleagues. Furthermore, there is a greater sensitivity to the temporal/spatial constraints inherent in any social theory, whether this is partially achieved by use of types of nation-states as Rosenau and Wilkenfeld have done or in terms of issue-areas as proposed by Coplin and O'Leary. Both internal and external sources of foreign policy behavior are increasingly recognized as mutually essential parts of any theoretical framework as a result of the efforts of scholars like Brecher. (Of course the particular mix of factors is still the subject of considerable disagreement). An adequate theory of foreign policy, as the progressive efforts of Rummel among others has shown, must have explicit substantive content. This means that the logic linking various components of a framework cannot be simply represented as statistical decision rules. Finally, some attention has been directed to the dynamic properties of the phenomenon to be modeled (e.g., Brecher's systems perspective; and Rummel's changing status discrepancies).

Expectations about theory development in the comparative study of foreign policy certainly shape our evaluations of what has been achieved. From our point of view, however, the situation is not unlike that facing Tom Sawyer on attending his own funeral and concluding that reports of his demise seemed rather premature. So also it seems to us are some judgments about the comparative study of foreign policy. Future theory builders in the area can start from a base that did not exist 20 years ago. Given that achievement, some optimism about the prospects in the years ahead is reasonable.

## Notes

- 1 The frequent use of the acronym CFP and of phrases such as "the comparative study of foreign policy" may lead to misunderstanding if not properly clarified. The use of such terms to characterize the activities of a collection of scholars may create the impression of a tightly knit group, all of whom interact continuously with one another and share a common set of beliefs about their intellectual enterprise. While some scholars did engage in frequent exchanges, many who have contributed to the comparative study of foreign policy were part of no organized group nor would all agree upon a narrow conceptualization of the field. The reader should therefore not allow our shorthand references to CFP and our summary statements to create the image of a monolithic group of scholars which in fact never existed. Our statements should suggest broader perspectives, perhaps akin to the notion of central tendencies in the field.
- 2 The ICFP should not be confused with CFP. The former was a coherent group of scholars working on some shared programs while the latter is a shorthand way of making reference to efforts in the field.

3 Some have stressed that the comparative study of foreign policy also includes comparisons of a system through time as well as comparisons across units. To date, however, no careful specification of the requirement for longitudinal comparison of different states of the same foreign policy system have been developed by anyone in the field. Similarly underdeveloped is the comparison of foreign policy among non-nation units despite such initial efforts as those of Mansbach, Ferguson and Lampert (1976).

4 The contributions to CFP theory development reviewed in this essay should be regarded as representative of what we regard as major trends and developments. Those included illustrate theory building by researchers who would appear to share a commitment to (a) more comprehensive theories involving multiple sources of explanation, (b) a consciously cross-national orientation, that is, theory applicable to more than one country or actor, and (c) an intent to fashion theories that can be subjected to empirical investigation by scientific methods. Our review is not intended to be exhaustive. In a more comprehensive review a strong case could be made for the inclusion of the innovative work of Choucri and North (1975) who relate select national attributes to conflict behavior according to an explicit interpretive theory or the efforts of McGowan (1974) to formalize a theory of foreign policy adaptation. A similar argument could be made for the examination of national elite beliefs by Bobrow *et al.* (1979), of individual beliefs by George (1979a) and others, and of role by Walker (see Chapter 14). If we relaxed the commitment to the scientific mode of inquiry, then certainly the studies of the effects of bureaucratic politics on foreign policy (e.g., Allison, 1971) deserve attention. Except for reference to our own work on the CREON project, we have excluded consideration of still emerging developments such as applications of artificial intelligence to foreign policy or international political economy as reviewed by Moon in Chapter 3.

## Political Economy Approaches to the Comparative Study of Foreign Policy

BRUCE E. MOON

As witnessed by the existence of this volume and the conference which spawned it, there is little doubt that the current state of comparative foreign policy theory mandates the exploration of "new directions". Against that backdrop, this chapter offers a brief diagnosis of the existing literature's shortcomings and a sketch of an alternative approach built upon political economy conceptions that have generated considerable interest in related areas. In particular, the theoretical treatment of the state and the sources of its behavior are considered and key elements of that behavior are identified. A broad framework for understanding linkages between various aspects of foreign policy behavior illustrates the potential of political economy approaches.

## Contemporary Comparative Foreign Policy Research

Many have lamented the continuing absence of theoretical integration in contemporary comparative foreign policy research (Rosenau, 1976a; Rosati, 1985; Kegley, Chapter 13; Powell, Dyson and Purkitt, Chapter 11). Despite a body of *ad hoc* middle-range propositions held together by methodological orthodoxy, there is no sense of a cumulative enterprise centered around a coherent and widely shared set of assumptions. Indeed, there is little common currency of concepts, no consistently applied theoretical perspectives, and few agreements about the important issues to be addressed.