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دورية علمية محكمة

المجلد التاسع (العدد السابع عشر، يناير 2024)

The Common Denominator: A Critical Review of Theoretical Approaches to Foreign Policy Analysis ⁽¹⁾

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(1) تم تقديم البحث في 2022/11/25، وتم قبوله للنشر في 2023/3/19.

Abstract

The main question that motivated this review was if there existed a common denominator or a common string that ran through the fabric of the varying approaches to foreign policy analysis (FPA). In fact, there is. This review critically surveyed the most important of these FPA approaches, and traced that string. As observed in those approaches, the search is continuously for the subjective view of the decision-maker, which has primacy over the objective view of the analyst. Classic rationality has been the backbone of FPA for a long time, so a close critique was accorded to it. Over the years, classic rationality has been discredited, as completely unrealistic for human decision making, and was thus replaced by bounded rationality. As a result, the rational choice approach is no longer the antithesis of the gist of the cognitive approach. In that light, the once-opposites unite. The study also reviews other alternative cognitive-heuristic approaches that emerged as a reaction to the discrediting of the rational actor model. Moreover, realizing that the leader's belief system emerged as prime, it became very important to uncover the leader's belief system. As such, the most salient of the relevant cognitive approaches were critically reviewed, and one was chosen to be the most useful.

Keywords: Foreign policy analysis, cognitive school, rationality, belief systems, individual decision-maker.

المُخَصِّص

كان السؤال الرئيسي الذي حفز هذه المراجعة هو ما إذا كان هناك قاسم مشترك أو خيط مشترك يمر عبر نسيج الاقترايات المختلفة لتحليل السياسة الخارجية. في الحقيقة، هو موجود. قامت هذه المراجعة بعرض نقدي لأهم هذه الاقترايات، وتتبع ذلك الخيط. كما لوحظ في تلك الاقترايات، فإن البحث يكون دائماً عن وجهة النظر الذاتية لصانع القرار، والتي لها الأسبقية على وجهة النظر الموضوعية للمحلل. كانت الرشادة الكلاسيكية بمثابة العمود الفقري لتحليل السياسة الخارجية لفترة طويلة من الزمن، لذلك تم توجيه نقد وثيق لها. على مر السنين، فقدت الرشادة الكلاسيكية مصداقيتها، باعتبارها غير واقعية على الإطلاق لصناع القرار، وبالتالي، ظهرت بدائل معرفية، ومنها الرشادة المُقَيِّدة. كانت نتيجة للأخيرة أنه لم يعد الإطار الرشيد بالضرورة النقيض للإطار المعرفي. في ضوء

ذلك، اتسعت رُقعة القاسم المشترك. إضافة لذلك، قدمت الدراسة مراجعة للاتجاهات المعرفية التي ظهرت كبدايل، نتيجة لفقد الرشادة الكلاسيكية مصداقيتها. من ناحية أخرى، وإدراكًا لظهور النسق العقيدي للقائد كأولوية في تحليل السياسة الخارجية، أصبح من المهم جدًا الكشف عنه. على هذا النحو، تمت مراجعة أهم الاقتربات المعرفية ذات الصلة، بشكل نقدي، وتم اختيار أحدها ليكون الأكثر فائدة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل السياسة الخارجية - المدرسة المعرفية - الرشادة - نظام المعتقدات - النسق العقيدي - القائد السياسي - متخذ القرار الفرد

Approach: This review critically examines theoretical frameworks to foreign policy analysis, using both the cognitive and rational schools. It examines the main gist of the reviewed approaches in an effort to trace the common denominator to all of them. Even though the rational and cognitive schools are at the opposite ends of the spectrum, once we use a simple process of elimination, the rational school slowly moves into the domain of the cognitive school. As such, opposites unite, and the common denominator claims further ground.

Purpose: During the Cold War era, foreign policy actors had a limited scope of action. The International system dictated the rules of the game. The end of the Cold War, without a direct military confrontation between the two antagonists, greatly diluted the importance of the external determinant of foreign policy behavior in favor of the idiosyncratic determinants of decision-makers. As such, decision-making theory, incepted far earlier, in the 1950s, instantly gained more clout. Problematic was the division of decision-making theory into two opposing schools: The rational and the cognitive. Much stratification in terms of approaches abound. They provided varying angles, much to the confusion of the analyst. As such, the research question arose: Could theorists come to a consensus, whereby a common denominator between the most important theoretical approaches to foreign policy decision-making analysis actually exists? Additional questions presented themselves: Could similarities between those approaches outweigh the differences? Are the rational and cognitive schools really at the opposing ends of the spectrum? Given the importance of a leader's beliefs, how do we uncover a decision-maker's belief system? The aim of this review is double-fold. First, to trace the common denominator of approaches to foreign policy analysis. Second,

to single-out the most salient cognitive approach to uncovering a leader's belief system. The *thesis statement* of this review is as follows: Based on his political belief system, the decision maker's perception of the decision situation shapes his problem representation, and sequentially his decision choice in the form of a decision output.

Findings: After a simple process of elimination to the unrealistic facets of the rational school, the review concluded that there exists a common denominator, or one string that is weaved into the fabric of all reviewed approaches: Primacy of the political leader's subjective view, over the objective view of the analyst. Furthermore, one cognitive approach was singled out as the most suitable one to decipher a leader's worldview (belief system). A leader's perception, in terms of his political belief system, creates his problem representation, mediates facts on the ground and bounds them into the sphere of the possible; thereby producing decision alternatives, and ultimately a choice in the form of a decision output, very specific to that leader in that particular point, in both time and space.

Originality/Value: The importance of this review is double-fold. First, it bridges the gap between the seemingly opposing rational and cognitive schools. Second, it unifies theoretical frameworks of foreign policy analysis and brings attention to their common denominator.

Paper type: A review paper

Introduction

Even before its inception in the 1950s, scholars have used the decision-making approach to understand international politics. Twenty-four centuries ago, and in an effort to study the Peloponnesian wars, Thucydides analyzed two determinants of foreign policy behavior: The environmental, as well as the psychological determinant of the decision-maker (Thucydides, 1954). As such, he not only used the decision-making approach, but also the individual political leader as the unit as well as level of analysis (Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 2001, p.554).

The question that motivated this review was: As varied, different, and maybe as opposed as foreign policy analysis (FPA) approaches may be, could there be similarities? Is there one string that is weaved into the fabric of foreign policy analysis literature? In fact, there is, as will be shown in the following pages.

Even though theories of FPA abound, it is the aim of this review as well as its proposition that foreign policy decision-making approaches share a common denominator: That of the primacy of the subjective view of the decision-maker, rather than the objective view of the analyst. This is not a novel idea in the abstract sense. The novelty here is it being the *general* case with theories of foreign policy analysis, and not pertaining to particular theories. Moreover, this idea in the general sense, has a different shade with each of the varying heuristic-cognitive approaches to foreign policy decision making. The *thesis statement* of this review is as follows: Based on his political belief system, the decision maker's perception of the decision situation shapes his problem representation, and sequentially his decision choice in the form of a decision output.

According to Valerie Hudson, foreign policy analysis as a science blossomed in the 1960s through three "paradigmatic works" (Hudson, 2013, p. 16): First, the decision-making approach by Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin (Snyder, Bruck, & Sapin, 1962). Second, Pre-Theories by James Rosenau (Rosenau, 1966). Third, the individual-environment relationship by the Sprouts (Sprout & Sprout, 1957).

This review will be divided as follows: Part one will form the theoretical backbone. Its first section will be a critical evaluation of the above paradigmatic theoretical frameworks. The second section will be a cumulative and critical revision of the rational choice approach. The latter has dominated foreign policy analysis for decades, and is closely related to realism. As such, a short discussion of Morgenthau's realism will be included. The third section will discuss the cognitive (heuristic) alternatives that emerged as a reaction to the inaptitude of the rational choice model. Part two will be a literature review of the most salient approaches contained in the study. The choice of literature focused on the salience of the cognitive aspect of foreign policy decision making. Thus, it was either an application of or an argument for or against related theories. The first section would be a literature review of paradigmatic works. The second section will be a literature review of the rational actor model. The third section will be a literature review of the alternative heuristic cognitive approaches. Finally, and due to the importance of a leader's belief system, part three of the paper will be concerned with reviewing the three main cognitive approaches used to uncover a leader's belief system; namely, cognitive maps, ideology, and the Operational Code

approach. In the end of the review, one approach will be singled out as the most suitable.

Part One: Theoretical Approaches to Foreign Policy Analysis:

Section One: Paradigmatic Works

1. Decision-Making Approach

R. Snyder, H. Bruck, & B. Sapin (Eds.). (1962). *Foreign policy decision-making: An approach to the study of international politics*. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe.

A significant choice of Decision-making theory was that of replacing the state as the principal actor in the international system, with the individual decision-maker (or state officials who influence him), since they are in effect, the ones that represent the state. Richard Snyder and his colleagues' seminal piece, specified a prerequisite for their analysis: the world is not viewed objectively, but rather subjectively, from the decision-maker's standpoint. Their aim was to reproduce the "world of the decision-makers as they view it" (Snyder, Bruck, & Sapin, 1962, p. 65). As such, the decision-making process (or the 'how' and 'why' of the decision), rather than the decision output, became of prime importance. They assumed the presence of an internal and external environment, within which the individual interacts (Snyder, Bruck, & Sapin, 1962, p. 65). Both environments are interrelated (Snyder, Bruck, & Sapin, 1962, p. 69), and overflow into one another.

Snyder and his colleagues viewed these preceding ideas from an institutional and organizational perspective, rather than an individual one. It is the subjective reconstruction of the situation that resulted in behavior by organizations and state officials within those organizations (Snyder, Bruck, & Sapin, 1962, p. 65).

They discussed the environment, naming it "setting" and defined it as "a set of categories of *potentially relevant factors and conditions* which may affect the action of any state" (Snyder, Bruck, & Sapin, 1962, p. 67). The "external setting" is dynamic and includes only what decision-makers consider to be important (Snyder, Bruck, & Sapin, 1962, p. 67). In this sense, they share the Sprouts' view of the specificity and importance of the 'operational environment' to the subjective view of the decision maker (a review of their theory will later follow). Snyder and his colleagues wrote,

the key to the explanation of why the state behaves the way it does lies in the way its decision-makers as actors define their situation ... Relevance of particular [environmental] factors *in general and in particular situations* will depend on the attitudes, perceptions, judgments and purposes of state X's decision-makers, that is, on how they react to various stimuli (Snyder, Bruck, & Sapin, 1962, pp. 65-67)

The work of Snyder and his colleagues included a large number of determinants that encompassed the internal and external environments in three frames of thought. Each of these three intellectual frameworks is considered a factor in determining decision-making. The first framework is "spheres of competence" or a decision maker's required action to meet state goals ("unit"). The second framework: "communication and information", which covers the interpretations, values, and choices that are available at the time of decision output. The third framework is "motivation", which includes the values and psychological make-up of the decision-maker, thus becoming part of the decision-making process, and having an input on the outcome of decision (Brecher, Steinberg, & Stein, 1969, p. 77).

Motivation is central for Snyder and his colleagues. It accentuates the importance of the individual political leader. They distinguish between two types of motivation. The first is purposive motivation, or decisions taken to achieve a specific goal. Second, causal motivation, or decisions made due to subconscious motives and tendencies, resulting from past experiences, and how they relate to the present situation. According to Snyder and his colleagues, one could only achieve that through conducting a complete medical and psychological examination of the political leader (Snyder, Bruck, & Sapin, 1962, p. 144). The inapplicability of such endeavor gives further credit to approaches that aim at uncovering a leader's belief system, at-a-distance.

- **Academic Response to the Decision-Making Theory**

The decision-making theory's idea of perception was well received and supported by the academic community. For example, Joseph Frenkel, accords it a central position in decision-making theory. The subjectivity is clear where he believes that the decision-maker's definition of the political situation is just as important as the situation on the ground (Frenkel, 1963, p. 4). At the same time, it does not detract from the importance of the

environment, as the latter limits the range of possibilities (Frenkel, 1963, p. 4). Leaders make sensitive political decisions. According to Jervis, the importance of leaders' perception is augmented in situations of crisis or uncertainty, and where lack of its appreciation renders explanation of a political decision, an impossible endeavor (Jervis, 1976, p. 28). Sydney Verba also connotes perception when he says, "what we can say on the basis of these studies is that, at minimum, personality variables affect attitudes and behaviors in the international sphere" (Verba, 1969, p. 219).

Michael Brecher provides us with a critique of decision-making theory, where he clarifies its advantages as well as disadvantages. The advantages are as follows: First, it allows the analyst consistent and uniform classifications for the gathering of data. Second, it emphasizes the psychological factor (Brecher, Steinberg, & Stein, 1969, p. 77). Third, it offers a theoretically accurate examination of the foreign policy decision-making process (Brecher, Steinberg, & Stein, 1969, p. 78). The approach is nevertheless flawed: First, it devalues the operational environment. Second, it overlooks the idea of feedback, with its ability to render the process dynamic. Third, and most importantly, the inapplicability of the approach. The vast number of determinants, many of which cannot be investigated, makes research for this approach "difficult" (Brecher, Steinberg, & Stein, 1969, p. 77-78).

In return for that critique, Brecher offered an approach proposing the concept of a system of action, with three axes: inputs, decision-making process, and outputs. The system works vertically, and accounts for the operational environment (internal and external), the psychological environment, decision formulation, and the feedback process (Brecher, Steinberg, & Stein, 1969, p. 79-80). The operational environment works as the "setting" (Brecher, Steinberg, & Stein, 1969, p. 80), or all the variables that affect a state's foreign policy. Its importance stems from the idea that it sets the limits of the possible for decision-makers' behavior. Nevertheless, the operational environment is important only in terms of the decision-makers' view of it, or image. The relationship between the leader's mental image of the operational environment and the decision itself (decision output) is one of the important features of this approach (Brecher, Steinberg, & Stein, 1969, p. 81).

On the other hand, Brecher's approach has two drawbacks. First, it includes a massive number of variables, so it renders research difficult, and distracts the focus. Second, it assumes a perfect fit in the decision-making group's views. In reality, this is hardly the case. More specifically, this is not the case in closed societies, where power is concentrated in the hands of the head of state, the individual decision-maker.

2. Pre-Theories

James Rosenau. (1966). Pre-theories and theories of foreign policy. In R. B. Farrell (Ed.), *Approaches to comparative and international politics* (pp. 27-92). Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

In his influential study, "Pre-Theory" (1966), James Rosenau indicated five sets of variables that shape a state's foreign policy: The first, the idiosyncratic variables set, includes all facets of the foreign policy decision-maker himself. The second set, the role variables or the role the leader holds and what it dictates to him, regardless of his own idiosyncrasies. The third set, the governmental variables, are those aspects of a government's makeup that either constrain or improve a decision-maker's foreign policy options. The fourth set, the societal variables, or those facets particular to a society, that influence its foreign policy. The fifth set, the systemic variables, or the nonhuman external factors or foreign activities that shape the views of a society's leaders (Rosenau, 1966, p. 43). He ranks these variable sets for eight types of states.

Rosenau provided three additional dichotomies to the five sets of variables: the size of the country (small or large), its economy (underdeveloped or developed), and the type of its political system (closed or open) (Rosenau, 1966, p. 47). According to Rosenau, the idiosyncratic variables are the highest in the hierarchy of determinants. In this respect, the leader's perception is of prime importance [Robert Jervis (1976) and Joseph Frenkel (1963) also stressed the importance of perception]. When coupled by his additional division, the system of governance, the picture becomes clearer (Rosenau, 1966, p. 48).

In Rosenau's ranking of the five sets of variables in eight different types of societies, the results were as follows: idiosyncratic variables ranked second in large, developed, closed societies. It ranked first in both large underdeveloped open, and large underdeveloped closed societies. It ranked third in small developed closed societies, and first in both small

underdeveloped open, and small underdeveloped closed societies (Rosenau, 1966, p. 48). These results support the hypothesis that the leader determinant is of prime importance in foreign policy decision-making of closed societies:

Idiosyncratic variables include all those aspects of a decision-maker _ his values, talents, and prior experiences _ that distinguish his foreign policy choices or behavior from those of every other decision-maker” (Rosenau, 1966, p. 43).

Michael Brecher pointed to the drawbacks of Rosenau’s approach: first, the indicators are vague and run over one another. Second, the span of the components of the idiosyncratic set of variables is so large as to include all that cannot be added to the other variable sets. Third, the approach lacks a measuring tool for defining the additional divisions, i.e., what defines a small or large country, and what is meant by open or closed society. Fourth, this approach is classified with the input-output approaches, yet denies proper attention to ‘feedback’. As such, it is focused primarily on decision output rather than the decision-making process, which is characterized by an interaction (between the different determinants) and a sense of continuity (Brecher, Steinberg, & Stein, 1969, p. 79).

Echoing Brecher’s criticism: Rosenau’s divisions (size of the country, level of economic development, closed or open society) lack definition. As such, the need arose to turn to Barry Farrell, who provided a conclusive account of closed and open societies [Rosenau’s division that is of most interest to this review] (Farrell, 1966). In addition, this section will include what this delineation of the two types of societies means in the context of foreign policy decision-making.

- ‘Open’ and ‘Closed Societies’:

R. B. Farrell. (1966). Foreign politics of open and closed societies. In R. B. Farrell (Ed.), *Approaches to comparative and international politics*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

The term ‘Open societies’ defines those societies with a democracy, based on a constitution. A number of legal parties exist, each aspiring for power, and each with an opportunity to ascend to it. Periodic competitive elections take place. The constitution provides limitations on executive authority, who in turn accepts those limitations. On the other hand, ‘closed societies’ have a dominant ideology, and security forces dominate society. It is a one-party system, with a small margin of the community as members.

Centralization prevails, and permeates the media, the army, and the economy. However, it is worth noting here that few societies strictly belong to either type of this division (Farrell, 1966, p. 168). Rather, it is in the lines of the ‘majority’ of societies, rather than ‘all’ societies (Farrell, 1966, p. 172).

In ‘open societies’, and for purposes of re-election, the decision-maker is limited in his subjective political views, where instead, he gives way to those of his electoral base (Farrell, 1966, p. 184). In closed societies, he will resort to using external threats as a means to pass unwelcome domestic policies or to justify personal failures (Farrell, 1966, p. 185). Nevertheless, this is not exclusive to closed societies, as it does take place in open ones as well (Farrell, 1966, p. 186). Closed societies are characterized by an acquiescent class of civil servants. Opposing leadership or debating with it is not the norm (Farrell, 1966, p. 187). In addition, the various ministries and governmental bodies are merely enforcement or execution tools for the decision-maker (Farrell, 1966, p. 189).

A most prominent distinction between the two kinds of societies is the importance and weight of public opinion and interest groups. In closed authoritarian regimes, leadership seeks to group all interest groups under the banner of the ruling party. At the same time, objection to and criticism of the various policies is minimal, and the ruling party’s propaganda directs the media and public opinion. Opposition is radically handled, and therefore has an almost non-existent effect (Farrell, 1966, p. 194).

An important characteristic of closed societies is the ability of their decision-makers to quickly and deliberately change foreign policy. The opposite is not true for open societies. An example of this is the Non-Aggression Pact signed between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany on August 24, 1939; thus, overnight changing the characterization of these two states from enemies to friends (Farrell, 1966, p. 200). Such rapid and stark changes are difficult to muster in open societies where the leader would need to convince legislators, public opinion, party advocates, and interest groups of such change (Farrell, 1966, p. 201). In closed societies, the political leader is at liberty to take surprise military measures and spend on foreign aid (as a foreign policy investment) without the need to justify his actions to the legislator or his electoral base. Inversely, open societies have restrictions that limit the leader’s ability to carry out hostile activities (Farrell, 1966, p. 207). Closed societies have the possibility for making long-term plans, and foreign

policy decisions of an enduring nature (Farrell, 1966, p. 201). The opposite is true for open societies, as they seem to handle day by day realities without having permanent plans (Farrell, 1966, p. 202).

A prime foundation of open societies is the division of power. Even if the executive possesses the power to override other state institutions, it is time-consuming and affects the decision-making process (Farrell, 1966, p. 205). On the contrary, in closed societies, absolute power is concentrated in the hands of a few, or just the individual foreign policy decision-maker. Their endeavors are neither constrained nor criticized, which emboldens their foreign policy outlook (Farrell, 1966, p. 206). Farrell notes an interesting point: In closed societies, individuals derive a sense of personal gratification when using power through decisions characterized by violence, major changes, or high risk. On the other hand, a similar behavior, if found in open societies, would be controlled by a system of checks and balances (Farrell, 1966, p. 206).

From the previous points, we can draw the following conclusions: First, the characteristics of closed authoritarian societies give the upper hand to the individual political leader. Second, these characteristics give an ease of action on the institutional, bureaucratic, and societal levels, thus further pronouncing the importance of the personal characteristics of the individual foreign policy decision-maker, rendering a most important determinant of foreign policy analysis, as well as making him the most important level of analysis.

3. The Environment

A point of contention in foreign policy analysis was the role of systemic variables. Andrew Moravcsik's work formed a departure from realist and structural realist thought. For those theorists, systemic variables dominated all analysis, while internal variables were reverted to, only in exceptional cases. Moravcsik maintained that we must merge both levels in a consistent manner (Moravcsik, 1993, p. 6). On a related note, the 1990s witnessed an interest in the importance of the internal domain in foreign policy decision-making. Nevertheless, it was not without perils. Robert Putnam portrayed the situation as a parable of being between two tables: the international table (whether or not in a crisis situation), and the domestic table (with its domestic political pressures). Thus, the decision-maker is under pressure for acceptance of the output of his decision, on the international as

well as domestic plains (Putnam, 1988). According to Farrell, political science professors, such as Snyder and Rosenau, have admitted the haziness of the line between the domestic and international domains, if there ever is one (Farrell, 1966, p. 169) [2].

In all cases, the decision-maker's environment, in the aggregate sense, is of great importance. The general contention is whether that is the case as it stands in an objective detached sense, or as it is seen through the subjective eyes of the decision maker. As such, we now turn to the last of the three paradigmatic works of our review, the Sprouts study on the effect of the environmental factor on the foreign policies of states, and more specifically on the decision-maker's choice of foreign policy alternatives.

Harold & Margaret Sprout. (1957). Environmental factors in the study of international politics. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 1(4).

Harold and Margaret Sprout were one of the founders of the environmental factor in foreign policy decision-making analysis. They used the term "Operational Environment" to describe the environment surrounding the foreign policy decision (Sprout & Sprout, 1957, p. 311). They considered "cognitive behaviorism" as paramount. It has two facets: One facet is the sharp distinction they make between the two environments (psychological and operational). The operational environment ultimately limits the scope of the possible when the decision is carried out (Sprout & Sprout, 1957, p. 314).

Another facet is the idea that an individual's reaction to his environment depends on his vision of that environment, and how he interprets it in light of previous experiences. The Sprouts dubbed it the "Psychological Environment" or the "Psychological Milieu" (Sprout & Sprout, 1957, p. 314). The decision-maker may have a flawed picture (psychological milieu) of the surrounding environment (operational environment). Here, what counts is what the decision-maker sees or imagines the situation to be, and not the actual situation itself (Sprout & Sprout, 1957, p. 318). As per the Sprouts, "environmental factors are related to policy decisions only to the extent that they are taken into account in the decision-making process" (Sprout & Sprout, 1957, p. 319). The Sprouts also say, "in policy-making, as we have stressed before, what matters is how the policy-maker imagines the milieu to be, not how it actually is" (Sprout & Sprout, 1957, p. 318). They elaborate by saying, "what matters in policy-making is how the milieu appears to the policy-maker, not how it appears to some sideline analyst or how it might appear to

a hypothetical omniscient observer” (Sprout & Sprout, 1957, p. 319). In a later work, they articulate it more succinctly:

What an individual perceives, and how he interprets his percepts, may or may not correspond to reality. Often it does not. But it is his percepts and reactions thereto, not the milieu as it is in actuality or as someone else perceives it, that affect his psychological state and overt behavior (Sprout & Sprout, 1968, pp. 30-31)

In consequence, the Sprouts believe that the first step for an analyst to explain or predict how the environmental determinant shapes foreign policy decisions is to get inside the mind of the decision-maker. In their words, it is the need to imagine “the universe of the decision-makers” – or, in less technical idiom, the “pictures in their heads” (Sprout & Sprout, 1957, p. 320). However, the second step for the analyst would be to determine the goals of the decision-maker, the kind of information he considers important, and the path he deems best to reach his goals (Sprout & Sprout, 1957, p. 320).

The concept of national capabilities is related to the idea of the decision operational environment and also to Morgenthau’s idea of power. The Sprouts make an important distinction: power is not an inventory of a country’s endowments, and is not in the abstract. Rather, it is relative to a desired objective. Without this relationship, power has no meaning, and our analysis is meaningless (Sprout & Sprout, 1957, p. 325). On the weight of power, the Sprouts say, “such factors acquire political significance only when related to some frame of assumptions as to what is to be attempted, by what means, when and where, and vis-à-vis what adversaries, associates, and bystanders” (Sprout & Sprout, 1957, p. 326). As such, context is everything. Power is never in the abstract, but should be viewed contextually.

The second important distinction the Sprouts make is between capability analysis and foreign policy analysis. Capability analysis is when an independent analyst accounts for a state’s attributes, in relation to other states, or the state’s objectives, and determines constraints and opportunities in that operational environment. It morphs from capability analysis to foreign policy analysis when the analyst reflects on what decision-makers see as important, or “how the policy-makers and their staffs themselves envisage the opportunities and limitations implicit in their milieu” (Sprout & Sprout, 1957, p. 325).

According to Valerie Hudson, there appears to be one emerging message of these three paradigmatic works: The specificities of the human beings making foreign policy decisions are prime in understanding those decisions. Our focus should move from treating them as idiosyncrasies to categorizing them as variations in the larger workings of the ‘process’ of foreign policy making. This message had one result: The essence of foreign policy analysis *is* the decision-making *process* rather than the decision output (Hudson, 2005, p. 7).

Section Two: The Rational Choice Approach

- **The Realism of Hans J. Morgenthau**

Morgenthau, H. J. (1967). *Politics among nations*. New York: Knopf.

Rational choice theory or the rational actor model derives its basis from realism, which is one of the most enduring schools in the field of International Relations, albeit much critiqued. As such, we will give a brief review of it, as it relates to rationality. Realism’s most enduring theorist, Hans J. Morgenthau, used the notion of ‘power’ as an all-encompassing answer to every question. For him, politics is a struggle for power, and “statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power” (Morgenthau, 1967, p. 5).

Brecher critiqued Morgenthau, saying that the latter is a pioneer in International Relations, yet his ideas have a number of shortcomings when viewed from the standpoint of its sub-field, foreign policy. First, the theory’s assumed objective, the “national interest” is nuanced as it fails to link it to “reality” and the robustness of the decisional environment (Brecher, Steinberg, & Stein, 1969, p. 76). Second, power needs a definition in relation to another power (this echoes in with the Sprouts’ contextual nature of power, or power as it relates to a desired object). Power does not stand in the abstract. Realism ignores such point. Moreover, it fails to adequately distinguish between power as a means, as opposed to power as an end (Brecher, Steinberg, & Stein, 1969, p. 76). Third, and most significantly, Brecher critiques Morgenthau’s theory for asserting that “power politics” is a continuous feature of international politics. Reality is pragmatic and experimental, “empirical”; and should not be taken as “normative” (with values of what should or should not be) (Brecher, Steinberg, & Stein, 1969, p. 76).

Morgenthau proposes uncovering the decision-maker's objectives through examining his foreign policy behavior and its consequences. He claims that from these consequences, we could assume the leader's objectives (Morgenthau, 1967, p. 5). As far as the leader's belief system is concerned, we believe that this defines the *faulty circular reasoning* that analysts should never exercise or fall for.

Yet, Morgenthau continues, that facts alone are not enough in uncovering objectives, and said that we must place ourselves in the leaders' shoes, and ask ourselves which of the rational options, along with the situational givens, that this leader is most inclined to choose; and that coupling the facts with what the leader is most likely to choose, is in fact the crux of political theorization (Morgenthau, 1967, p. 5). The inherent problem here is the lack of two ideas: First, the proposition of being in the leader's shoes. What does the leader actually see, as opposed to what *we think* he sees? Second, what is the definition of the term 'rational'?

For Morgenthau, rationality derives from power and interest. For him, power defines interest, and interest defines rationality. He believes interest streamlines foreign policy decision-making in all societies, irrespective of their nature (as such, disregarding Rosenau's types of society in terms of open and closed), and also irrespective of the specificities of the individual statesmen, at the time of political action. In his words, "regardless of the different motives, preference, and intellectual and moral qualities of successive statesmen" (Morgenthau, 1967, p. 6). The problem here is that Morgenthau erased societal and cultural specificities, as well as personal specificities of the different decision-makers.

Morgenthau then contradicts himself by saying that the analyst needs to understand the intellectual prowess of the decision-maker, as well as "his ability to translate what he has comprehended into successful political action" (Morgenthau, 1967, p. 7). We believe that leaders' comprehension is subjective, and cannot be streamlined. According to Morgenthau, "the contingent elements of personality, prejudice, and subjective preference, and of all the weaknesses of intellect and will which flesh be heir to, are bound to deflect foreign policies from their rational course" (Morgenthau, 1967, p. 7). This is an example of Morgenthau's or realism's *inhuman* politics. What is a decision-maker if not a human, and what are humans if not beings with all the specificities, weaknesses and subjectivity that Morgenthau alienates rational

policies from? Is all political policy irrational then, as it is human-based? This represents classic rationality. As such, we now turn our review to a discussion of classic rationality, and its rational actor model.

- **Rationality and Its Discontents: Varied Notions**

1. **Classic Rationality and the Rational Actor Model:**

In their book, *Contending Theories of International Relations*, editors James E. Dougherty and Robert Pfaltzgraff refer to the classic model of decision-making. This model assumes the rationality of the decision-maker, where all options would be clearly laid out, and available for the policy-maker to take. After assessing the different options, and calculating the probable outcomes, a decision-maker would then be free to make the choice that would “maximize the expected utility” and thus be the “optimal course” (Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 2001, p. 560).

According to the Sprouts, when discussing foreign policy decision-making, one finds three assumptions about the decision-maker: (1) that he always wants to gain more, (2) that he has enough information, (3) that he is rational (Sprout & Sprout, 1957, p. 320). The Sprouts respond to these three assumptions: first, there always exists one objective or another in foreign policy. Second, the Sprouts question the idea that the decision-maker has up-to-date information, or enough time to consult his advisors (Sprout & Sprout, 1957, p. 321). As such, he may fall victim to biased information. Third, with regards to rationality, even if humans act uniformly or logically to similar environmental cues, the problem is that not all decisions are based on correct information or are formed as a result of logical reasoning (Sprout & Sprout, 1957, p. 322).

Another layer plays into the concept of rationality in decision-making. As previously noted, foreign policy decision-making in open democratic societies is different than that in closed authoritarian societies (Farrell, 1966). As previously noted, Farrell expresses the element of personal contentment of an individual political leader when taking violent and risky decisions (Farrell, 1966, p. 206). David Singer also points out to the idea by saying that individual decision-makers, are higher risk-takers than most states, “with many getting a large measure of psychological satisfaction from the low-probability-of-success-decision” (Singer, 1963, p. 425). Inversely, and irrespective of appeal, most states are traditional and cautious in their foreign policy decisions. They rarely invest in an option with a low likelihood of

success (Singer, 1963, p. 425). As such, we conclude that elements other than classic rationality are at play in such leaders' decisional calculus. This point also ties in with Rosenau's idiosyncratic set of variables, scoring high in the hierarchy of importance, in most cases (Rosenau, 1966), and especially in closed societies.

How then is rationality defined? In reference to the Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Thought, rationality is "the ability to reason and act upon the results of deliberation". For Laver, it is "goal-seeking behavior" (Laver, 1997, p. 2). For Adam Smith, "being rational means having reasons for what you do" (Simon, 1997, p. 6). Herbert Simon notes that Smith's version of rationality does not involve the idea of maximizing utility, nor is there a basis for choice selection (Simon, 1997, p. 6). For Simon, Smith's rationality is the everyday, common, innate rationality that assumes causation in human action. Simon sums up his idea of rationality, which he believes to be "behavior that is appropriate to specified goals in the context of a given situation" (Simon, 1985, p. 294). Freud believes that even in most cases of insanity, there is method. In other words, that people always have a certain reasoning or justification for their actions; that their actions are grounded (Simon, 1985, p. 297). What may appear to us as irrational, is still rational to its actor.

Moving to a more rigid vision of rationality, Sydney Verba describes the Rational Actor Model as follows,

Rational models of individual decision-making are those in which the individual responding to an international event bases his response upon a cool and clearheaded means-ends calculation. He uses the best information available and chooses from the universe of possible responses that alternate most likely to maximize his goal (Verba, 1969, p. 218)

This is the rationality championed by neo-classical theory, and is referred to as "global rationality" (Simon, 1997, p. 17). It is based on certain "rules of rationality" (Verba, 1969, 225). Here, the characteristics of the decision-maker are not important, except for his utility function. This version of rationality deems efforts to understand the human mind quite futile (Simon, 1997, p. 18).

2. Criticism of Classic Rationality:

The concept of ‘rules of rationality’ is an elusive one. According to Simon, and as per means-ends analysis, rationality is the means to reach a certain goal, in the form of a value (Verba, 1969, p. 225). As such, the decision-maker needs to make a choice that best serves that goal. Rationality means the presence of a choice between alternatives, the actual consideration of all or the most salient of those alternatives, and that the choice is the best representation of that leader’s most cherished values (Verba, 1969, p. 225). [As such, it is unique and subjective to each leader’s own value system]. Additionally, it means that accurate information must be available, and a careful study of the options and calculations must be made, with prior knowledge of their results. This process must be made with a calm and clear-headed mind, for the sake of accuracy of calculations. The problem with these ideas is that this is hardly the case for human interactions. Human “frailty” negates these notions. On the other hand, the environment may flood us with information, or be scarce. Either case produces stress, which negates the premises of rational choice theory (Verba, 1969, p. 226).

According to David Singer, and with regards to classical rationality, the decision-maker must do mathematical calculations, multiplying the utility by the probability of success, and comparing it to utility, multiplied by the probability of success of the threat made by the opponent, but also comparing it to a wide range of threats that are both less and greater than what the opponent threatens with, and by calculating the probability of the opponent’s success in all these threats (Singer, 1963, p. 426)! Our review does not concur with this idea. The question here is: does the decision-maker have such luxury of time, effort, the availability of information, and the highly sophisticated and complex computational capabilities needed to engage as such? In addition, what would be the case in the event of a crisis or lack of sufficient information? Furthermore, does a normal person make such calculations before making his decisions, so it becomes safe to assume it with foreign policy decision-makers? This is hardly compatible with the *modus operandi* of the human mind. The rationality of classical decision-making theory is simply unrealistic, given the natural capabilities of the human brain (i.e., restrictions on human cognition). Simon examines classical rationality and says,

we see immediately what severe demands they make upon the choosing organism.... My first empirical proposition is that there is a complete lack of evidence that, in actual human choice situations of any complexity, these computations can be, or are in fact, performed (Simon, 1955, pp. 103-104)

A number of other assumptions associated with classical rationality have been criticized as follows: First, if the decision-maker's goal is to maximize a specific value or multiple ones, in a certain order, this requires self-knowledge. In reality, the 'Self' tends to be ambiguous. Even if the Self was not a concern, values are intrinsic to the situation. Situations change, and so do choices, in the goal of attaining a certain value appreciated by the decision-maker (Verba, 1969, p. 227). Second, the method for obtaining information is unrealistic. The decision-maker is not simply granted the information. He obtains it in a time-consuming painstaking effort (Verba, 1969, p. 228). Third, the assumption that the decision-maker considers all available options is not well-grounded. The decision-maker searches for an option that is as close as possible to one that was previously made, in an effort to seek guidance. Fourth, the labelling or designation of the choice shifts from "optimal" to a "limited modification of the *status quo*", i.e., 'adequate' (Verba, 1969, p. 229). As such, and according to Herbert Simon the decision maker shifts from looking for utility 'maximizing' to 'satisficing'. Fifth, there may be one optimal choice, but many satisfactory ones. As such, how do we determine a choice based on the rules of rationality? This question has not been answered by classic rationality.

In order to solve some of the nuance around classical or objective rationality, the utility function became central to academic discussions. According to Simon, in theory, the utility function can be determined in the laboratory. In practice, this is not possible. Experiments done in this regard give results of the inconsistent nature of human's "utility functions or probability assignments. In application, therefore, auxiliary assumptions about utility and expectations must usually be supplied before the theory of objective rationality can be applied to real situations" (Simon, 1985, p. 296). When objective rationality is void of utility functions, the subjective view of the decision-maker, and his unique capabilities are not part of the equation. This leads us to a question: if the utility function is of such importance to

objective rationality, then how is it formed inside the mind of the individual leader? Why and how does this function arrange the different options in the leader's mind the way it does?

Even in economics (which is a more straightforward field than political science, in determining rationality), results that are characterized as conclusive, do not depend on assumptions that exist in objective rationality, but rather on "auxiliary assumptions" about utility and expectations that place constraints on this type of rationality, and operate in a general sense, in the decision-making process (Simon, 1985, p. 297). It is this part that can be empirical or experimental. This review argues that the above (additional assumptions about utility and expectations) are equivalent to studying the 'how' of a political decision, which pertains to the decision-making process, i.e., *how* the individual leader perceives the environmental inputs (the 'why'), and translates them according to his political belief system, so that he could, in turn, make a political decision that is his own.

With regard to information processing, we need to ask: Do we all have the same mental capabilities, and also the same mental limitations, so that we all make the same calculations, and reach the same decisions when faced with a given situation? Is it logical for a single situation to evoke the same decision output from all those exposed to the situation, irrespective of their different political beliefs, backgrounds, and tendencies? Certainly not.

The missing link in objective or classical rationality is our view of the utility function. Consequently, the idea of utility function equates with the belief system or political worldview of the individual leader. After all, it is the belief system that determines the decision-maker's view of his political environment, and his ability to change circumstances, his goals, and determines his method for achieving those goals with the highest possible efficiency. In other words, the leader's worldview determines the choice that secures the highest benefit or utility, given the objectives set out in that same leader's worldview. Thus, in discussing the utility function of rational choice theory and the leader's belief system and political worldview; evidently, we are discussing the same thing, to a great extent.

Section Three: Cognitive (Heuristic) Alternatives to the Rational Choice Model

According to the previous discussion, the rational actor model lost ground in foreign policy decision-making analysis. Heuristic alternatives

evolved to fill the vacuum and explain foreign policy decisions more realistically. Bounded rationality, the cybernetic model, prospect theory, sunk costs, bureaucratic politics model, and the organizational process model, were the main heuristic or cognitive choices that emerged. Last but certainly not least, the poliheuristic theory (PH theory), emerged as one that combined both rational and cognitive models in a single framework.

1. Bounded Rationality

The rational school weighs costs versus benefits in an effort to maximize utility (Simon, 1985, p. 295). In reference to Herbert Simon, the classic rational model is unrealistic and inapplicable. In reality, a decision maker cannot examine all available information to reach the optimum alternative. Instead, he would settle for an alternative he deems acceptable. As such he is not optimizing, but rather satisficing (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010, p. 68). In addition, humans do not use all information available, but tend to select. They conduct partial searches, as well as choose satisfactory rather than optimal options (Simon, 1985, p. 295). Moreover, decision makers are forced to satisfice because of high information costs (Simon, 1959, pp. 262-263). The cognitive school focuses on the individual, and how he actually (and not ideally) makes decisions and learns in an environment that is boundedly rational (Simon, 1985, p. 295). In effect, Simon believes that applying economic logic to political decision-making requires us to inspect the situation from the subjective view of the actor rather than from the objective view of the political analyst (Simon, 1985, pp. 297-298).

In an earlier work, Simon says, “in most global models of rational choice, all alternatives are evaluated before a choice is made. In actual human decision-making, alternatives are often examined sequentially” (Simon, 1955, p. 110). For Herbert Simon, the best option is one of the probable options. It is not the optimal choice, or the one that maximizes the utility function, but it is one that exceeds a certain level of utility; and therefore, one that satisfies a certain requirement (Simon, 1955, p. 108). As such, it aims at achieving utility sufficiency as opposed to utility maximization. Even though we may not know the modus operandi by which the different choices are investigated in the human brain (Simon, 1955, p. 110), according to Simon’s idea, the decision-maker evaluates the available alternatives sequentially until he reaches an option that satisfies the minimum acceptable level, thus enabling him to halt the search and make a decision, irrespective of whether

or not he may later have found a better alternative (Simon, 1955, p. 108). We prefer to call this ‘the good enough option’.

As a result, Simon believes that the kind of rationality exercised by humans is that of bounded rationality. On the other hand, classical rationality is substantive rationality, as it focuses on the outcome of the decision rather than on the decision-making process (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010, p. 69). Simon makes an intricate differentiation: classical rationality may be applied to simple situations that are slow-paced, and where decision makers have a single goal. But they fall short of explaining more complicated situations (Simon, 1959, p. 279).

Simon compares the findings of psychology to rational choice theory. Accordingly, he says that people have justifiable grounds for their actions, but that this justification depends on people’s perception of the situation, and on the data or intelligence they have about what matters to them. As such, people exercise procedural rationality. It need not be unerring or thorough. To be able to analyze, we need to know what people deem important, and what they know (Simon, 1997, pp. 8-9). Simon specifies even further the link between cognitive psychology and bounded rationality. In problem-solving, a human uses his limited mental capabilities to study a myriad of options, in order to discern the choices available as well as their consequences (Simon, 1985, p. 295).

As previously mentioned, procedural rationality is closely related to bounded rationality. Since human choice is restricted by the bounds of available knowledge, as well as by humans limited mental capabilities, then it may never be objectively rational. *But*, if a decision-maker uses efficient and effective procedures, as best as his means (of decision-making and problem-solving) allow, in reaching a choice; then that choice is procedurally rational. In Simon’s words, procedurally rational behavior is “behavior that is adaptive within the constraints imposed *both* by the external situation and by the capacities of the decision maker” (Simon, 1985, p. 294).

2. The Cybernetic Model

The cybernetic model has much in common with the model of bounded rationality. It has two main features: the use of information feedback loops to reduce uncertainty (Steinbruner, 1974, p. 51), and the simplification of the situation, on the part of the decision maker, as he assumes the alternatives are already limited. The cybernetic model sets out

from the start to minimize incoming information by a process of filtration (and by a sort of an organizational code book of standard operating procedures). As such, with fewer options to choose from, the cybernetic approach appears to be a 'programmed' one (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010, p. 69).

According to John Steinbruner, the cybernetic model aims to address a central limitation of the rational model, namely foreign policy choices that seem very irrational and unexpected (Steinbruner, 1974, p. 47). One major drawback of the rational framework is that it ignores the factor of uncertainty. It assumes that all possibilities are known from the start, and excludes the possibility that an unforeseen outcome might occur. The cybernetic model does not support either of these assumptions, especially in complex situations (Steinbruner, 1974, p. 18). Our times are full of uncertainty. In addition, our cognitive skills are not created to function within the rational framework (Steiner, 1983, p. 423).

John Steinbruner gave a prime example of how the cybernetic model is practiced in our everyday lives. It is the example of the tennis player who strikes the ball without *consciously* making hundreds of cognitive calculations. In this instance, as with a thousand others, the tennis player relies on information that is kept in feedback loops (Steinbruner, 1974).

3. Prospect Theory

Prospect theory was designed by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, in 1979. Ever since, it became one of the principal theories of foreign policy decision making analysis. In their leading work, "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision Under Risk", Kahneman and Tversky assert that people are risk-acceptant with regards to losses (to recover losses) and risk-averse with regards to gains (to protect and keep those gains) (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Prospect theory became an alternative to expected utility theory, and other similar models from the rational framework, which are asset based. Vital to prospect theory is the idea of a reference point, where deviations from it in terms of gains and losses of levels of assets are what matter (Levy, 2000, p. 194). As such, actors do not evaluate the final utility of outcomes (as in a final value), but rather evaluate them relative to how they fare as gains or losses, *when* compared to a reference point (what is higher than that point constitutes a gain, and what is lower than that point constitutes a loss). This, in turn, acts as a guiding beacon for actor behavior (Schenoni, Braniff, & Battaglini, 2020, pp. 38-39). As prospect theory is predicated upon the concept of 'risk', it thus becomes vital to adopt a definition of it.

According to Barbara Vis and Dieuwertje Kuijpers, the definition one should work with is “risk as outcome uncertainty” (Vis & Kuijpers, 2018, p. 583).

4. Sunk Costs

A concept that is connected to prospect theory is that of sunk costs: the result of some costs are still *more* costs of the same nature. Such costs frequently compel decision makers to continue with a certain course of action even when the situation becomes worse. It is a progression in foreign policy known as

irrational escalation of commitment” [whereby the decision maker] “continue[s] to persevere in losing or failing ventures, often pouring more and more valuable resources into them, in the hopes of eventual success (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010, p. 77)

Even though this process is not apprehensible, it is still practiced. According to rational cost-benefit calculations, one should not account for resources that were already used [i.e., sunk costs. In a sense, they are expired]. Yet, decision makers defy rules of rationality and find it very difficult to comprehend this concept in a fashion that is reflected in their policy choices (Renshon & Renshon, 2008). The consequence of that are more losses. The losses are compounded when other opportunities are passed up for the sake of continuing a previous policy. Mintz and DeRouen express this idea by saying that

Once the purchase of an item has been made, it has a “sunk cost” ... A sunk cost is when a government funds an expensive and, not cost-effective project. Funding that project, and not others, that may be more useful projects, is an opportunity cost (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010, p. 77)

The US war in Iraq is an example of sunk costs. For example, soldiers’ lives had already been lost, and cannot be reclaimed. Barry Schwartz recounts President Bush’s invoking the deaths of thousands of American soldiers who died in the US Gulf war, in order to validate continuing that war. He mentioned another example, that of statements used to justify protracting the Vietnam War. In a sense, sunk costs influence a leader’s decision making (Schwartz, 2005). Sunk costs make retreating from a wrong foreign policy move quite hard, and further negates the validity of rational choice theory.

5. The Bureaucratic Politics Model and the Organizational Process Model

This segment will review the seminal piece: (Graham T. Allison's (1969). Conceptual models and the Cuban missile crisis. *The American Political Science Review*, 63(3), 689-718). Allison buttressed two of the main approaches of decision-making theory, namely, the Bureaucratic Politics Model and the Organizational Process Model. Briefly put, the former deals with the power relations between bureaucrats of the same organization, and the latter deals with power relations between whole organizations within a state.

Naturally, the successful applicability of these two approaches lies in the presence of strong and independent bureaucracies and governmental organizations, each vying for power both within and without the state, thus affecting the foreign policy decision-making process. Such clause is absent in 'closed' societies, where absolute power, in foreign policy, is concentrated in the hands of the individual political leader, and where all else characterize as data collection and implementation bodies, or just as superficial rubber stamps. As such, these two approaches are rendered void in closed societies, or authoritarian regimes of all kinds.

On the other hand, the preceding two approaches are very specific to American foreign policy. Bahgat Korany critiques them and refers to suspicions of other researchers who say "that the model is much more culture-bound" (Korany, 1986, p. 56). And according to him, "this model of discrete decisions leading to disjointed incrementalism is inspired only by, and applicable mainly to the U.S. decision-making process" (Korany, 1986, p. 56). And even in the United States, the example of John F. Kennedy in the Cuban Missile Crisis goes a long way in sizing up the importance of the two approaches. The American leader did not adhere to institutional pathways or standard operating procedures of foreign policy decision-making, but marginalized governmental institutions, and surpassed them, in order to pursue what he believed was feasible (Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 2001, p. 573).

Are foreign policy decision-making rules and regulations, as well as the freedoms granted to the president, the same in Europe as they are in the United States? Certainly not. How about the East and the South? The exclusivity of the two aforementioned approaches renders them all the more

inapplicable to closed societies, or authoritarian regimes. It is the contention of this review that foreign policy analysis should cater to the unique characteristics of the state in question. It is unwise to have a one size fits all. But, in cases of authoritarian regimes and closed societies for example, it is fair to generalize the centrality of one determinant, namely the individual decision-maker, and certainly without ignoring the importance of other determinants. His political world view is what constitutes reality. The facts on the ground (operational environment) do not constitute reality, but affect the boundaries of the possible with respect to the leader's perceived choices. Reality is how the individual political leader perceives those facts (leader's political worldview). There is a constant interplay between the two. The political decision is the output of such interaction. The legitimate offspring, so to speak.

6. Poliheuristic Theory (integrating rational and cognitive models)

Graham Allison argues that it is best to combine elements of all three schools of his model: the rational, organizational, and bureaucratic politics models (Allison, 1971, pp. 258-259). But, instead of juxtaposing them side by side as Graham Allison argued, Alex Mintz recommends merging the two leading decision paradigms: the rational, i.e., expected utility theory (Bueno de Mesquita, 1981) and the cognitive, i.e., bounded-rational cybernetic approach, to form the poliheuristic (PH) theory. As such, it bridges the gap between the two frames of thought (Steinbruner, 1974).

The term poliheuristic could be broken down into two parts (Redd, 2003, pp. 103-104): The first part, (poli) meaning many, or the numerous heuristics that leaders use in foreign policy decision making. Additionally, (poli) used in the sense that the theory is internally-oriented; i.e., focused on the domestic domain, where gains and losses have a domestic political connotation (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010, p. 79). The original design of the theory very clearly "sees domestic politics as 'the essence of decision'" (Mintz, 2004, p. 7). Nonetheless, the external determinant is not ignored. As such, framing and counter framing become vital in passing a foreign policy choice with minimal incurring of internal political cost (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010, 78-79). The second part of the term, (heuristic) meaning shortcuts, or what the decision maker uses, and has a need to fall back onto, in order to simplify his given situation, and be better able to make a decision (Mintz, 2004, p. 7).

The theory as a whole also has two stages: The first stage is heuristic and minimizes the number of available alternatives by using cognitive shortcuts (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010, p. 78). Its approach may be suboptimal. For example, it allows decision makers to be uncompromising (noncompensatory) with respect to one or many criteria. Specifically, criteria that would lead to their ousting from office. Yet, it comes back in the second stage to rationally study the surviving alternatives (Mintz, 1997). Thus, the second stage uses the rational approach to choose a final alternative, using utility maximization. As such, there are two parts to every decision (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010, pp. 78-79). Moreover, if the decision is sequential, then each small decision in the sequence of decisions will be treated with the regular two-stage poliheuristic process (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010, p. 80). As Mintz and DeRouen put it, this theory

is applicable to single decisions made by leaders, group decisions, sequential decisions, and decisions in strategic settings. It explains how and why leaders make decisions (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010, p. 78)

Steven Redd argues that the most pioneering aspect of the poliheuristic theory is its induction of the noncompensatory principle to foreign policy analysis in the first stage of the poliheuristic model (Redd, 2002, pp. 340-341). The poliheuristic theory's insistence on applying the cardinal rule of avoiding major political loss in the first stage, minimizes the decision pool to be rationally evaluated in the second stage. Otherwise, in the second stage, such pool would be too large to secure any simplification (Opperman, 2014, p. 23). As a result, the decision is broken up into two stages, which simplifies the decision maker's environment, and overcomes time constraints as well as stress (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010, p. 78).

Mintz noted two interesting points: First, being political creatures, leaders are very wary of high political costs, as their political survival is prime. So, even if an alternative may provide gains in other criteria (but a loss with the political audience), it would still be rejected. As such, the first stage of this theory may lead to a poliheuristic bias (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010, pp. 79-80). Second, in the first stage, leaders do not just eliminate those alternatives that are not acceptable to them, but also those that would be politically unattainable for their opponent (Mintz, 2004, p. 8).

According to Brandon Kinne, the poliheuristic theory can be applied to foreign policy decision making in undemocratic states, and to autocratic leaders (Kinne, 2005). Just like their democratic counterparts, these leaders are also preoccupied with political survival, and therefore would embrace the “avoid major loss” noncompensatory principle (Kinne, 2005, p. 16).

Using the frame of poliheuristic theory, decision makers find themselves in a “hyper bounded environment”. Their boundaries are tightened with just a few alternatives to choose from (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010, 78-79). According to Alex Mintz, Indicators of noncompensatory factors of political loss that should be avoided (in the first stage) are:

prospects of an electoral defeat; threat to a leader’s survival; significant drop in public support for a policy; significant drop in popularity; domestic opposition; threat to regime survival; intra-party rivalry and competition; external challenge to the regime; potential collapse of the coalition, government, or regime; threat to political power, dignity, honor, or legitimacy of a leader; demonstrations, riots, and so forth; the existence of veto players (e.g., pivotal parties in parliamentary systems) (Mintz, 2004, p. 9)

Even though economic and military factors are of high importance to leaders, the poliheuristic theory still considers domestic politics to be the main determinant of decision making. Nothing could compensate for costs concerning the political audience (i.e., public opinion), as it relates to political survival of the decision maker. Concerns in that area are nonadditive and noncompensatory (Goertz, 2004). As such, empirical research using poliheuristic theory focuses on studying a given decision’s effect on the leader’s domestic political standing (Opperman, 2014, p. 25).

Poliheuristic theory is

dimension based, ... nonholistic, satisficing, and order sensitive.

This set of characteristics distinguishes it from other theories of decision making (expected utility theory, cybernetic theory, and prospect theory) (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010, p. 80)

The information search for the first (cognitive) stage is noncompensatory, satisficing, nonholistic, and uses heuristics in its decision making. The second stage (rational) looks at the remaining alternatives (ones that survived the first process), and uses all the modes of rational choice theory, most notable of which is utility maximizing using thorough calculations (Mintz & DeRouen, 2010, p. 78).

The noncompensatory rule in poliheuristic theory is dimension based. Alternatives are evaluated via their dimensions. Dimensions do not compensate for one another. If an alternative scores very low in one dimension, it cannot be compensated for by another dimension. Furthermore, dimensions are evaluated sequentially. If an alternative does not meet the minimum threshold set on one key dimension, or the previously set “satisficing” threshold (Mintz, 1993, pp. 598-603), then the whole alternative is discarded, and the process starts anew with another alternative (Opperman, 2014, pp. 24-25). As such, the poliheuristic theory uses the elimination-by-aspect decision rule of the cognitive school.

- **Synopsis: The Common Denominator**

According to our previous discussion, even though classic rationality of the rational actor model has dominated foreign policy analysis for many decades. It was simply unrealistic and needed to be discarded. And even though it has generally been seen as antithetical to cognitive models that seek to uncover the individual leader’s world view, our review showed much congruence between them, once taken from the perspective of bounded rationality. They are basically the same thing – two sides of the same coin. As we have seen, bounded rationality was the first heuristic cognitive alternative to rational choice theory.

A few points seemed common between the previously reviewed approaches. First, the idea of feedback. The cybernetic theory saw it in the form of unconscious feedback loops to reduce certainty. Rosenau failed to give it enough attention (as per Brecher’s critique), where he was mainly focused on decision output rather than the decision-making process. For Brecher, that process would take the form of an interaction between the different determinants, one of which would be feedback, sewn right back into the foreign policy decision-making ‘system’. Brecher clearly exemplified it as prime, processing it back into the system, making the latter dynamic rather than stagnant. Second, the operational environment. The Sprouts created a sharp separation between the two kinds of environment (‘operational’ and ‘psychological’), where the former limits the scope of possible for the latter. Brecher’s system concurred. He called it ‘setting’, and also believed it set the limits of the possible. On the other hand, Brecher critiqued both Rosenau and Snyder for devaluing the operational environment. An important point raised by Snyder and Rosenau in the 1960s was the haziness of the line between

domestic and systemic variables. In today's uber interconnected world, it is almost dissolving. Third, the subjective view of the decision maker. Snyder endorsed it, yet institutionally. Brecher called it the 'image', where it assumed importance that rendered the operational environment important *only* in terms of the decision-makers view or 'image' of it. Rosenau's idiosyncratic set of variables fared high in his 'Pre-theories' paper. The role of leader's perception was prime for Rosenau, Robert Jervis, as well as Joseph Frenkel. As for the heuristic cognitive alternatives to rational choice theory, the subjective view of the decision maker was the prime variable.

Part Two: Literature Review

Section One: Literature Review of Paradigmatic Works:

1. Snyder's Decision-Making Approach

An exemplar application of Richard Snyder and his associates' approach (1962) was Glenn D. Paige's study of the American decision regarding North Korea's aggression on South Korea, in 1950 (Paige, 1968). In an earlier and more compact study (1958), Snyder and Paige treated the subject matter. They aimed at connecting the most important variables Snyder set out in his framework, and tested them on the inner workings of the American government during the making of that decision (Snyder & Paige, 1958). Their aims were three-fold: A better understanding of that particular decision, the reason why the American government, led by President Truman, decided to take that decision in the first place (contrary to general understanding that it would not), and why this particular decision was taken as opposed to another (Snyder & Paige, 1958, pp. 342-343).

One important point was the lack of any assumption about rationality, but rather the omission of random responses. The subjectivity of decisions, and the motivation of decision makers was assumed. The state was viewed in the collective sense (Snyder & Paige, 1958, pp. 345-346). Sociological and psychological factors at times overlapped, and were in general exemplified (Snyder & Paige, 1958, pp. 350-351).

Snyder and Paige concluded their study by answering the questions they set out at the beginning. A decision was taken in the first place because of the presence of state officials that were *authorized, motivated, and prepared* to take a decision. The particular choice of decision was a function of a few points: the decision output was equal to perceived future losses, the

risks and costs of the decision were equal to the threatened values as well as the perceived possible concrete ground losses, and the needed resources to carry out the decision were readily available at the required time (Snyder & Paige, 1958, pp. 377-378).

According to a symposium on foreign policy analysis, the subfield of political psychology is concerned with how the psychology of members of the decision-making unit affects policy, and how the inner workings of such unit either advances or circumvents the decision-making process (Garrison, Kaarbo, Foyle, Schafer, & Stern, 2003, p. 171). In retrospect, Snyder and his associates' seminal piece (1962) resulted in a large amount of literature dedicated to "how leaders, groups, and coalitions of actors can affect the way foreign policy problems are framed, the options that are selected, the choices that are made, and what gets implemented" (Hermann, 2001, p. 1).

2. Rosenau's Pre-Theories

As previously discussed, James Rosenau's paradigmatic study "Pre-Theory" (1966) added three dichotomies to his five sets of variables. One of which was the size of the state. Maurice A. East's study focused on the effect of size on the foreign policies of states (East, 1973). The conventional model assumed 'rationality' for small states' foreign policy behavior. The author offered an alternative model, whereby small states were at a disadvantage with regards to communication (given the relatively small size of organizational prowess to monitor world crises at their infancy, when they are least risky). He hypothesized that they would always enter crises at a later, high-risk point, and would therefore engage in high-risk behavior. Both models were mostly similar, except for areas relating to high-risk behavior. To ascertain the utility of either model in this area, East turned to events data aggregations. With regard to high-risk behavior, his test results ran contrary to predictions of the conventional model ('rational', risk-minimizing behavior). Small states took part in more non-verbal conflictual behavior, they were more specific with their targets as well as their issues (East, 1973, pp. 574-575).

Rosenau's 'issue areas' was studied by Thomas L. Brewer (1973). Brewer's interest was in the effect and context of issue areas on American elites' foreign policy behavior. One of the author's four typologies applied Rosenau's articulation of ends-means relationships. The study concluded that the latter typology has in fact a correlation with the behavior of American

elites. The latter's cognitions and communications were stable overtime, and they least likely used verbal means to reach their desired ends. Their responsiveness took the form of actions rather than words (Brewer, 1973, p. 109).

John A. Vasquez's study (1983) tested Rosenau's propositions on the effect of issue areas on foreign policy interactions, and his test results supported Rosenau's propositions. His conclusions show that as the tangibility of issues increases, the level of cooperation between actors increases, but the number of actors involved decrease. On the other hand, the more intangible the issues are the more conflictual they become. "Research ... may very well show that Rosenau's concept of issue area was the most important and lasting contribution of the pre-theory" (Vasquez, 1983, p. 189).

Reza Bagheri and Eric Lob's article (2022) uses Rosenau's framework, and concentrates on the individual, systemic, and societal factors to analyze Hassan Rouhani's presidency of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). These factors combined led him to neglect and disengage from Africa (Bagheri & Lob, 2022, p. 154). At the individual level, Rouhani's orientation towards the West, his need to distinguish his rule from that of his predecessor, and his focus on repairing his country's international as well as regional image, all supported his disengagement from Africa (Bagheri & Lob, 2022, p. 154) - whether as explicit policy or as a general orientation. The interplay of Rosenau's three factors proved to be a strong determinant. The study focused on the leader's worldview, and his values and beliefs. It also focused on his need to appease his selectorate (domestic supporters and allies who affect his stay in power). Even though the study concludes that individual and societal variables bolstered the systemic variable and vice versa, it stressed that the individual and societal variables held the higher ground. As such, Iran's foreign policy was in large part dependent on the its leader's preferences and his perception of priorities; in other words, his beliefs, values, and worldview (Bagheri & Lob, 2022, pp. 172-173). This application of Rosenau's framework ties in elements from the poliheuristic theory (primacy of domestic politics, as seen with the 'selectorate'), as well as Alexander George's operational code model (1969) [which this review will later on show to be the most suitable to uncovering a leader's belief system or worldview].

3. The Sprouts' Environment

In reviewing the Sprouts' work (and also that of Snyder's, as it relates to the environmental determinant), Hyam Gold (1978) iterated Snyder's view that the importance of the environmental determinant is predicated on addressing the decision-makers' specific mental processes, "namely, their environmental perceptions and related attitudes and images. It is this narrower claim which makes their argument [the Sprouts', and the similar ones made by Snyder and Brecher] interesting, rather than simply true by definition" (Gold, 1978, p. 578). Gold furthers his critique by wondering about the effect of elements of the environment, that are *unperceived* by the decision maker (Gold, 1978, p. 582). He elaborates that these should be seen as an intervening variable that affects decisions indirectly, by affecting decision makers' attitudes and recognition of other *perceived* factors (Gold, 1978, p. 583). A second critique Gold puts forth, is the lack of anonymity among members of a decision group. The images and perceptions they hold of the environment, may be conflicting. This problem becomes all the more pronounced with Allison's bureaucratic politics model. Because of bickering, the resultant compromising may prove very different from the views of any individual member's environmental views. In this situation, the environmental variable would hold a much lower significance with regards to decision output (Gold, 1978, p. 584-585).

Or Rosenboim (2020) reviewed scholarship on space and time, and chose the Sprouts to be one of the main movers and shakers of International Relations (IR) theory in the 1950s. Yet, it would take the Sprouts three decades to become mainstream. According to Rosenboim, their theorizing was different from their colleagues, as they refused to treat 'states' as abstract entities, that were moved around on the systemic plane. Rather, they employed individual psychology, and how nations acted collectively to produce patterns of behavior and specific thoughts about state 'capabilities' (Rosenboim, 2020, p. 649). As a beacon of change in the field, Harold Sprout aimed at concentrating on the field's foundations, rather than on relations between states. He believed four main fields were of paramount importance: "the objectives of foreign policy, motivations of statesmen, tools of statecraft, (and) state capabilities" (Rosenboim, 2020, p. 650). Motivations of individual statesman featured high on his list. Instead of being interested in geopolitical vocabulary, the Sprouts were more interested in the relationship

between man and nature, with regards to decision making. As their colleagues were consumed in the dry aspects of national capabilities, they later on argued that these by no means exemplify power except if they were placed within a larger framework of assumptions about specifics: which actors are at play, who is trying to enact change, through whom, and what conditions they set to do so (Rosenboim, 2020, p. 650). Their 1957 article challenged environmental determinism (the absolute and deterministic impact of the environment on policy), and turned the tale to one of perception. They argued that “geographic ‘conditions’ were cognitive possibilities, in the eyes of the beholder” (Rosenboim, 2020, p. 650). The term they used, ‘cognitive determinism’, borrowed ideas from the fields of psychology and sociology and intellectually thrust them into the field of geopolitics. According to Rosenboim, one of the main contributions of the Sprouts was their idea of ‘possibilism’, where environmental conditions are not inflexible constraints on policy makers, but only a limitation, where “the perceptions of these conditions and the impact that they may or may not have on state policy depend on the ‘creative imagination’ of policy makers” (Rosenboim, 2020, p. 651).

Section Two: Literature Review of the Rational Actor Model:

Hongyu Zhang (2015) used the rational actor approach to analyze and trace China’s nuclear nonproliferation policy. Over the five decades between 1963 and 2012, China’s stance has moved from opponent to proponent of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Were there moral (or normative) grounds to the shift? What caused that change (Zhang, 2015, pp. 283-285)? The author paid attention to the *context* of change, and constantly looked for patterns of change, and consistencies underlying this change (Zhang, 2015, p. 286). China’s policy had four shifts. The first shift was in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the relaxation of security concerns (Zhang, 2015, p. 288). The second shift came in the 1980s, when China needed to adjust its foreign policy. After three decades of being isolated from the west, China needed to engage with the developed world; partly, to alleviate international pressures on the Taiwan issue, and partly to create for itself an environment favorable to economic development (Zhang, 2015, pp. 290-291). Conversely, the West also expected China to be part of international norms with respect to nonproliferation (Zhang, 2015, p. 291). The third shift took place from 1992 to 2002, when China indoctrinated

international norms into the fabric of its own domestic legislation (Zhang, 2015, p. 292). Economic growth was now prime and export became the state's foremost priority (Zhang, 2015, p. 292). The state's own legitimacy depended on raising the standard of living of its populace. This needed world economic stability. To access the markets of the world, China needed to comply with international norms (Zhang, 2015, p. 294). The fifth shift was possibly from 2002, when China started good practice methods of law enforcement. This needed state capacity in the form of legal infrastructure, institutional capacity, and economic capacity (Zhang, 2015, p. 295). The author drew from these four shifts, a hierarchy for China's primary motives with respect to its nonproliferation policy (Zhang, 2015, p. 297). Security loomed high on its motives, and as concerns eased, China was more willing to comply to serve other needs on that hierarchy. The author concludes that the four shifts followed a reasonable path of meticulous rationality (Zhang, 2015, p. 297).

Mangus Andersson and Jinsum Bae's article (2015) deals with Sweden's foreign policy towards North Korea, from the angle of motivations. The rational actor model would generally be viewed as a fully-serving framework. According to Anderson and Bae, and contrary to popular belief, the latter could not solely explain Sweden's motivations. The first finding of the study stipulated that the constructivist perspective was needed to cater to a new value, that of 'appropriateness' (Andersson & Bae, 2015, p. 57). Part of that 'appropriateness' was how the individuals in those engagement programs with North Korea rationalized the work they did in their own heads (Andersson & Bae, 2015, p. 55). Secondly, even though it was in Sweden's interest to expand relations with North Korea, the latter's hostile behavior has put the former in an awkward position. Having to comply with international norms (another layer of 'appropriateness'), the constructivist rather than the rationalist framework took the lead in explaining those foreign policy motivations.

Uriel Abulof (2015) has discredited the concept of rationality when used to describe concrete foreign policies and security policies, in other words, foreign policy analysis (FPA). He uses the case of the Western discourse used to discuss the nuclear policy of Iran. In his view, it has become a malpractice "which is best uprooted" (Abulof, 2015, p. 358). Abulof gives a few reasons: First, rationality, "while suitable for the research agenda of

certain brands of rational choice theory (RCT), even in IR, it is distinctively detrimental for FPA. RCT has much to offer, but with clear limitations” (Abulof, 2015, p. 359). Second, users of the term fail to clearly define it. As such, reception is not necessarily congruent with initiation (Abulof, 2015, p. 359). Third, the term ‘rational’ is used in a hugely normative fashion, in a way to signify the difference between *us* and *other*, or trust, prediction, reliability, or lack thereof. Fourth, the use of the term ‘rational’ has fallen into the realm of habit, rather than being a conscious choice. As such, “the current use of “rationality” is more a burden than an asset in FPA” (Abulof, 2015, p. 360). Even though the author distanced himself from setting down an alternative model (to rationality), he briefly still notes one. Its anchor is away from the ‘rationality’ of actors per se and towards the ‘reasons’ they employ for their choices. He called it a “reasoned choice theory” (Abulof, 2015, p. 378). Such alternative is based on a two-step process: First, the degree by which the actors themselves reflect upon the situation, and discuss it in terms of ends and means. It is apparent that in this sense, Abulof uses the Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Thought’s definition of ‘rationality’, put as “the ability to reason and act upon the results of deliberation”, as well as Adam Smith’s definition, that “being rational means having reasons for what you do” (Simon, 1997, p. 6). Second, the degree to which they believe they have the freedom to enact change (Abulof, 2015, p. 378). He hypothetically responds to structural theorists that would claim some structures are too rigid for actors to even try to overcome, by saying,

the key is analyzing the psychological, discursive, and behavioral parameters that would allow us to learn about the decision maker’s own reflectivity and self-perceived efficacy. Deciphering this process of “agentation” may reveal much about the self-perceived possibility, and actual prospect, of an actor transgressing a seemingly robust structure, such as MAD [mutually assured destruction logic] (Abulof, 2015, p. 378).

Section Three: Literature Review of (the most salient of the) Cognitive Alternatives:

1. Cybernetic Model

Foster and Keller (2014) tested the cybernetic theory with regards to a leader’s propensity for the use of force in situations where they experience

economic duress. To ameliorate their situations, the rational school favored a cost-benefit analysis which swayed leaders away from the high-risk use of force abroad, while the cognitive heuristic school preferred a simplifying track of thought that would favor the high-risk use of force abroad as the automatic ultimate diversion from misery at home. Each school found its examples in real life to prove its point, but the truth was still lost. Neither of these models was universally applicable.

Foster and Keller turned to research in political psychology. According to the latter, the cognitive processes of leaders are not constant, but rather variable. As such, both theoretical frameworks hold true, given certain circumstances. Foster and Keller traced those circumstances back to leaders' conceptual complexity (CC) (Foster & Keller, 2014, p. 205). The complexity of the leaders' cognitive processes affect how they perceive possible results of certain diversionary policies (Foster & Keller, 2014, p. 206). Their results were the following: A hardline leader who is characterized by high distrust (low conceptual complexity), and good knowledge of and confidence in his ability to bring about the desired outcome (or the choice of diversionary measures) through the use of military measures, will in fact resort to using them (Foster & Keller, 2014, p. 219). On the other hand, a leader with high conceptual complexity would resort to more "consistent cost-benefit analysis" (Foster & Keller, 2014, p. 220) that would sway him away from resorting to high-risk, high-cost policies of military use of force and more toward less-risky ones (Foster & Keller, 2014, p. 220).

Foster and Keller bring two interesting points to the forefront: First, their idea about using instrumental beliefs in place of 'distrust', as a precursor of hardline leaders. They wrote,

future research should consider alternative measures, such as instrumental beliefs from Operational Codes analysis ..., which more directly measure leaders' attitudes toward coercive versus cooperative policy instruments" (Foster & Keller, 2014, p. 220).

Second, the writers view of 'distrust' as an important determinant of the nature of a leader's use of diversionary policy, in times of duress. These two pieces of information tie in with results of this review. After studying the different models available to uncover the leader's belief system, it singled out Alexander George's Operational Code approach as the most suitable one.

2. Prospect Theory

Prospect theory was successfully applied in studies of foreign policy analysis. Karl DeRouen used it in his study of the use of military force in situations where presidents were in a low point in their careers (DeRouen, 1995). Rose McDermott also used prospect theory to explain President Carter's action in the hostage crisis of 1980. Even though the rescue operation was risky, she found that he was risk-acceptant, since he was in a domain of political loss, with respect to the 1980 elections (McDermott, 1992). On another instance of the successful use of prospect theory, Glen Biglaiser and Karl DeRouen Jr. showed that in situations of high inflation (a domain of political loss), Latin American leaders were more willing to embrace liberal economic reforms, which was a risky option. As such, they were risk-acceptant when in a domain of political loss (Biglaiser & DeRouen, 2004). As seen from these applications of prospect theory, the decision maker's domain is a pivotal factor in his foreign policy choices (Levy & Vakili, 1992).

The concept of 'loss aversion' is a vital one for prospect theory. According to experiments done by Kahneman and Tversky, people are more willing to avoid losing than they are to securing gains (loss aversion). People cherish what they already have and are afraid to lose it (the 'endowment effect'). In the aforementioned experiments, two groups were essentially given the same information, but that information was framed differently. The first group was told that if they took a certain option, they would have a 90% chance of gain. The second group was told that if they took that same option, they would have a 10% chance of loss (same thing). Both groups chose the option with the lower value of gain; one that secured what they already had and avoided further loss; even though they were essentially choosing the same thing, as a 90% gain is the same value as a 10% loss (Levy, 1992).

Applications of prospect theory hold that framing effects are vital in the selection of an alternative (policy). Decision outcomes may change depending on how they are framed (Levy, 1992). This idea is contrary to assertions of the rational framework, which holds that the way the information is presented (framed) and the order in which it is presented are not important determinants of policy choice (McDermott, 2004).

Eszter Simon (2015) studied decision-makers' change of foreign policy, using prospect theory. The study had a number of findings. In

situations that prove to be resisting change, a shift in context may provide the needed trigger for a change in framing and therefore of preferences (Simon, 2015, p. 891). Most notably, domestic duress may provide just that. As such, prospects of internal losses combine with international losses, prompting that change (Simon, 2015, p. 890). Redefining the reference point after the passage of a long time of policy initiation (lag time), may be more conducive to reaching a domain of gain, and therefore, a less-risky policy choice. The problem emerges when an initial policy had resulted in losses. A policy maker would be more eager to make up for those losses, by continuing the same policy that incurred those losses in the first place (Simon, 2015, p. 891).

As such, we believe that prospect theory merges in with another cognitive heuristic alternative to rational choice, that of 'sunk costs. According to Simon, handling incurred losses becomes more complicated when intertwined with policy makers who are emotionally attached to beliefs that feed policy (Simon, 2015, p. 901). Simon furthers this argument by asserting that the cognitive requirements needed to enact foreign policy change were more challenging than the tangible difficulties present in on the ground, in the strategic environment. The human brain resists information that runs counter to preconceived beliefs. As such, change is problematic and tends to take place in small increments (Simon, 2015, p. 901).

Luis L. Schenoni, Sean Braniff, and Jorge Battaglini (2020), studied the causes of the Malvinas/Falklands War. Using prospect theory, they were able to prove that Argentina's decline in relation to its peers put it in a loss domain, and started a series of risk-taking behavior that led to the war. They argue furthermore that prospect theory is a very valuable theoretical framework to use when explaining the behavior of states in decline [in other words, '*decision makers*' of states in decline], who have accumulated tangible losses, and are in a domain of loss (Schenoni, Braniff, & Battaglini, 2020, p. 62).

Huiyun Feng and Kai He (2017) used prospect theory to study how China would challenge the existing world order. Turning to its previous interactions with the United States, the study found that when China was in a domain of gains, after the 2008 world financial crisis (China fared better than most others), China was risk averse. As such, when faced with economic pressures from the United States, it chose to promote the FTAAP (Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific), as a means of countering the US-led and controlled

TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership). On the other hand, When China's decision-maker found himself in a domain of loss, he took a risk-acceptant policy. This was apparent when the US pressure came in the security dimension, with its pivot-toward-Asia policy in 2011. China's response was to amass international support against the United States, indicating to other Asian states to adopt the Chinese security order and abandon that of the United States (Feng & He, 2017, p. 43-44).

3. Poliheuristic (PH) Theory

A prime reaction to the poliheuristic theory was Kai Opperman's concept of issue salience. Even though the poliheuristic theory deems domestic politics to be the "essence of decision", Opperman adds to it a very important articulation. It is not merely domestic politics, but the issue that is important to the domestic public. It is what matters to the public, whether the issue is domestic or external. Its salience to the public, or its importance to the public is what matters. He calls it issue salience (Opperman, 2014). Looking into the first stage of the poliheuristic theory, one should consider what issues are important to the electorate, i.e., members of the public that can unseat the political leader (Buena de Mesquita, 2002, p. 561). With respect to autocracies, analyses should focus on issue salience with those who determine the political survival of the political leader (Opperman, 2014, p. 28). Using a wider view of the poliheuristic theory, the argument goes that if a foreign policy issue has a low salience with the leader's electorate, in the dimension of domestic politics, then the leader should let go of that dimension and move on to other dimensions (Opperman, 2014, pp. 28-29). As such, domestic politics should not be the only variable to analyze (Opperman, 2014, pp. 25).

Since the added value of poliheuristic theory, however, to a large extent rests on having introduced the noncompensatory principle of decision making to FPA and thus on the effectiveness of this principle, the concept of issue salience can be construed as a scope condition of poliheuristic theory: the theory holds more explanatory promise when it is applied to foreign policy issues which are highly salient to a government's electorate than in relation to issues which are of low domestic salience (Opperman, 2014, pp. 29).

K.P. Vijayalakshmi (2017) applied the poliheuristic theory to the Indian foreign policy decision of signing the Civil Nuclear Agreement with the United States. Given the individualistic nature of foreign policy decision making in India, albeit its parliamentary makeup, this theoretical framework was seen as suitable. The study rested on the importance of the leader's beliefs and perceptions as a prime factor in problem representation. In the first stage of the theory's decision making, domestic Indian coalition politics obstructed the deal due to the domestic high salience of the issue. To sell the deal, Indian Prime Minister had to frame it along the lines of providing the country with an uninterrupted stream of fuel. The second stage of the decision was handled in a utilitarian fashion. According to Vijayalakshmi, one important result of the study was the greater need for the PH theory to simultaneously incorporate "individual cognitive-psychological factors that influence choices, ..., in the stages of decision making" (Vijayalakshmi, 2017, p. 218).

Moch Faisal Karim and Willy Dwira Yudha (2021) applied the PH theory to Indonesia's non-decision regarding deep-sea mining (DSM) (Karim & Yudha, 2021, p. 461), an area which qualifies as pertaining to Indonesia's resource security (Karim & Yudha, 2021, p. 479). The results of the study closely followed stipulations of the PH theory. The noncompensatory nature of domestic politics was clear. An increase in government debt was the primary consideration seen to indicate loss of popularity and public support for the president. As such, the president's choice of alternative was a non-decision (Karim & Yudha, 2021, p. 479). In this respect, any form of debt-increasing decision was eliminated in the first stage of the PH theory, given the latter's noncompensatory clause.

Jonathan Keller and Yi Edward Yang (2016) worked with the poliheuristic (PH) theory in a different way. They believed it did not inform us with regards to problem representation (PR). Foreign policy research in problem representation conveys that the leader mentally determines his decision problem (or how he conceives the problem), which in turn determines the possible foreign policy alternatives (of the PH theory's first stage) for that particular leader given that particular decision problem. They add, that

the explanatory power of any decision model that focuses exclusively on the option-selection phase of decision making will

be greatly hampered by its inability to explain why certain options made it into conscious consideration while others were unconsciously screened out prior to the option-selection phase (Keller & Yang, 2016, p. 749)

As such, the authors developed a hybrid PR-PH framework. In this framework a new stage is introduced before the first stage of the PH theory. In that stage, the leader *unconsciously* screens the situation, and creates his problem representation (PR), then he starts the first stage of the poliheuristic (PH) theory and *consciously* screens the situation in a domestically-salient noncompensatory way. Through a simulated case of a foreign policy crisis, the authors tested hypotheses begotten from their hybrid framework, and found that one key element of PR greatly affected a decision maker's screening. It was that of 'perception of threat'.

To account for the preliminary stage before stage one, they propose that the first stage of the PH theory be divided into two parts, as follows:

stage 1A (heuristic and unconscious) and stage 1B (heuristic and conscious). We begin stage 1A with problem representation rather than ontology because although a leader's world view provides many of the raw materials of problem definition, ontology represents a relatively static "background condition" – the decision process in any particular instance really begins when a leader constructs a problem representation in response to a given situation, drawing on preexisting beliefs, values, and current perceptions of the environment (Keller & Yang, 2016, p. 749)

Part Three: Cognitive Approaches Uncovering an Actor's Belief System:

Our review of the theoretical frameworks of foreign policy decision-making analysis uncovered a prerequisite that appears to be the common denominator that runs through the fabric of them all: it is the importance of the subjective view of the decision-maker, rather than the objective view of the analyst. Snyder and his colleagues endorsed it albeit institutionally, Allison supported it in his Organizational and Bureaucratic approaches, although was critiqued for fitting almost solely to the American model of foreign policy decision-making. Rosenau backed it up in his 'Pre-theories' when the idiosyncratic variables set assumed importance in most cases in the

hierarchy of variable sets. The Sprouts championed it in the importance of the environment to the decision-maker, and Simon endorsed it in his version of the rational actor model (procedural-bounded rationality), and all cognitive-heuristic alternatives to the rational framework endorsed it.

In effect, we are witnessing a myriad of constructs made of the same amino acid, namely the idea of the subjectivity of all aspects of the situation, which gain importance and enter the decision-making process *only* as so deemed by the individual decision-maker, and not objectively as observed by the side-line analyst. If all approaches have this common denominator as a cornerstone, then it is only logical to *bring the individual back in*, as a basis for foreign policy analysis. The following section reviews the most salient cognitive approaches that aim to uncover a leader's belief system. These approaches are 'cognitive maps', 'ideology', and the 'Operational Code approach'. After surveying the available literature, only the most prominent work was selected for review and evaluation for each of those approaches. At the end of the section, one approach would be singled out as the most useful.

1. Cognitive Maps

R. Axelrod. (1976). The analysis of cognitive maps. In R.

Axelrod (Ed.), *Structure of decision* (pp. 55-74). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

This review's choice for the current section was Axelrod's "The Analysis of Cognitive Maps". The author explains cognitive maps as follows:

A cognitive map is a specific way of representing a person's assertions about some limited domain, such as a policy problem. It is designed to capture the structure of the person's causal assertions and to generate the consequences that follow from this structure (Axelrod, 1976, p. 55)

Cognitive maps are mathematical models of an actor's system of beliefs, or are derived from what we can ascertain to be a leader's beliefs. The question here is, how do we ascertain that we are working with the correct set of beliefs in the first place? And being mathematical, the model has two properties: First, a normative one, meaning it tells us how an actor should act. Second, an empirical one, meaning that the mathematical operations that are contingent to the model are in fact mirrored by the actor in real-life situations (Axelrod, 1976, p. 56). This could hardly be true. Even if we know

the leader's beliefs, how can we closely account for the many unknowns and unanticipated situations in the actor's operational environment? As such, this model is a quasi-lab experiment, and falls short of representing the rawness of the environment.

Cognitive maps are also complex, in the sense that their parts (i.e., a leader's beliefs) do not add up to the whole (i.e., a leader's cognitive map). In other words, the parts have certain characteristics, and there are rules of interaction between them. As such, the result is pragmatically and not metaphysically more than the sum of the parts (Axelrod, 1976, p. 55). Axelrod himself points out to the question of whether or not we could trust the laws of cognitive maps to be the case of how actors really operate. And even if we could, do actions of individuals measure up to the steal-cut mathematics of the model, with its if-then assumptions? (Axelrod, 1976, pp. 56-57).

Another drawback of the model is its assumption of rationality of the actor, yet does not specify its 'kind'. It also assumes fluidity between beliefs and actions via that assumption of rationality. According to Axelrod, rationality here is far from being unlimited. Rather, it comes from the truthfulness of deductions. Limitations on rationality come from wrongful representations (images) by the actor of his environment, which eventually "lead to serious distortions of the external policy environment" (Axelrod, 1976, p. 57).

2. Ideology

Giovanni Sartori. (1969). Politics, ideology, and belief systems. *The American Political Science Review*, 63(2), 398-411.

This review chose Giovanni Sartori's "Politics, Ideology, and Belief System", where he links ideology to beliefs. He places belief systems as the wider umbrella, where ideology is its political component. "A political belief system consists of beliefs according to which individuals navigate and orient themselves in the sea of politics... ideology indicates a particular state, or structure, of political belief systems" (Sartori, 1969, p. 400).

Sartori adds a few specifications: First, ideas that are still verifiable, and reached at by virtue of their logic, are not ideologies, but still reside in the realm of ideas (Sartori, 1969, p. 399). Second, there is a structure to ideology, or "how one believes"; and a function to ideology, meaning "the efficacy, or effectiveness of belief systems" (Sartori, 1969, p. 399). Third, he

differentiates between “ideological politics” and “pragmatic politics”, where pragmatism is an equivalent to “non-ideology” (Sartori, 1969, p. 399).

Sartori uses two pages describing what ideology is and what it is not (Sartori, 1969, pp. 398-400). It is apparent that there is no clear definition of the term, to the extent that it could mean everything. It is an elastic term. But, ideology as a culture, refers to a pattern by which an individual stores and codes all incoming information (Sartori, 1969, p. 402).

Ideology is linked to beliefs, and both the former and the latter are value-laden. Even though Sartori provides a few typologies of the different kinds of belief systems (in terms of open and closed minds on the one hand, and the level of emotional intensity on the other), they are still generalizations, without identifiable tools of analysis between beliefs and their corresponding values.

If ideology is the political component of belief systems, then it is not enough in its own right. The reason being that ideologies describe an individual’s view of how the world *should be*, and not the actor’s view of how the world *really is*. Additionally, it fails poorly with respect to specifying ways to reaching political goals. In effect, it provides a handbook, not a roadmap.

Sartori discusses how belief elements form belief systems, and how the latter are linked to two conflicting types of “ideologism[s]” (Sartori, 1969, p. 398): The ideological mentality and the pragmatic mentality (Sartori, 1969). The ideological mentality is more associated with closed minds (closed belief systems), as opposed to open minds (open belief systems) that tend to be rather pragmatic. Closed minds judge incoming information, not on its own merit, but rather on its source (Sartori, 1969, p. 401). An ideological mentality has a doctrinal approach to politics, that is unyielding and fixed. Its central elements (one that cause conflict) are concerned with ends rather than means (Sartori, 1969, p. 403). The pragmatic mentality is on the opposite end of the spectrum.

Throughout Sartori’s analysis, the ideological mentality was the antithesis of the pragmatic mentality. Pragmatism was the lack of ideology. A problem presents itself here: With respect to foreign policy decision-making, a leader may lack a political ideology per se, but would certainly still perceive inputs in a subjective manner, as well as be able to devise ways for

reaching his political goals. As such, using ideology is not a precise way of uncovering a leader's political worldview.

3. Operational Code

Alexander George. (1969). The 'operational code': A neglected approach to the study of political leaders and decision-making, *International Studies Quarterly*, 13(2), 190-222.

The third and last approach reviewed here to uncovering an actor's belief system is Alexander George's Operational Code Approach, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making". According to George, the actor's beliefs create a prism that

Influences the actor's perceptions and diagnoses of the flow of political events, his definitions and estimates of particular situations. These beliefs also provide norms, standards, and guidelines that influence the actor's choice of strategy and tactics, his structuring and weighing of alternative courses of action. Such a belief system influences, but does not unilaterally determine, decision-making; it is an important, but not the only, variable that shapes decision-making behavior (George, 1969, p. 191).

As such, George's approach deals with cognition as well as political behavior. George's main objective was to decipher the leader's belief system or political world view. He achieves that through ten questions, five philosophical (how one sees the political universe), and five instrumentals (how one pursues his goals) (George, 1969). George stressed that the operational code is neither a magical solution for analysis, nor a mechanical one. It influences decisions in a general sense, and is not the only determinant of decision-making (George, 1979).

Synopsis: The Most Useful Cognitive Approach to Uncovering a Leader's Belief System

George's approach represents the most applicable of the three being reviewed, in determining a leader's belief system, or more precisely a leader's political worldview. Both the cognitive maps approach and the ideological approach are normative (among other drawbacks as previously discussed). They deal with what should be, rather than what is. They also deal with if-

then scenarios. They are either mathematical and lab-like (i.e., cognitive maps), or idealistic (i.e., ideology). George's approach only deals with the political part of a leader's worldview or belief system, and deals with what is, not what should be. Moreover, the cognitive maps approach does not produce a picture of the leader's whole political belief system, but only the part related to a certain issue-area. Those beliefs that could be related to issue-areas need to be causal, and not all beliefs could be causal. Therefore, it does not account for the needed parts of the belief system. Furthermore, the approach's tools are highly mathematical, thus unattainable for the regular political science researcher.

Conclusion

For long decades, the rational school was the antithesis of the cognitive one. On the other hand, theories of foreign policy analysis abound. As a result, the motivation of this paper was in the following question: Is there a common denominator that ran through the fabric of the different theories of foreign policy analysis? Through a discussion of rational choice theory and the criticisms waged at it, it became clear that classic rationality was discarded for a more cognitive-oriented version of it, bounded rationality. As a result, the once-opposites, converged. On the other hand, alternative heuristic-cognitive alternative emerged to fill the void. The *thesis statement* of this review was as follows: Based on his political belief system, the decision maker's perception of the decision situation, shapes his problem representation, and sequentially his decision choice in the form of a decision output.

This paper reviewed the three main paradigmatic works that built foreign policy decision-making theory, rational choice theory and its rebuke, as well as the cognitive alternatives that arose. A review of applications to most of those theories followed, as well as a review of the approaches designed to uncover an actor's belief system. Throughout the paper, an actor's belief system emerged as the main building block of his foreign policy decision-making heuristics. As such, a review of the approaches that uncover an actor's belief system was conducted. One leading approach was Alexander George's 'Operational Code approach', which was singled out to be the most useful in that respect.

In conclusion, what follows are the main findings: First, the primacy of the individual leader is most pronounced in closed societies. Second, the

importance of at-a-distance methods of analysis is prime in analyzing the leader. Third, cultural specificity and the type of government and society should be laid out and respected first and foremost before choosing one's analytical approach. Fourth, especially in today's hyper-connected world, there exists a constant overflow between the internal and external environments, and the line between them is becoming much more blurred. Fifth, power and national capabilities enter the equation of foreign policy analysis only as they are seen by the decision-maker. Sixth, classic rationality is unattainable given human frailty, and should be discarded altogether. The most suitable kind of rationality is that of sufficing and not utility maximizing. It is bounded rationality. Seventh, and most importantly: The common denominator that runs through the fabric of most theories of foreign policy analysis is the primacy of the leader's subjective view of the situation (operational environment). It is important to note here that it is neither the leader's belief system on its own that determines his choice of foreign policy alternative, nor the facts in the operational environment themselves that determine that. It is the interplay between the two that produces a decision output that is unique to both the decision maker and his situation, at a particular time and space. As such, the analyst's search should always be to that end. Eighth, Alexander George's 'Operational Code approach' is the most suited approach in uncovering a leader's belief system.

Future research could take multiple paths. First, empirical studies of non-Western leaders should use the 'Operational Code approach' to uncover those leaders' belief systems. Second, the cybernetic theory's diversionary use of military force could benefit from George's results regarding cooperative or aggressive outlooks, rather than look at the variable of 'trust'. Third, with the rise of the individual's role in foreign policy decision making, the importance of the environmental factor should not be discounted from FPA. In fact, attention should rather be given to the interplay between man and his nature, rather than viewing each determinant on its own, or ascertaining that it is one or the other that determines foreign policy outcomes. Fourth, through his work on the poliheuristic theory, Kai Opperman's concept of issue salience should be further reflected in research. The world is becoming increasingly interconnected, where the line between international and domestic issues is becoming increasingly blurred. As a result, the normative nature of issues outside of a nation's borders will gain

prominence on the domestic front, as it applies to public opinion. It follows that research using the poliheuristic theory should pay closer attention to transnational ideas and values that would now gain more domestic prominence (have domestic salience), and would thus affect the first heuristic stage of the theory's application. Fifth, future research could look at states that are declining in power, and test if their leaders would function from a domain of loss and engage in risk-taking behavior or not. Seventh, after becoming discredited by the cognitive heuristic alternatives, research in the classical form of the rational actor framework should be discontinued.

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