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Peter Trubowitz.
STRUCTURE AND CHOICE IN FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS.
Abstract

How do states choose their foreign policies? Most foreign policy analysis relies on structuralist reasoning to answer this question. Realist theory emphasizes a nation’s position in the international distribution of power. A second approach focuses on domestic factors and stresses a country’s political institutions. Both traditions focus on constraints on state behavior. The future of foreign policy analysis lies in finding ways to incorporate politics and choice into structuralist reasoning. Three main solutions have been proposed: theories that focus on how international pressures affect competing domestic coalitions, rational choices theories that analyze “two level games,” and constructivism. This paper proposes an alternative model that views politicians as political entrepreneurs who seek to consolidate domestic power in national arenas that are conditioned by international constraints. The approach is developed and illustrated in a discussion of foreign policy choice in the United States.

Resumen

¿Cómo eligen los estados su política exterior? La mayoría de los análisis en política exterior emplean un razonamiento estructuralista para responder a esta pregunta. La teoría realista sostiene que la posición de una nación depende de la distribución internacional de poder. Mientras que un segundo enfoque, argumenta que ésta se encuentra vinculada a los factores internos de un determinado país y hace hincapié en las instituciones políticas del mismo. Ambas posturas se basan en la limitación de conducta del Estado. El futuro del análisis de política exterior está en encontrar la forma para incorporar la política y la elección en un razonamiento estructuralista. En el presente trabajo se proponen tres soluciones principales, al respecto: teorías enfocadas en cómo las presiones internacionales afectan la competencia de las coaliciones internas, teorías de elección racional que analizan “juegos a dos niveles” y el constructivismo. De esta manera, damos a conocer un modelo alternativo que muestra a los políticos como empresarios políticos que buscan consolidar su poder interno en los ámbitos nacionales, los cuales están condicionados a las limitaciones internacionales. Ello es desarrollado e ilustrado en un debate sobre la elección de la política exterior en los Estados Unidos.
Introduction

How do states choose their foreign policies? Why do some nations seek to extend their influence abroad, while others define their interests in narrower, more inwardly focused terms? Statesman, historians, and political scientists have long pondered these questions. Though there is no shortage of answers, most observers have followed one of two distinct paths: the first emphasizes states' external or international situation; the second stresses their internal or domestic makeup. This paper proposes an alternative model. It views politicians as political entrepreneurs who seek to consolidate domestic power in national arenas that are conditioned by international constraints. The approach is developed and illustrated in a discussion of foreign policy choice in the United States.

1. Realpolitik

“Realism”, which emphasizes state's relative position in the international distribution of power, is usually regarded as the dominant approach to the study of foreign policy. Certainly, it is the oldest. Ever since Thucydides wrote about the Greek city-states' struggle for power and security, many have embraced realism's basic postulates as the best guide to explaining state behavior: anarchy is the basic, irreducible fact of international life. In the absence of a central authority to settle disputes over territory and wealth, states must provide for their own security and welfare. Exactly how they go about this, and the conditions that make success most likely, are the central issues animating realism.

1.1 The Classical School

Although scholars classify realism into different variants (“offensive” and “defensive” realism and “classical” and “structural” realism), in the foreign policy field the term is most often associated with classical realists, scholars like E.H. Carr, Nicholas Spykman, and Hans J. Morgenthau. Writing during the years between

1 The classic statement remains Kenneth Waltz, _Man, the State, and War_ (Columbia University Press, New York, 1959).

World War I and II, these self-proclaimed realists sought to catalogue the "do's" and "don'ts" of international power politics. Their work continues to be touchstone of realist thinking about foreign policy today.

Classical realists start from the assumption that states are influence-maximizers: they seek first and foremost to control and shape their external environment and, all things being equal, will seek more rather than less influence. How ambitious and single-minded their leaders are in this regard depends on many things, but for the realist none is more essential than a nation's power, or more precisely, its relative power, where power refers to its share of material resources such as military strength, world trade, and population.

For realists, power is indispensable. Knowing how much a nation has, they argue, tells much about the foreign policies it will likely pursue. In general, as states' international power or capabilities increase, they will seek to extend their political interests abroad; as their power ebbs, their actions and aspirations will be scaled back accordingly. In short, power shapes intentions: the stronger the state's international position, the more expansive its foreign policy interests will be.

1.2 Realism's Strengths and Weaknesses

One of realism's great virtues is that it reminds us of the importance of power in understanding state behavior. Big changes in a nation's international position—such as Britain's rise to great powerdom in the late 18th century, Germany's ascent under Otto von Bismark after 1870, and American dominance after World War II—can lead to big changes in its foreign policies. The theory that a country's power determines its intentions is crisp and parsimonious, and much of realism's appeal stems from this fact.

A major weakness of realism, however, is that it is underdetermining. A nation's international position may well create incentives for action. But rarely is a state's "relative power" vis-à-vis it allies, competitors, and neighbors clear and unambiguous, and rarely is there a consensus among its leaders over the appropriate response to foreign policy opportunity or challenge. For every rising state that has acted as realism predicts, there is one that has not. Declining powers often continue to expand abroad, failing to make the


3 In this respect, classical realists differ from neorealisists who assume that states are, first and foremost, security maximizers. On the difference, see Fareed Zakaria, From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).


5 There is a large literature on this topic. See, for example, Paul Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000 (New York: Random House, 1986).
adjustments realism predicts. Sometimes this results in disaster as realism would predict, but sometimes they get away with it.

Realists try to address this shortcoming in one of two ways. The first involves substituting “elite perception” about international strength for objective reality. By dispensing with objective measures of power in favor of policymakers’ perceptions of power, it is possible, realists contend, to explain gaps or lags in a country’s response to increases (or decreases) in its power as assessment failures. Strategic miscalculations or misjudgments arise because of difficulties inherent in accurately judging military strength, commercial prowess, and so on.

A second solution to the problem of indeterminacy involves the introduction of domestic decision-making structures into the model. Even if leaders correctly assess their nation’s power, they may not be able to respond appropriately because of domestic institutional constraints. The weaker (i.e. the more fragmented and decentralized) a state’s political institutions, the harder for its leaders to mobilize internal resources and act with dispatch. Here state strength functions as an “intervening variable”, mediating the transmission of capabilities (realism’s independent variable) into behavior (its dependent variable).

Such efforts to bring theory and reality into line are useful. But introducing variables like elite perception and state strength also carries a methodological price, most notably a loss of parsimony. One needs to know a great deal about the country in question, as well as its decision-makers, to make the theory work. Even more serious is the inevitable loss of distinctiveness that accompanies such broadening of the theory. The more realists turn to domestic variables, the harder it becomes to distinguish Realpolitik from its competitor: Innenpolitik.

2. Innenpolitik

If relative power in the international arena is realism’s core idea, Innenpolitik’s is domestic political structure. Like realism, this approach claims that the context in which foreign policy decisions are made shapes policy. Where they differ is how they understand “context” or more accurately, in their judgement about which

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setting, the international or the domestic, should receive pride of place in the analysis. For realists, a state’s external situation is determinant; for Innenpolitiker’s, a country’s internal makeup is decisive.

2.1 Many Theories, One Approach

Like realism, Innenpolitik’s roots are European. The approach traces its origins back to early 20th century accounts of British imperialism and German Weltpolitik, though at least one variant of the general approach, the so-called “democratic peace theory”, can be traced to Immanuel Kant’s discourses. Vladimir I. Lenin’s theory of colonialism and economist Joseph A. Schumpeter’s theory of imperialism are classic examples of the Innenpolitik genre. In the North American context, the earliest example is historian Charles Beard’s revisionist account of America’s entry into World War I.

As these examples suggest, Innenpolitik is less a single theory than a family of theories, each stressing a different, specific domestic variable in the explanation of foreign policy outcomes. Some argue for the importance of a nation’s culture, others its socioeconomic structure, and still others its political institutions. What ties these theories together is the common assumption that foreign policy is best understood from the “inside-out”, as a product of domestic conditions and circumstances.

In its strongest forms, Innenpolitik makes predictions about foreign policy based solely on information about a state’s domestic makeup. The notion that democracies behave differently from that of non-democracies is a popular, if overdrawn, example. A more subtle version of the argument is democratic peace theory. Liberal institutions and norms, it is claimed, make democracies less inclined to fight each other, even if they show no such reluctance when dealing with authoritarian regimes.

The key distinction in democratic peace theory is regime type—democratic or authoritarian. How war prone states are depends upon their domestic political

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institutions. The implication is clear: change a state's domestic structure, and its foreign policy behavior will change accordingly. International conditions, while not completely ignored, are secondary. They neither constrain nor dictate foreign policy; they provide opportunities. Whether states seek to exploit international opportunities or not depends on how constrained or motivated their leaders are by "checks and balances", interests of domestic constituencies, and pressures to gain office in a competitive political environment.

A focus on states' domestic makeup also informs many theories of imperialism, the most well-known of which, Marxism, claims that capitalist states, due to problems of overproduction and underconsumption, are more prone to expansionism than non-capitalist ones. Whether or not they aggressively pursue an imperialist foreign policy, and how likely they are to succeed if they do, may depend on the international balance of power, but their expansionist impulses do not. They are internally generated. Again, domestic structure is determinative.

2.2 Choice and Decision-Making

Theories of democratic peace and imperialism are structural theories, and in this regard are like realism. Strictly speaking, information about the beliefs, perceptions, and prejudices of decision-makers is unnecessary. For Innenpolitiker's, the implicit claim is that states with similar domestic structures will pursue similar foreign policies. Conversely, dissimilar states will differ in their foreign policies.

The problem is that there are many examples of states with similar domestic structures that have acted differently in foreign policy. The reverse is true, too: dissimilar states sometimes act similarly. It turns out that just as a state's external position rarely precludes a range of responses, its internal makeup usually leaves room for meaningful choice. To understand how those choices are made, domestic-level theorists, like realists, have sought to incorporate decision-making into their models.

The decision-making theory that has had the biggest impact on the Innenpolitik approach to studying foreign policy is "bureaucratic politics". A form of interest-group theory, its central claim is that foreign policy decisions are the result of bargaining among government officials and agencies. Foreign policy choices are thus seen as a product of the distribution of power and initiative among governmental actors, which varies by policy issue.

That government officials' choices matter in the making of foreign policy is clear. Yet how useful bureaucratic politics is in explaining those choices is less obvious. One problem is that the decision-making process inside government is not as autonomous and insulated from larger political processes, as bureaucratic politics theorists would have it: "palace politics" often reflects larger social interests and

12 The classic work here is Graham T Allison's Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis (Glenview, Ill: Scott, Foresman, 1971).
powers. Moreover, the theory seems to work best when it matters least: on issues that are not seen as crucial to the state's security, and that are therefore handled mostly inside the foreign policy-making bureaucracy.

3. *The State of the Art*

As structuralist theories, realism and Innenpolitik both seem to flatten the sense of choice and politics that characterizes statecraft. The future of foreign policy studies lies in finding systematic ways to transcend this problem: that is, to introduce choice and politics into models that recognize that foreign policy-making is constrained by domestic institutions and international balances of power.

Some possible strategies have been proposed. One is to introduce politics by analyzing the uneven impact of international forces on the different constituencies, sectors, or interest groups within one country. Groups compete within the framework of domestic political institutions to promote what is, in the final analysis, and inherently partisan vision of “the national interest”.

Another is Robert Putnam’s solution, which is to envision statesmen as rational maximizers who are engaged in “two-level games”. Foreign policy makers must strategize in domestic political arenas, as “democratic peace” theorists suggest, and simultaneously seek stability or advantage in the competitive international settings that are the centerpiece of realist analysis.

Finally, there are constructivist theories that dissolve the distinction between “international” and “domestic”. Constructivist writers see “structural constraints” themselves—understandings of international power balances, state interests, and domestic priorities—as the product of ideologies, cultural bias, and discourses about state and nation.

The main empirical challenge for foreign policy analysts is to figure out ways to conceptualize “international context” and “national interest” at a time when international relations is fluid and increasingly dominated by forces not controlled directly by governments (such as international capital flows), and when traditional definitions of security must be broadened to include environmental, economic, and other non-state sources of challenge. One way to confront this challenge is to retain

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a focus on the domestic political processes whereby national interests are defined or constructed.

For the case, I propose the following approach to theorizing the relationship between structure and choice in foreign policy-making. The question I try to answer is a classic one in the analysis of American foreign policy: When do U.S. leaders choose activist (expansionist) foreign policies? When do they opt instead for more insular and isolationist stances vis-à-vis the world?

3.1. An Alternative Approach to Explaining Expansionism in U.S. Foreign Policy

Statesmen can be viewed as self-interested political entrepreneurs who are concerned first and foremost with their own “relative power”, not the nation’s. They view foreign policy the way they see domestic policy: as a tool for amassing political power. How much of the nation’s capital they are willing to invest in foreign policy depends on the relative political benefits foreign policy offers (relative to domestic policy that is).

We assume that under most conditions, political leaders have a choice about where to invest time and resources, and that decision will largely reflect a judgement about the likely political payoff of “going international” —of trying to harness the nation’s resources and putting them toward international ends. When leaders see political benefit in pursuing an internationalist foreign policy, they will try to do so. When they don’t, they will favor more isolationist stances. More precisely, I predict that leaders will “go international” when their party or coalition is sharply divided over domestic policy and foreign policy looks more attractive setting for consolidating domestic power. (If the party or coalition out of power is divided over foreign policy all the more reason to play the foreign policy card).

So how (when) do international constraints matter? How does the international system constrain actors’ choices? In this model, the international environment limits how ambitious a leader is willing to be, precisely because policy failure abroad can spell political defeat at home. Going international involves risks and the shrewd statesman is one who knows how much slack or play there is in the international environment. They can after all get it wrong, as Sadaam Hussein or Slobodan Milosevic so amply demonstrated.

16 The obvious exception here would seem to be when a country is under military attack.
17 How successful they are depends on circumstances, domestic as well as international. Political leaders can overestimate the political potency of foreign policy just as they can underestimate the permissiveness of the international environment. I am not trying to explain foreign policy outcomes. My interest like classical realists lies in understanding where states’ foreign policy preferences come from.
Instead of treating the systemic environment as the independent variable, as Realists do, I treat it as an intervening variable, one that can condition the scope and intensity with which leaders pursue expansionism (as well as the likelihood of success). The source of energy lies on the domestic side, in the political circumstances that give some leaders an incentive to go international and not others.

A brief comparison of two recent U.S. administrations, Reagan's and Clinton's, helps illustrate the logic of this argument.

From a bare bones Realist perspective, one would predict that Clinton would have devoted more attention to foreign policy than Reagan, and that U.S. foreign policy would have been more ambitious in the 1990s than in the 1980s. By all the standard indicators, the United States enjoys much more relative power today than it did under Ronald Reagan, and the disparity between the two periods is probably even greater when one factors in "soft power" indicators like ideology and culture.

Yet one would be hard pressed to find a foreign policy analyst, at least an American one, who didn't think Reagan's foreign policy, was more ambitious than Clinton's. In contrast to Reagan, who expanded America's strategic commitments as well as its useable resources (i.e. military capability), Clinton sought to maintain America's privileged position in the world but at reduced cost. As Stephen Walt put it recently in *Foreign Affairs*, Clinton's grand strategy was "hegemony on the cheap".

The contrast between the two administrations' foreign policy strategies resonates deeply in the history of U.S. relations with the rest of the world. During his tenure, Reagan often evoked comparisons to Jefferson and Truman, both avid internationalists who pursued expansionist foreign policies. By contrast, U.S. foreign policy under Clinton's tenure was often likened to the 1920s, when a series of Republican presidents chose not to capitalize on America's emergence as great power, a period when power outstripped policy.

Such comparisons are instructive. Like Jefferson and Truman, Reagan was able to use foreign policy as a wedge issue—as a tool to broaden the base of their own party while dividing the opposition. In the 1970s the Democrats were badly divided along North-South lines over foreign policy, a consequence in part of the Vietnam War. By pursuing an assertive foreign policy, a policy that resonated in the South for economic as well as political reasons, Reagan was able to broaden the Republican's hold on the South while putting the Democrats on the defensive.

This same north-south cleavage made it hard for Clinton to put America's extraordinary power to political ends, at least in any programmatic or systematic way. That is, he could play the foreign policy card, as he did in the case of NAFTA, but only at the risk of alienating the party's base in the North, as the subsequent battle over "fast track" so amply illustrated. A better bet, at least politically, was to emphasize domestic issues, especially economic and social ones that were less

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18 This section draws on my book, *Defining the National Interest*. 

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divisive within the party and offered some hope of sowing division among Republicans.

All of this helps explain why Clinton downplayed foreign policy and focused his energies and resources in the area of domestic policy. Foreign policy just didn't offer the same kind of political payoff for Clinton that it did for Reagan. What the comparison is meant to underscore is the primacy of politics. Reagan's internationalism, as well as what we might call, Clinton's quasi-internationalism, were both shaped by political considerations, judgements about the political risks and advantages of "going international”.

Turning these insights into a more systematic and testable model is the core of my current research. In this approach, the key to explaining foreign policy choice is thinking systematically about the domestic political circumstances that define actors' foreign policy choice. I am not really interested in foreign policy crisis situations. Rather, I am interested in more stable times and more deliberative strategies, that is, testing my argument on the Realist's preferred turf.

3.2 Operationalization and Research Design

The argument can be framed in standard methodological terms. The dependent variable is foreign policy activism, which can be measured using a number of empirical indicators, including defense spending, military deployments, and presidential addresses. The independent variable is the level of political division in the president's party over foreign policy, which in the American context can be operationalized as the level of party unity in the Congress. The intervening variable is the state's relative capabilities, measured using indicators like GDP, military power, and the like.

I use the U.S. case, although the basic claim (hypothesis) here is that the argument will travel to Mexico, Germany, Russia, and elsewhere. There are very good methodological reasons for using the U.S. case as a first cut, one of which is that Realists have lavished a great deal of attention on it. One reason they've done so is that America doesn't always behave the way realism would predict, and gives new meaning to the term "American exceptionalism". The failure of the U.S. in the 1870s, 1920s, and yes, the 1990s to exercise power commensurate with its capabilities pose a problem for classical realists. And the obvious cases of U.S. expansionism in the early 1800s, 1890s, and 1940s, provide an opportunity to see if I can explain these cases as well, if not better, than Realists.

In a book project that is in-progress, I plan to use quantitative methods to provide a general overview and test of the argument and then supplement it with an analysis of foreign policy making during six presidencies—the Jefferson, Hayes, McKinley, Harding, Truman, and Clinton administrations. In three of the cases—Jefferson, McKinley, and Truman—the U.S. pursued an ambitious, expansive foreign policy. By contrast, the Hayes, Harding, and Clinton administrations favored a narrower, more restrictive definition of the nation's interests. Under
Hayes, Harding, and Clinton the U.S. failed to exercise international influence commensurate with its power.

Taken together, these administrations provide a set of critical cases to test my argument about the politics of expansionism. By comparing presidents facing different political possibilities, I show that where leaders stand on foreign policy depends in large measure on their political circumstances, their “place in political time” as it were. Selection of these particular time periods also makes it possible to control for variation in America’s standing in the international system, even within the sub-set of the three internationalist cases. This is key to a research design that would give analytic leverage on the structure-choice problem, for it allows me to rule out external imperatives as either necessary or sufficient to explain foreign policy activism.

I model foreign policy choice as a two-dimensional problem, as illustrated below in Figure 1. This creates a typology we can use to describe the foreign policy choices of U.S. administrations (and that can be elaborated as in Figures 2 and 3 below).

![Figure 1](image)

*Foreign Policy Choice as a Two Dimensional Problem*

*Slack in International Setting*

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The assumptions here are that leaders are interested in accumulating power, that they do not have unlimited means or resources at their disposal, and that they see foreign and domestic policy as alternative (substitutable) ways of accumulating power. The question is why some leaders favor foreign policy and others favor domestic policy.
Internationalism measures the relative weight that leaders attach to foreign and domestic policies. The more a leader puts public resources toward international ends (gaining territory, winning market share, etc.), the more internationalist he can be said to be. Multilateralism, by contrast, measures the extent to which leaders rely on cooperation with other leaders (e.g. alliances, institutions, arbitration, etc.) in managing the nation’s foreign policy.

**Domestic Payoff:** The more leaders find foreign policy politically useful, the more they will seek to control and influence the state’s international setting (and devote public resources toward this end). In general, leaders will “go international” when their coalition or party is divided over domestic policy. By contrast, isolationism will be more attractive when domestic policy offers leaders their best chance to accumulate power: that is, when the leaders’ coalition is united over domestic policy and divided over foreign policy.

**International slack:** The more abundant a state’s security is, the less incentive its leaders have to cooperate with other states, and thus the more unilateralist its foreign policy. Under conditions of abundant security, the potential risks of allying (autonomy, entrapment, or abandonment) will likely outweigh any possible benefits (security in numbers) that might come from pooling resources (aggregating capabilities). When security is scarce, and the risk of policy failure is larger, the comparative advantages of pooling resources would seem to be greater.

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19 There are a number of ways to measures this: military spending as a share of GNP; ratio of international to domestic investment (treating tax cuts as domestic investment).

20 If the party or coalition out of power is divided over foreign policy all the more reason to play the foreign policy card.

21 The security-richness of a state’s environment can be measured by the state’s relative power (itself a product of military strength and geographic location).
Figure 2. Presidencies and Foreign Policy

International Slack

High

Jackson

Low

Harding

Jefferson

High

Low

Truman

Domestic Political Payoff
In developing this approach I seek to incorporate the insights of realists like Morgenthau who stress the international consequences of state behavior as opposed to its determinants. What makes the international system important is that it is a source of "reward" and "punishment": it rewards states (leaders) who correctly assess the balance of power and punishes or "selects out" those that ignore or misread the proverbial "writing on the wall", who overreach or under perform. Since leaders who "get it wrong" invariably pay a political price at home, they have an incentive to get it right. They think about what the international environment can do for them and what it can do to them. When the potential political payoff is great but the international situation is fraught with peril, leaders will look for ways to reap the rewards while minimizing risks.

Figure 3. Typology of Foreign Policies

Unilateralism

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<td>Jackson</td>
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Isolationism

Internationalism

Harding

Truman

Multilateralism

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What emerges from this perspective is a view of statecraft that is no less “hardball” than Realism, but one in which the domestic political logic of policy choice is given pride of place. The key question is whether Presidents believe “going international” will enable them to consolidate their power, or more generally their party’s. When the answer is yes, Presidents will pursue an active foreign policy, seeking to convert the nation’s material power into international influence. When they have little political incentive to go international, Presidents will adopt a more tentative and passive approach to foreign policy and concentrate their attention and political resources elsewhere.

Seen in this light, many of the anomalies or paradoxes of American foreign policy seem less puzzling. Consider, for example, the case of the 1890s. For Realists the period has always presented a bit of a problem. As everyone knows, the 1890s were a watershed, a time when America redefined its grand strategy, replacing decades of passivity and self-isolation with a new and dynamic diplomacy of expansion in the Western Hemisphere and Pacific Basin. What is much less clear is, why? For the 1890s were also a time when America enjoyed tremendous security: it was surrounded by two vast oceans and weak neighbors, and protected by the British Royal Navy, which ruled the seas without challenge.

America’s turn to empire becomes easier to understand when one recognizes that expansionism was a powerful weapon in the Republican’s campaign against populism. Drawing on strategic arguments popularized by Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, the Harrison and McKinley administrations offered the promise of foreign markets to western farmers to weaken the agrarian movement, and to consolidate Republican control over the national government. For Republicans, going international was politically motivated. It was part of a larger electoral strategy aimed at exploiting sectional differences between West and South and preventing an alliance against the North.

If going international was good politics for Republicans in the 1890s, the reverse was true in the 1920s. Then, America suffered from what might be called “imperial understretch”. Instead of converting its unrivalled power into influence, as Realism would predict, America under Republican leadership retrenched, rejecting Wilsonianism and adopting narrow nationalist policies on tariffs, war debts, and foreign lending. In an effort to account for this awkward anomaly, Realists depart from “externally driven” explanations and fall back on domestic political culture and institutions, blaming America’s anti-statist traditions and weak institutions for its failed diplomacy.

But the policy failures of the 1920s had as much to do with politics as anything else. In contrast to the 1890s, sectional divisions within the party made it nearly impossible for Republican leaders to exploit the nation’s unrivaled power. Badly split along East-West lines, Republican leaders from Harding to Coolidge to Hoover tried to finesse contentious issues like tariff, reform, European reconstruction, and debt cancellation by “farming out” foreign policy to Wall Street bankers and investors; this was so-called “dollar diplomacy”. What emerged was a
kind of semi-internationalism, a foreign policy based on private initiative rather than governmental activism.

What these examples underscore is the need for greater attention to the second face of strategy. Foreign policy is not just about the world out there. It is also about politics back here. This means that IR scholars need to pay more attention to the currents in domestic politics that go far in shaping when, how, and why a country exerts its power abroad.

For the United States, it is more true now than it has ever been. A decade into the post-Cold War era, the United States enjoys tremendous latitude in defining its interests. At the same time, Americanists interested in explaining the logic of sectional and partisan alignments and realignments need to look more systematically at foreign policy, which Presidents exploit as a political resource in the larger game of American political competition.

4. Conclusion

Focusing first and foremost on the domestic political logics of foreign policy choice goes far in dealing with structure-agency problems in foreign policy analysis. This paper has reviewed strengths and limits of existing models in the field, and proposed an alternative that is developed with respect to the US case. As noted above, the model will have to be generalizable to non-U.S. cases if it is to stand as a robust alternative to realism, which continues to stand as the dominant (if besieged!) paradigm in the field of International Relations and foreign policy analysis.
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