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The Two Cultures of Academia and Policy-Making: Bridging the Gap¹

Alexander L. George
Stanford University

Different approaches to foreign policy taken by academic scholars and practitioners of foreign policy are identified. The gulf between these "two cultures" can be bridged by focusing on the relationship of knowledge to action in the conduct of foreign policy. Thus, in order to select viable strategies in dealing with other countries, policymakers need three types of knowledge that academic scholars can help to produce. These three types of knowledge are (1) conceptual models of each strategy (e.g., deterrence, coercive diplomacy, crisis management, crisis resolution, cooperation, etc.); (2) general ("generic") knowledge of conditions that favor successful employment of each strategy; and (3) actor-specific models of the values, mind-sets, behavioral styles, internal politics, and culture of actors toward whom the strategies may be directed. The essay points out how these three types of knowledge can help to bridge the gap between the theory and practice of foreign policy.

KEY WORDS: foreign policy; theory and practice; strategy; knowledge for statecraft.

In 1966, while still a member of the RAND Corporation, I became impressed with the need to supplement efforts to formulate general theories of international relations with theories having greater relevance for the conduct of foreign policy. To this end I initiated a small research project, "Theory and Practice in International Relations." Later, upon moving to Stanford University in 1968 I elaborated the title to "Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy" and this has remained the focus of my research program and, in one way or another, of most of my studies since then.

¹This paper draws on a more detailed study prepared later for the United States Institute of Peace (1993), and is a slightly revised version of a paper presented at the 33rd Annual Convention, International Studies Association, Atlanta, Georgia, 31 March–4 April 1992.

Quite early in implementing this research program, I concluded (for reasons detailed later in this paper) that it would be necessary to move beyond structural-realist theory, rational choice theory, and game theoretic approaches. These approaches “black-box” decision-making and strategic interaction and deal with these processes by assumption. Instead, I felt it necessary to engage in direct but admittedly difficult empirical study of decision-making processes and strategic interaction between actors. However, I do not regard deductive and empirical ways of approaching the task of developing international relations theory as antithetical. Rather, like many other researchers, I believe that the development of both deductive and empirical approaches can be improved by closer interaction between them.

I found it useful in developing policy-relevant theory, which I regard as the type of knowledge needed for what historians used to refer to as “statecraft,” to distinguish between two types of theory.² “Substantive theory,” the first type, deals with standard foreign policy undertakings and strategies such as deterrence, crisis management, coercive diplomacy, war termination, mediation and dispute resolution, or security cooperation. In selecting some of these foreign policy activities for systematic study, I was guided by historical events that demonstrated that a better knowledge base was needed by U.S. leaders for managing Cold War crises so as to avoid war. My interest in studying deterrence, for example, was aroused by the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, which I regarded as a conflict that could well have been avoided. Similarly, what seemed to me another, avoidable war later that year in Korea—this time with the People’s Republic of China—aroused my interest in understanding better the requirements and modalities of crisis management. Later, again reacting to what I regarded as a misguided, flawed American policy, I began to study the limitations of coercive diplomacy after observing the abortive U.S. effort to use air power in early 1965 to intimidate North Vietnam. Some years later, I initiated a large collaborative study in order to understand why U.S.-Soviet efforts to cooperate on security issues since the end of World War II were sometimes successful and failed on other occasions.

In a recent study for the United States Institute of Peace, I found that four of the six strategies the United States employed in dealing with Iraq after the Iran-Iraq war failed in part because policy-makers did not have adequate conceptual and generic knowledge of these strategies. Employed sequentially during the period 1988–1991, these six strategies were (1) the effort to resocialize an “outlaw” state and to reform a “rogue” leader; (2) appeasement; (3) deterrence; (4) reassurance; (5) coercive diplomacy; (6) use of military force and ceasefire terms for achieving postwar political objectives. Only for deterrence and coer-

²I use the word “theory” to encompass a broad range of ways of formulating knowledge that come out of the scholarly tradition.

cive diplomacy did officials of the Bush administration have adequate conceptual and empirical knowledge of these strategies, which failed for other reasons.

“Process theory,” on the other hand, focuses on how to structure and manage the policy-making process to improve information-processing and judgment so as to increase the likelihood of better decisions. My research on these matters was stimulated by case studies that pointed to various “malfunctions” of the U.S. policy-making system. My conception of the contribution that process theory should make to better decisions is a broad one. It rejects placing reliance on the criterion of “technical rationality” and emphasizes that the policy-making process needs to be sensitive as well to the broader criterion of “value rationality” and to normative considerations (George, 1984; 1976, pp. 114–119; George, Hall & Simons, 1971, pp. ix–xviii; George & Smoke, 1974, pp. 616–642; Smoke & George, 1973).

Both substantive theory and process theory are needed; they complement each other in contributing to efforts to improve the analytic component and effectiveness of foreign policy. Quite obviously, substantive knowledge of foreign affairs can have no impact on policy unless it enters into the process of policy-making. The present paper deals only with substantive theory, and it begins by noting some of the difficulties encountered in developing general knowledge of these instruments of statecraft and in making use of such knowledge in policy-making.

THE TWO CULTURES

The development of theory about international relations by academic scholars and the use of this knowledge by practitioners³ in the conduct of foreign policy has been handicapped by the different cultures in which they have traditionally resided. Members of these two communities have been socialized in quite different professional and intellectual worlds. They generally define their interest in the subject of international relations differently and have pursued different objectives; and, not surprisingly, for all these reasons they have difficulty communicating with each other. An additional obstacle to bridging the two cultures is the reluctance of some academic scholars, particularly when they disagree with foreign policies of the government, to serve as “technicians” for

³I use the term “practitioners” broadly to include specialists who make different kinds of contributions to the policy-making process. In addition to central decision-makers, this includes advisers, policy analysts, intelligence specialists, functional and area experts. There are important differences in perspective toward scholarly research and its relevance to policy-making between political-level officials (elected or appointed) and career professionals who serve at lower levels in the government. The former are more action-oriented, the latter more likely to give attention to the analysis of policy issues and to be more receptive to the work and views of academic scholars.

the state by providing specialized knowledge that may be "misused"; such scholars prefer the role of critic and that of the "unattached intellectual" (Weiss & Bucuvalas, 1980).

With the passage of time, however, there has been some erosion of the gulf between the two communities. As academically trained specialists in international affairs and academic scholars themselves have moved in and out of government service, and as former foreign policy practitioners have found places in academia, a substantial intermingling of the two cultures has taken place. Many policy specialists and technical experts holding positions especially in middle levels of the policy-making hierarchy have had advanced training in international relations or in related fields. In addition to drawing upon their own familiarity with scholarly knowledge, they are likely to maintain contact with academic scholars and their publications. Thereby these policy specialists can serve as an informal bridge between the two worlds and increase the likelihood that relevant scholarly knowledge can be utilized in policy-making. Policy specialists in the government increasingly have tried in a variety of ways to tap and make use of the knowledge of scholars on specific policy problems. Frequently utilized for this purpose are conferences and meetings at which academic specialists meet with policy specialists to discuss a particular problem. Foundations have made important contributions in encouraging interaction between academics and policy specialists. For example, the Council on Foreign Affairs has for many years conducted a fellowship program that places carefully selected young international relations scholars in the government for a year and places mid-career policy specialists in academic centers of foreign policy and security research. As a result, progress is being made in understanding how scholarly research on international relations can benefit from the perspective and experience of the policy world and how, in turn, policy-making can benefit from the scholarly research. The objective of the present study is to further this development.

This favorable trend, however, remains quite uneven. Quite striking was the rapidity with which academic and policy-making perspectives converged after World War II in the field of strategic studies and arms control. Because this was a relatively new, wide-open field, it attracted the thoughtful interest of a number of academic scholars who had been exposed to problems of military strategy and operations during the war and who were galvanized by the new challenge of understanding the impact of nuclear weapons on strategy and foreign policy. In fact, much of the impetus and some of the most important early contributions to the new field of strategic studies and arms control were made by civilians such as Bernard Brodie, William Kaufmann, Herman Kahn, and others, and by members of the new postwar think tanks such as the RAND Corporation. International law appears to be another subfield of international relations in which there has been good two-way communication between specialists on the subject within the government and academic scholars in the subfield. And it may be that with the

infusion of economists into government departments concerned with foreign policy, academic and policy-making perspectives in related issue areas have come closer together.

But progress in bridging the two worlds of policy-making and academia has been much slower and more difficult in other basic dimensions of foreign policy having to do with the role of force and threats of force in the conduct of diplomacy, and in the various dimensions of conflict management. And though there are striking exceptions, even less appears to have been accomplished thus far in bringing about more fruitful, sustained interplay between the academic and the practitioner in the important issue-areas of conflict avoidance and conflict resolution, and more generally in the study of international cooperation and long-term change in the international system.

The intermingling of scholars and practitioners in each other's worlds offers important opportunities for learning how to make additional progress in bridging the gap between the two cultures and their traditional perspectives. It is just this opportunity and challenge that has motivated the present study. It is well to begin by clearing some of the underbrush that still stands in the way and to formulate a common ground on which productive two-way interaction can take place between the theoretical approach to study of international relations pursued in academia and the practitioner's need for the kind of knowledge that can facilitate formulation of sounder, more effective policy. That common ground, it will be suggested here, is to be found in the relationship between knowledge and action.

I shall consider first some typical reservations, *whether wholly justified or not*, that many (though not all) practitioners of foreign policy and many academic international relations scholars have about each other's approach to the subject (Rothstein, 1972; Druckman & Hopmann, 1989; Caplan, Morrison & Stambaugh, 1975; Weiss & Bucuvalas, 1980). I hope that the reader will keep in mind that this is a highly condensed characterization of reservations about each other held by academics and policy specialists, and that there is considerable variation in the views held by members of both groups. Later I shall offer a different set of observations regarding how the relationship between knowledge and action can be conceptualized so as to provide a bridge between scholars who specialize in the production of better knowledge of international relations and policy specialists within the government whose responsibility includes using available general knowledge of this kind to produce policy analyses to assist central policy-makers to make their decisions.

PRACTITIONERS' RESERVATIONS ABOUT "ACADEMIC" THEORY

Academic specialists have often been struck by the fact that the eyes of policy specialists quickly glaze at the first mention of the word "theory" or the

phrase “scientific study of international relations.” This reaction is unsettling to academic scholars since they have been socialized in a world in which the development of theory and scientific knowledge enjoys the greatest respect and highest priority.

What lies behind and helps explain the glazing of the practitioners’ eyes? It is a certain image of academic efforts to theorize about international relations and policy-making. A familiar complaint is that academic scholars do not understand how policy is actually made, even when they undertake in case studies to follow the “paper trail” of how a particular decision was made. Lacking an understanding of the process, academics tend to overintellectualize policy-making and exaggerate the importance of “analytic rationality” as the criterion on the basis of which policy is, or at least ought to be, chosen.

And even when the results of scholarly research are potentially relevant, the results of scholarly research are underutilized for another reason. Thus, not a few policy specialists exposed to the scholarly literature have concluded that most university professors seem interested in writing largely for one another and have little inclination or ability to communicate their knowledge in terms comprehensible to policy-makers. Some practitioners are acutely uncomfortable with the unfamiliar and, to them, pretentious jargon with which their activities are described and the esoteric explanations given their behavior. One may recall in this connection Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s tongue-in-cheek response when he became aware of the way in which his role in the U.S. decision of late June 1950 to come to the assistance of South Korea had been referred to in a scholarly study. Acheson professed to take exception to being treated as a “dependent variable” in this study, observing dryly that he would have thought that it would be obvious that he had played the role of an “independent variable” in that crisis!

Practitioners also object to what they judge to be a heroic but misguided effort by academicians to put foreign policy on a scientific basis. Insisting that statecraft is an art and not a science, practitioners emphasize the role of judgment in making policy decisions. Some years ago George Ball, then undersecretary of state, emphasized this point in describing the complexity of the problem he and his colleagues had faced during the Cuban Missile Crisis:

We were presented . . . with an equation of compound variables and multiple unknowns. No one has yet devised a computer that will digest such raw data as was available to us and promptly print out a recommended course of action. (Ball, 1962, pp. 987–991)

How do policy specialists respond to quantitative studies produced by academic scholars who attempt to account for war and other foreign policy outcomes by means of statistical correlations? Quantitative studies may claim, for example, to “account for” (but not necessarily explain) 75% of the variance in the outcome of many instances of a particular phenomenon. Such studies may provide the policy-maker with a useful indication of the probability distribution, but

of course this finding does not tell him whether the individual case he is confronted with falls in that group or is among the 25% that are not accounted for by the statistical study. A more important dissatisfaction with this type of study for the policy-maker stems from the fact that it typically ignores domestic political and decision-making variables. The policy relevance of such studies is limited, therefore, because they do not include variables over which the policy-maker has some leverage, which he can try to exercise in order to influence outcomes. Therefore, such studies give the policy-maker no help in deciding what he can do to avoid unwanted outcomes and to achieve desired ones.

More generally, the gap between academic scholars and practitioners reflects the difference between their professional missions. Academics aim at increasing general knowledge and wisdom about international relations; practitioners are more interested in the type of knowledge that increases their ability to influence and control the course of events. In the role of policy-maker, the individual often adapts by becoming a "man of action": he needs less complicated diagnoses of problems and simpler "answers" to them in order to respond at all. It is not surprising that policy specialists should "want short, precise answers to problems rapidly. . . . But the academic cannot give a short answer to a policymaker's question—not because the academic is long-winded or pretentious, but because [it appears to him that] that short answer is in fact not an answer . . ." (Post & Ezekial, 1990, p. 506).

Similarly, the practitioner finds it difficult to make much use of academic approaches such as structural-realist theory and game theory which assume that all state actors are alike and can be expected to behave in the same way in given situations, and which rest on the simple uncomplicated assumption that states can be regarded as rational unitary actors. As against this, practitioners believe they need to work with "actor-specific" models that grasp the different internal structures and behavioral patterns of each state and leader with which they must deal. Similarly, although practitioners can accept the academician's argument that the assumption of pure rationality is a powerful tool for the construction of theory, they are more impressed with the caveat that sophisticated academicians add, to the effect that the validity of such theories of course must be established by empirical research that examines their "fit" with reality.

Practitioners have a similar reservation when encouraged to use new psychological theories developed under carefully controlled laboratory conditions that purport to—and indeed do—have relevance for some aspects of foreign policy. Perhaps drawing on their memory of undergraduate psychology courses, policy specialists recall that experimental psychologists themselves emphasize that it remains to be seen whether theories that have emerged from carefully circumscribed and controlled laboratory conditions have "external validity" when an attempt is made to apply them to the greater complexity and messiness of real-world situations.

Policy specialists also believe that there is often good reason to question the results of studies produced by academic scholars that explain and evaluate foreign policy decisions. Policy-makers suspect that scholarly studies are not always "objective," even though dressed up to look that way, but that they contain a political or ideological bias. Given the proliferation of competitive "advocacy analysis" in the ever-expanding world of think tanks and academic centers, policy-makers can find excuses and justification for rejecting those studies that do not fit their own policy orientations and rely instead on those that do.

Then, too, the database utilized in scholarly studies, policy specialists argue, is often inadequate and can distort the scholar's interpretations. Not only is access to classified information for such studies limited, available declassified information does not give the whole picture and may introduce flaws in the interpretations. Similarly, data a scholar obtains from current or former policy-makers are subject to a variety of limitations that the scholar is often unaware of or does not adequately take into account. In some cases a scholar relies too uncritically on information about an unsuccessful policy provided by policy specialists lower down in the hierarchy, who say in effect, "We had the correct analysis of the problem and the right answer, but higher-ups didn't listen."

Finally, the practitioner is often wary of theories and generalizations produced in academic research that purport to provide policy advice. A strong reservation of this kind was expressed by Richard Goodwin (1968), a former policy adviser in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, in a sharply critical review some years ago of the book *Arms and Influence* written by Thomas Schelling, a leading strategic theorist. For Goodwin, Schelling's book "raises troubling questions about the growing body of social-science literature devoted to military theory." Goodwin rejected the view that what Schelling called "the diplomacy of violence" can be the subject of systematic theory and marshalled several familiar arguments to buttress his conclusion. For Goodwin history is *sui generis* and therefore to generalize from one historical crisis to another is dangerous and "almost guarantees error." In any case, the task of developing valid generalizations is, according to Goodwin, virtually insuperable. And even if some sort of generalization were somehow derived, its relevance to any immediate policy problem could not be determined, since in almost any situation decision-makers must act without knowing all the facts, and the variables in the situation "are so numerous that they elude analysis." These concerns led Goodwin to put forward a sober warning: "The most profound objection to this kind of strategic theory is not its limited usefulness but its danger, for it can lead us to believe we have an understanding of events and a control over their flow which we do not have" (1968, pp. 19–20). I shall return to Goodwin's concern later in this article.

ACADEMIC SCHOLARS' RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE POLICY WORLD

Although specialists in the study of international relations sharply disagree among themselves over questions of method and theory, many share the belief that policy-makers are too aconceptual and atheoretical, even anticonceptual and antitheoretical. At the same time, academic scholars note that policy-makers and their advisers often do operate with a general view of international politics influenced by their acquaintance with realist theory and such related concepts as "national interest" and "balance of power." Academic specialists express concern, however, that the realist theory that shapes the mind-set of these policy-makers is a warmed-over and simplified version of Hans Morgenthau's influential post-World War II textbook, *Politics Among Nations*, and similar efforts by others in that era to steer American foreign policy away from what they considered to be a well-meaning but naively idealist orientation. These academic scholars hope that policy-makers do not take at face value Morgenthau's dubious contentions that "power" is and ought to be the dominant objective of foreign policy; that the "national interest" is an objective, scientific criterion that can provide the decision-maker with firm guidance in choosing policies; and that "ideology" is merely rhetorical justification for policy and does not (and should not) play any role in determining a nation's policy. Elements of this earlier classical realist theory have been criticized and reformulated since then by a new generation of academic scholars.

The simplified and dated view of realist theory employed by many policy-makers is seen by academics as part of a larger problem. Granted that policy specialists and top policy-makers come into government with "intellectual capital" derived from earlier education and other relevant experience, their work in government provides most of them with little opportunity for replenishing and updating their knowledge. Full-time work in government offers inadequate opportunity and little inclination for keeping abreast of relevant scholarly knowledge. More than one policy-maker has expressed concern that over time one uses up and exhausts one's intellectual capital.⁴ Some policy professionals, academic scholars find, tend to have a fixed body of knowledge which is relatively impervious to outside influence and challenge. Commenting on this state of affairs, some scholars who have had opportunities to participate in and observe poli-

⁴Zbigniew Brzezinski, for example, states in his memoir that during his four years as President Carter's national security adviser, "I was very conscious of the degree to which my intellectual arsenal was becoming depleted in the course of a continuous race against time. There was hardly ever any time to think systematically, to reexamine views, or simply to reflect. A broader historical perspective and a sense of direction are the prerequisites for sound policy making, and both tend gradually to become victims of in-house official doctrine and outlook and of the pressure toward compromise" (1983, p. 514).

cymaking speak of the policy professionals' "resistance to knowing" what they do not already know.

Academics are skeptical of claims that the intuitive judgment and "experience" of policy specialists suffices to ensure sound foreign policy decisions, that they need not make use of what academics refer to as "theory" and systematic empirical knowledge regarding the uses and limitations of the various instruments of statecraft. Academics also point out that in fact, whether policy-makers realize it or not, they do use "theory," though usually in the form of a variety of implicit assumptions, beliefs, and maxims that are seldom raised to full consciousness and examined critically. Policy beliefs and maxims of this kind emerge from an individual's personal or vicarious experience of past historical events and from "lessons" of the past passed on from earlier generations of policy-makers. And such policy beliefs and historical analogies are usually rather simple, uncomplicated formulations of causal relationships. An example of this is the familiar proposition derived from the experience of the '30s that was and remains influential in shaping American policy, namely: "If appeasement, then World War III," or as it is often worded, "If we appease the opponent now we shall have to fight a much larger war against him later."

To the academician, simple generalizations of this kind seriously oversimplify the complexity of foreign policy strategies and outcomes. They should be replaced by "conditional" generalizations—thus, one needs to ask "*under what conditions* is appeasement counterproductive and when does it serve to increase the likelihood of war?" And also "*under what different conditions* is appeasement a useful, viable strategy for conflict resolution?" Systematic study of a variety of historical cases and more thoughtful reflection, the academician argues, are needed to provide discriminating conditional generalizations of this kind. (At the same time, however, it must be said, academic scholars have yet to produce a systematic, empirically grounded, and differentiated theory of appeasement!)

A related criticism singles out the policy-maker's habit of relying upon and often misusing a single historical precedent or analogy (Neustadt & May, 1986; Vertzberger, 1990, Chapter 6; Jervis, 1976; Khong, 1992). Policy-makers and those who, like Richard Goodwin, reflect their perspective often maintain that history is *sui generis*, that each case they have to deal with is unique; nonetheless, this conviction does not dissuade them from searching for and using a historical analogy to help them to deal with a "unique" case. As seen by academicians, policy specialists seem to have no interest in cumulating "lessons" from a number of different historical cases and no effective method for doing so. As a result, so academicians believe, what the policy-maker learns from history often does not take into account and digest properly a broader range and variety of relevant historical experience and, therefore, is of dubious validity.

For these and other reasons, academic scholars believe that policy-makers need to develop a better understanding of how their own beliefs and tacit assump-

tions about the international system, international politics, and other actors in the state system influence their perception of developments, their diagnoses of situations, and their judgments. Academics, therefore, are very much in agreement with the observation made many years ago by a former State department planner, Louis Halle, that the foreign policy of a nation addresses itself not to the external world per se but rather to “the *image* of the external world,” that is in the minds of those who make foreign policy. Halle concluded his book on American foreign policy with a sober warning: “In the degree that the image is false, actually and philosophically false, no technicians, however, proficient, can make the policy that it is based on it sound”⁵ (Halle, 1960). Accordingly, academic specialists suggest, practitioners should recognize the importance of subjecting the operative beliefs and policy maxims they rely upon to scrutiny via scholarly studies of a broader range of historical experience.

Finally, academic specialists believe that in choosing a policy, decision-makers are too often swayed by political considerations of one kind or another rather than by the results of objective analysis. According to this view, policy-makers are perceived as less inclined to choose the best policy than one that commands greater political support and avoids too much controversy. Another criticism is that even when good policies are announced this is done largely in order to be able to say that the administration does have a policy but one to which it assigns low priority and does little to implement. At the same time, it must be said that many academic scholars do not understand or sympathize with the fact that policy-makers must deal with difficult trade-off dilemmas between the quality of a policy, the need for consensus, and the effective use of time and political resources.

* * * *

I have called attention to the somewhat different conceptions of knowledge about international affairs that are valued most in academia and in the world of policy-making. Also contributing to the gulf between these two cultures are the rather different socialization experiences that shape an individual’s career orientation and professional style in the worlds of academia and policy-making. Those who participate in policy-making learn that nothing much can usually be accomplished by the individual without a great deal of coordination and cooperation with others. And one gets ahead in government by being able to adapt to the norms and procedures of various kinds of group work. The policy-making process blends the search for a high-quality decision with the need for developing a degree of consensus and support. Interpersonal skills as well as analytic competence are at a premium. At the extreme, this goes so far on occasion that the

⁵By “philosophically false,” Halle probably had in mind the conceptual inadequacy of theories of international relations that ignore or minimize the importance of actors’ cognitive beliefs and mind-sets.

individual finds it preferable not to claim credit for a good idea but instead to plant it inconspicuously in the process of interacting with others.

On the other hand, as is well known, efforts to cooperate and coordinate often break down, and the policy process is then ridden by the dynamics of bureaucratic politics. When the game of bureaucratic politics cannot be tamed by strong leadership at higher levels, information and knowledge become instruments of the struggle between competing policy advocates.

Academia is less conducive to participation in group work. To get ahead one tries to differentiate one's ideas and scholarly products to give them a distinctive stamp. Importance is attached to establishing an individual reputation as against a reputation for effective participation in group work. Not surprisingly, some academics who enter government often find that the individualistic professional style into which they have been socialized encounters difficulties in the world of policy-making. However, it must also be said that other academics entering the policy world adapt all too readily to tempting opportunities to participate in influencing policy. They become absorbed in the internal politics of policy-making and lose interest in strengthening the role of scholarly knowledge in policy-making.

A COMMON GROUND: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION

The most promising way to bridge the gap between the academician and the policy-maker, I believe, is to focus on the relationship of knowledge to action in the conduct of foreign policy. That relationship, of course, must be conceptualized in a way that will speak to both academic scholars and policy specialists. What this means, more concretely, is that scholars should acquire a clear and detailed understanding of the types of knowledge that are needed by policy-makers in considering how to understand and deal with different types of foreign policy problems. Scholars can be assisted in refining their understanding of the "knowledge requirements" of practitioners to some extent by what policy specialists themselves can convey as to the kinds of knowledge they believe are needed. But since practitioners and their staff specialists may not be able to articulate knowledge requirements well enough, scholars need to study actual policy-making closely in order to identify the types of theory and knowledge that are likely to be relevant.

Since so many individuals who serve as policy specialists and in staff roles in the government have previously studied international relations in academic centers, they can and do serve as informal intellectual "brokers" between the two cultures. To the extent that they accept this role, they are in a position to draw upon and adapt the results of academic research for use in policy-making and, also, to familiarize academic specialists with the kinds of information and knowl-

edge required by policy-makers. How much interest they have in doing so and how well they perform this role, however, is another question. Nonetheless, it is useful to interview present and past former policy specialists and intelligence officers having academic backgrounds in order to draw upon their experience and to obtain suggestions for obtaining a better appreciation of the relationship between knowledge and action.

In concluding this discussion of the “two cultures,” I return to one of Richard Goodwin’s criticisms, noted earlier, of Thomas Schelling’s *Arm’s and Influence*. Goodwin argued that a “systematic theory” of the kind he (incorrectly) attributed to Schelling was impossible as well as dangerous. The criticism rests on a misunderstanding of “systematic theory” as something that seeks to provide, or seems to provide, the policy-maker with detailed, high-confidence prescriptions for action in each contingency that may arise. Such a theory, however, does not exist and is not feasible. But the choice is not between detailed, high-confidence prescriptions for action, or nothing. Instead of a focus primarily on the *prescriptive* utility of theory for policy-making, the present study argues that more immediate and feasible is the contribution that theory and generic knowledge can make to *diagnosis* of the specific situations that policy-makers must make before they decide how to deal with that situation. My assumption is that correct diagnosis of a policy problem should precede and—as in much of medical practice—is usually a prerequisite for efforts to make the best choice from among policy options. The analogy with the medical profession is an apt one since the policy-maker, too, acts as a clinician in striving to make a correct diagnosis of a problem before determining how best to prescribe for it.

The reader will note that for Goodwin’s rhetorical question whether a “systematic theory” is possible I have substituted three different questions: (1) What is the relationship between knowledge and action? (2) What kind of knowledge is most relevant for assisting policy-making? (3) How can *this* type of knowledge be developed by scholars and research specialists and how can it be employed effectively by policy-makers?⁶

THE STATE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

What, then, is the state of contemporary international relations theory and what does it contribute to the knowledge base needed for the conduct of foreign policy? Expectations in this respect should not be excessive since, as is well

⁶I do not wish to imply that knowledge exists independently of, or always prior to action. As is well-known, knowledge can be gained through action in several ways: for example, action can be undertaken to remove uncertainties, to gain additional relevant knowledge of the problem, or to “test” existing hypotheses; and past actions can be evaluated so as to draw “lessons” (whether correct or not is a different matter) and to learn more about the phenomenon of interest. (See also the discussion below of the importance of developing empirically derived conditional generalizations.)

known, theory necessarily abstracts and simplifies reality to some extent. Moreover, as the difficulties scholars have encountered in trying to explain the failure to predict the end of the Cold War has reminded us, theory must often struggle to catch up with changing realities; and in the field of international relations, it generally does better explaining what has happened than in predicting it (Jervis, 1991–1992). For various reasons, therefore, we should not expect too much from general theories of international relations, for they do not attempt and by no means claim to provide all the knowledge needed for the conduct of foreign policy.

The study of international relations lacks a single comprehensive, coherent theory. Rather, theorizing is fragmented, much of it is not very well-developed, and not surprisingly the field continues to be marked by often intense controversy. Much of the “Third Debate” currently waged by international relations theorists is focused on epistemological and normative issues. Rarely do participants in the debate ask what difference the positions they advocate makes for the development of policy-relevant knowledge (Ferguson & Mansbach, 1991). Indeed, many scholars in the field show little interest in bridging the gap between theory and practice. At the same time, however, other research on international relations theory is evolving in important directions as scholars pay increasing attention to developing knowledge that has policy relevance, broaden the agenda of problems to which theory should be applicable, and undertake more sophisticated and systematic study of the importance of cognitive, organizational and political variables (Holsti, 1989; Walt, 1991).

The dominant academic theory of international politics—variously referred to as “structural realism” or “neorealism”—deals only with basic structural features of the international system such as its “anarchical” nature, the relative distribution of power, and the importance of the balance of power. This theory draws upon the tradition of political realism which has ancient roots in the writing of Thucydides, and attempts to transform classical realism into a scientific deductive theory that focuses on the structure of the international system. The most authoritative and influential statement of neorealist theory is Kenneth Waltz’s *Theory of International Politics*. It should be noted that Waltz’s theory is a leaner version of classical realist theory that was formulated many years ago by Hans Morgenthau. It avoids questionable assumptions, ambiguities, and contradictions that Waltz and other scholars discerned in Morgenthau’s writings with respect to the central concepts of “power,” “national interest,” and “balance of power” (Waltz, 1979; 1991). At the same time, Waltz’s book has stimulated a considerable debate regarding the uses and limitations of structural-realist theory and numerous suggestions for broadening the scope of international relations theory (Keohane, 1986; Vasquez, 1983).

It should be recognized that classical realist theory was more comprehensive in scope and more ambitious in its aims than Waltz’s leaner neorealist theory.

Morgenthau, for example, claimed that his version of political realism not only could explain and predict the play of international politics but also could and ought to guide statesmen engaged in the conduct of foreign policy. In other words, Morgenthau's theory was also a theory of statecraft. In contrast, narrowing the scope of Morgenthau's theory, Waltz attempted to convert it into a scientifically respectable deductive theory, one that relies on structural attributes of the international system to generate predictions and provide a basis for explaining outcomes of international politics. We need to consider how well it achieves these goals and how much it contributes to the knowledge base needed for the conduct and understanding of foreign policy.

Although it is cast in the form of deductive theory, structural realism is not a full-fledged deductive theory since its key variables and hypotheses have not been "operationalized" in order to make predictions of outcomes of *specific* cases.⁷ In consequence, structural-realist theory can make only predictions of a probabilistic character. But since such predictions lack grounding in systematic empirical analysis of the observed relationship between relative capabilities and outcomes in a large and presumably representative sample of interactions between states, the theory cannot express probability in statistical terms and is little more than a statement of likelihood. Nor does structural realism do much by way of identifying the conditions under which it expects its predictions to materialize.

As its foremost proponents acknowledge, the few structural variables encompassed by the theory operate not as determinants but merely as *constraints*, though certainly important constraints, on choices made by policy-makers. In effect the theory warns that the relative power of states in the international system should be properly attended to by statesmen in conducting foreign policy because their failure to respect the power advantage of an adversary will likely lead to their being "punished"—either by the state's being eliminated as an actor in the system or by incurring costly setbacks in interactions with other states. This general warning is indeed highly relevant and useful, but policy-makers are still left to decide as best they can how, and by how much, their calculation of utility and risk should be influenced by power inferiority when they consider whether and how to pursue their interests in specific situations. And, as will be noted later, leaders of weak states—not deterred by the general warning conveyed by structural realism—often find successful strategies for advancing their interests in interactions with stronger states.

Particularly relevant to this discussion of the relationship of knowledge to action, therefore, is the fact that *structural realist (neorealist) theory is not a*

⁷For a rare example of a full-fledged deductive theory in the field of international relations, one that operationalizes key variables, see Bueno de Mesquita, 1981. The theory is used to generate predictions for each of a large number of specific historical cases. Whatever reservations one may have about the implementation and results of the study, it is valuable because it recognizes the need for and provides an explicit operationalization of a rational-choice type of theory.

theory of foreign policy. This was explicitly acknowledged by Waltz, who warned against expecting his theory to “explain the particular policies of states” and regarded it as an error “to mistake a theory of international politics for a theory of foreign policy.” Waltz also acknowledged that structural-realist theory “makes assumptions about the interests and motives of states, rather than explaining them.” That he regarded it as a theory of “constraints” on foreign policy rather than a theory of foreign policy was made clear in the additional observation that “what it [structural-realist theory] does explain are the constraints that confine all states” (Waltz, 1979, pp. 121–122).

Granted that structural-realist theory does not claim to be a theory of foreign policy, it is nonetheless useful for present purposes to identify its limitations from the standpoint of the knowledge base that is needed for the conduct of foreign policy. “Power” remains an elusive concept in the theory. The emphasis on the importance of the differences in power among states fails to take into account that not all the capabilities a state possesses come into play and influence the outcome of its interactions with other states. The theory fails to distinguish—and cannot distinguish—between what might be called the totality of “gross capabilities” a state possesses and the “usable options” that its leaders can employ or wish to make use of in particular situations. And yet the distinction between gross capabilities and usable options is often critical for understanding why powerful states do less well in military conflicts and trading disputes with weaker states (Aggarwal, 1985; Yoffie, 1983; George, 1971). Much of the power resources a strong state possesses may simply not be relevant or usable in some disputes with weaker states (or, indeed, with other powerful states). Weaker states often do surprisingly well in disputes with stronger states insofar as they enjoy an asymmetry of motivation in a dispute, a variable that can compensate for inferiority in overall power capabilities. What is at stake in a particular dispute may be more important to the weaker state than to its stronger rival—the “balance of interests” may work to the advantage of the weaker state and enable it to obtain a better outcome than could be predicted by the relative distribution of raw power capabilities.

Thus, if it is true, as structural-realist theory warns, that weaker states can be punished if they ignore power inferiority with strong states, it is also true, as structural-realist theory fails to add, that strong states can be punished if they ignore asymmetry of motivation that weaker states sometimes enjoy in disputes with stronger states. Nor should one overlook that strong states often have multiple, global foreign policy interests that compete with and place in perspective the particular interests engaged in a dispute with a weaker state. The more powerful state may not attach enough importance to these particular interests to warrant a heavy expenditure of resources to achieve a maximum payoff in the dispute with a weaker but highly motivated adversary.

None of these limitations of structural-realist theory are unknown to, or

denied by scholars who attach great importance to the theory. The sophistication of their understanding of the complexities and uncertainties of international relations is much broader than the scope of the theory. The point emphasized here concerns the theory itself; its inability to encompass the distinction between gross capabilities and usable options is a major limitation of the theory. The deficiency is intrinsic to the theory, not a piece of it that is accidentally missing or one that could be added without changing the very nature of the theory's exclusive focus on structural variables. Rather, the distinction between gross capabilities and usable options can be accommodated only by a different kind of theory that works with the decision-making level of analysis and studies the actual process of strategic interaction between states, both of which are deliberately excluded by structural-realist theory, which deals with them by assumptions.

Another major deficiency is the limited scope of neorealist theory. Much that goes on in relations among states, including what policy-makers are sometimes most concerned with, cannot be explained, predicted, or guided by the maxims of neorealist theory. Critics have pointed to a number of limitations of the scope of the theory, including that it does not provide much help in addressing and understanding (1) all the sources of long-term trends in the international system; (2) how to promote peaceful change in the international system; (3) how to avoid conflict and to resolve it via diplomacy; (4) how to achieve cooperation among states; and (5) how to understand and promote foreign policy "learning" by states and their leaders. Each of these important problems requires policy-makers and students of foreign policy to pay attention to variables excluded from structural-realist theory.

Still another limitation of neorealist theory is that not only are its predictions sometimes badly off the mark, which is to be expected of any theory that is capable of making only probabilistic predictions, but even its correct predictions are typically of a general character. For example, although it is true that during World War II neorealist theory would have successfully predicted that conflict would develop between the United States and the Soviet Union after their cooperation in defeating Nazi Germany, the theory could not predict whether postwar U.S.-Soviet conflict would result in a spheres-of-influence agreement, a withdrawal of the United States from Europe in favor of a hemispheric "Fortress America" security policy, a relatively benign collaborative-competitive relationship, a Cold War, or World War III. Other variables, not encompassed by neorealist theory, would have to be considered in order to try to predict or explain any of these highly different outcomes. Indeed, structural-realist theory was not designed to make more specific predictions of this kind. I am not criticizing it for not being able to do more than it was designed to do but merely pointing out the important limits of what it is capable of doing when viewed from the perspective or the knowledge base needed for the conduct of statecraft and for the explanation of important foreign policy outcomes.

In sum, although neorealist theory is an indispensable and necessary part of the knowledge needed, it is quite insufficient by itself for the study and even more insufficient for the conduct and management of international affairs. Other variables that influence foreign policy decisions and their outcomes that are not encompassed by neorealist theory—such as domestic structure and politics, ideology, belief systems, images of the opponent, various impediments to and distortions of information processing, bureaucratic politics, strategy and bargaining—need to be brought into the analytic framework. At the same time, of course, the substantial difficulty of developing theory and generalizations as to how these additional variables also affect foreign policy decisions and outcomes must be recognized.

This discussion has used the critique of structural-realist theory as an example. Other theoretical approaches also have major limitations as seen from a policy perspective. This particular theory has been used here to illustrate the limitations of theories of international relations more generally because this one is currently predominant in academic circles.

How then can progress be made in developing the additional knowledge needed for the study and conduct of foreign policy? One approach that scholars have taken is to develop empirically derived generalizations about the ways in which *each* of these additional variables—domestic politics, bureaucratic politics, or ideology, for example—influence the process of policy-making, the content of decisions taken, the implementation of politics, and their outcomes. Knowledge of this kind can indeed serve to sensitize policy specialists, if they have not already been alerted through experience, to the ways in which foreign policy can be influenced for better or worse by each of these variables. However, theories and generalizations that focus narrowly on but one of these individual causal variables are of limited utility, among other reasons because they are not linked with variation in situational contexts and with strategies and instruments of policy that practitioners employ in attempting to influence outcomes in their interactions with other states. It is to theories and knowledge about strategies that the discussion now turns, but before doing so it should be acknowledged that policy-makers need many other types of knowledge that are not discussed in this paper.

There are a host of important problems that affect the interests of individual nations and their peoples to which scholars and policy specialists must be attentive. Among these problems are proliferation of nuclear weapons and other mass destruction capabilities, environmental and ecological problems, population and demographic trends, food production and distribution, water scarcities, sanitation and health, and emergence of nationalistic, ethnic, and religious conflicts. Well-informed, objective analyses of these problems are an essential part of the knowledge requirements for conduct of foreign policy.

THEORY THAT FOCUSES ON INSTRUMENTS OF FOREIGN POLICY

More useful in policy-making than structural-realist theory and theories that deal with individual causal variables is another type of knowledge that focuses on different instruments of foreign policy, strategies, and undertakings—for example, negotiation, deterrence, economic sanctions, coercive diplomacy, crisis management, war termination, regime formation and maintenance, detente, conflict resolution, international cooperation, and so on. All of these activities involve strategic interaction between two or more states. I should note briefly that game theory can generate hypotheses about these different types of strategic interaction for assessment, refinement, or qualification by means of empirical research.

The objective of scholarly investigation is to develop for each of these strategies (1) an abstract “theory” or conceptual model that identifies the critical variables of that strategy and its general logic, and (2) general (or “generic”) knowledge of the strategy which, derived from systematic comparison of relevant historical cases, identifies those circumstances and conditions that favor the success of that type of undertaking and those other conditions associated with its failure. What I refer to as abstract theory or conceptual model can be regarded as a quasideductive theory, one that is not yet operationalized and therefore not capable of making specific predictions. Generic, empirically derived knowledge of a strategy bears a similarity, of course, to “laws” which as yet have not been fully developed or validated. Together, the abstract “theory” of a strategy and “generic knowledge”⁸ (see George and Smoke, 1974; George, 1991a) regarding its efficacy provide policy-relevant knowledge about each of these policy instruments and foreign policy undertakings.

However, it must be emphasized that although an abstract model of a strategy and generic knowledge of its workings can help to bridge the gap between theory and practice, they cannot eliminate it. *Theory and generic knowledge are best conceived as aids to policy analysis and to the judgement of the policy-maker.* Even the best knowledge of that strategy cannot substitute for

⁸Many examples of “generic knowledge” regarding a particular foreign policy strategy or undertaking could be cited. Perhaps one or two will suffice. Studies of historical cases of failures of deterrence led to the formulation of the following generalization: deterrence can fail in several different ways and for different reasons depending upon not merely whether the adversary believes that a commitment exists to defend but even in the face of such a commitment when the adversary identifies an option for challenging the status quo for which she or he believes the risks can be calculated and controlled. Similarly, studies of the effectiveness of the strategy of coercive diplomacy have identified several critically important conditions—all of a psychological character. Thus the success of the strategy often depends on creating in the opponent’s mind (1) a sense of urgency for compliance with what is demanded; (2) a belief that there is an asymmetry of motivation that favors the coercing power; and (3) a fear of unacceptable punishment if the demand is not accepted.

policy analysis that must consider whether some version of that strategy is likely to be viable in the situation at hand or substitute for the final judgment the policy-maker must exercise in deciding whether to employ that strategy in that situation.

Let us consider, therefore, how conceptual, quasideductive models and generic knowledge can contribute to policy analysis and to the judgment of the decision-maker. A conceptual model is *not* itself a strategy but merely a starting point for developing a strategy; its usefulness for policy-making is limited to providing the basic framework for understanding the general requirements for designing and implementing an effective strategy. The “logic” of the model, in turn, indicates in a general way what must be achieved in any particular situation for that strategy to be effective. Thus, for example, the logic of deterrence states that the threat to respond to an action against one’s interests should be credible and potent enough to persuade the adversary that the costs and risks of his contemplated action outweigh the expected gains. A similar logic is identified in the conceptual model of coercive diplomacy, the difference being that the objective of the threat of punishment in this strategy is to persuade the adversary to stop or undo a harmful action he has already taken. (Both these conceptual, quasideductive models, as well as those that describe other strategies, rest upon the assumption of pure, uncomplicated “rationality” on the part of the opponent, which will be discussed later.)

Conceptual models of this kind identify only the general logic of an effective strategy, not what the policy-maker would have to do to induce that logic into the adversary’s calculations. To achieve that result, the policy-maker has to convert the abstract model into a specific strategy that is tailored to the peculiar configuration of a particular situation *and* to the characteristics of that particular adversary. For example, to convert the abstract model of coercive diplomacy into a specific strategy, the policy-maker has to fill in the four empty “boxes” (variable-components) of the model: (1) what to demand of the opponent; (2) whether and how to create a sense of urgency for compliance; (3) how to create a threat of punishment for noncompliance that, hopefully, will be sufficiently credible and potent enough to induce compliance; and (4) whether to couple the threat with a positive inducement (a “carrot”) to facilitate compliance, and what kind and how much of such an inducement.

Several additional types of knowledge are needed for this purpose: (1) empirically derived generic knowledge as to how and why the strategy does or does not do well under various conditions; and (2) an actor-specific behavioral model regarding the adversary in question. Generic knowledge assists the policy analyst’s and the policy-maker’s *diagnosis of the situation*, for which they draw on available intelligence and information about the case at hand in order to judge whether the favorable conditions identified by generic knowledge for the use of the strategy exist and to identify possible obstacles and constraints that would be encountered by the strategy. Generic knowledge can also make a significant input

to *policy analysis and policy planning* that addresses the task of considering whether a specific variant of the strategy can be devised that is sufficiently tailored to the peculiar configuration of the situation and to the opponent in question so as to offer a good possibility of inducing the requisite “logic” into the calculations of the adversary.

As the discussion suggests, generic knowledge often takes the form of “conditional generalizations.” Such generalizations are referred to as “conditional” because they identify those conditions and factors that favor success and others that are associated with likely failure of the strategy.

A few examples will suffice to illustrate the nature of “conditional generalizations.” Some years ago after comparing a number of historical cases of efforts to mediate conflicts, Zartman advanced a theory of “ripeness” that identified a number of conditions which, if present in a crisis, would seem to favor the possibility of successful mediation by an outside actor. According to this conditional generalization, briefly summarized here, a crisis is ripe for mediated resolution when (1) the actors perceive that a deadlock has emerged and fear that things will get worse; (2) when they believe that a satisfactory outcome via unilateral action is no longer possible and that acceptable joint solutions may be feasible; and (3) when the side that previously had the upper hand has slipped, and the underdog has gained in strength. Zartman characterized such conditions as “a mutually hurting stalemate” (Zartman, 1985; Stedman, 1991; Haass, 1990).

Another example of conditional generalizations is provided by a study of the problems encountered in getting the recalcitrant parties in the Arab-Israeli conflict to the negotiating table. Janice Gross Stein analyzed “pre-negotiation” efforts by mediators to achieve this objective in 13 historical cases. Several conditions were identified that appeared to favor the success of such efforts. (1) At least one side must fear a looming crisis—such as the prospect of war or in the aftermath of a recent war; (2) Both sides must be persuaded that participating in a pre-negotiation process is acceptable because the “exit costs” of failure of pre-negotiation are lower (and more likely to be acceptable) than would be the case of a failure of direct negotiations; (3) Both sides must believe that prenegotiation may offer the possibility of limiting the scope, participants, and agenda of formal talks later, thus reducing some of the critical uncertainties and risks of formal negotiations; and (4) one or both sides believe that participating in prenegotiation will yield useful “side-effects” independent of whether it leads to agreement to enter formal negotiations (Stein, 1989).

How, then, can conditional generalizations and actor-specific behavioral models contribute to the policy analyst’s judgment regarding the likely outcome of employing a particular strategy in a given situation? An example is provided by the U.S. decision to employ the strategy of coercive diplomacy in the Cuban Missile Crisis. After discovering Soviet missiles in Cuba in October 1962, U.S. policy-makers felt they had to choose between undertaking a military response

and applying coercive diplomatic pressure to persuade Khrushchev to remove the missiles peacefully. Critical for this choice of policy was the question whether Soviet leaders were capable of a diplomatic “retreat” in a situation of this kind. Or was it the case that the deployment of missiles into Cuba had proceeded so far and that Soviet leaders were so committed to the daring venture that for them there could be no turning back? An answer to this question was suggested by a conditional generalization and knowledge of an important aspect of the Soviet political style derived from studies of past Soviet behavior and Soviet political doctrine (e.g., Leites, 1953). Readiness to retreat in order to extricate oneself from a situation of overwhelming danger was one of the cardinal maxims of the old Bolshevik doctrine. A good Bolshevik had to know when the time came for retreat and not let false considerations of pride or emotion get in the way. Even so, U.S. policy-makers had to judge whether *in this particular situation* they could devise appropriate means to activate the latent Soviet capability for retreating under pressure. It was concluded that the possibility existed, and President Kennedy proceeded to try coercive diplomacy based on the expectation that it might well induce a withdrawal of the missiles.

This example is useful also in conveying that generic knowledge regarding a particular strategy is itself not prescriptive; it does not tell policy-makers *whether* to undertake a course of action, nor does it tell them *how* to devise effective policy means. What generic knowledge does do is to help policy specialists formulate a specific estimate of the likelihood of success after they have made a diagnosis of the situation and applied their general knowledge of the behavioral patterns of the adversary in question in order to choose an option. (A detailed discussion of “actor-specific” behavioral models appears below.)

I have distinguished between two ways in which theory and generic knowledge can contribute to policy-making and have placed greater emphasis on the *diagnostic* contribution they can make than on their ability to *prescribe* sound choices of policy. Correct diagnosis of a policy problem should precede and—as in much medical practice—is usually a prerequisite for efforts to make the best choice from among policy options. The analogy with the medical profession is an apt one since the policy-maker, too, acts as a clinician in striving to make a correct diagnosis of a problem before determining how best to prescribe for it.

THE NEED FOR ACTOR-SPECIFIC BEHAVIORAL MODELS

As was emphasized earlier and as the Cuban Missile crisis example illustrates, essential for correct diagnosis and prescription are “actor-specific” theories regarding the values, mind-sets, behavioral styles, internal politics, and policy-making systems of other actors in the international system. Such actor-specific theories, combined with generic knowledge regarding the conditions that

favor effective use of each instrument of policy—whether negotiation, deterrence, or conciliation—will assist policy specialists to make better diagnoses of situations to which they must attend and to devise a more appropriate policy response.

The important diagnostic function of theory and generic knowledge is insufficiently appreciated and understood by many scholars. Even those engaged in developing policy-relevant theory often show little interest in the diagnostic dimension of policy-making and, instead, place reliance upon general rational-choice theory in the expectation that it should bear directly or indirectly on the selection of policy. Rational-choice theorists risk making questionable or insignificant contributions to decision-making insofar as their theories ignore the need for actor-specific models and also fail to take into account variables and circumstances that even rational policy-makers must consider in deciding how best to respond to a situation.⁹

The general assumption of “rational” actors made in game theory and in many formulations of strategies such as deterrence and coercive diplomacy has often been sharply questioned. But in conducting foreign affairs, policy-makers, too, often operate with an oversimplified image of a rational opponent who is, in effect, a “mirror image” of themselves in this respect. Instead, what is needed for policy-making and what scholars and area specialists are sometimes called upon to develop are “actor-specific” behavioral models that characterize in a more discriminating way how particular leaders or leadership groups in another state approach the difficult task of assessing situations, make utility calculations, and select a course of action that they hope will further their values and interests. In other words, the abstract model of rationality has to be supplemented or replaced by an empirically derived theory as to the values and “mind-set” of a particular actor and how *that* actor tends to deal with the various, well-known constraints on rationality in decision-making. In employing strategies such as deterrence and coercive diplomacy, and in engaging in crisis management, policy-makers need actor-specific behavioral models of the adversary in order to take into account the possibly idiosyncratic psychological, cultural, and political variables that shape and influence the adversary’s behavior.

I have emphasized that good theory and sound generic knowledge can help bridge the gap between theory and practice but that they cannot eliminate it. Theory and generic knowledge are best conceived as *aids* to policy analysis of a specific foreign policy problem and to the judgment of the policymaker. Even the

⁹In the development of game theoretical approaches and formal models, increasing recognition is being given to the need for making “auxiliary assumptions” about the actor. George Downs (1991, p. 75), for example, states that the degree of correspondence, if any, of a formal model with reality “will be strongly affected by the appropriateness of certain auxiliary assumptions . . . a well-specified formal model must implicitly make some assumption about the nature of the decision maker in each state.”

best theory and the most highly developed generic knowledge cannot *substitute* for policy analysis and for the judgment the policy-maker must make in deciding what to do.¹⁰

Understanding the limited contribution of theory and generic knowledge should not be a reason for discouragement or disillusionment. Rather, it should help all concerned to define better the conceptual models and generic knowledge that need to be developed and how best to use them in policy-making.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Scholars specializing in international relations and policy specialists within the government together face the challenging task of improving the knowledge base required for more effective foreign policy. This objective will be furthered by a better understanding of the gap between the theory and practice of foreign policy. Bridging this gap, in turn, will be facilitated if differences between the two cultures of academia and the policy-making world can be bridged. Many members of these two communities define their interest in international relations somewhat differently; they pursue different professional goals and have difficulty communicating with each other.

However, these difference need not lead to pessimism as to the prospects for more effective two-way interaction. Noteworthy is the fact that the boundaries between academia and the policy-making arena are quite permeable; there is much movement of individuals between them and many opportunities for joint discussion of policy problems. Individuals who have had experience in both worlds are in a particularly good position to contribute to bridging the gap between scholarly research on international relations and the practice of foreign policy. As a stratagem for achieving this objective, I have suggested that scholars and policy specialists put aside reservations about each other and focus instead on their shared interest in understanding better the relationship between knowledge and action.

The dominant and most prestigious scholarly theory of international relations is structural-realist theory or, as it is sometimes called, neo-realist theory. I have called attention to the limited scope of this theory when viewed from the perspective of the knowledge base required for the conduct of foreign policy. Indeed, as proponents of that theory explicitly acknowledge, it is not a theory of foreign policy; but it is precisely that kind of theory that policy-makers need!

¹⁰Many years ago, Charles Hitch, one of the founders of modern systems analysis, emphasized that even the best analysis of this kind should be regarded as an aid to the preparation of sound policy decisions and not a substitute for the judgment of the policy-maker.

Clearly, scholars who wish to contribute to the development of theory and knowledge that is relevant for the conduct of foreign policy will have to go beyond realist theory. In this paper, I have advocated that systematic research be directed toward developing three types of knowledge: better conceptualization of each strategy, empirical knowledge of the conditions which favor its success, and also more sophisticated actor-specific behavioral models of actors in international politics to replace the simple assumption made by realist-theory and other academic approaches that states are rational, unitary actors.

Although the three types of policy-relevant knowledge I have identified can indeed help bridge the gap, they cannot eliminate it. Rather, their contribution is best understood as that of making an input to policy analysis of specific issues within the government, and as providing an aid, not a substitute for judgments that decision-makers must exercise when choosing policies. Although such scholarly knowledge can generally be expected to make only an indirect contribution to policy-making, nevertheless its contribution will often be critical for the choice and implementation of sound policies.

In thinking about the kind of policy-relevant knowledge that needs to be developed, and its role in policy-making, we should give more attention to the contribution it can make to the diagnosis of problem-solving situations than to its ability to prescribe sound choices of policy. The three types of knowledge that have been identified are particularly appropriate for diagnosing situations to which a policy response must be worked out. The same cannot be said for rational-choice theories favored by some scholars, for these theories typically bypass the task of situational and contextual analysis or deal with it by assumption, and instead proceed directly to offering prescriptive advice on policy choices.

I would like to put forward a number of additional observations for discussion and further consideration. First, the types of policy-relevant knowledge identified here need not meet the most exacting requirements of science in order to contribute to the sensible conduct of foreign policy. Just as intelligent persons are generally able to manage the multiplicity of chores with which they must deal in everyday life reasonably well without benefit of scientific knowledge governing each decision they must make, so too can intelligent policy-makers make use of the best "quasi-scientific" knowledge of different aspects of international affairs. Hence, conditional generalizations regarding the efficacy of a strategy need not achieve a high degree of verification in order to retain their usefulness in policy-making. Of course, ideally, policy-makers would like the general knowledge on which they base decisions to have as high a level of verification as possible, but as a practical matter they will settle—if for no other reason than that they have to—for more modest levels of verification. Decision-makers can make responsible use of conditional generalizations even though such generalizations have limited empirical support and therefore are only plausible (Lindblom,

1990).¹¹ Policy-makers can do so by drawing on available information about the particular case in question in order to judge whether the plausible generalization is likely to hold for that situation.

Second, academic scholars should include in their research designs variables over which policy-makers have some leverage. Strategy is just such a variable.

Third, taking note of concern often expressed by policy-makers, scholars should recognize that for their research to be more relevant and useful in policy-making they should not define concepts and variables at too high a level of abstraction. The more abstract a concept, the more remote it is from its referent in the real world, and the greater and more difficult the intellectual demand on the practitioner to make that linkage and to benefit from it.

Fourth, scholars should recognize that too strict a pursuit of the scientific criterion of parsimony in their efforts at theorizing is inappropriate for developing useful policy-relevant theory and knowledge. A “rich” theory or theoretical framework—which I define as one that encompasses a relatively large number of the variables that can influence the outcome of a policy—is often more useful in policy-making than a simpler theory of narrow scope, such as structural-realist theory, that encompasses only a few causal variables. The policy-maker who has to deal with complex situations that embrace many variables gets more help from a “rich” theory, even though it enjoys less verification than from a simple, parsimonious theory that establishes a linkage of some kind between only a few of the operative variables. This does not mean that the policy-maker is reduced to making purely subjective or highly speculative judgments. Thorough verification of such “rich” theories is not a major issue for the policy-maker since, as noted earlier, he can try to assess the validity of that theory or generalization for at least the particular case at hand by using the detailed information available on that case.

A “rich” theory that embraces a larger number of policy-relevant variables is useful to the policy-maker if it meets two criteria: its contents must be at least plausible, and it must contain indications of the special conditions under which its propositions are likely to be true or false. Such a rich, differentiated theory serves at the very least as a sophisticated checklist which reminds policy analysts and policy-makers of the numerous conditions and variables that can influence their ability to achieve desired outcomes and to avoid undesired ones in any given foreign policy activity. When more fully developed, a rich, differentiated theory regarding a particular type of foreign activity identifies those conditions that “favor,” though they do not guarantee, its success. Such conditions have causal relevance even though they cannot be regarded as either “necessary” or “suffi-

¹¹A conditional generalization is “plausible” if it is not contradicted by available evidence and if some evidence, at least, supports it.

cient” conditions for a given outcome to occur (George, Hall & Simons, 1971; George 1979).

Fifth, an important objective in developing policy-applicable theory should be to produce just such *conditional generalizations*. These are more useful in policy-making than generalizations that merely assert a *probabilistic* relationship between two variables without identifying the conditions under which the relationship does and does not hold. Conditional generalizations are also more useful than *deductive theories* and *universal generalizations* that are able to claim no more than perhaps to have identified a “necessary” condition for the success of a particular policy instrument or undertaking, but have nothing to say about what in addition to the necessary condition must also be present for that favorable outcome to occur.

This is not to say, however, that it is a relatively simple research task to produce conditional generalizations. For example, despite the considerable research effort of many scholars over the years on the question “Do arms races lead to a war?”, a recent review of this literature tells us that “there is still no well-developed theory that describes the circumstances under which arms races will or will not lead to war. Nor is there a theory that provides a reliable guide for policymakers” (Downs, 1991). However, what increasingly sophisticated research on this question does permit us to say is not without value. Thus, it is clear that arms races are neither a *necessary* condition for the occurrence of war (since wars do sometimes occur in the absence of a prior arms race): nor are arms races a *sufficient* condition for war (since an arms race is not always followed by war). However, additional assessment of the relevant historical experience should make it possible at least to identify a number of conditions, which if present in a given case, can be said to favor or increase the likelihood of war. Hopefully, such a study would also identify ways in which policy-makers can act to reduce or control the likelihood that an arms race might result in war.

Sixth, but by no means least in importance, in attempting to develop conditional generalizations, scholars should consider whether the phenomenon in question is characterized by “equifinality.” This term is employed in general systems theory to refer to the fact that *similar* outcomes in different cases of a phenomenon can have *different* causal explanations. An example of equifinality was the discovery that deterrence can fail in several different ways, leading to the identification of three different causal patterns leading to deterrence failure (George & Smoke, 1974). Another example of equifinality emerged in the identification of several different paths to “inadvertent war”—that is, a war that occurs even though neither side wanted or expected it at the beginning of the crisis (George, 1991b).

The phenomenon of equifinality is in fact pervasive in much of international relations and indeed in many other areas of life, as John Stuart Mill recognized so many years ago in his *System of Logic*. Mill warned that the methods of agree-

ment and difference he outlined were not applicable to many social phenomena because their occurrence was subject to “plurality of causes.” Equifinality has important implications not only for the form that causal knowledge of foreign policy outcomes often must take but also for research strategy aimed at developing causal theory. Scholars should not assume—as they often do—that the task of developing theory and causal knowledge consists in finding a single causal generalization for all instances of an undertaking that have resulted in a similar outcome. Rather, the research task will be better pursued and be more fruitful if the investigator is alert to discovering different causal patterns that led to a similar outcome.

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