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The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy

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Actors: the Responsible Decision-makers

Decision-making must be the starting-point if we wish to understand the dilemmas of acting in the international system. Agency entails individual human beings taking decisions and implementing them on behalf of entities which possess varying degrees of coherence, organization and power – of which the most effective are generally states. Any analysis of this activity needs to focus in turn on the political dimension, where named individuals have formal responsibility for foreign policy, on the associated bureaucracies, which provide so much of the continuity and expertise which make action meaningful, and on the problem of rationality, or the capacity to pursue objectives in a logical, intentional manner in what is a particularly inchoate environment. Finally, foreign policy actions cannot be understood without an appreciation of their implementation phase, which is at least as important as that of decision-making, given that outcomes are so often markedly different from original intentions. This first section of the book tackles these four aspects of agency in sequence, beginning with the most visible, political level of activity.

When the level of discussion is that of the international system, states or other entities can perfectly well be treated as unified actors. Although short-hand, it still makes sense to say that 'Iraq invaded Kuwait', or 'Japan wishes to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council'. That is, after the processes of decision-making appropriate to the countries concerned, the state took up an external position which was acknowledged as a move in international relations by other states, which then reacted in their turn. Tracing these various moves gives us many of the events of international politics and we can attempt to analyse the patterns they produce.

Realists generally believe that the information thus generated can explain a good deal of international relations, including the behaviour of individual states. That is not the position of foreign policy analysis, which is premised on the belief that we can only fully understand what states do by looking at two interactions: between their international position and their domestic context; and between the problem being faced and the nature of the decision-making process employed to handle it. Further, we must now accept that there are other international actors than states, including some based in particular societies but in competition with their own government, and that the border-zone between the external and the internal, often termed 'intermestic', is now both wide and fuzzy.[1] Nissan's support for the single European currency project, or Greenpeace's opposition to nuclear testing, are just as much international actions as those of Iraq and Japan cited above.

It soon becomes indispensable, however, when trying to understand an international event or a particular actor's behaviour, to break down the action into its various levels and components. Was Iraq's decision to invade Iran really Saddam Hussein's alone? If it was, did he nonetheless have the broad support of his populace? What was the thinking behind the calculations that must have gone on inside the Iraqi military establishment? Similarly, with the less dramatic case of Japan, how far was the change in policy on the Security Council the product of painful consensus-building, and how far the result of leadership? What were the positions held in the various ministries which might be differentially affected by an increase in the country's responsibilities for international security? These are questions which need regional specialists to give answers, but their effective formulation depends on the body of theory and analysis which has been built up in the comparative study of foreign policy.

Those who are formally responsible for taking decisions in foreign policy, and who therefore carry the can at home and abroad, are politicians of various descriptions. Their precise titles and locations in the political structure will vary a great deal according to the type of state or other international actors they represent. The heads of multinational corporations, or financiers such as George Soros, may resemble more the strategic players of game theory, working to a limited number of concerns, than true politicians. But they share the high profile and vulnerability when things go badly wrong, in contrast to the much larger number of bureaucrats behind the scenes. The delineation of the roles of responsible decision-makers will involve a discussion of the various institutions which tend to be involved, such as executive councils, inner cabinets and the providers of intelligence. The aim is ultimately to uncover the practical meaning of 'responsibility' for those conducting foreign policy at the highest level.

Who Governs, in Foreign Policy?

If the application of Robert Dahl's famous question to foreign policy is one of the main purposes of this book as a whole, a short answer can still be given at this stage. In most states the formal office-holders dealing with foreign policy questions are limited in number, although the growing scope of foreign and intermestic policies is bringing more people into play by the year.

The nominal chief of foreign policy operations in most states is the foreign minister, whatever his or her precise title (for example, 'Secretary of State' in Washington, DC). Foreign ministers are still of considerable importance by virtue of specializing in external policy but they struggle to keep control of their vast portfolio, increasingly invaded as it is by colleagues running other ministries, and they are always likely to be trumped by a head of government who decides to take a direct interest in foreign affairs. Their relationship and activities are discussed in the next section; for the moment it is enough to stress that heads of government, whether they intend to or not, are invariably drawn into foreign affairs, and a large proportion of their time is spent upon it. Conversely, outsiders rarely assume that a foreign minister has full powers and often prefer to open up direct channels to the head of government. A further potential confusion is opened up by the fact that some heads of government are also heads of state (as in France, the United States and South Africa), and therefore have ceremonial as well as executive functions which place them on a higher level of protocol, with more weight but less accessibility than a simple head of government.[2] In most states the functions are separated between two individuals. The separate head of state, whether dynastic monarch or elected personality, has some function in foreign relations, but is much less of a figure than the chief executive. Most informed outsiders, for example, would know that in 2001 Silvio Berlusconi was the Prime Minister of Italy. Only a small proportion would also identify Carlo Azeglio Ciampi as the Italian President. Nonetheless, a figure such as Ciampi can have real influence in improving relations with other countries, and with symbolizing the state's outlook in a way that is above factional politics. After Berlusconi's gaffe in talking about a clash of civilizations after the attack on the World Trade Center, there were calls for the President to

speak for the whole country on the matter. Richard von Weizsäcker was very successful in this role for the Federal Republic of Germany between 1984–94, embodying its democratic and pacific values and making it clear that his compatriots accepted responsibility for their past.[3]

The other members of the political foreign policy elite vary more widely from country to country. Where there is some form of cabinet government the foreign minister will have to keep all colleagues informed on the main lines of policy and get their active support on an issue of high significance. Some will be continually involved in aspects of external relations by virtue of their own responsibilities (such as agriculture ministers inside the EU) and their actions will need coordinating, both with each other and with the foreign ministry. In general more and more departmental ministers are discovering an external dimension to their job, but it would be wrong to suggest that many of them make it their priority or indeed that they have an international conception of public policy. This is still a matter of great variability. The key colleagues for a foreign minister will normally be the ministers of defence, economics and trade, in that order.

A few other key individuals should be included in any description of the top office-holders in the area of foreign policy. The chief of the foreign intelligence service could be a visible political figure but equally he could be a bureaucrat operating in the shadows. Either way he (exceptionally she) will be answerable to the head of government and/or the foreign minister, and will be a central figure in any high-level discussions on policy. Similarly the chairman of the chiefs of staff, on one definition strictly a bureaucrat, is likely to have permanent and direct access to the highest circles of foreign policy-making, particularly where armed conflict is a possible outcome. In a completely different vein, the chair of the parliamentary foreign affairs committee, where one exists, may sometimes be drawn into top-level consultations where the need for wider political consensus is particularly strong. Such a figure can certainly be used as a mouthpiece, with a useful ambiguity as to authenticity built in. Where there is actually a formal division of power on foreign policy as in the United States the key chairs and senators become almost parallel foreign policy-makers to the President, and have to be courted assiduously by the White House so as to avoid embarrassing divisions in relations with other states.

In the case of transnational enterprises the responsibility for international strategy is less clear. Normally the chief executive of a multinational company will be party to any decisions with political implications – that is, which involve dealing with governments. There may also be a director or vice president with special responsibility for an international division, only loosely responsible to shareholders.[4] Globalization has involved much integration of transnational production and communication networks, although 'the emergence of the truly "placeless" global corporations is still a long way off'.[5] For an international pressure group or political party the situation is different. The former run on small budgets and cannot afford to have many executive officers flying the world on diplomatic business, even if the need for negotiations with governments is more pressing than it is for companies. What is more, they tend to prize the collective nature of their decision-making. Nonetheless, the two or three individuals at the top of organizations like Amnesty International become very well-known and engage in much para-diplomacy.[6] Political entities are usually more directly imitative of state structures, because they wish ultimately to acquire them. Thus Oliver Tambo was the foreign secretary in exile of the African National Congress (ANC) for all the time that its president, Nelson Mandela, was in prison, and he ran an extremely effective international policy – albeit reliant on the political and logistical support of sympathetic governments.[7] Similarly the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) ran a foreign policy in all but name for many years under the leadership of Yasser Arafat. The latter has not become noticeably better known (or more powerful) since he has become a legitimate head of government in a (semi-) sovereign state. These revolutionary movements did not survive, however, by relying on one man for their strategy. They usually rested on a tight-knit cell of leaders operating in a disciplined but collective way. Otherwise arrests and deaths would have decimated the movement. Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network has skilfully exploited its leader's wealth and charisma while remaining diffuse and horizontal in structure.

The issue of who holds formal office is not the trivial question that some behaviouralist writers, critical of the aridity of the public administration approach, once thought. Although it is crucial to distinguish between formal and real power, and never to assume that decisions are made as the official flow charts would have it, those who occupy the highest positions in a state have the opportunity to dispose of a great deal of influence. In foreign policy they have at their disposal the resources of the state, and – because external policy requires relatively little legislation – a fairly unstructured decisional environment to exploit. They can also, even today, often work away from the public eye. This provides a considerable opportunity for the relatively small group of men and women who are the formal, political decision-makers to

exert leadership in foreign policy and to personify the state in their actions. At this level individuals have considerable scope to influence events. How they do so depends, as we shall see, on a mix of factors: the personal and political qualities of the personalities involved, the nature of the issue being decided, and the political structures of the state in question.

The Foreign Policy Executive

In most political systems any given area of policy will be conducted at the highest level by a combination of the head of government, free of any particular portfolio, and the departmental minister, the specialist. This is particularly the case with foreign policy, where the expectations of head of government involvement, from inside and outside, are high and where it is difficult for others to develop an equivalent level of expertise. On the other hand, some of what goes to make up foreign policy in a developed state is handled by economic ministers who themselves participate directly in international meetings on finance or trade and therefore possess a knowledge which the foreign ministry generalist will struggle to match. Insofar as foreign policy, therefore, seeks to integrate the various strands of external relations, it will be conducted by what can be termed the 'foreign policy executive', consisting in the first instance of the head of government and the foreign minister, but often widened according to circumstances to include defence, finance, economics and trade ministers. There may often also be other ministers without particular portfolios, close to the head of government, whose job is to help on matters of high politics (in the sense of something conceived of as involving the government's central values and objectives).[8]

The reason why foreign policy, even on a wide definition, is particularly susceptible to being made by an inner executive, is twofold: on the one hand most politicians spend much time looking over their shoulders to their domestic base, and do not wish to 'waste' time on cultivating foreign contacts from which there might be little return. On the other hand, the international environment still presents a long and steep learning-curve for any politician wishing to feel at home in it. Consequently, when that curve has been surmounted, a minister is usually on the circuit for life, since their hard-won expertise is valued if not at home then in the various IGOs and INGOs where openings can be found – witness the careers of David Owen, Javier Solana and Mikhail Gorbachev.[9] Moreover, in foreign policy the number of unforeseen issues which

arises is disproportionately high, giving the advantage in policy-making to those who hold the power of initiative and response. Foreign policy problems are also often unstructured in advance, in the sense that there is no obvious framework or timetable for their consideration in the way that a domestic issue, often based on a manifesto commitment, expert report or parliamentary legislation, tends to be. Once again this means that responsibility falls onto the shoulders of the small number of politicians with the special knowledge and flexibility to respond.

There is a degree of overlap between the kinds of issues I have described and the nature of crisis. But the argument is not that foreign policy is mostly conducted in conditions of crisis, or that crises tend to be run by a few individuals at the top. Foreign policy is almost as much a matter of routine business as is domestic policy, and crisis is comparatively rare.[10] Furthermore, even crisis does not automatically produce a highly personalized decision-making system – examples can easily be found of deliberate attempts to build consensus and to spread responsibility around a wider group than the foreign policy executive, even if purely operational matters have a restricted circulation list. In fact, crises sometimes heighten the desire not to risk going too far out on a limb from the domestic political base, as can be seen with John Kennedy's careful consultations during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 and the Soviet vacillation over the Czech problem in the summer of 1968.[11] The point is, rather, that even non-crisis foreign policy issues are often only loosely structured and represent something of a blank canvas on which it is difficult for a committee to work collectively in sketching the way forward. Thus the foreign policy executive tends to take the initiative, to outline proposals and to invite responses from colleagues which will inevitably deal more with matters of detail than with fundamental direction. An autocratic political system exacerbates this tendency, but even in democracies the political structure is usually canted towards making foreign policy a special area, with maximum freedom for the key elite. In France, for example, foreign policy very much gravitates towards the president and the Elysée Palace, and the foreign minister may be forced to work more with the president than with his own prime minister.

On a minority of occasions a foreign policy issue will turn out to be highly structured, with a clear issue, documents on the table and a reasonably long time period for consideration. In those circumstances the foreign policy executive will either choose, or be forced, to allow wider participation from Cabinet colleagues, or whatever the relevant political group might be. Examples of the kind of issue in question are treaty

negotiations, such as the Anglo–Soviet negotiations over an alliance in the spring of 1939, when prime minister Neville Chamberlain was forced to make concession after concession to Cabinet colleagues more eager than he was to see an agreement. This could happen because concrete proposals were being taken line by line by a Cabinet committee, and the full Cabinet was able to monitor progress with some precision. It was also perceived by most ministers to be an issue of the highest importance.[12]

A similar issue would be the application of any state to join the EU. This is not something that can be rushed through by sleight of hand. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, the front-runners, have had a huge range of legislative issues to consider in detail, and the question of accession penetrates deep into domestic society. No small foreign policy executive could manage all this alone, or would be allowed to. Conversely, from the EU side the creation of policy on enlargement was a classic case of a fluid, general and creative process in which leaders holding the initiative set the parameters for everyone else and pushed the policy on, while leaving the ramifications and details for later.[13] It is also true that even when the issues are clear from the start, some detailed negotiations, like those in the framework of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) are usually so specialized and long-drawn-out as to induce terminal boredom in all those trying to follow from the margins. There is a powerful tendency to leave things in the hands of the two or three ministers who have to deal with them. This can be resisted but it does represent the default setting.

This means that an individual personality, particularly in the two positions of head of government and foreign minister, can have a significant influence on policy. The psychological dimension of such influence is considered in Chapter 5, but here the need is to show how and to what extent this impact takes place.

The foreign policy executive always gathers around it an inner coterie of trusted colleagues, security advisers and *éminences grises*, but without strong personalities at the helm little may happen. Prior knowledge of foreign affairs is not even necessary. Motivated leaders learn on the job, as with Mrs Thatcher as Prime Minister of Britain. For most of her first term of office (1979–83) she was dependent on the expertise of her Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington. After his departure over the Falklands invasion the Prime Minister quickly became one of the most active and notable figures in world diplomacy. Thatcher undoubtedly made her mark on Britain's foreign policy, most obviously in relations

with the EC, but less predictably in reviving policy towards eastern Europe and in creating a special relationship with Mikhail Gorbachev. Leaders of her type often hanker after a place in history, and it is obvious that this is more likely to be achieved by influence at the world level than by actions inside one country.

For better or for worse, therefore, many heads of government end up by having a distinct impact on their country's foreign relations. This is true for both big and small states, as a list which includes Chou En lai, Ronald Reagan, Nikita Khrushchev, Menachem Begin, Lee Kuan Yew and Georges Papandreou easily demonstrates. It follows that changes in government can have a disruptive effect on foreign policy depending on whether a major personality is leaving or entering office – and in the latter case it is rarely evident in advance. When François Mitterrand became President of France in May 1981 he arrived as a shop-soiled character who had been twice defeated – by de Gaulle and Giscard d'Estaing – and seemed desperate for power at any cost. By the time he left office in 1995 he and Helmut Kohl were the acknowledged architects of the new European Union. Likewise Harry Truman in 1945 seemed a provincial figure in comparison to his predecessor Franklin D. Roosevelt. Yet by 1949 Truman was the dominant influence over the West's role in the emerging Cold War.

The ability to lead is dependent on circumstances being ripe.[14] Conversely, some apparently influential figures are more significant for their ability to embody either the wishes of a particular political movement or the *zeitgeist* than for a sharp personal contribution. Ronald Reagan is the best contemporary example. His grasp of detail was notoriously weak, but he brilliantly articulated 'a cultural narrative of American myths' in the interests of restoring confidence and assertiveness to the foreign policy of the United States, particularly in relation to dealings with the Soviet Union.[15] As the leader of Russia, Boris Yeltsin was less slick than Reagan, but came to be regarded (especially abroad) as being of vital importance, less for what he did than for the way he symbolized reform and forestalled the arrival in office of potentially more dangerous individuals. Such types can come to personify their country's international position, which is a potentially dangerous development given the narcissism this then encourages.

If heads of government have a natural tendency to get drawn into foreign policy and to become their own foreign minister, there is no iron law that they will end up in a dominant position. This is not only because the summits at which leaders are most visible are relatively infrequent or because not all possess the personal capacity for statesmanship.[16] Just as

important is the fact that some political cultures are more resistant to the cult of personality than others (the Scandinavian states have generally produced neither dramatic foreign policies nor charismatic leaders), and that many governments simply do not last long enough to provide the time an individual leader needs to make a major impact. Even if there is some continuity, and the will to be assertive, over-work, illness or political distractions can prove serious impediments. Georges Pompidou struggled as French President with the illness that was to kill him in 1974. The Soviet Union had sick or otherwise incapacitated leaders for perhaps eighteen of its sixty-seven years of history before Gorbachev.[17] The arrival of Yeltsin in 1991 simply meant nine years more of the same. In terms of mental strain, Richard Nixon, generally thought of as a foreign affairs expert and highly innovative in diplomacy, was reduced to virtual hysteria by the Watergate crisis. On one night at its height, he made 51 phone calls between 9 pm and 4 am. His image, and his position, thus soon became irretrievable. As for foreign ministers, they suffer notoriously from an excess of work and travel. In 1991 American Secretary of State James Baker travelled 235 000 miles in visiting 35 countries. Over 30 years before, the British Cabinet had commissioned a report on the subject from former Prime Minister Lord Attlee, who concluded that the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer were over-burdened in comparison to all other ministers, including the premier.[18]

The Nixon–Kissinger period demonstrated the vital importance of the relationship between chief executive and foreign minister. Kissinger had been National Security Adviser in the first Nixon administration from 1969–73, but this had undercut the State Department and he was more than willing to take on the position of Secretary of State himself the second time round. The trust which he and Nixon shared was of vital importance in allowing these two assertive foreign affairs specialists to work together, and permitted Kissinger to run US foreign policy more or less effectively during Nixon's final crisis. The famous move towards China, from 1969–71, was in the first instance Nixon's doing, but it only went forward so successfully because Kissinger respected the limits of his own position. While his diplomatic skills were indispensable he did not engage in the kind of competitive leaking that often damages US diplomacy.

There are, broadly speaking, three possible models of the relationship between head of government and foreign minister, each with its strengths and weaknesses depending on how the personalities involved handle the situation and how they interact with events. Table 3.1 sets out the possibilities.

Table 3.1 **Head of government–foreign minister relations: three models**

1 **Equality:** trust, ability and matching reputations can create a strong team and continuity. The weakness is the danger of becoming detached from other colleagues and of appearing too dominant. Examples of effective partnerships: Truman and Marshall (US, 1947–9); Truman and Acheson (US, 1949–53); Nixon and Kissinger (US, 1973–4); Geisel and Azereido da Silveira (Brazil, 1974–9); Bush and Baker (US, 1989–93); Gorbachev and Shevardnadze (USSR, 1985–90); Andreotti and De Michelis (Italy, 1989–92). Alternatively equal strength can lead to antagonism, as with Churchill and Eden (see below), Mitterrand and Cheysson in France (1981–3) or Kohl and Genscher (FRG, 1982–92), where their different political parties exacerbated personal tensions, and blindness, as with Galtieri and Costa Mendez (Argentina, 1981–2).

2 **Subordinate foreign minister:** where a politically or personally weak individual is appointed, often deliberately, it gives the head of government a free hand and turns the minister into a functionary. The weakness is the danger of an excessive concentration of power and an increasing arrogance of judgement. Examples: Eden and Selwyn Lloyd (UK, 1955–6); Khrushchev and Gromyko (USSR, 1957–64); Saddam Hussein and Tariq Aziz (Iraq, 1979–); Nehru (India, 1947–64) who held the position of foreign minister himself.[19]

3 **Established foreign minister:** this can work surprisingly well where there is a clear division of labour and excellent communications. It works badly where there is less a lack of interest on the part of the head of government than a lack of competence, and/or where political rivalry develops between the two figures. Examples of the former: Attlee and Bevin (UK, 1945–51); Reagan and Schultz (US, 1981–5). Of the latter: Eisenhower and Dulles (US, 1953–8); Chernenko and Gromyko (USSR, 1984–5); Kohl and Genscher (FRG, in the early part of Kohl's Chancellorship, when his main concerns were domestic); Clinton and Warren Christopher (US, 1993–7).

There seems to be surprisingly little self-consciousness about this crucial relationship. Pairings arise more out of the need for political balance, or from the whim of the head of government (who possesses the crucial power to hire and fire) than from any attempt to meet the demands of the situation. In the first Blair administration in Britain for example, Robin Cook rather unwillingly took on the post of Foreign Secretary as the only one available at a suitable level of seniority. As a result he and the Prime Minister did not make up so happy a team as that between Blair and Gordon Brown (Chancellor of the Exchequer) on economic affairs, where the bases of agreement and a division of labour had clearly been established in advance.[20] Two strong personalities inside the foreign policy executive can cause serious problems. Anthony Eden regarded himself as more expert than the ageing Winston Churchill by the time the latter formed his second administration in 1951, and his reluctance to accept interference with his duties as Foreign Secretary caused

personal tensions and errors of policy.[21] Where personal differences reinforce political divisions, as within a coalition government, the clashes can be savage and burst into the public realm. This was the case with the relationship between Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez of Spain and his Foreign Minister Fernando Morán (who eventually resigned). On one occasion Morán was so upset by a pro-NATO speech made by Gonzalez in Germany that he left the official entourage and returned home.[22] In September 2001, during the crisis after the World Trade Center attack, Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon vetoed the meeting Foreign Minister Shimon Peres had arranged with Yasser Arafat, pushing their relationship near to breaking-point.[23]

Foreign ministers are vulnerable to removal in the early phases of their tenure, in particular being made scapegoats for failure, but the longer they survive the more vital their experience and contacts become. Maxim Litvinov was sacrificed readily by Stalin to his change of policy towards Germany in 1939; Alexander Haig paid the price in 1983 for pressing too hard and too quickly to run foreign policy by himself. Antonio Samaras of Greece was dismissed by Prime Minister Mitsotakis of Greece for being excessively nationalist over the 'Macedonian' problem, and responded by setting up his own political party to prolong the dispute.[24]

On the other side of the coin Molotov survived for ten years (and returned for three more after Stalin's death), Gromyko for 28, and Hans-Dietrich Genscher for 17, becoming steadily more indispensable. Sheikh Yamani, as the oil minister of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, performed much the same vital function of continuity for nearly two decades. The position of these individuals was strengthened by the fact that they had become important not just to their own state but to the network of international relations as a whole. So long as they are not perceived at home as having 'gone native' (as Sir Geoffrey Howe was by Mrs Thatcher and her circle) then the way they have come to embody international society and diplomacy makes them difficult to sack. If they resign on a point of principle, as Anthony Eden did from Chamberlain's government in 1938, Cyrus Vance did over President Carter's approval of the hostage rescue mission in his absence in 1980, and as Ismail Fahmi did in protest against Egyptian President Sadat's personal decision to go to Jerusalem in 1977, the consequences can ultimately be very damaging.[25] Even Howe had his revenge; Mrs Thatcher was brought down by an undeclared and subtle coalition of opponents from her own Cabinet and other European leaders, all of whom saw Howe's humiliation as the last straw.[26]

Cabinets, Security Councils and Politburos

Although it is sometimes easy to get the impression that the foreign policy executive monopolizes key decisions – an impression the individuals themselves often do little to discourage – the government as a whole rarely becomes completely detached from foreign affairs. In times of war and crisis the issues cannot be avoided; in times of peace the external dimension of economic policy broadens ministers' perspective.

Most leaders use what is conventionally called a 'cabinet', even if it sometimes bears little resemblance to the British original. The United States pioneered the idea of a National Security Council on foreign and defence matters in 1947 and by 1950, boosted by the Korean War, this had become a more significant body in its area than the routine Cabinet.[27] In the states of the Soviet bloc the key hierarchy was the Communist Party, not the formal government, and the top decision-making unit the Party's Politburo, not the state's Council of Ministers. In other types of states other designations have been used – in Colonel Gaddafi's Libya it is the Revolutionary Command Council, in Taliban Afghanistan it was the Interim Council of Ministers. The fact remains that all but the most tyrannical leaders need some forum in which to bring together senior colleagues, so as to share ideas and coordinate strategy.[28] These can be generically referred to as cabinets.

On various occasions leaders will convene ad hoc inner cabinets to deal with particularly difficult problems, especially in war-time. Prime Minister Blair, notably dismissive of cabinet government, was persuaded of the value of a war cabinet four weeks after the attacks on New York and Washington in 2001. It can happen in more routine times that an informal inner cabinet congeals around the foreign policy executive, dealing with what are perceived of as the highest matters of state. This can be related to what R.A.W. Rhodes has called the 'core executive' in a state – the 'final arbiters of conflict between different parts of the government machine' – key political figures and their advisers.[29] But such arrangements are rarely fixed; formal arrangements always create problems as to who is in and who excluded from any given special committee. It is much better for the leadership, although not for cabinet accountability, to encourage a certain amount of uncertainty as to the extent of informal consultations in those private meetings which in any political system have the capacity to decide the outcome in the larger forum.[30]

To some extent the membership of such groupings on foreign policy questions is self-selecting. There is usually only a small number of

senior politicians who are familiar with foreign leaders and can be trusted with intelligence information. This self-perpetuating process was particularly evident in Italy between 1960–92, when the same names appeared and reappeared as either prime minister or foreign minister. In the 33 governments formed during that period, Aldo Moro was prime minister five times and foreign minister nine. Mariano Rumor was prime minister five and foreign secretary three; Giulio Andreotti was prime minister seven times and foreign minister on five occasions.[31] In Britain the circulation of the elite has been more vigorous but a restricted access on matters of state is formalized in the title of Privy Councillor, which is conferred for life on current and former ministers of the Crown and other 'distinguished subjects' including the leader of the Opposition. Councillors have to swear an oath of secrecy, which allows consultation on a highly confidential basis in 'the national interest'.[32] Michael Foot, Leader of the Opposition in 1982, famously refused confidential information on these terms so that he would remain free to criticize the government over the Falklands War.[33] In France, because of the preeminence of the Elysée Palace in the Fifth Republic, it is even easier to draw certain key figures into decision-making informally. By the same token systematic coordination on important matters becomes very hit-and-miss, with the prime minister and some of his colleagues often out of the loop. It is for this reason that discussions began in the early 1990s on whether France should follow the US lead and set up a formal National Security Council where all the major security and intelligence players would sit.[34]

Full cabinets remain in the background on routine foreign policy matters. They can easily become pro forma institutions, with the real work being left to a small number of relatively expert politicians, usually in a standing sub-committee. This is more due to the weight of documentation to be digested in a short time than to manipulation on the part of the foreign policy executive; most ministers are more concerned to make sure they do not drop the ball in their own area than to trespass on those of others. Moreover, given that trade and monetary questions are even more arcane than security problems, it is an illusion to suppose that the changing nature of diplomacy has broadened the base of cabinet discussions on international questions. Instead, it has simply created a new problem of coordination, between different kinds of externally-oriented responsibilities – for defence, finance, trade and development. Foreign ministers, and heads of government, naturally want to take on this role of coordination, but the atomization of the process is difficult to resist.

Despite the weight of specialization the full cabinet (or politiburo, or security council) can never be taken for granted. It can come to life unexpectedly, and if united can even threaten the political survival of the head of government. This was the case in Britain before the fact, when a rumbling cabinet rebellion may have headed off Chamberlain and Halifax from further appeasement after Hitler's invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, and after the fact over the Suez crisis of 1956, when the way in which Prime Minister Anthony Eden and Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd had committed the government to a disastrous invasion of Egypt without consultation, led to a quiet revolt that ousted both within six months.[35] The fact that this can happen, admittedly most often during crises, makes the foreign policy executive more cautious about overlooking colleagues than they might otherwise be. In the case of P.W. Botha, last President of apartheid South Africa, the reverse was true. The failure of Foreign Minister Pik Botha and heir-apparent F.W. de Klerk (the Education Minister!) to consult Botha over their decision to visit Kenneth Kuanda in Zambia forced him into open protest and resignation.[36]

This uncertainty does not amount to a real system of checks and balances. Two ministers resigned from the British Cabinet in August 1914, but it was not enough to stop the war proceeding.[37] Stalin was in shock for three days after the German invasion of 22 June 1941, but no-one dared replace him, and when he recovered his control became even more absolute.[38] More important is the political culture in which the institution exists. By 1964 the Soviet system had become resistant to Stalinism, and ironically one of its main critics, Khrushchev, fell partly as a result of losing colleagues' confidence over his handling of the Cuban missile crisis and preceding foreign policy problems.[39] In Japan, by contrast, no nail ever sticks up from the floorboards for too long, and foreign policy decisions, like cabinet government in general, tend to be by consensus. In 1986 the then Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone was criticized for departing from this tradition, partly through a minor cult of personality (he established the 'Ron–Yasu' relationship with Ronald Reagan) and partly for daring to sack – under foreign pressure – the education minister who had denied in public that Japan had committed war-time atrocities against China. Nakasone did not have, subsequently, the prominent career he expected.[40]

Thus, if we consider together the foreign policy executive and the 'cabinets' to which it is answerable, rarely a group of more than 20 in total, we can see that the political office-holders enjoy a good deal of freedom in which to make decisions. The foreign policy executive in particular holds the powers of initiative, information, convening

meetings and (in the case of the head of government) also the appointment of colleagues. This means that much foreign policy business is handled by a small number of specialists. Only when a problem is both of high priority and structured in such a way as to make it possible for a committee to follow the issues does the balance of advantage swing to the larger group. This is sometimes the case in crises, when what is at stake is well known, but often crisis simply exacerbates the tendency to rely on the foreign policy executive for rapid and creative responses. It is, therefore, not wholly surprising if the executive is seen from outside as personifying the state. Individual leaders have a range of opportunities to be real foreign policy actors.

Intelligence: a Special Case?

One of the key elements in foreign policy-making is the use of intelligence material, gained from both foreign operations and domestic counter-intelligence.[41] It raises interesting questions about how information is assessed and about a particular kind of bureaucratic politics, but in this context the issue is whether the intelligence services are capable of running an alternative policy to their political superiors, under the cover of official foreign policy.[42] The relationship between intelligence and politics is of crucial importance to the success of foreign policy, and although much routine information-gathering is a low-level business, ultimately the issues are played out at the highest level. Intelligence sits right in the middle of the civil–military relation, which can be crucial even in a democracy, as we saw when General Eisenhower became President of the United States during the Korean War, or when General de Gaulle put a decisive end to the Fourth French Republic in 1958.

Because both the successes and the failures of intelligence are spectacular, the foreign policy executive has to pay the closest attention to the advice of intelligence chiefs.[43] Political leaders can be raised on high or brought right down by the results of their judgements about intelligence forecasts. Jimmy Carter, for example, never recovered from gambling in 1980 on the attempt to liberate the American hostages in Teheran by military means. He was ill-advised by his special forces, and paid the price at the presidential election the following November.[44] Winston Churchill, by contrast, attained his mythical status as a great war leader in part because of his astute and experienced use of intelligence – an area where he constantly wrong-footed Hitler.[45] The key variables in this process are fourfold: the quality of the intelligence; its ability to reach political leaders; leaders' judgements; and the independent actions of the intelligence community. It is the last two which concern us here.

A secure executive has wide discretion whether or not to take notice of intelligence. De Gaulle was sceptical of it and preferred to pursue his own previously thought out '*grandes lignes*'.[46] Moreover, if the official intelligence services cannot or will not follow instructions, it is always possible to set up informal, parallel systems, as did President Reagan with Colonel Oliver North and his operatives in the Iran–Contra scandal, or François Mitterrand with the 'Elysée cell' he set up in dissatisfaction with the state counter-terrorism operation.[47] There is barely any public scrutiny to check these actions except after the fact, when things go wrong and/or illegalities get exposed.[48] The phenomenon of built-in deniability, *à la* Henry II and Thomas à Becket, is a great advantage, although both the Iraqi Supergun and Sierra Leone affairs in Britain have shown that the converse sometimes applies – that mud sticks to everyone, especially those ultimately responsible. The fact that most intelligence services are fragmented between home security, foreign operations and military intelligence (with each of the armed services often having its own branch of intelligence) makes it often difficult to decide on the most useful information amidst all the 'noise', but it also makes it possible for politicians to operate the strategy of divide and rule. The CIA's various failures, for example, have given the White House some leverage over this potential state within a state, while the rival Defence Intelligence Agency is institutionally limited from straying too far into non-military subjects.

The intelligence services naturally have an interest, in the carefully-selected information they let out, in playing down their role vis à vis their political masters. This should not lead us to underestimate the degree of autonomy they often enjoy in foreign policy matters. This is partly operational, as with snooping on allies' communications, which could be diplomatically embarrassing, and partly strategic, in that they are able to plant their people inside the head of government's entourage, and in rival sources of analysis, such as research institutes and universities. Most important, their information is fundamentally uncheckable by anyone outside their own circle, unlike that of the academic, journalist or even career diplomat. Few leaders have the time or inclination to look at raw data, and those, like Churchill or Margaret Thatcher, who do have a tendency to be their own intelligence officer have no basis, other than intuition, and a limited capacity for cross-checking, for evaluating it. They all have to rely on human filters.[49]

A great deal, again, depends on the political culture of the particular country. In Soviet Russia the secret police methods of Stalin, combined with the state's sense of being under perpetual siege by hostile foreign powers, led to the KGB becoming institutionalized as a major force in all aspects of top decision-making. If the Communist Party was the parallel power structure to the state, then the KGB was the parallel structure to the party. Often the most able people would gravitate towards the intelligence services because of the relative freedom, personal and intellectual, which they could enjoy there compared to the ideologically top-heavy party cadres. These were the people with the clearest sense of what life was like in the West and of how far the Soviet Union was slipping behind under Leonid Brezhnev.[50] It was not therefore wholly surprising that their candidates, first Yuri Andropov and then Mikhail Gorbachev, should have found themselves in the position of supreme power in the USSR.[51] After ten years of post Soviet Russia, its current leader, Vladimir Putin, is from the same stable.

This kind of power is less likely to be found in countries with a wider range of effective institutions, although this is not to say that the intelligence services cannot veto the advance of key individuals they distrust.[52] In general, intelligence is a factor which must be reckoned with in any analysis of foreign policy.[53] It is all too easy to skim over the surface of events without asking about the advice top leaders were getting from their 'permanent government', or about the extent to which the latter were engaged in covert operations – with or without explicit authorization – that did not always square with declaratory policy. Clear answers to such questions can rarely be found, but on the basis of the historical record it is not unreasonable to conclude that intelligence services are occasionally pro-active, and intermittently decisive, in a state's foreign relations.[54] By the same token their internal divisions, relatively limited resources and rather narrow range of concerns mean that they should not be seen as the hidden string-pullers of political marionettes. Political leaders usually manage to set their own broad foreign policy parameters, and where there is consensus and continuity they tend to have been determined by deeper forces than the influence of MI6 or the DGSE. Intelligence can become crucial when it is least expected, but most politicians in office have plenty of other things to worry about, at home and abroad, than the machinations of their own secret services. What is more, spectacular failures such as the inability to predict the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 do damage to reputations which can take decades to repair.

Leading Responsibly

Most scholars agree that leaders make a difference in foreign policy. Had Rabin and Peres rather than Begin and Sharon been leading Israel in 1982, says Shlomo Gazit, there would probably have been no invasion of the Lebanon.[55] It is true that Begin and the Likud Party had been elected by the Israeli people precisely because they were more hawkish on security questions, but that still left the prime minister and his colleagues a lot of scope for taking their own decisions. Since Israel is a democracy, they were supposed to lead responsibly, that is, bearing in the mind the wishes of their party and the electorate but still using their own judgement and values to assess what the circumstances required. For 'responsible' is an ambiguous word, referring on the one hand to behaviour which is generally sober and sensitive to context, and on the other to a person's answerability to specified others. This is the Weberian ideal-type of modern, legal–bureaucratic leadership.[56]

Political leadership in every area of policy involves quite a small group of people – cabinets rarely number many more than 20. In foreign policy this elite is generally even smaller, because of the nature of the issues, at once specialized and overwhelmingly comprehensive, which sets limits on those who can or wish to participate. The circuits of those who operate at the highest levels of international politics are still surprisingly restricted in numbers. This makes it possible for the foreign policy of the state to be 'captured' by a coterie of individuals, circulating over many years, with a particular perspective or even set of private interests. This is what the isolationists said, not wholly without justice, about the east coast WASPs who committed the USA to the defence of western Europe after 1947. It is more obviously true (but not just of foreign policy) in the sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf.

Yet even when a small elite monopolizes foreign policy, it does not follow that they are able or willing to exploit the state in the narrow sense of venality. More likely is that they come to identify themselves with the state, holding strongly to a particular image of what foreign policy should be doing and seeing their own line of policy as so much more 'responsible' than the alternatives. For it is all too easy both for insiders and outsiders to confuse the personalities of state foreign policy – the visible foreign policy executive – with 'national character' or with the interests of the whole community. The same mistake may be made with INGOs, when the Roman Catholic Church is identified with the pontiff of the day, or the problems of a multinational company are reduced to

the dynastic politics of an Agnelli or a Murdoch. It happens less in the 'faceless' corporate environment, but in a world of collective actors, and where states of all sizes enjoy formal equality, some personification is inevitable. Sometimes this is consciously exploited; more often, it leads to confusions on all sides as to who is really speaking for whom, and for which interests. Gorbachev, for instance, revolutionized Soviet foreign policy, but turned out not to be so representative of the country's people as most outsiders assumed. Like Churchill in 1945, Gorbachev was summarily expelled from office at the hour of his greatest fame.

Foreign policy has its peculiarities as an area of public policy. Whereas health, education and transport are always close to the centre of popular concerns, but only rarely bring forth great dramas, foreign policy can run in its own channels unseen by all except the specialists, only to break into the collective consciousness as a *grand guignol*, with the potential to do serious damage to the very fabric of the state and to its citizens' lives. This means that responsible leadership consists in not being lulled into complacency by the lack of daily domestic interest, and in not confusing the processes of decision-making by elites with the structures of multilayered international politics. It has to take the long view, trying to manage affairs so to avoid getting into the dangerous crises (whether military, political or economic) which are inherently transformational and restrictive of choice. It is *crisis*- (not conflict-) prevention which should be the touchstone of foreign policy, given that conflict in some form is inevitable and crisis is not. At the same time, an excessive emphasis on foreign affairs, with a corresponding over-insurance in costly defence policies against notional risks, can bankrupt the state and pervert its values. Both superpowers suffered from this to some degree during the Cold War, and the Soviet Union collapsed as a result.[57]

The responsibility of foreign policy does not always weigh heavily on decision-makers' shoulders, even if it ought to. Some insist on a particular version of 'the national interest' that is little more than a costly bet with history. Either way, there is a good deal of scope for actorness for the individuals and small groups who find themselves deciding on behalf of peoples in international relations. They have quite a margin in which to err or to show wisdom, even allowing for the constraints of the structures in which they are operating, international, transnational and domestic. They *interpret* a society's needs, for security, prosperity and independence, in a long perspective and with some degree of institutional freedom. Yet in so doing, they do not act alone. In the modern era foreign relations cannot be conducted by gifted amateurs with a small

number of personal assistants. A formidable bureaucracy geared to international policy has now grown up around most points of decision, and it is to the question of how far these seemingly non-political officials are obedient agents, and how far themselves shapers, or actors, that we now turn.

4

Agents: Bureaucracy and the Proliferation of External Relations

All modern leaders are heavily dependent on their professional staff, from the *éminences grises* who participate in summits, like Chancellor Kohl's Joachim Bitterlich, to the desk officers hidden away in ministries who follow day-to-day events in the Gambia or the Food and Agriculture Organization. This is true even of autocrats like Saddam Hussein; they may ensure obedience by terror rather than by legitimacy, as in democratic states, but they cannot run a complex set of external relations and social control solely through the clan-members of their power-base. Every system requires its janissaries to run embassies, manage the armed forces, gather and assess the mountains of information now available and not least assist in the many technical negotiations which constitute contemporary international relations. Policy-making works on the basis of formal operating rules, but also through trust and informal job-sharing.[1]

The importance of these cadres in foreign policy-making has long been recognized by scholars, and much literature now exists on the political impact of bureaucrats and the extent to which foreign policy is really in their hands. This chapter will examine the hypothesis of bureaucratic control by comparing the Weberian ideal-type with practice across different systems of society and government, with the help of the theories of 'bureaucratic politics' which have been developed by political scientists and students of International Relations. It will also discuss the way in which the foreign policy bureaucracy is no longer confined to ministries of foreign affairs, but extends horizontally across most governmental departments, provoking new problems of coordination and control.

Agents not Agency

The arrival of industrialization and a complex division of labour in nineteenth-century Europe fostered existing developments towards modern systems of government and administration. In particular the twin doctrines of democracy and meritocracy began to shape the expanding apparatus of the state. So far as foreign policy-making was concerned the impact of the new meritocratic thinking was evident rather earlier than that of democratic philosophy. Both had been present in the great symbol of modern upheaval, the French Revolution. Napoleon's revolution in French administration, with its key notion of *la carrière ouverte aux talents*, had been made possible by the sweeping away of feudal privileges between 1789–93, just as the great idea of popular sovereignty had been unleashed on the world by the Revolution. However disappointing its practical application in the Paris of Jacobins, Bonapartists and then restored Bourbons, there was to be no going back in terms of the discourse of European politics. But whereas even the aspiration for a democratic foreign policy, in the form of the policies of Woodrow Wilson, would not reach the political agenda for more than another hundred years, the pressure for greater efficiency and the mobilization of more state resources meant that the introduction of meritocratic measures into the official class began to take place around the middle of the nineteenth century.

In Britain, for example, the Northcote–Trevelyan report of 1854 led eventually to the civil service reforms of 1871 whereby formal grades of administrative and executive service were introduced as part of the move against corruption and incompetence. The army and navy reforms begun in the 1870 were designed to the same general end, so that position could no longer so easily be gained on the basis of birth and connections. This was partly the consequence of demonstrable incompetence during the Crimean War of 1854–6. Similarly in France, the devastating defeats of 1870–71 led to a reconsideration of many aspects of state policy, including education and the armed forces. The subsequent reforms meant that the country was to provide a far more formidable adversary for Germany in 1914. For its part, the newly unified Germany, with Prussia at its core, was proving a model of new administrative practice for other countries, even if the element of promotion on merit was still circumscribed by the powerful presence of the Junkers' elite in both army and government.

The ideas of rational conduct and a clear chain of command/authority were important to the new German model of administration, but they were by no means unproblematical, as the foremost theorist of modern bureaucracy, Max Weber, was subsequently to make clear.[2] A modern

system had to go beyond the notion of unqualified obedience to the next rung in the hierarchy; this had, after all, been the *motif* of absolutist forms of government. The ethos of democracy increasingly demanded a system in which obedience was owed only to legitimate government, and where legitimacy derived from the popular will. Moreover, obedience had to go hand in hand at all levels with accountability: politicians were to become ever more accountable to electorates, and to the press, while their subordinates were accountable both to their immediate superiors and to a growing corpus of written rules, necessary to systematize an ever more complex administration of interlinked parts. Finally, it was slowly becoming clear that both bureaucrats and their masters needed to be sensitive, and to some extent open, to inputs from mass society, from whom they took their rationale.

In pre-modern days, the clerks and secretaries who were the forerunners of today's 'secretaries of state' were judged by a particular form of efficiency – their ability to perform the prince's will, or at most their ability to persuade him to do what he surely would have wanted to do in any case. Until the age of mercantilism, there were no abstract indicators, whether economic or relating to 'power', against which performance could be measured. With the arrival of meritocratic thinking, however, in the wake of the enlightenment, came a sense of loyalty to the *res publica*, independent in the last analysis of the orders of any politician. This was a reworking of the classical distinction between the private and the public spheres in the light of notions of popular sovereignty.[3] By the late nineteenth century it was becoming accepted that an official should serve both legitimate political authority and some higher notion of the national interest in the event that the former proved corrupt or particularly inept (as in the case of those officials in the 1930s who leaked information on Britain's weak defences to an out-of-office Winston Churchill). It was, of course, to be hoped that such a fundamental conflict of loyalties would arise only rarely. For the most part the new breed of civil servant was to be loyal, professional, clear-sighted and non-political. The ideal-type of the modern official as articulated (but not invented) by Weber was that of someone who had been trained to implement policy decided upon by those engaged in politics, without themselves becoming politicized.[4] The human temptation to play politics was to be neutralized by the provision of proper job security and salaries, as well as by an ethos of responsibility and *esprit de corps*. More negatively the incentives to use office in the traditional way for the pursuit of personal wealth and advancement were diminished by supervision and by the fear of denied promotion or even dismissal.

This new class was to consist of reliable *agents*, in the sense of acting on behalf of others. But in today's terms they were not themselves either the repository of *agency* or independent foreign policy actors.

This was the theory. Certain states, like Britain, started to implement it much earlier than others, and it is in any case a job, like the painting of the Forth Bridge, which can never be completed. Arguably some states, even developed ones, have still not made much progress on it today. But wherever one looks, foreign policy was almost the last area to be reformed. The association of foreign policy with international elite networks meant that the impact of democratic and meritocratic thought fed through slowly, sometimes on the basis of two steps forward, one-and-a-half steps back.

Bureaucracy and Foreign Policy

The 'age of the masses' affected diplomacy in only piecemeal fashion, even if the two world wars caused major upheavals. Woodrow Wilson articulated the principles of 'open covenants, openly arrived at' in 1917, with its assumption that the old 'freemasonry' of international diplomacy had been responsible for the disastrous errors leading to the Great War. Efficiency, merit and democracy were conjoined in a new philosophy of foreign policy as a form of public service. As it happens, the values of professionalism had already begun to creep into the British, French, Japanese and American foreign ministries by 1914, with a gradual acceptance that intellectual ability was as important as social connections. After 1918 further changes were seen in Soviet Russia (where, however, one form of caste soon replaced another in the diplomatic corps), and Germany, although the highly turbulent and ideological thirty years which followed made this a period in which the advancing role of civil servants was inevitably stalled.[5]

Diplomatic dynasties continued to survive in the twentieth century – but the era of the gentleman diplomat was steadily giving way to an order in which officials were seen as both indispensable and wholly subordinate. This was as true of the United States, where state service enjoyed only moderate prestige and where each presidential election produced a new raft of political appointees to control the higher echelons of the State Department, as it was of the Soviet Union, where the organs of the state soon came to be infiltrated and controlled by the Communist Party – as late as 1956 Khrushchev could boast that 'Gromyko only says what we tell him to'.[6] In Britain, the ideological

hostilities of the 1920s, when the Foreign Office barely concealed its lack of trust in the first Labour government's ability to defend the national interest, were put to rest – at least so far as the leadership was concerned – during Labour's first full term (1945–50) when the prime minister and foreign secretary worked closely with senior officials to construct a new order in Europe. With France finally settling down under the Fifth Republic to an era in which respected presidents were served by able, loyal functionaries from the *grandes écoles*, the second half of the twentieth century seemed to have established bureaucracy as the neutral buffer in the political process, responsible for logistics, implementation and advice, but always subject to the decisions of the people's elected representatives.

Ironically it was just at this time, the 1950s and 1960s, that academics were beginning to question the truth of such a neat model, and to see bureaucrats themselves as powerful players in the policy process. Individual officials had already drawn attention to themselves, like Sir Eyre Crowe and his famous memorandum on British foreign policy of 1907, or André François-Poncet, the influential French Ambassador in Berlin from 1931 to 1938.[7] More common was the tendency of ad hoc personal advisers, such as Woodrow Wilson's Colonel House, or Tsar Nicholas's Rasputin, to come to public attention as svengali figures. Thereafter the steady growth in size of bureaucratic apparatuses, the increased number of states in the international system, and with them diplomatic representations, plus the remarkable economic expansion of the post-war years, all served to highlight the changing balance of power, in terms of numbers, resources and information (expertise), between politicians and officials.[8]

In the area of foreign policy the loyal 'agents' seemed from the outside to constitute a particularly compact and manageable body, with a readily identifiable foreign ministry and diplomatic service at the service of each state. Moreover, the strong sense of elite status and *esprit de corps* of diplomats, many of whom naturally served far from the supervising eyes of their domestic masters, made them obvious candidates for study as the real authors of foreign policy.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs

As we shall see, the past fifty years have seen the emergence of many rivals to conventional diplomats from within the bureaucracy. Nonetheless, the foreign ministry and those serving abroad (who have

increasingly come under the ministry's control) represent a formidable engine in the making of policy. The ministry still performs three vital functions:

- *Routine information-gathering*: no state can manage without the means to collect and analyse information on the range of issues in which it has interests. Although journalists now have better and quicker sources on developments in wider society, there is no substitute for the first-hand knowledge of their interlocuteurs in host administrations which good diplomats possess. In conjunction with the intelligence services they can also monitor policy-implementation in detail, when journalists have long ago moved on to other stories. This is why one of the first steps of the British government after the fall of Kabul in November 2001 was to re-establish the embassy and to send the Head of the South Asia Department of the FCO to run it.
- *Policy-making*: politicians formulate their foreign policies in opposition and have the assistance of their party machines in government. But they still rely heavily on the experts in the foreign ministry to sift the vast quantities of incoming information, to interpret and predict the actions of other states, and to formulate policy options on the thousand and one detailed questions which never come to public attention. Only in one-party states can the party machine represent an alternative to this concentration of specialized advice, as in the Soviet Union or China, where the International Departments of the Communist Party became surrogate foreign ministries.[9]
- *Memory*: every system needs continuity in its external relations, and career diplomats institutionalize it by serving as the system's collective memory, with the help of their record-keeping system. Without the capacity to relate myriad past commitments and treaties to the present, and to each other, decision-makers would be left floundering in chaos, given the complexity of the contemporary international system. Alternatively they would turn inwards, as with countries like North Korea which have been too paranoid to permit the development of civil service expertise. Conversely, the possession of this institutional memory does produce pressures for conservatism in foreign affairs. If *pacta sunt servanda*, as diplomats and their legal advisers usually believe, then it is difficult to strike out in new directions, and domestic radicals of various colours easily become frustrated with what they see as the inertia and obstructionism of their own foreign ministry. This is exacerbated by the uncertainties

of the external environment and the tendency of the experts to rely on the 'lessons' of the past.

Apart from these broad functions, in most cases where foreign ministries are not demoralized and deliberately emasculated, they develop certain institutional strengths. In the first instance they usually attract high-quality personnel, selected in the modern era by competitive examinations. The social and intellectual sources of recruitment may still be narrow – history and law graduates from comfortable backgrounds for the most part – but the meritocratic principle is now dominant: the diplomatic service represents an elite of ability as well as ethos. In 1984, 28 per cent of all French ambassadors had been educated at the top-ranking Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA), while 75–80 per cent of ENA's own recruits came from Paris's Institut des Etudes Politiques ('Sciences Po'). And there is no doubt that both ENA and Sciences Po and their equivalents elsewhere are funnels for students of the highest calibre. Even in very small countries like Ireland and Luxembourg, the quality of their officials is perceived abroad as being high – in the two cases cited running the six-month revolving presidency of the EU has never proved a technical problem, even if at times the volume of work has been excessive.[10]

Secondly, where they do enjoy trust, foreign ministries will have a considerable degree of autonomy, virtually constituting a sub-elite within the machinery of government. Their control over external representations, their privileged contacts with foreigners and the continued mystique of international affairs gives them a certain carapace which protects against interference by other parts of the domestic administration. In the long run this can attract resentment and hostility, as with Truman's often-expressed view of foreign service officers as 'the striped pants boys', or the Nazi Party's determination to control its too-reasonable diplomats by compelling them to become members of the Party.[11] Still, for countries as diverse as Argentina, Egypt, Norway and Canada the foreign ministry and its diplomats constitute a distinctive and high-status profession without which the state would be significantly disadvantaged in the international system.

Lastly, foreign ministries have adapted during the current century to the vastly greater range of business which confronts states by organizing themselves on both geographical and functional lines. At various times each has been in fashion; for example, the European Commission, which in one respect is a proto-European foreign ministry, has had three reorganizations in less than a decade, swinging back and forth between

the geographical and the functional principle.[12] The Dutch foreign ministry has dealt with the problem by consolidating its regional directorates: political, economic and aid-related.[13] In general, however, it is now generally recognized that a foreign ministry needs both area specialists and experts in functional questions like energy and the environment, themselves partly reflecting the emergence of ever-more specialized international organizations.[14] Foreign ministries are increasingly stretched thin in the attempt to cater for this range of knowledge, but only they possess the *combination* of the different skills required.

Naturally these continuing strengths are only part of the story. Indeed current conventional wisdom tends to see foreign ministries and their employees as dinosaurs being supplanted by home-based experts and non-governmental para-diplomats. Let us examine the reasons why diplomatic services are under challenge, in the very era when they have finally become modern, professional organizations:

- *Technical incompetence*: diplomats are seen as over-generalist and over-stretched, incapable of discussion on equal terms with economists, scientists and businessmen. Even the 'specialism in abroad' counts for less now that travel is so easy and so common. Typical was the day trip made by British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook to Ankara in May 1998.[15] Mr Cook was also particularly aware of the 'infomatic' challenge. He introduced a secure electronic mail system, since his officials were receiving hot information later than the foreign editors of most newspapers.
- *The spread of mini-foreign offices*: most domestic departments now engage directly in international relations by sending their own experts out to meet their equivalents in another state or to participate in a specialized international organization. This is particularly the case in the European Union, where the Council of Finance Ministers (ECOFIN) is now a serious rival to the Council of (Foreign) Ministers as the working 'Cabinet' of the EU. In Japan the Ministry of International Trade and Industry has more prestige than the foreign ministry, together with its own network of external contacts. In the 1980s it caused problems by encouraging Toshiba, for commercial reasons, to break the rules of the CoCom (the Coordinating Committee associated with NATO from 1949–93 to control the export of strategic goods to hostile countries) by selling computers to the USSR. This was obviously within the purview of classical foreign policy. In Mexico 'almost every Ministry has a *Dirección General de Asuntos Internacionales*'.[16] These days hardly any government

department anywhere can be regarded as wholly 'home' in its remit. Between 1960 and 1980, for example, the number of domestic ministries with their own international units in Finland and Sweden rose from two in each case to six and ten respectively.[17] Similarly, as early as 1975 the US's Murphy Commission investigating 'the Organization of the Government for the Conduct of Foreign Policy' found that of more than 20,000 civilian employees working full-time on foreign affairs (excluding the many in support agencies and in intelligence) only about 4000 worked in the Department of State. Abroad, in 1982 there were 126,520 civilian employees of the Executive branch, from 25 departments and agencies. Of these, 15,339 worked for the State Department, including foreign nationals.[18]

- *Poverty of resources*: foreign ministries use up very small amounts of public expenditure – in general less than 1 per cent of the total. The State Department's budget is rather less than the Pentagon's jet fuel bill. Yet far from strengthening their position, not being a burden turns out to be a political disadvantage. It is one of the paradoxes of modern government that those departments which use most resources, and cause most headaches, such as education, health and social security, seem most able to protect their budgets, while the foreign ministry, whose outputs are less tangible but far less expensive, is constantly vulnerable to cut-backs and bad publicity.[19] What is more, cuts here mean the loss of trained manpower, whose effects cannot quickly be reversed.[20]
- *Lack of domestic constituency*: following on from the above, foreign ministries have few natural supporters within their own societies. Foreign policy requires little domestic legislation and in consequence few members of parliament are drawn into policy-making, with the potential to become allies of the department. Whereas defence ministries can look to those manning bases or employed in the arms industry, and finance ministries always find allies in those who wish to cut taxes, the foreign ministry easily becomes labelled – as by Margaret Thatcher in Britain, and Jessie Helms in the USA – as the department for foreigners. Indeed it is all too easy for diplomats to get out of touch with their domestic base. Even when they return home for a period, they only serve in the nation's capital. In recent years, moreover, diplomacy has acquired a stuffy image, the opposite of street and business credibility, not least as relative salaries have declined, with the result that many of the best and the brightest have gone elsewhere. Even French 'enarques' were attracted away to private industry. This trend has begun to be reversed, as awareness has grown of the limits of a business vision of the world.

These foreign service weaknesses are real. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the formal, separate diplomatic apparatus as we know it might disappear over the next few decades to be replaced by what Britain's Berrill Report envisaged in 1977 as 'a foreign service group' within the wider civil service – in other words, a bureaucracy in which service overseas at some point becomes normal for most staff, and where 'external' policy is simply one aspect of policy in general. On the other hand, a terminal prognosis misses some important vital signs. For instance on the issue of technical competence, the more effective foreign ministries have adapted by increasing training in economics, and by allowing some staff to specialize. Furthermore, the greater diversification of external relations has created new needs for coordination and synthesis that foreign ministries, if they can escape the more traditional elements of their mind-set, are well-placed to meet. It is by no means obvious in any case that specialized currency issues are best negotiated by monetary economists, or chemical weapons questions settled by natural scientists. The ability to understand political and historical context is vital, together with the ability to keep experts 'on tap and not on top'.

To the extent that a foreign ministry can do this without falling back on the spurious justifications that only diplomats understand foreigners or the processes of negotiation, then they will maintain the high status that even today attaches to their profession and to the post of minister of foreign affairs. Despite their domestic vulnerabilities diplomats continued to be valued by the members of a formidable network, national and international, of influential figures, not least those politicians (and journalists) who lean on their skills in daily life, and who have seen at close hand how the profession has become more stressful, demanding and often physically dangerous since 1945. Diplomats have been held hostage and sometimes killed in many postings as a result of embodying their countries' policies and being the most obvious point of national weakness. The four-month siege in the Japanese embassy in Lima in 1997, and the killing of American diplomats in bomb attacks in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998 are vivid recent examples. The G8 summits may take all the headlines, with political advisers, 'sherpas' and flown-out domestic officials to the fore, but behind all the fanfare is a great deal of indispensable routine daily grind in which foreign ministries

have a prime role. Few presidential or prime ministerial offices, even in the most prominent cases of Washington, Bonn and Paris, would wish to do without the extensive diplomatic machinery that is also at their disposal. Even Henry Kissinger, who was very hard on American diplomats, dedicated a major book to 'the men and women of the Foreign Service of the United States of America, whose professionalism and dedication sustain American diplomacy'.[21]

Proliferating Rivals

Outsiders dealing with a particular state are always thrown into a quandary when they have to deal with a range of different departments or agencies. Is the adversary playing a strategic game by speaking with competing voices, or is there a genuine problem of fragmented decision-making? There is clearly a great deal of room for misunderstanding when many states are incapable of speaking with one voice.

This happens increasingly because foreign ministries now find themselves in a situation of structural rivalry with domestic competitors and because they do not always succeed in rising to the new challenge of coordination. Whether it is because of the international phenomenon of 'complex interdependence' or because of endogenous changes in the state (and the two processes are difficult to separate out) many states are now facing what has been termed the 'horizontal decentralization' of their foreign relations, or the foreign ministry's loss of control over many external issues to other parts of the state bureaucracy. From the wider perspective of the interests of state and society the problem of unitary action means that opportunities for linkage may be missed in international negotiation, that outsiders will be able to play on internal divisions or confusions, and that long-term strategic planning becomes almost impossible.

Who are the rivals to foreign ministries which have been proliferating in recent decades? They may be listed in four categories, three with substantive concerns and one with a procedural mission. First is the military, which can act as an ally to the foreign ministry, but which has its own sizeable vested interests and direct links with its equivalents overseas. Its actions can, not always intentionally, constitute a form of parallel foreign policy which then boxes in the official version – as did the Anglo-French military conversations of 1905–14, with their growing presumption of an automatic alliance between the two countries.[22] Since the military possesses considerable physical resources, a domestic constituency and its

own network of attachés and intelligence sources it clearly has the capacity to embarrass conventional diplomacy. This is to say nothing of the numerous countries in which at one time or another the military has played a disproportionate part in government, and therefore been able to invert the normal servant–master relationship of defence to foreign policy. In the United States the military was not hindered by having General Eisenhower as President for eight years, even if General MacArthur's attempt to subvert democratic policy-making during the Korean War had been rebuffed by Truman, and his successor was aware of the need to tread carefully in civil–military relations. In the Soviet Union the military remained cowed until the death of Stalin by its losses in the purges of 1937–8, but thereafter soon became a massive force for over-insurance in the arms race which eventually brought their state to its knees. The Third World continues to produce examples of military dictatorships which are often cautious in their foreign policies but almost always lacking in the finesse and cooperative capacity which experienced diplomats bring to bear.[23] Brazil in the 1960s, Greece in the 1970s, Turkey in the 1980s, Nigeria and Burma in the 1990s, are all cases in point.

The second category of rival to the foreign ministry is that of the economic ministries. These will vary in number and title according to the state, which might possess one or more departments dealing with foreign trade/commerce, finance, development/foreign aid, industry, agriculture, fisheries and shipping – to say nothing of central banks, an increasing number of which are constitutionally independent of political control, although the other side of their lack of malleability is that their strict monetary remit usually makes them conservative and predictable. These entities are the basis of the hypothesis that interdependence is dissolving foreign policy and replacing it by a mosaic of functional, transgovernmental networks. The important roles of finance officials in IMF and EMU meetings and of trade officials in GATT/WTO negotiations seems to bear out the argument. Karvonen and Sundelius, however, have made a detailed empirical study of this question, largely in relation to Finland and Sweden but also carefully located in a comparative frame of analysis.[24] They conclude that although the picture is inevitably variegated, given the variety of state cultures and the genuine uncertainties about the best way to proceed, foreign ministries have often reasserted their central role in the 'management of interdependence'. Indeed, in 1983 the Swedish Commerce Ministry was dismantled and its international trade functions transferred to the foreign ministry. On the other hand, there is no doubt both that

'domestic' parts of the machinery of government have grown at a faster rate than the 'international' part, through their very expansion into the latter's territory (as we saw above with the notion of 'mini-foreign offices'), and that problems of coordination and control have consequently increased.[25]

The third form of rival is the intelligence services, whose role we have already surveyed in Chapter 3. These are at once the most difficult to keep in line and the least able to participate in routine policy-making and international negotiations. They are to some extent hamstrung by their own strengths. Nonetheless, when western states are at a loss to decide which branch of Syrian intelligence might have been responsible for a bomb attack on a jet airliner, as with the Hindawi affair of 1986, it is clear that a state's foreign policy can at times be splintered by powerful internal elements running their own line – or it can appear to be so, when it suits various parties not to assume a single locus of responsibility within the acting state. Conversely, in a democratic state the leadership can sometimes be forced to take responsibility for a policy failure which was really that of an importunate intelligence service. John Kennedy and the Bay of Pigs operation against Cuba of 1961, and Robin Cook and the Sierra Leone affair of 1998 are two prominent examples. Few intelligence agencies can resist the temptation to move on from information collection to assessment and action, as the role of Pakistan's Military Intelligence in supporting the Taliban in the war of 2001–2, despite President Musharraf's support for the United States, demonstrated.

The consequences of proliferating external relations leads us to the last, and rather different, set of rivals facing the modern foreign ministry – those who think they can pull the threads of complexity together rather more effectively than can the diplomatic generalists. These people reside either in the prime minister's office and/or cabinet secretariat (in a parliamentary system), in the president's personal 'cabinet' (in a presidential system) or in the party machine in a one-party state. They have the advantages of being close to the head of government and being free of departmental bias, with an overview of the whole system. They often also control high-level appointments across the bureaucracy. All this makes for formidable rivals to the foreign ministry as it seeks to reconcile the many different strands of external relations. Yet the latter is not without its own advantages. A prime ministerial or presidential office can set the main outlines of policy, but it can easily get out of touch with detail, expertise and implementation. The concern with public policy as a whole can lead to the external dimension being unjustly neglected, manipulated for purely political reasons or distorted by ideological preoccupations, with unpleasant surprises the eventual result. The challenge for foreign policy-makers today, therefore, is to build on the foreign ministry's unique capacity to understand how a state's activities look from the outside, and to judge how much of a united front is actually desirable, while ensuring that no gap arises between classical foreign policy and the various international dimensions of domestic policy. Striking the balance, and keeping the major departments of state in harmony with each other along the way, is one of the great tests of modern government.

The Theory of Bureaucratic Politics

So far theory has hardly entered the discussion. Yet if we are fully to understand the simultaneously fragmented and unitary character of foreign policy-making, we need theories which address the roles of bureaucracy, of choice and of government. Fortunately a rich literature of precisely this kind has grown up over the past thirty years under the general heading of 'bureaucratic politics'.

The theory of bureaucratic politics was introduced thirty years ago by Graham Allison, building on previous work done by Charles Lindblom, Richard Neustadt, Herbert Simon and others.[26] It has been developed since by Allison himself, Morton Halperin, Robert Gallucci and others, and applied in numerous case-studies.[27] Although it has also been subject to healthy criticism it is in ever-wider use empirically, not least among historians. Outside academe, however, things are rather different. Although practitioners would not quarrel with the model, and often live up to its predictions, they are barely aware of its propositions, let alone its implications for the wider issues of choice, democracy and responsibility. *A fortiori*, the citizenry has little clue that foreign policy decisions might be being made in the less than ideal way described by the theory of bureaucratic politics. They have a healthy sense of the self-interest and incompetence of individual politicians, but probably assume that in foreign policy it is not too much to expect the major departments of their country's bureaucracy to pull broadly in the same direction.

Yet this is precisely what does not happen, according to the theory. Allison's two models, soon collapsed into a single theory entitled 'governmental politics', are well enough known by now not to need recounting in detail.[28] Put baldly, the hypothesis, worked out in a case-study of

superpower behaviour during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, was that ministries and other bureaucratic units pursue at best their own versions of the national interest and at worst their own parochial concerns, so that foreign policy-making becomes an inward-looking battleground in which decisions are produced by horse-trading more than logic. But the fundamental assumptions of the argument should be examined, not least because they have been sharply criticized and because they have important implications for any attempt to address the problem of action in foreign policy. If we wish to know where agency lies in modern international relations, we must consider the proposition that the state tends to decompose into its various separate parts, and the degree to which the fissiparous tendencies of bureaucracy might be countered through intelligent leadership or constitutional provisions.

The bureaucratic politics approach has two general consequences for the study of foreign policy: it reinforces the whole domestic politics approach, against the scepticism of realism, neo-realism and some forms of historicism, and it presents a picture of decision-making in which 'foul-ups', as opposed to either rationality or inevitability, are very prominent. In both these respects it is thus central to the subject of foreign policy analysis, which came to the fore precisely because it has forced the domestic environment onto the agenda of International Relations and because it has subverted the claims of decision-makers always to be acting intelligently and/or in the public interest. For our purposes, however, although the bureaucratic politics model highlights the importance of agency, it also complicates the question significantly.

This occurs for one fairly self-evident reason and two more subtle ones. The basic reason is that bureaucratic politics insists that clear, rational decisions dealing with the merits of a problem tend to be supplanted by the mere 'resultants' of an internal process of bargaining and manoeuvring, in which, as Lamborn and Mummie have pointed out, the outcome will probably not correspond to the initial preference-orderings of any particular actor.[29] In other words, internal dynamics invariably shape policy to produce compromises that are unsatisfactory in terms of their external competence. This is, in practice, another version of the view that democracies are at a disadvantage in their dealings with autocratic states, which we shall encounter in Chapter 11, but it adds the problem of competing foreign policies being run from the same state, with no certainty for outsiders or insiders as to which might prevail.

The agency problem is more tangentially affected by a second aspect of the bureaucratic politics theory, namely that of its assumptions about the place of rationality in the calculations of what Allison calls 'the

players ... men in jobs'.[30] Are they mostly acting irrationally, or just sub-optimally? Are they, conversely, acting in the same way that is described in the famous 'rational actor model' of the first part of the book, but at the level of individuals and departments rather than unitary states? Either way, does it make a crucial difference to foreign policy outcomes, and the location of responsibility for decisions? These questions touch on the biggest weakness of the theory: that the springs of choice are left unclear. If policy-makers, instead of trying to liaise in the best way possible to construct an effective, united national position, prefer rather to pursue the interests of their own ministry, department or office, why should this be so? In what way might they profit (for at base, the analogy is an economic one) if the state as a whole is served less well than their parochial departmental loyalty? Why, indeed, is it obvious that separate administrative units have competing interests, beyond the trivial level of finance and survival? One can argue that the same problem of rational actorness applies at both levels, the unitary state of Model I and the bureaucratic entity of Model III: that is, are human beings really desiccated calculating machines who optimize on the basis of as much information as they can gather, without much regard for political beliefs, moral values, personal loyalties or sense of identity? It seems very unlikely, even if, to turn Allison on his head, they are more likely to make the effort in the service of a collectivity like the state, whose very survival might be thought to rest on their ability to relate ends systematically to means. It would be almost bizarre to deploy the same resources in the interests of a sub-unit.

If the bureaucratic politics model is correct it does have profound implications for our notions of foreign policy action. It would make it very difficult to rely on a notion of state-as-actor in international relations. States would become less important, not because of the familiar forces of interdependence but because the state apparatus would have become little more than an arena in which competing fiefdoms fought out their inward-looking games. Foreign policy in this perspective either gets made by accident, or it is captured unpredictably by different elements at different times. This was, indeed, the line taken by Allison and Halperin, particularly in the latter's book on the US Anti-Ballistic Missile System decision of 1967.[31] Here he showed that a system originally designed to protect against the USSR was described as being deployed against China, with all the obvious consequences for relations with Beijing, largely because of the battles which had been fought within the government, particularly between Secretary McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

If this is a true description and one of general applicability then we have to live with the fact. But as Jerel Rosati once pointed out in a famous attack on the theory of bureaucratic politics, it makes the idea of responsible, democratic decision-making difficult to sustain.[32] Rosati made a category error in presuming that because bureaucratic politics undercuts the constitution and presidency of the United States the theory must be mistaken. It may describe something which is undesirable, but that does not make it fanciful. On the other hand Rosati has certainly happened upon an important issue. If policy-making is a seething mass of intertwined bureaucratic conflicts, then the formal responsibility of office-holders for final decisions becomes more nominal than real. Moreover, if the culture permits individuals and units to behave in this way then it must signify that a sense of duty to the government of the day, and to the public behind them (to say nothing of wider societal or universal values), has not been widely disseminated.

Bureaucratic politics and agency are mutually entangled for one final reason. One of the key ideas underpinning the theory is that of role-socialization – even if Allison does not put it in quite these terms. By this is meant the presumed ability of an organizational context to socialize its staff into a particular set of values attached to that unit, over and above apparently superordinate value-systems such as the 'national interest'. Thus foreign ministry personnel will pursue concerns which are very different from those of the military. Even more obviously, inter-service rivalry will be a fact of policy-making life, as the navy is never going to agree that boats should be mothballed while more tanks are bought, and so on. The trouble with this all too plausible picture of how individuals become 'organization man' (or woman – it is often forgotten that in Margaret Thatcher's first Cabinet post as Secretary of State for Education, she was a high-spending minister in favour of state schools!) is twofold. Firstly, it is by no means clear what the 'unit' is that has such determining effects on a person's behaviour. Is it, for example, in the case of a high-ranking defence official, the department as a whole, the minister's inner group, or the particular armed service/functional division for which he or she happens to have responsibility? And do lower-level functionaries only identify themselves with their immediate unit, or with all the divisions which are on top and around them? Secondly, even if we can identify stable units for given 'players', what is the 'line' which they are supposed to be pushing, and how do they know? Such suppositions as 'the military are hawkish' or 'diplomats tend to appeasement' do not withstand a moment's serious scrutiny.

If there is a relationship between organizational context and substantive policy preference, then it is a more subtle affair than this. Martin Hollis and Steve Smith have been the most effective critics of this part of the bureaucratic politics model, and their amendments make it much more useable.[33] Instead of a mechanical system which either reproduces the problems of rational action or depicts decision-makers as robots wholly programmed by their position in the administrative order, they suggest that the roles individuals take on when they become part of an organization should be regarded as both constraining and enabling. Bureaucratic animals are constrained by their terms of reference, their superiors and the culture (or 'expectations') of their group, and they also have opportunities to interpret their given roles in new ways on the basis of their own personalities and particular circumstances. This description does justice to the evident fact that we are all shaped profoundly by the goals and values of the work we do, while allowing for change and an important element of indeterminacy.

A key question in social science is 'where do preferences (values, ideas, and so forth) come from?' – a question which pinches sharply on the theory of bureaucratic politics, given the assumption that roles are the source of key preferences. In practice, there is no substitute for empirical flexibility on this: that is, being aware when it comes to the analysis of particular cases and countries that outcomes may well have been strongly influenced by bureaucratic competition, while at the same time not falling into the trap of using the model in too rigid or exclusive a manner. There are, after all, many key variables involved in the making of foreign policy, and the theory of bureaucratic politics deserves the status of single-factor explanation no more than any other.

Assuming that bureaucratic roles condition preferences to some degree – if only by making it difficult to change positions radically when new political bosses arrive – there remains the question of interaction between the separate agencies responsible for external relations, and how far competition between them undermines an effective foreign policy. The theory has problems here too, notably in taking an overly narrow view of what constitutes 'politics' within the policy-making system.[34] The tendency to assume that bureaucratic units are characterized by the pursuit of power in some form of micro-imperialist scramble does less than justice to the evident differences of formal responsibility (it is a treasury's *purpose* to try to ensure sound finances) and modes of understanding the world that exist between, say, career diplomats and those who make their living from working in the field on development aid projects. These different groups will engage in politics, but usually at a

rather more serious and elevated level than that of mere pork-barrelling. For example, it is clear that in Japan at the present time most officials in the foreign ministry are in favour of Japan becoming a permanent member of the UN Security Council because it will enhance the ministry's domestic position vis à vis rivals such as MITI. On the other hand, there are plenty of officials outside the foreign ministry who favour the move for broader reasons to do with Japan's future place in world politics, and few who would oppose it just so as to scupper the diplomatic corps.

This means that the bureaucratic politics theory must be used in conjunction with an understanding of both wider conceptions of politics and the roles of the formal *political* actors. Through their power of hiring and firing, but also through the manifesto commitments which they embody, the agreements they reach with foreign leaders and the sheer capacity for heroic transcendence of routine which all powerful leaders enjoy, a head of government can change the rules of the bureaucratic game and start the whole dance off again to different music. This happens most obviously in the United States, but there are plenty of examples from other systems, as we saw in Chapter 3. It must also take account of the variability of contexts in which bureaucratic politics are played out – there are many different levels of state power and economic development – as well as varying particular circumstances, historical periods and political cultures. Halperin was myopic when he wrote that 'as we believe, all Governments are similar to the US government as we have described it here'.[35] Most observers have concluded that although the United States system is indeed beset by bureaucratic infighting (which is why the literature originated there) the degree and quality of the problem are unmatched anywhere else.[36] Some other cultures, indeed, display some of the opposite pathologies, as with Japan, where there is an obsessive concern with consensus ('*ringi-sei*') and to a lesser degree the centralized states of France and the United Kingdom, where the structure favours the forces of coordination over those of fragmentation. Moreover, most systems have informal networks which cut across the nominal interdepartmental divisions and produce elites with a strong sense of overall direction and/or common interest.

It is also important not to exaggerate the importance of officials. Some foreign policy disasters have less to do with decision-making fiascoes – whether bureaucratic or otherwise – than with more 'structural' forces such as geo-politics, ideological conflict or the configuration of classes. As Fred Halliday pointed out in relation to the Iranian revolution, 'had there been dozens of wise Persian-speaking C.I.A. and State Department officials, or had the Shah not been admitted to the USA in October 1979, these broader problems would have remained'.[37] Officials themselves, in memoirs and interviews, naturally tend to highlight problems of resources and coordination, but a different vantage-point, and in particular a longer historical perspective, may well make their concerns seem more ephemeral.

This raft of qualifications is only worth making because the theory of bureaucratic politics has at its core a set of insights which is both strong and parsimonious. In the next section I want to show that the most useful of them derive less from the idea of interdepartmental conflict than from that of organizational process, but there is certainly much empirical evidence to suggest that the former is also a common and influential phenomenon. Allison argued that if he could show that governmental politics occurred even in conditions of extreme crisis, it must be endemic, and even after accepting the more pertinent criticisms of the historical basis of his case study enough remains to make the point plausible. On the Soviet side, recent documents have suggested that there was confusion between Moscow and its military in the field as to who was supposed to be in control of the anti-aircraft batteries on Cuba which shot down an American U2.[38] As for the United States, the navy was certainly reluctant to pull back the blockade line so as to create more time for diplomacy, and some air force chiefs (notably Curtis LeMay) pushed so hard for air-strikes, even after a deal had been done, that President Kennedy had to exert maximum authority to ensure control over events.

In more normal times, budget allocations invariably produce interdepartmental rivalries of an intensity that can leave foreign policy the victim. This was the case with the Navy vs Air Force dispute of the early 1960s which led to the cancellation of the Skybolt missile programme despite the fact that the system had already been offered to the UK.[39] Outside the US there are also many examples of at least intermittent bureaucratic politics. In the Soviet Union after 1978 the newly created Department of International Information provided yet another rival to the Foreign Ministry, and Gromyko complained strenuously about the existence of parallel systems.[40] The Israeli secret services are known to have put agents into their own prime minister's office, while the Coalition's war in Afghanistan in late 2001 saw the Italian foreign ministry at odds with the more cautious officials of the defence ministry.[41] Less dramatic have been the tensions inside the German state between the Chancellor's Office, the foreign ministry (often feeling itself excluded) and the economics ministry – to say nothing of the fiercely

independent Bundesbank in its heyday. At times the German position on a future European monetary union oscillated wildly according to which institution was briefing the press.[42]

Thus any bureaucracy which is big enough to have a normal division of labour between ministries is likely to have a *tendency* to bureaucratic politics, however much the culture encourages solidarity. In complex systems, decisions are almost always the result of inter-agency compromises, and therefore in strict terms are sub-optimal, although as we shall see in the next chapter the checks and balances involved can turn out to be valuable.[43] If decision-making matters at all in terms of affecting outcomes, and of providing choices over different courses of action, then relations between politicians and their officials will matter too, and a theory of the politics which occurs between them must be taken seriously. It is just as important, however, to look at the characteristics of bureaucracies which are not strictly political at all.

The Heart of the Matter – Organizational Process

There is a great tradition of writing about bureaucracy which long predates the work of Allison. From Weber, Michels and Ostrogorski through to Herbert Simon and Chester Barnard a body of thought has built up from which the pathologies of modern organizational life have become clear. These general theories of organization focus particularly on the routines of bureaucratic procedure and on the handling of information. What they have to say about the problem of rationality is of great interest, and this will be dealt with in the next chapter. The main point of interest here is the way in which officials shape policy by their quiet but ubiquitous presence. As Richard Betts noted in relation to the power of the military, 'the real problem ... is indirect influence and the extent to which it may condition the decision-makers' frame of reference'.[44] There are at least five ways in which this happens, independent of any bureaucratic politics:

- Administrative systems 'factor' problems so as to be able to deal with them more efficiently. That is, everything is broken down into its component parts and classified into headings and systems that suit the pre-existing organizational structures but may not suit the problem itself. This is a partly rational, partly historical process and it militates against seeing the problem in the round, strategically. Where competence exists, the problem will be dealt with well, but the converse is also true. Thus, US diplomacy on the law of the sea in the late 1970s and early 1980s was hampered by the fact that the State Department's 'Bureau of Oceans and International Environment and Scientific Affairs' was evidently inadequate.[45] If it had been stronger it would surely have led the United States to take a more pro-active, and perhaps constructive, role in the negotiations over a Law of the Sea Treaty. Even where knowledge is not the issue, factoring can cause severe problems. From 1984 the CIA had critical data on Iraqi stores of nerve gas, but it failed to ensure that the US troops who blew up the bunker in Khamisiyah in 1991 were warned about their possible exposure to toxic agents.[46]
- Bureaucracies cannot work without 'standard operating procedures' (SOPs – a key concept in *Essence of Decision*). That is, they need to have formal rules, almost always written down, which individuals are extremely reluctant to over-rule. Personal initiative is discouraged precisely because the *system* is seen as the source of efficiency. The rules usually only get changed under the pressure of a catastrophe which has already happened. Thus the Soviet Union's eastern air defences shot down the Korean civil airliner KAL007 in 1983 without proper reference to Moscow because they had orders not to allow hostile incursions which could be a missile attack on pain of their jobs (and possibly their lives).[47] It was easier to 'obey orders' than to take initiatives and to act on the basis of lateral thinking. It may have been a similar problem which led the US Navy ship *Vincennes* to shoot down an Iranair airbus in 1988, also with complete loss of life. The most famous SOPs are sometimes said to have had even more serious consequences: the Austrian need in 1914 to get the harvest in before calling up their reserves for war, together with the German Schlieffen Plan which led rigidly to the invasion of Belgium in the event of war with France, may between them have ensured that a limited conflict turned into a continent-wide disaster.[48] Greater flexibility would at least have created more contingency plans and more political room for manoeuvre.
- Conservatism is another iron law of bureaucracies. Even at the level of basic competences, decision-makers often do not take measures to change the existing order of things. Thus the administration of EU development policy continued unreformed throughout the 1990s, despite its evident inability even to spend the funds allocated.[49] When problems are anticipated, change – in the form of retraining or new recruitment policies – takes decades to implement. The 'young turks' in the Italian foreign ministry demanded reform for

years before the measures announced in 1998 which have begun the slow process of modernization.[50] In actual foreign policy behaviour conservatism usually takes the form of being 'risk-averse', in Allison's terms, and of over-insurance. That is, not wanting to be exposed as having failed to do the job, bureaucrats tend to stick to what they know has worked in the past and to err on the safe side. They often see their job as holding on to politicians 'by their coat-tails' to prevent fanciful initiatives. It is of course thoroughly desirable to think things through and not to take stupid risks, especially with other people's lives and taxes. But it can also be a fatal error not to change in time, as the French armed services found with their attachment to the Maginot line in 1940 and the entire communist bureaucracies of the USSR and eastern Europe discovered in 1989.[51] Margaret Thatcher was disdainful of 'the Foreign Office where compromise and negotiation were ends in themselves' and even more of ministers who could not break free of its 'spell'.[52]

- The quality of bureaucracy most prominent in the public mind – not without justice – is pettiness. Most citizens associate their state with administrative nightmares to do with long queues, unnecessary paperwork and 'officious' behaviour. In the area of foreign affairs the image is bad because of problems getting visas, passing through border controls and getting consular assistance (despite the fact that the first two of these are in fact not the responsibility of the foreign ministry). Behind the scenes the reality does sometimes live up to the stereotype. The small-mindedness of the British officials who refused to accept the evidence before them of genocide against the Jews was staggering, rather like the wall of unseeing which characterized so many of those in the service of apartheid in South Africa. 'I was just doing my job' – the definition of the reliable bureaucrat – has unfortunately become a synonym for lack of imagination and humanity.[53]
- The comparative study of organizations tends, lastly, to highlight the inherent tendency of bureaucracy to expand when not positively checked. This can also be termed elephantiasis. As Kissinger observed, 'the vast bureaucratic mechanisms that emerge develop a momentum and a vested interest of their own'.[54] Problems of coordination abound, particularly given the steady expansion of external relations and the information overloads evident in the second half of the twentieth century. The sheer technical problems of filing, copying, and personnel management present formidable obstacles to efficiency in the biggest systems. Information technology has simply increased the amount of transactions, while the need for encryption and other problems of secure communications are other factors which make size and sophistication to some extent a disadvantage. Nor does privatization reduce the size and unwieldiness of bureaucracy. Although some ideas have been floated about sub-contracting embassy work (as with some prisons), it is not really feasible to expect that a society as a whole can be represented abroad, often in highly political negotiations, by private interests. Whether centralized, like China, or federal, like Germany, the administration of foreign relations is complex and growing in proportion to the increased number of states, international organizations and private transactions that a foreign policy process has at the least to track and quite probably relate to. At the extreme this can have dire consequences: the CIA is said to have received advance warning in 1981 that President Sadat of Egypt was going to be assassinated; there were, however, so many pieces of information to process that the warning was not read until after the murder had taken place.

Politicians and Officials: Can the Dog be Separated from his Tail?

Given the theory of civil service responsibility and obedience to elected politicians, but the evident reality of the former's monopoly of expertise, detail and continuity, the question inevitably arises of whether the tail wags the dog. The theory of bureaucratic politics and its empirical follow-ups have shown convincingly enough that in certain circumstances an administration can indeed have a mind of its own. It is, for instance, notoriously difficult for politicians to intervene in the processes of weapons development and procurement.[55] More interesting, however, in the light of the equally clear weaknesses of this approach, is to ask whether in the complex circumstances of modern foreign policy-making, the dog can be sensibly considered separately from its by now extremely bushy tail. The American use of the term 'official' to cover both politicians and bureaucrats is revealing, placing both sets of people in the category of accountable public servants, and with the implication that it is naïve to look upon professional administrators as being in some sense apolitical. Nor is this any longer a phenomenon peculiar to the United States. The past two British governments have tended to look sceptically on the notion of neutral advice from their top civil servants, and some personnel changes have been made accordingly. The Mandela government in South Africa was understandably keen to get blacks into senior positions in the Department of Foreign Affairs and

other ministries, at the same time as it acknowledges the importance of not alienating the existing white cadres.

The ideal-type, whereby bureaucrats provide the 'permanent government' for transient politicians, while at the same time leaving policy-*making* to the people's legitimate representatives, has by no means disappeared, and indeed there are strong normative reasons for aspiring to it. Still, it is idle to pretend that bureaucrats do not also make policy, and that their discretionary powers over, and impact on, the vital implementation phase of policy are not considerable.[56] The whole thrust of the reaction against dry public administration studies in the 1960s was to frame the 'policy-making process' as an integrated whole. In the context of foreign policy, Roger Hilsman, the archetypal scholar-practitioner, formulated a concentric circles model which accepts that there are different kinds of 'power centres' in the policy process, sometimes competing but also overlapping and engaged in a continuous search for consensus based on shared values. In this process some, both politicians and officials, will be closer to the centre of final decision than others, who orbit the inner group in varying degrees of proximity.[57]

As Hilsman pointed out, 'policy-making *is* politics', and the bureaucrats responsible for high level foreign policy decisions are political animals whether they recognize the fact or not. They are a key element of the elite which runs foreign policy, albeit with ever increasing pressures from the domestic society they represent but are not closely in touch with. Divisions of view and interest within the elite are of central importance, but they must not be mistaken for the more profound forms of politics which arise from the clashes between differing value-systems and sets of social interests. The range and depth of these differences almost always goes well beyond those apparent within the foreign policy elite, whether between bureaucrats and politicians or (more likely) between different departments, including both levels of action. From this point of view the dog and its tail wag in reasonable harmony. Different animals will snap at each other from time to time, but the real problem is the ability of the pack as a whole to take all the juiciest bones for itself. As we shall see in Part III, those excluded from the inner circle still find it difficult to share in the process of setting directions in foreign policy, despite the often grievous consequences for themselves. In terms of causation both politicians and officials contribute to foreign policy agency, but in terms of democracy, they count only intermittently and ambiguously as agents of the people.

5

Rationality in Foreign Policy

Rationality is one of the most central and difficult problems in all social science, and it figured prominently in the study of politics during the twentieth century. Any attempt to understand or prescribe action cannot but make some reckoning with the concept, since it has come to represent an ideal-type for both individual and collective decision-making. Indeed, the very idea of making 'decisions' and 'policies' seems to be a modern notion indelibly associated with the attempt to exert rational control over events – as opposed to allowing destiny, God's will, chance or arbitrary (mere) power to determine one's lot. This said, it immediately becomes controversial as to how far human beings are capable of behaving rationally, how rationality is defined in the first place, and whether what we deem rational behaviour is in any case so desirable. These and other doubts have produced raging debates between, *inter alia*, the profession of economics, where the idea of rationality has undoubtedly been of central importance, and other social scientists, for many of whom the concept looks like a straitjacket imposed on the rich diversity of human motives and interactions, and one which assumes a greater degree of calculation (often quantitative) in the business of choosing futures than is either possible or desirable. At the present time this debate has extended into political science, where rational choice approaches, having made considerable inroads, are encountering stiff resistance from those allergic to the idea that politics is best explained in terms of the interactions between egoistic individuals continually assessing the degree to which their preferences will be served by a given outcome – in short, through game theory and its variants.[1]

10

The Constituencies of Foreign Policy

A democratic decision-maker is always aware of being responsible to the society which lies behind the political process. Even autocrats are not always insensate in this respect. But responsibility is ambiguous and relational, because there are many constituencies which must be borne in mind simultaneously: at home there are colleagues in government, the party machine, the constituency voters who brought you to power in the first place, sponsors of various kinds, and ultimately the electorate as a whole. In the international realm there are allies, neighbours and colleagues in a network of similar parties, together possibly with 'the international community'. All this is to say nothing of future generations, whether at home or abroad.

It is a matter of practical and theoretical importance as to whom decision-makers feel responsible, and to whom they are expected to be responsible. Yet these feelings and expectations are highly variable, according to individuals and contexts. This is partly because of the obscure nature of the evidence about the extent to which domestic populations are concerned about foreign policy. Little research has been done on this question, although much has been presumed, not least by politicians. While it is clear that some aspects of domestic and foreign policy have come to be intertwined, and therefore that certain groups have come to have stakes in external policy which they did not previously possess, at the same time there is much which remains specialized, arcane and remote to the silent majority still rooted in one particular society – until it smashes unexpectedly into their lives, as so literally and horribly happened to the people of New York on 11 September 2001.

Even under the impact of such events we cannot assume that there is necessarily a steadily growing international awareness. The tragic upheavals of war and totalitarianism destroyed or rearranged the lives

of hundreds of millions between 1914–89. Yet the children and randchildren of those who suffered, perhaps precisely because of a painful awareness of the past, are only too happy to sink back into a routine existence, whose essential parochialism remains unchallenged by occasional travel to foreign beach resorts or real-time news of crises in exotic countries of which they know little. To an extent this is a Eurocentric perspective. The populations of the Middle East, Indo-China and parts of Africa know only too well how the international can tear into their lives, through war, environmental degradation, alien ideologies and the continuing consequences of imperialism. Yet by the same token they resent the incursions and hold the more fiercely onto their local identity. Only a few are able to embrace globalization or to harvest its benefits.

Given these uncertainties about what the sovereign people might want, expect and need their governments to do in relation to the world beyond their immediate community, this chapter investigates the relationship between foreign policy and the political constituencies which lie behind it. A path is steered between the traditional paternalist assumption of a necessarily elite-run foreign policy on behalf of the general good, and the implication of globalization theory that foreign policy is an empty vessel, incapable of delivering any goods, general or particular. The questions are posed: for whom is foreign policy conducted, in principle and in practice? Who lays claim to it, and by what means are decision-makers held to account? And a version of the old question, *cui bono*, who sees themselves as benefiting from foreign policy? The analysis begins with the formal mechanisms of foreign policy accountability, building on the discussion of constitutional structures in Chapter 9. This is followed by discussion of the key institutions connecting decision-makers to wider society, namely public opinion, interest groups and the mass media, leading to an assessment of the view that since civil society and domestic politics themselves are constituted by foreign policy activity, they cannot be seen as independent constraints. The chapter ends by showing how leaders increasingly feel the need to engage in dialogue with foreign publics as well as their own, which tells us something about the evolving meaning of responsibility in the modern era, and about how the constituencies of foreign policy have become more extensive, and more complex.

Accountability versus the Security State

Accountability is not the same as responsibility. Responsibility is about the awareness of acting for others as well as oneself; it begins with

perceptions and values. Accountability is more formal, and refers to the ability to make someone answerable for their actions, and to pay a penalty if, according to the prevalent rules, their account is unsatisfactory.[1] In foreign policy the issue of accountability has been widely discussed since the First World War (and in the United States for much longer). In few countries, however, have very clear mechanisms been established, and even where they have, actual practice often does not live up to theory. Indeed, it can be argued that provisions for accountability have often been deliberately sacrificed in the presumed interests of security and an effective executive – and that legislators have been all too willing to go along with the attenuation of their powers. When one adds in the dimension of the enormous growth in the apparatuses of foreign, defence and intelligence policy-making in the twentieth century, we can see how difficult democratic accountability is to achieve in practice against the presumptions of the 'security state', all too often bloated, secretive and prepotent.

The discussion of accountability primarily involves liberal democratic states, which make it an article of faith to restrain executive power and to seek a popular consensus for public policy. Even one-party systems, however, usually have formal provisions for some degree of answerability and participation in foreign policy-making. The Supreme Soviet had powers over the ratification of treaties, and the Chinese National People's Congress (NPC) likewise. That in practice they performed the function of rubber-stamps does not mean that their constitutional powers could not have been asserted more, with meaningful debates and more genuine transmission of views upwards from local party representatives.[2] The political systems of the Soviet Union and of the People's Republic were forged in war and revolution and never evolved beyond their original command culture, at least on foreign policy. In many other states parliaments are equally ineffective – unrepresentative, cowed or suspended *sine die*.

Since 1989 there has, nonetheless, been a general move towards democratization, which means that it is particularly important to examine the experience of pluralist states. Here formal accountability has two main aspects: *parliamentary control* and the verdict of the electors. These things are inter-related since legislatures consist of elected representatives who then exercise powers in the light of the views of the voters who gave them power, but members of parliament in a representative system follow the dictates of party and conscience, the first of which in particular tends to take precedence. In foreign policy-making in any case they generally have few constitutional levers to pull because of the presumption in most constitutions that the executive needs free

hands if the state is to be effectively protected. Yet parliaments are powerful symbols of popular political control, and are focal points for both insurgents and nervous leaders – as Boris Yeltsin revealed when suspending and shelling the Russian Supreme Soviet in 1993.[3] It is worth asking in the context of the contemporary triumph of liberal democracy whether even foreign policy is now becoming more open to democratic influences – or if not, why not?

Always the exception, as we saw in the last chapter's discussion of constitutional structures, has been the United States. In terms of basic powers over foreign policy-making the US Congress has no rival. The constitution gives it the right to declare war, to raise and to support armed forces and to ratify treaties (by a two-thirds majority of the Senate – and of those present). It also has the crucial power of the purse; appropriations for foreign policy purposes are not excluded (as in Britain) from the general requirement to be specified in a budget with legislative approval. This is vital given the immense size of the military–industrial complex and of the United States' global presence. Finally, the Senate's approval is required for senior ambassadorial appointments.[4] In the past thirty years the Congress has extended these nineteenth-century powers by approving the War Powers Resolution (in 1973) which sets limits on the period in which the presidency can pursue an undeclared war, and by requiring the secretary of state to give the Congress the texts even of executive agreements (previously the way around Congressional powers over treaties) within sixty days of their signature.[5]

Other democratic systems, mature or not, do not have these provisions for parliamentary control. In some the executive tends to be extremely cautious about not running too far ahead of the legislature, for historical reasons. The Federal Republic of Germany is a case in point, where the Basic Law of 1949 does not in so many words forbid the use of troops 'out of area', but where the conventional political interpretation until the Constitutional Court ruling of 1994 was that it did.[6] The French National Assembly voted down the European Defence Community in 1954 just as the US Senate had done with the League of Nations thirty-five years before. The Japanese Diet in 1955 threw out the idea of an extension of the Japanese–American security treaty, despite Foreign Minister Shigemitsu having signed a joint communiqué agreeing to it.[7] The House of Commons has given British governments a very hard time over every treaty relating to accession to the European Communities and their development.

What is common to these cases is not the formal powers which parliaments have over foreign policy; these vary considerably, not least in

their implementation. More important is the interpretation of the law, which itself depends partly on general political culture and partly on particular circumstances. Given the number of occasions when even the parliaments with relevant powers do not assert themselves to halt treaties or to interrogate the foreign and defence budgets, it is clear that it will take an unusual combination of circumstances for the executive to have its agreement with another state overturned by parliament at home. Even in the United States there will need to be both a deep lack of confidence in the government of the day plus a high degree of salience and concern about the foreign policy issue concerned – probably as the result of a long sequence of frustrations which have brought things to boiling point. Thus both President Carter and the Congress had had enough of Soviet behaviour in the Third World by the time they ended the SALT II negotiations after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. But the Congress was ready to throw out a treaty whatever Carter decided, and it is the knowledge of its *potential* power which is most inhibiting to a president.

At times, given these are always two-level games, the potential obstruction is useful to an executive. When the European states were reluctant to go along with American sanctions against Iran in April 1980 they pointed out that since any action would have to be ratified by the nine national parliaments involved, they would therefore only apply to new contracts and not to existing ones. This was a successful delaying tactic, although arguably short-sighted in terms of its effect on the United States.[8] At other times, the blind eye tactic suits the legislature itself. The Congress was generally opposed to President Reagan's covert actions with the Contras in Central America, but at much the same time was prepared to overlook the arming of the *mujahideen* in Afghanistan. More constructively, where a legislature has a significant role in foreign policy-making, as with the Danish Folketing, it creates a greater certainty, both at home and abroad, that commitments entered into are legitimate and will hold.[9]

One sensitive point where legislative activism can generally be expected is where a treaty, or agreement, has implications for sovereignty, in terms of ceding powers or territory, or both. The Israeli Knesset passed a law in 1999, at the behest of the settlers in the Golan Heights, specifying that no territory can be ceded to another country without a majority in the 120-member house.[10] This is the ultimate power of a parliament which makes any democratic leader cautious; legislators exist to make law, and sometimes they do, thus even moving the goalposts in foreign affairs. In the US *only* the Congress can acquire

or cede territory. The UK government, well aware only two years after the Falklands War of how sensitive an issue the cession of Hong Kong to China would be, ensured that the Westminster Parliament had plenty of opportunities to discuss the Sino–British Agreement, even though only the Queen's signature was constitutionally required for ratification of a treaty, which technically this was not.[11] Apart from legal considerations, parliamentary divisions stimulate public awareness and pressures on government. When legislation was sought in the New Zealand parliament to enshrine in law the ban on visits by nuclear-armed ships, it stirred up debate and precipitated a serious clash with the United States. The outcome was that the US suspended its guarantees, and the ANZUS Treaty, between 1986–94.[12] Similarly, once the European Parliament had acquired in 1987 the 'power of assent' over association agreements concluded by the European Community, debate on the policy-making of external relations became notably more substantial.

Against these cases, however, may be set many more, equally 'high politics' in character, where executives have been able to circumvent parliamentary powers without difficulty, or simply to drive a coach and horses through the gaps not covered by the constitution. With hubris, the law may simply be broken, as Reagan did when continuing to arm the Contras in defiance of the Boland Amendment, or as Nixon and Kissinger had done through the secret bombing of Cambodia – which certainly breached the spirit, if not the letter, of the War Powers Resolution.[13] At least the latter had closed the loophole exploited by President Johnson nine years before, in 1964, when he got almost unanimous Congressional support for the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, and thus a free hand to prosecute a war against North Vietnam, on the basis of the most flimsy, indeed fabricated *casus belli*.[14] Much will depend in the United States on whether the president's party has a majority in Congress and/or on whether he is already in difficulties with Congress. In Britain and France, by contrast, war may still be undertaken by executive *fiat*, although the lofty disregard of parliamentary support may later come home to haunt leaders, as during the Suez crisis of 1956–7. Mrs Thatcher was wise enough to allow an emergency debate in the House of Commons on a Saturday (3 April 1982) before sending a Task Force to the Falklands three days later. Had the debate gone wholly against a military response it would have been difficult for the Prime Minister to have ignored it.

It will be clear from the above that even the power over the purse strings may be circumvented – this is precisely what Colonel Oliver North was doing for President Reagan in arranging the secret arms deal

with Iran which funded the Contras in Nicaragua.[15] The British government, when it decided to upgrade the Polaris missile system at a time of considerable public support for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in 1977, simply slipped through the necessary funding in the general Defence Estimates placed before the House of Commons, without drawing attention to it.[16] The Italian government moved in the 1990s to being one of the major contributors to UN peace-keeping efforts with the Chamber of Deputies barely noticing.[17] In Malaysia in 1988 the Leader of the Opposition demanded that full details of a proposed $1 billion arms deal with Britain be made public; his speech in the budget debate was not even reported in the local media.[18]

On a day-to-day level, parliaments relate to foreign policy less through the exercise of formal powers than through supervision, scrutiny and investigation. Here too their capacity to constrain and participate is limited, but it can be expected to grow as foreign policy becomes ever more central to normal political life, and as the presumption of bipartisanism breaks down. In the first place, representatives usually have some means of questioning the executive on its activities. In the Westminster model, still in use in many ex-colonies, this occurs through scheduled question and answer sessions. Unfortunately, civil servants soon become skilled in briefing ministers on how not to give away information, and on how to use the occasion for sending signals to other states as much as to their own citizens – insofar as foreign policy is ever the focus of questioning.[19] Elsewhere, foreign ministers may be brought more regularly under the spotlight and cross-questioned on particular themes. But this will normally rely on the existence of a lively and independent foreign affairs committee (FAC).

It is only in the past twenty years that it has become normal for legislatures to have a committee specializing in foreign affairs on the American model (both chambers in Washington have such a committee, and more besides, relevant to external policy). All member states of the European Union, for example, now have FACs, and they are also well-established in the major Commonwealth democracies and in Japan. This should not lead us to conclude that the committees consistently act like Senator Fulbright's Foreign Relations Committee in the 1960s, which for a time was in the eye of the storm over the Vietnam War. Even for the United States this was exceptional. All too often they are perceived as 'a nice club of honoured personalities who are satisfied to have regular exchanges of views with the foreign minister without claiming directly to control and influence the government's strategy'.[20] They also provide opportunities to travel abroad, leading to reports

which all too often go unnoticed or are out of date by the time they appear. As in the relatively infrequent plenary debates which take place on foreign policy in national assemblies, it is all too evident that only a small proportion of members is informed and interested about foreign affairs, while some of those will be pursuing special interests, such as the need to gain a particular defence contract for their own constituency.

Granted the deficiencies of parliamentarians in relation to foreign policy, it is the FACs which represent the best hope of exerting sustained pressure on an executive. They are more able to build up expertise over time with which to challenge the diplomatic specialists. They may, if able to insist on the presence of ministers (and even better, the release of documents), expose errors and dissimulations through cross-questioning and written analysis. Their reports – especially those investigating policy fiascoes – carry the weight of a public body and will often be taken up by journalists and scholars. If at times they provoke sharp controversy, unwelcome to decision-makers, this is essential for quality control and shows they are doing their job. So long as the committees can avoid being recruited into the process of diplomacy itself – for example by acting as spokesmen abroad – and if they can find themselves an air pocket, free from the control of party managers, then they will at least be able to engage the executive in a meaningful dialogue. Although the foreign relations committees of the US Congress are now less in the public eye than during the Vietnam War, together with others such as the committees on Appropriations, Armed Services, Commerce, and Intelligence, they keep up a remorseless pressure on the White House, which knows that if it wants to get measures approved it needs to invest in a major political effort, involving side-payments and concessions. This is particularly evident in foreign trade policy, where the lobbies proliferate, but it can also happen on purely political matters, since key groups can exert a veto on official policy simply by the threat of publicity and filibustering.

No other national system yet has the resources to rival the US effort (the total staff of Congress is nearly 30 000), or indeed the political culture which requires it, but most parliaments are coming to realize that detailed forensic work through committees is the essential precondition of plenary debate and ultimately of the very principle of democratic control. Otherwise such control as exists ends up in the hands of special interests, which claim all too easily to be representing 'the national interest'. This was the case with the Falkland Islands in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when a small group in the House of Commons were able to talk out a government proposal for a negotiated solution with

Argentina. The British government simply decided not to invest the political effort in over-ruling them, and paid the price later with a major crisis. If parliaments do master the details on a regular basis they keep governments looking over their shoulder, as with the Netherlands, which suggested to its European partners in the last Intergovernmental Conference that it should have one more vote than the other middle-ranking countries, in order to prevent trouble in their parliament in The Hague.[21]

The second way in which formal accountability is exercised over foreign policy is through *the verdict of the electors*, who can make governments pay the price for errors or simply decide to change direction by voting in a new party or coalition. At one level it is difficult to see how elections do give citizens a role in foreign policy. They take place only every four to seven years, and represent crude choices between the large package deals offered by the main parties. Voters seem to be concerned principally with tax and welfare issues, and in any case the parties either do not talk much about foreign policy, or do not differ significantly in the options they present. In periods of war, when voters might actually wish to have a say in the foreign policy questions deciding their fate, elections are often suspended. At best there will be pressure not to undermine the government by voting for peace parties.

It is not surprising if the outcomes of elections usually seem to have little to do with foreign policy. In the 1983 German election, for example, the conservative CDU/CSU party was returned to government at a time when there was considerable unrest in the country over the Euromissiles affair. Whether this was a vote of confidence in the missiles policy, or simply a demonstration of the irrelevance of foreign policy to voting behaviour, is difficult to tell. In 1992 and 1996 Bill Clinton deliberately campaigned on domestic issues alone, partly because he genuinely wished to concentrate on internal priorities but partly because he correctly deduced that foreign policy was not a strong suit for the Democrats in general, and (certainly in 1996) for himself in particular.[22] The case can be made generally that conservative parties find it easier to 'wrap themselves in the flag' and to portray progressive parties as 'soft' on the national interest. On the other hand this would suggest that conservatives ought to campaign on foreign policy questions more frequently than seems to be the case, and it does not allow for bipartisanism. Moreover, the arrival of human rights concerns on the foreign policy agenda may have reversed this advantage.

At times voters do seem willing to distinguish between foreign and domestic policy issues and to favour the former – and in making such distinctions they show themselves to have the capacity for judgement,

even if detailed knowledge is lacking. In 1945 the world was astonished to see the British people vote out of office, in a landslide victory for the Labour Party, the war hero Winston Churchill. This result did not arise from any disapproval of Churchill's conduct of the war – he remained popular with people of all parties for that – but was the product of years of discontent with the old social and political order. Having made the huge effort for victory, the British people were determined to reap some reward at home. In that they thought that the war had been brought on by the failures of the Chamberlain government in 1938–9, voters were also punishing the Conservative Party, and not Churchill, who had himself been marginalized in the 1930s.[23] This kind of sophistication was also evident in the election of Clinton in 1992, which was a slap in the face for the Republican presidents who had been in office from 1981, and who had 'won the Cold War' so dramatically. On the other hand the low US electoral turn-out (*c.* 50 per cent) and the cyclical nature of party successes qualifies any generalization about American popular attitudes.

Only in countries with (1) active foreign policies, and (2) well-established democracies will any effective foreign policy debate be possible at election time. It is the kind of higher order activity that is difficult to achieve even in mature systems. What is true is that 'foreign policy is ... a prism through which voters judge the basic soundness of a candidate to govern the country'.[24] The ability to run a foreign policy safely and successfully in a dangerous world is an attribute valued widely, and one which contributes significantly to general images of competence. This attribute is therefore played on by the spin-doctors who have dominated elections since at least the arrival of President Kennedy's 'Camelot' in 1960. Of course Kennedy, however glamorous, was inexperienced and untried in foreign policy at perhaps the most dangerous time of the Cold War, and that weakness was reflected in his victory over Richard Nixon by the narrowest of margins (some indeed have said that the result was fixed by malpractice in Chicago, and that Nixon was the true victor). Other American elections, such as that of Eisenhower in 1952, and Reagan in 1980, were also determined in part by the wish of the voters to have a president who could resolve difficulties in foreign policy – the Korean War, and the humiliations of Carter by Iran and the USSR, respectively.[25] More recently Vladimir Putin won the office of president in Russia largely by emphasizing that he would win the war in Chechnya and thereby restore Russia's international image as a country to be reckoned with.[26] In Singapore in 1997 Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong argued, less than credibly, that his word

would count for less in international circles if a particular opposition candidate were returned who had questioned the predominance of English-speakers in the Singapore Cabinet.[27] Elections are always an opportunity to play up the gravitas that comes with office and the opportunities for international statesmanship.

It may be just as well that personality and foreign events both have their roles, for there are very few occasions when voters actually get a choice on key issues. In 1968 there was a crucial opportunity for the two main American parties to offer the voters a choice of strategies at the most difficult time in the Vietnam War, when Lyndon Johnson had withdrawn from the race in a funk, and the best way forward was genuinely uncertain. In the event, neither Nixon nor Humphrey gave a clear lead as to peace or war; both promised vaguely to achieve both peace and honour, but without specifying the policy implications. In office Nixon then escalated the war while trying to scale down the number of US troops. This was a major failure for democracy. Foreign policy does not need to dominate elections often, but this was the obvious exception. Neither party trusted the American people, or indeed itself.

The same is true in other states. The United Kingdom has had 14 general elections since the war. Arguably in three of them (1964, 1983 and 1987) the Labour Party was damaged by having an image of being unreliable on defence, in particular through association with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The second two of these were lost, not least because the two leaders of the time, Michael Foot and Neil Kinnock, were presented (mostly by the media) as being particularly unsound on defence. Foot held few cards on foreign policy; he was proud of never even having visited the United States, and Mrs Thatcher had just conducted the victorious campaign in the Falklands. Thus defence was used largely as a means of strengthening the image of the Conservative Party. Labour ran scared and actively tried to avoid giving the voters a clear foreign policy choice. In all the other elections, despite the obvious possibilities for debates on international matters (Korea in 1950 and 1951, Suez in 1959, east of Suez in 1970, the Middle East in 1974) the campaigns were almost wholly domestic in tone and voters would have had difficulty in obtaining information on the parties' foreign policy differences.[28]

It is clear that there are structural limits on the extent to which foreign policy accountability can be achieved through democratic elections, and these are both inherent in the complexity of the process and the product of a security state ethos among elites. There are, however, some signs of change which might tend to raise the profile of foreign

policy at elections. One is the way in which the politicization of foreign policy weakens both bipartisanism and internal party discipline, aided by the end of the Cold War but predating it in origin. This means that external issues can cut across parties and sometimes lead to severe internal divisions, as with the British political parties over European integration since 1959. This may make for less than effective decisions from the viewpoint of outsiders, but it certainly opens up the political space for prolonged internal debate. The same has been true in Germany, over the use of military force for humanitarian interventions. The result may not favour clear electoral choices, but it does weaken the ability of parties to manage the argument.

The second relevant development is the way foreign and domestic issues are now generally intimately interconnected; a domestic issue often has a foreign dimension, and vice versa. This means that it will not be easy to focus an election wholly on domestic issues, or to seal off foreign policy into a separate, bipartisan compartment. The prolonged Zimbabwean election campaign of 1999–2000, in which President Mugabe encouraged his supporters to occupy white farms as a way of appealing to the landless poor, inevitably had a foreign dimension. The white farmers appealed to Britain, the United States and the European Union for help both in upholding the law and ensuring fair elections. For its part Mugabe's ZANU-PF party combined anti-white with anti-British rhetoric throughout as a way of reawakening anti-colonialist sentiment. The President was no doubt delighted when the British government, in the form of FCO Minister Peter Hain, rose to the bait and engaged in an angry public slanging-match.[29]

Elections may, therefore, offer more platforms for the politics of foreign policy in the future. But debate will remain general, and voters will be able to do little more than to indicate broad preferences and to make judgements on their leaders' performances of the kind familiar in a Roman amphitheatre – thumbs up, or down. They act as a backup to the more formal powers of parliaments, themselves difficult to establish, assert and implement. At least both elections and legislators possess enough ammunition to keep an executive guessing. It is striking how most foreign policy-makers still take care to avoid riding roughshod over the processes of accountability, even if they well exploit the lacunae they find there. For democratic politicians and officials an embarrassing row over foreign policy, in parliament or at election time, is a prospect to be feared and avoided. US foreign policy virtually shuts down in an election year.[30] Whether justifiably or not, public opinion looms large in their minds as a potential constraint.

Public Opinion

Politicians often argue that their hands are tied by public opinion, or at the least that they have to work within the limits set by it. Campaigners also set store by this belief. Martin Dent, who is both an academic and an activist for Third World debt relief, rests his hopes on the claim of the *Anti-Slavery Review* in the nineteenth century that public opinion was 'the steam which [would] enable Parliament to extinguish slavery in one massive stroke'.[31] Political scientists tend to be sceptical and side more with those radical critics who claim that public opinion is paid lip-service to but in practice ignored. All these positions need scrutinizing within the special context of foreign policy.

The concept of public opinion is difficult to pin down. It refers at once to an actor in the political process and to an object of influence. Michel Tatu says it is 'both an instrument and a factor in the conduct of foreign policy'.[32] In this, however, it resembles a number of problems in social life, and academic writing has done a good deal to establish the parameters of the problem over the past forty years. On that basis there are four preliminary conclusions which may be drawn.

First is the fundamental distinction between mass and attentive opinion, particularly important in relation to any issue which is remote from everyday life and which cannot even be conceptualized without specialized knowledge (unlike, for example, the state of the nation's hospitals). This is not the same as a distinction between the educated and the lumpen, as mass opinion includes all sections of society, from the illiterate to Nobel Prize winners. But it does differentiate between the whole, which will only rarely be sufficiently focused on a foreign policy issue as to display a collective animus, and the minority which takes a persistent and knowledgeable interest in international affairs.[33] The latter will vary in size according to the location, culture and degree of development of a country, but even in western Europe it is unlikely to be more than 20 per cent of the adult population, and may be much less. Yet in one opinion poll in 1984, 60 per cent of Europeans said that they almost never thought about the Third World, which means that 40 per cent did reflect on the matter from time to time, and 10 per cent even said they would be prepared to give up 1 per cent of their income for development assistance.[34] It is not that the majority of the population is never concerned; only that interest goes up and down according to the issue and to its degree of perceived urgency or moral importance. The 'attentive' group can swell quickly, especially in times of crisis. More routinely there is a contrast between the basic importance which

the mass of people attribute to domestic affairs, compared to the generally more internationalist attentive public. According to a series of American focus groups in 1996, most people believed that 'domestic needs have been neglected at the expense of foreign affairs'. In a separate poll, 84 per cent of 'the elite' were willing to go to war to defend South Korea from an invasion by North Korea, but only 45 per cent of the general public took the same view.[35] Whether this is judged to be parochial isolationism, or historical memory of the costs of war, is a matter of political taste.

The second proposition which most students of foreign policy would accept is that there is a widespread degree of ignorance about the details of international affairs. This even applies to the basics of geography. It is difficult to form an opinion about the European Union if you do not know the names of its member states, or where to find them on a map.[36] In the midst of the arguments raging in the early 1970s about Britain's entry into the European Communities only 17 per cent of those questioned in the UK knew that the EEC had nine members and the location of its headquarters.[37] At the end of the decade, in 1979, only 60 per cent correctly identified what the initials EEC stood for. The figures for NATO and the IMF were even lower, at 33 per cent and 44 per cent respectively, although interestingly the UN was identified by 85 per cent of people and the IRA, whose actions were very much closer to home, by 75 per cent.[38]

In the United States, the National Geographic Society commissioned a Gallup poll in 1988 to measure geographical knowledge and to compare with a similar poll from 1947–8. Not only did they discover that there had been a distinct falling off over time, but the actual levels of ignorance were alarming. One in five could not name a single European country, one in two could not find South Africa on the map (at a time when the issue of support for the black majority was a big political issue in the US) and only one in three could find Vietnam, where nearly 60 000 Americans had died.[39] Respondents from other countries, notably Sweden and West Germany, displayed better knowledge, but it would be a mistake to assume that these data can be explained by Anglo-Saxon insularity.

Most people do not have the knowledge of geography and world politics taken for granted by diplomats and journalists, just as they do not seek to find out how their car works unless compelled by circumstances. Of course ignorance does not stop people having opinions or making judgements, nor should it. In a developed democracy, at least, people can improve their knowledge quite quickly if they so wish. But lack of knowledge does undermine individuals' confidence in their ability to

participate in the political process, and to heighten the elite perception of a hopelessly ill-informed mass whom it would be irresponsible to trust with decisions. When Mikhail Gorbachev started to liberalize the Soviet Union, one of his key ideas was *glasnost*, or openness. *Glasnost*, however, only applied to domestic affairs.[40] Despite the importance of issues such as the war in Afghanistan and the negotiations with the West on intermediate nuclear forces, the taboo on entrusting the people with a debate on foreign and security policy remained in force – until the point where the people intervened with direct action.

For at times, even on foreign policy, public opinion bursts forth with unexpected vigour and impact. This is actually the consequence of the third of our general conclusions, that the public is usually a follower, not a leader, when it comes to shaping policy. The combination of ignorance, apathy and other priorities means that the general public is often passive, and therefore able to be ignored, divided or used by the politically active, whether in governmental or NGO circles. The public's instinct is not necessarily to trust leaders but to be fatalistic about the possibilities of change.[41] Indeed decision-makers hold four vital cards: (i) the power of initiative; (ii) the capacity to define external threats; (iii) control over information and propaganda; (iv) the ultimate power of the state to coerce. Leaders issue the cues and the public tends to pick them up. The prime example of this remains the sad spectacle of millions of men accepting their fate in the First World War, condemned by the rigidity of their military high commands and their blinkered politicians.[42]

On rare occasions this norm breaks down. The apparently content and suggestible public turns out to have been taken for granted. In 1999 the UN conducted what it claimed was 'the largest survey of public opinion ever conducted – of 57 000 adults in 60 countries, spread across all six continents'. This found that while most people thought elections in their country were fair, 'two-thirds of all respondents considered that their country was not governed by the will of the people. This opinion held even in some of the oldest democracies in the world'.[43] This shows that the conditions of distrust and cynicism exist for occasional resistance. When a government ignores the actual feelings of its people, as opposed to its perceptions of their views, a political earthquake can ensue, with unpredictable consequences, even over foreign policy.

When this happens it is because of the impact of the last of our four parameters of the relationship between government and public opinion: the tendency on the part of the former to confuse the voice of the public with a particular channel through which it is being transmitted. Decision-makers naturally look to the most articulate elements in society

for evidence of what the public is thinking, especially in foreign policy, which is rarely touched on in opinion polls. They may assume that silence means consent, or they may take the hubbub in press and television to be widely representative – a transmission belt of democratic feeling, rather than one particular source of opinion. The same is true for members of parliament, who exist to 'represent' their constituencies.[44] In modern conditions leaders are particularly likely to interpret the activity of attentive opinion, in the form of pressure groups, as the voices which matter most. Pluralist theories of politics tend to make the same assumption.

Steven Lukes and others have shown that this distorts the truth.[45] MPs, journalists and pressure groups may have a better idea than most as to grassroots opinion (and the methodological obstacles to anyone being able to generalize about public opinion are enormous), but they also have their own special interests and perceptual blinkers. It is all too easy for decision-makers and their privileged interviewers to embrace in a closed circle of complacency as to what politics is about. Thus, on occasions, they all get taken by surprise.[46] The bitter outpourings in Russia in the summer of 2000 against the arrogance of the military in not seeking foreign help early enough to save the crew of the foundering submarine *Kursk* was a sharp lesson for Vladimir Putin, previously insulated from the people by his past as a KGB officer and by his facile entry into office. The greatest lesson of all was administered by the peoples of eastern Europe when they finally managed to throw off Moscow-imposed communism through peaceful revolution. That this was possible in 1989, and had not been earlier, for example in the abortive risings of 1956 in Hungary and 1968 in Czechoslovakia, tells us something about the need for conditions to be ripe before popular resistance can succeed. But it also demonstrated the immense strength of the people when united, and facing a government whose will to use force had been weakened through loss of legitimacy. It was spectacular evidence of how even elites disposing of the fullest apparatus of internal surveillance can misperceive the feelings of their own citizens. Their sonar picked up 'merely the echo of their own propellors'.[47]

It will always be the case that some decision-makers are misled by their own values or vanity to interpret public opinion wrongly. Neville Chamberlain was so entranced by the welcome he received at Heston Airport on his return from Munich in October 1938, and by his overwhelmingly favourable postbag, that he came to believe in the myth of his own ability to know what the people wanted. Thus when he received a critical postbag after taking Britain into war in September 1939, he

interpreted it as the product of an unrepresentative minority. He could not believe that the majority had not followed his own change of direction.[48]

Some indicators of public opinion are evidently more objective than others. Unless amounting to wholescale revolution, demonstrations will always be subject to the kind of rationalizations employed by Anthony Eden in 1956, when citing a bus-driver's letter to the effect that 80 per cent of a hostile demonstration in London over Suez was composed of foreigners, and therefore did not count.[49] Referenda and opinion polls, however, are more difficult to overlook, and they have been used increasingly after 1945, as party managers have sought to know how to please voters before elections, and how to stave off embarrassing media criticisms.[50] Referenda are still unusual on foreign policy issues, and they always contain the dangers of manipulation and populism, but in that turn-out tends to be high they are evidently welcomed by citizens. The results set the outline of policy for the medium term and make backsliding by government difficult. The Swiss, for whom referenda are a way of life, could not possibly enter the EU without popular approval in a referendum. Indeed, in 1985 75 per cent of the poll voted against Switzerland even entering the United Nations, with all 26 cantons voting against. After that few could be in any doubt as to public opinion on the issue, until the question was raised again in 1997, leading to acceptance of entry in the referendum of 2002. The narrow vote in 1992 against joining the European Economic Area, headed off any possibility of accession to the EU, just as the two votes in Norwegian referenda against EC/EU entry, of 1972 and 1994, made it impossible for the more integration-minded elites in Oslo to push on strongly with their project. Referenda in Denmark, Ireland and France on aspects of European integration, including defence, also forced the governments of these countries to take on board the greater caution of their populations.[51]

It is true that after such setbacks governments then become even more cautious about embarking on referenda, and about their wording, and they pursue other means of getting the same result – so that Denmark, for example, has now signed up to a European defence force, after the softening of domestic opposition. Still, a referendum made legitimate by a good turn-out makes it impossible for a government to interpret the public's wishes on that issue in a cavalier way, and will always increase their circumspection. That is why the supporters of the settlers in the occupied territories have ensured that any cession of Israel's territory in future will require not only a parliamentary majority, but approval in a popular vote. As the Head of the Golan Heights Residents' Committee, Avi Zeira, pointed out, 'the decision is not in the hands of the prime minister, it's in the hands of people'.[52] Even a close result may be a humiliation for a government, as De Gaulle decided when he resigned in 1969 after failing to win the support he expected in a referendum that turned into a vote of confidence.

Attention to opinion polls represents either a fetishizing of the *vox populi* or a fiendish instrument of political spinning, according to one's point of view. Polls, like any statistics, are certainly not inherently neutral and reliable. In 1987 Jerzy Urban, the Polish Foreign Minister cited a poll done for Polish radio and TV in 1985 in which 73 per cent judged the USSR a friendly country – this after the rise of Solidarity and only four years before the overthrow of communism. More accurate, paradoxically, were the police reports on censored letters which Mussolini saw in 1942–3, and which showed clearly the extent of popular disillusion with his rule.[53] Although opinion polling, which George Gallup began in the United States in 1935, has become a refined and indispensable instrument of government in the past few decades, it is rarely used to measure views on foreign policy, except in crises where the Vietnam syndrome, of the fear of haemorrhaging support from TV spectators appalled at the sight of body bags, is all too evident. When foreign policy becomes a test of the government's competence, image or leadership qualities, opinion polls will be used incessantly. When foreign issues drop below the horizon of daily visibility, whatever the polls say on international issues will be secondary to other factors.

There are transnational elements to governments' concern for public opinion. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's advisers concluded that his best chance of reaching the Russian immigrants in his country was to appear on the Russian-language TV shows most of them watch on cable. Accordingly Netanyahu's trip to Georgia, the Ukraine and Moscow in March 1999 was 'first and foremost a campaign trip'. Given the forthcoming general election, and the tendency of the large number of immigrants from the ex-Soviet Union to vote in blocs, this was crucial, and reaped dividends in terms of the 'reams of articles, stacks of photographs and many minutes of campaign time dedicated to Netanyahu and his pitch'.[54] Diasporas play important roles in and for particular countries. Otherwise, however, decision-makers tend to perceive public opinion as being firmly part of their own and others' domestic environments. Thus it is very common to come across discussions of how Europeans and Americans may be growing apart because of divergences in their respective public opinions, or of how US foreign policy may be forced in this direction or that by popular pressure.[55] Whatever the truth of transnational coalitions, or public lack of interest,

decision-makers still conceptualize public opinion as being important because it is so distinctively national.

Ultimately conceptualizations matter, for public opinion is a 'notional constraint'.[56] By this is meant a constraint which exists at least as much in the minds of decision-makers as it is embodied in substantive elements like law, institutions, demonstrations. It is what is now termed a 'constructed' reality. On any given foreign policy issue decision-makers will have an image of the public's view and degree of interest which may or may not be supported by 'the facts'. Indeed the nature of the facts will be particularly contestable, given that the public is large, amorphous, divided and reliant on transmission belts. There may thus be a tendency to over-rely on the 'scientific' evidence of opinion polls and focus groups, or on personal impressions. If the view of what the public wants is held strongly enough it may become a self-fulfilling prophecy in that decision-makers will feel inclined to bow the knee, and the myth of an influential public is born. This happened during the Vietnam War, where the US is commonly thought to have withdrawn because of opposition at home, but where there is evidence to show that public opinion was not ahead of official decisions, and indeed was generally permissive.[57]

Thus leaders do not always exploit the inherent incapacity of the public to mobilize the general will as ruthlessly or as effectively as theories of elitism might lead us to believe. They are, after all, fallible human beings themselves, as immersed in their country's political culture as anyone else, and often convinced democrats. In other guises they, too, are members of the public. They want and need to believe in accountability both because it relieves them of some responsibility, and because it avoids the cognitive dissonance which would result from speechifying about democracy while behaving like Stalin. On any given occasion this does give the alert politician the opportunity to have it both ways, but for the most part decision-makers tend to keep a close eye on the shadow which flickers in the cave behind them.

Interest Groups and the Mobilization of Civil Society

Even attentive public opinion requires organization, if it is to be an actor in the policy process as well as an object of it. Broadly speaking there are three major ways for public opinion to exert an active influence over foreign policy: through populist political movements, whether parties or less structured demonstrations; in crises, through heightened awareness

and direct pressure on politicians; and through preparation and full-time organization. Risse-Kappen's study concluded that in established democracies the more decentralized the system and the stronger the social groups capable of mobilizing public opinion, the more opportunities the latter had for influencing policy-makers.[58] It is evident that the groups seeking to influence foreign policy have multiplied since 1945, even if they are hardly as new a phenomenon as is often assumed. They are more visible, and they have acquired a degree of informal legitimacy in the political systems of complex societies, where governments require dialogue with their citizens on an increasing range of issues.[59] Unfortunately the serious study of the impact of societal groups on foreign policy has only just begun.[60]

Societal groups should not be regarded only as transmission belts for the conveyance of mass opinion to the centre. They perform that function, but also have their own specific concerns, relating to particular 'stakes' in society or distinctive cherished values. A double distinction must be made at the outset, between interest groups and pressure groups, and between interest groups and cause groups. Pressure groups by definition exist to exert pressure on government policy. Many interest groups will wish to influence policy and are therefore also pressure groups. But some exist simply to enable citizens to mobilize themselves around common interests – sporting federations are a good example – and they will only occasionally need to take on the role of pressure group. Cause groups also exist in order to change the world, but instead of relating to stakes which the members hold jointly, whether as dock workers or athletes, they arise out of common value positions, and a desire to achieve a given good independent of their connection to it. Those groups in rich countries which devote themselves to helping developing countries are a prime case in point. Thus cause, interest and pressure groups are overlapping but distinct categories.[61]

Many of these groups have developed considerable expertise, resources and (as we have seen in Chapter 8), transnational scope. It can no longer be concluded, as Milbraith did in relation to the United States in the late 1960s, that their influence is even weaker than slight.[62] The more important, like Oxfam, Amnesty, or the Stockholm Peace Research Institute, do not target only the government of their host country, and their influence must therefore be assessed on a regional or global basis. Furthermore, interest and cause groups, in contrast to pressure groups, act more on civil society, nationally or transnationally, than on governments. The Foreign Policy Association of the United States, which does a huge amount of work to spread knowledge of international issues

among schools, colleges and citizens' groups, is a foremost example – even if it is fighting an uphill battle.[63]

In terms of individual issue-areas, pressure groups can be effective, although there is much variability according to historical and national context. British overseas aid levels rose (temporarily) after the huge publicity obtained by Bob Geldof in creating BandAid in 1984, and the European Nuclear Disarmament movement (END) pushed west European members of NATO into a much less enthusiastic stance *re* the modernization of theatre nuclear weapons and the countering of Soviet SS20s. Although END failed to get the installation of Cruise and Pershing missiles unilaterally reversed, it compelled the SPD government in Bonn to make arms control and détente their first priority. Indeed, Helmut Schmidt's famous speech in London in 1977 which started the whole debate, did not in fact mention the SS20s, and stressed non-military security, out of deference to his domestic anti-militarists.[64]

Groups in particular sectors where the government either rates the issue low on its agenda, or is concerned not to engage in a public struggle, may have a veto on the way in which policy develops. Various national and ethnic groups within the United States are seen as having this capacity, particularly the Cubans, the Irish, the Jews, the Poles and the Greeks, although matters are rarely so simple. While these groups may well be better organized and have more electoral clout, than, say, the native American population, it is by no means clear that US policy in relation to their concerns would be any different without their input. In any case, the more a group's influence is celebrated, by itself or others, the more a government will wish to show its independence. This is beginning to happen with both the Cuban and the Jewish lobbies, and the Turkish lobby, set up to counterbalance Athens, has certainly not gone unheard in Washington, as is clear from US pressure on the EU to admit Turkey.[65] In a pluralist system groups compete in the political market and can cancel each other out. This is particularly true of economic groups, which are amongst the most active now that economic policy almost always has an international dimension.[66]

Even powerful lobbies may be outflanked by governments when they choose to ride out a public storm, as they often can, given the relative infrequency of elections. All American presidents have to tread carefully when they consider withdrawing support from Israel, but this does not mean to say that the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) always has a veto on US policy in the Middle East – even leaving aside the fact that American Jews are far from being of one mind on foreign policy. Ronald Reagan's sale of AWACs aircraft to Saudi Arabia

in the early 1980s was strenuously opposed by AIPAC but went ahead regardless. Nonetheless, such disputes helped to forge Jewish unity in the USA and AIPAC's organizational strength. According to *Fortune* magazine in 1997 it was the only foreign policy group in the top 25 lobbies, and the second most powerful in the country after the American Association of Retired Persons.[67] As a result, the Jewish lobby is widely *believed*, especially outside the US, to determine American policy on the Arab–Israel dispute, a perception which has important consequences.

When key values are at stake, or where there is a risk of serious upheaval, some groups will have to be heard. No Greek government could have ignored the nationalist outrage against the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, for having taken the name of Macedonia on independence. Similarly, it was impossible even for the centre–left elements in the government of Concertación Democrática in Chile in 1999 not to protest to the British government over the arrest of General Pinochet. In a dangerously divided country, the organized right was simply too strong to be allowed the luxury of painting the government in anti-patriotic colours.[68] On anything less central to the character of the state, governments have many ways of averting pressure from sectoral or cause groups.

It is in their collective impact that societal groups have most impact on foreign policy. Pluralist democracy means both freedom for individual actors and a web of common activity, in which governments as well as interest groups get caught, and in which a number of groups may be acting in broadly the same direction even if not in an actual coalition. In foreign policy this has produced a number of examples of the significant, cumulative impact of different groups operating simultaneously and giving a government no rest. Thus the Conservative administrations of Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain in the 1930s came to adopt the quietist policy of appeasement under persistent pressure from organized groups reminding them of the need to avoid another war and to follow the road of agreement rather than force. This was despite their huge majority in the House of Commons.[69] Likewise the French right, acting through various extra-parliamentary groups, some involved in violence, others not, brought down the Fourth Republic over the Algerian crisis. The number and extent of the foreign aid lobbies in the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries make it difficult for those countries to reduce their ODA spending down to, say, Spanish levels, to say nothing of the huge range of companies, trades unions and towns with a vested interest in the continuance of a global military role for the

United States. Their collective pressure does not even need to be brought to bear on policy. It is so structural as to be a given.[70]

Organized opinion has the advantage of being able to get close to the seat of power. By the same token it may be drawn in too close, and lose some of its independence. If this becomes a permanent arrangement groups become what has been called 'parastate organizations', effectively serving the functions of the state while remaining private.[71] In such form they may be subsidized directly or indirectly by the state, and develop common definitions of problems and solutions. Inderjeet Parmar and others have argued from a Gramscian perspective that while ideas, groups and individuals make a difference, if they come to share the same 'state spirit', the necessary tensions between those in power and those seeking accountability will become lost in a form of intellectual (and sometimes institutional) corporatism.[72] It is certainly no accident that in most countries the principal institute of foreign affairs is close to government, and often significantly subsidized by it. Even when not, as is currently the case with the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, it is difficult not to take cues from officialdom, in terms of research projects, conferences and visiting speakers.

Such institutes are perceived abroad as staffed by what Chadwick Alger has called 'external bureaucrats'.[73] The Council of Foreign Relations in New York is the most studied example, and indeed one which has been important in creating and reproducing consensus over American foreign policy, particularly during the move away from isolationism and during the Cold War. Such a privileged position, however, carries with it the inevitable risk of becoming detached from wider society, and overtaken by powerful new ideas and groups. Thus the Council of Foreign Relations was seen by the radical right as part of the very east coast establishment which needed supplanting in the late 1970s, and struggled to have influence over the Reagan administration and its newly assertive foreign policy.

Each era tends to produce its own activist groups, some of which gradually get drawn into the process of policy-making. They thus exchange influence for compromise, and a certain distancing from their own roots, They also create for decision-makers the sense of being in touch with public opinion, when in practice the boundary between ins and outs may simply have been moved a little further out. This process, ineluctable more than dishonourable, can be seen in the way the Blair government in Britain encouraged human rights and development groups to enter into structured dialogues with officialdom, and has come to rely on them for help with policy implementation in the Third

World. The risk, as with the Green Party in Germany which entered the governing coalition in 1998, is that the process of taking responsibility alienates natural supporters without convincing general opinion. The whole point about interest groups is that they offer alternative definitions of responsible behaviour; once in partnership with decision-makers they imperceptibly change roles and the pressure for accountability must come from elsewhere.

If there are to be democratic struggles over the direction of foreign policy, expert officials can only be engaged by those with a degree of knowledge and professionalism. Accordingly, pressure groups become a career choice like everything else, and their permanent staffs can end up in too cosy a relationship with their erstwhile targets. Nonetheless, on foreign policy the general public has little choice but to rely on these groups to keep governments up to the mark and aware of attitudes within the society which they serve. The same is true of an even more important social institution.

The Media as Gatekeepers

In the age of television the mass media look like kings. They seem to be the key to influence over public opinion, and they have the ear and eye of government. With real-time broadcasts from even remote spots in the world to the homes of hundreds of millions, the 'CNN effect' – of foreign policy shaped by the latest media feeding frenzy – seems palpable. If the press was the 'fourth estate' so radio, and in particular television, are now the fifth – the constituency which holds most informal power.

Despite this there have been few serious studies produced of the relationship between the media and foreign policy.[74] As with much of the domestic environment, commentators are long on opinion and short on evidence. It is not surprising if many journalists exaggerate their own importance, or if politicians like to paint themselves as boxed in by constant media pressure, but academics can use a wider angle lens. In this respect, such work as has so far been done tends to qualify the picture of the dominant media.

Historically the 'age of the masses' and the growing importance of the media go hand in hand, the one fostering the other. If print was important in fostering first the emergence of the state, and then the 'imagined communities' of nationalism, the development of rapidly published and widely disseminated broadsheets was fundamental to the organization of modern industrial society, both liberal and totalitarian.[75]

The daily newspaper was soon recognized as a key instrument of the dissemination of information and the mobilization of the mass, whether for constructive or manipulative purposes. Nor did it take long to become apparent that the flow of influence went in two directions – from the public via the press to government, as well as from the top down – or that the press itself could be a formidable independent factor in politics. The arrival of press barons like Beaverbrook, Rothermere and Northcliffe had a major impact in the British Commonwealth countries between the two world wars, just as William Randolph Hearst dominated the press in the United States, exerting a powerful influence for isolationism and nationalism. As early as 1922 there was an example of a politician using the press, when Lloyd George let journalists know during the Chanak crisis that he would be calling on Canadian and Australian troops – this without informing the government of either country, while exploiting the advantage of time zones and print deadlines. The resulting storm may have gone beyond what Lloyd George intended, but it certainly exerted pressure in favour of the principle of imperial loyalty.[76]

With the proliferation of war correspondents, diplomatic correspondents, film crews and 'star' reporters this kind of 'media event' has become commonplace. A constant struggle takes place for advantage between the press corps (used here to refer to journalists of all kinds) and those responsible for official policy. At one moment the former will have the advantage, creating embarrassment or setting the agenda. The next moment, those we now call 'spin-doctors' will be planting a story or distracting attention from the real issue of the day. It also happens not infrequently that the two sides develop a common way of looking at the world, even common interests, and behave in an incestuous way which closes the circle against public involvement. Each of these three patterns of relationship bears some further examination.

The power of the media is exerted in two distinct ways: over public opinion, and then over decision-makers, including indirectly via the political class. There is no doubt that in the relatively restricted area of foreign policy – however widely we define it – the media have an almost exclusive gatekeeping role with respect to the public. Only very few individuals even in a highly educated society are in a position to acquire information or to express their views on international relations without relying on the media – although the internet may transform this in the future. Such public debate as exists on foreign policy is almost entirely focused on the noticeboards provided by newspapers and television. Public meetings, word of mouth and interest groups produce a *samizdat* literature which may have a long-run impact, but even they never exist in isolation from the dominant discourse conducted at the national, indeed often transnational, level by the big battalions. It is not difficult to think of cases where the media have created almost out of nothing a public mood of concern which has then rebounded onto government. African famines have produced many such moments in western societies, but probably the most revealing of recent times was the publicizing of the plight of Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq at the end of the Gulf War, which led first the British, then other governments, into a commitment to 'safe havens' from Iraqi attack and thus a *de facto* policy of intervention inside northern Iraq.[77] Since journalists and editors have their own news values, and are also restricted by circumstances in their access (it was easier for them to film in northern Iraq, via Turkey, than in the south, where the Shias were also in revolt) they only publicize certain problems, and to a large extent their selectivity determines public debate.

On the other hand although the media appear to have almost monopolistic access to the public, there are limitations to their impact. For one thing even the serious newspapers only devote between 33–45 per cent of their space to international affairs.[78] Television news does the same, but as Theodore Sorensen points out, '45 per cent of the 22 minutes of news contained in a 30 minute newscast does not convey enough words to fill one-third of one page of a standard-size newspaper'.[79] Image therefore predominates over information and analysis. This is not always a superficial matter, since an emotional and visual appeal can leave a more lasting effect than metres of the written word. But it is usually evanescent, and leaves the watcher ill-equipped to do more than telephone in a credit card donation. This is particularly the case given that the evidence suggests that most readers and viewers are not much interested in foreign affairs. Distance counts, in the sense that without some involvement of 'our people' (usually co-nationals) only the most massive events will halt the tendency to switch off, literally, or more likely, psychologically. Thus much of the media will play up the simplistic and even the xenophobic aspects of their coverage to ensure the attention their proprietors and advertisers require.[80] This does have a dumbing-down effect on the audience. More insidious is the opportunity cost of denying clear information and analysis to the mass of people, who are far from being as coarse or as incapable as cynical journalists assume. The public is thus not quite so moulded by the media as it might seem, but nor is it empowered.

The more direct power of the media, as an actor in the policy-making process, is exerted both through personal contacts and through providing

a means of communication between foreign policy professionals and the attentive public, particularly those inner rings which might be politically active. Decision-makers do not have much time to read the press or watch television, and at times they affect not to do so. But they employ advisers to summarize who is saying what and anything which shows a weakness or starts a trend is soon spotted. Key opinion-formers, like Josef Joffe of the *Süddeutschezeitung* in Germany, or Stanley Hoffmann in both France and the United States, do not go unheard. In this respect the media have the capacity to influence political argument, by ventilating debate which might otherwise stay behind closed doors, by subjecting the official line to critical scrutiny and by tilting the balance in favour of one position over another. Even on what was for the average citizen the arcane subject of NATO enlargement it was not possible to take policy forward without an extensive debate in the press on both sides of the Atlantic. This interacted with argument in Congress (and no doubt inside western ministries) to ensure that the policy did not escape interrogation. The same ordeal by fire may have contributed to President Clinton's decision in August 2000 not to go ahead with the Nuclear Missile Defence system he had previously announced. The combination of difficulties with Russia, and strenuous opposition within NATO countries, made him calculate that it was too big a political risk to leave the policy hanging round the neck of Al Gore (the Vice President, hoping to be elected to the White House in his turn).

In democracies many other cases of media influence over foreign policy can be found, but there are an equal number where their role has been exaggerated. This is the conclusion of Halliday's study of the Gulf War, and of Carruthers' survey of other cases in the 1990s, including Somalia, Yugoslavia and Rwanda.[81] It is also the view taken of television in the research done by Nik Gowing, himself a distinguished TV reporter.[82] If we look at the other big enlargement issue of the 1990s, for example, that of the European Union, we find that there has been little serious debate, and that the press coverage has been muddling and diffuse. This is because the issue is less clear-cut, and the timetable much longer than that of the NATO enlargement, where there was polarization around one more or less clear proposition. With respect to the EU, the timetable is long and shifting, the permutations endless and the issues multiple – and difficult for all actors to synthesize. In this situation the serious press, to say nothing of television and the tabloids, has failed even to identify the main outlines of a debate, let alone to insist on one taking place. The problem is compounded by the need for a Europe-wide debate, whereas the press is still predominantly national in its focus, and by the tendency

in a complex issue to take cues from governments – which in this case, although for diverse reasons, have manufactured a consensus in favour of the principle of enlargement. The issue is presented as closed, with only implementation at stake. The media have thus failed to ensure that a massive question of public interest and accountability is properly debated, and no other institution has been able to do any better. Given the number of constituencies affected by enlargement this neglect could lead to a considerable political backlash in the future.

Not only do the media often fail to rise to the occasion, but they can be more easily manipulated by policy-makers than the general public realizes. The press has long been used to launch diplomatic trial balloons, and not infrequently information is released which has only the most tenuous relationship to the truth. Particularly in war-time, actual disinformation is frequently reported faithfully by the media. Whole squads of public relations experts have now moved into the foreign policy area in order to present parties in the best policy light. Many foreign trips are essentially media events, designed to use press, radio and television as instruments of projection, at home and abroad.[83] The expertise and continuity of public officials as opposed to the short newspaper memory caused by the torrent of deadlines, gives the former a great advantage. The media lack both stamina and *gravitas* when it comes to pursuing complex foreign issues over time, compared to parliamentary committees, disadvantaged in a different way.[84] Both also tend to chase the game. As James Reston said, 'we will send 500 correspondents to Vietnam after the war breaks out ... but we will not send five reporters there when the danger of war is developing'.[85]

It is also evident that the relationship between the media and government in many respects suits both sides very well. Publicity and the two-way transmission of information are exchanged for privileged access and (often) seats on the presidential or prime ministerial plane. Some critics have concluded from this element of collusion that the press corps is structurally rotten and part of the self-serving elites it is supposed to be scrutinizing.[86] It is certainly true that some journalists have subverted their own independence by acting as diplomatic 'couriers', or even as actual spies. Nervous governments often assume that foreign journalists are agents of influence. Systematic subordination is a serious problem in autocracies, but in democracies it is a relatively trivial problem compared to the structural difficulty of developing foreign policy themes in an ever more commercial and trivializing environment. In any case, in the post-Cold War era it is not clear what the ideology of a power elite means when applied to foreign policy, unless it is the simple injunction

not to criticize official policy, which holds little water. On many of the problems confronting us, like the future of Taiwan, the Middle East peace process and Third World debt, it is simple-minded to suppose that there is an obvious line which serves the interests of the most powerful. Complexity produces divided opinion inside both officialdom and the media. The latter could be much more alert, sceptical and creative in their approach to the reporting of international affairs, but anyone familiar with *Le Monde*, *The International Herald Tribune* or the BBC's 'Newsnight' programme (watched extensively in Belgium and the Netherlands as well as the UK) will not think that western governments, at least, have things all their own way.[87]

The media are hardly a flawless example of a pluralism in action, given the power of the big proprietors like Murdoch, Berlusconi and Springer, and the real problem is the excessively narrow range of options which journalists tend to consider as 'realistic'. This is less a matter of radical writers being denied platforms – which does happen – than of conventional thinking within a self-regarding media world. It is true that there is still competition in the treatment of foreign policy issues, and that various functions are performed for political debate: between them press, radio and TV can bring new issues to the public's attention, transmit opinion back to the centre, act as noticeboards for discussion, conduct informal diplomacy, make transnational links between national debates and put governments under pressure. The difficulty is that the process is hit and miss, with few being sure as to which function is being served at any one time, and little continuity. Some pressures merely cancel out, leaving governments freer to go their own way. Popularizing can lead to a crude jingoism which serves no-one's interests.

More significantly, the short-termism of the media means that fundamental or long-term questions are rarely pursued, and the basic assumptions of decision-makers too often go unquestioned. The debate about foreign policy will often take place within too narrow limits, with both policy-makers and commentators accepting the same conventional wisdoms. The media may, therefore, be gatekeepers between politicians and their domestic environment, but in so doing they do not serve democracy particularly well. That there is some variety evident between different capitalist countries – as between British tabloid culture, which affects even the broadsheets, and the more serious Dutch or German press – suggests that this is not an inevitable outcome. But the costs of running modern mass media mean that once a pattern of ownership, and a culture, has been established, it can be changed only slowly, if at all.

The Rise of Public Diplomacy

An important new dimension of the domestic environment in recent decades has been the emergence of public diplomacy. This is the process whereby governments by-pass their equivalents in another country and target the wider political process, including civil society. They do this on the assumptions that opinion matters, that transnationalism is unavoidable and that they can influence outcomes by direct intervention in another country – not least because of the increased freedom of movement of capital, goods and people governments themselves have signed up to. States therefore have to work out strategies both of public diplomacy and of coping with others' activity behind their own backs.

As a result of this deliberate crossing of the public/private boundary, there can be some confusion as to the nature of the actors and actions involved. Mark Leonard and Vidhya Alakeson argue that 'people [are] at the heart of the agenda rather than states' but the key word here is 'agenda'. Most of the discussion arising from the soft power paradigm is directed to the necessity for governments to understand that 'people' are now a necessary target, and that they must be drawn into the diplomatic process. This is a different thing from the *direct* people-to-people contacts which we discussed in Chapter 8, which create a new environment for states independent of their attempts at controlling it.[88] Public diplomacy involves a government deliberately attempting to manipulate (even if at times, with benign intentions) a foreign society. This is little different in principle from the familiar uses of propaganda to target morale or belief in another state. Yet public diplomacy is more subtle than the megaphone operations of the Cold War, and is generally perceived as more legitimate. This is because it builds upon an implicit recognition of shared, or at least over-lapping, constituencies between separate states. Issues such as reparations for war-time crimes (for instance the theft of Jewish gold), the future of genetically modified food, or the treatment of refugees from the Balkans play differently in different societies, but they stimulate enough of a common debate for governments to accept that they are involved in dialogues not just with their own public opinion, but with opinion more broadly.

In its more manipulative, or coercive, modes public diplomacy may actively seek advantage in the decisions taken within a foreign political process or even to undermine a government. The western allies attempted the latter during the Kosovo war by using the internet. This proved unworkable, because the authorities in Belgrade were able to flood the NATO server and put it out of action for ten days.[89] China and

Singapore too have proved adept at limiting their citizens' access to foreign information on the web. More usual is the simple attempt to gain access to another state's decision-making process. Thus foreign governments employ not just their own lobbyists but also professional marketing firms in Washington, sometimes advised by those who have recently left positions of responsibility in the US government. The number of firms involved grew from 468 in 1967 to 824 in 1986, and the number of new foreign clients from 118 in 1987 to 453 in 1987.[90] These hired guns are part of an increasingly professional approach in the work which diplomats are doing within a foreign society. Ambassadors were already rare among functionaries in having any kind of public profile, with their occasional appearances on television in their host country, but they are now much more active in reaching out to the regions and to citizens' groups. They have to work with marketing and opinion survey specialists, as well as to take rather more seriously the functions of cultural diplomacy, seen during the Cold War as something of a poor relation.

One aspect of this is a curious revival of statism in this age of globalization. A state has become something to sell, through an image which effectively promotes its strengths and downplays its weaknesses. States with obvious image problems, like Rhodesia in the 1970s, or Malaysia in 1999, have tried to improve their reputations by such means as hiring image consultants or advertising their economic achievements in western newspapers. But there is a limit as to what can be achieved in the face of obviously negative messages coming from what Manheim calls 'historical reality' – that is, problems of human rights or incompetent management which just cannot be kept out of the news.[91] With less problematic behaviour, matters become easier. 'Old states' wishing to escape from outdated images, like Britain and the City gent, or Germany and the jackboot, may take active measures to rectify them. Thus the campaigns for 'cool Britannia' and 'cool Germania'. Conversely, new states without 'name recognition', like the Baltic states, may have an urgent need to raise their profile, not just at the popular level but also among elites, given their wish to enter the European Union at the earliest opportunity. Slovenia has been particularly active in marketing its brand, and in distinguishing itself from the other ex-Yugoslav republics as a modern and peaceable country which would fit easily into the EU.[92]

Striking as this kind of activity is at first sight, it is clear that only limited progress is possible through re-branding.[93] Much more effective than marketing are substantive achievements, such as Ireland's self-transformation from a poor agricultural backwater to thriving post-modern economy and centre of youth culture. Word of mouth has transmitted

this new image around the world, with the aid of diasporas. What is more, an excessive enthusiasm for a new image, as in Britain, invites a satirical response from the sophisticated, and is superfluous for those who know about the country in the first place. The fashion for this kind of public diplomacy, however, does reveal both the continued differentiation of national approaches, and a certain anxiety about how to pursue national economic goals in an era of privatization. The various paradoxes which public diplomacy thus presents do at least help us to understand the changing nature of foreign policy instruments, and their increasingly close ties with civil society.

Finally, the rise of public diplomacy presents us with two interesting moral issues. The first is about the public's right to know. If we take seriously the need for information and accountability, then citizens need to have access to the views of other governments than their own, and not just filtered through their own diplomats or national media. Well-grounded political systems have little to fear from this cross-fertilization, but they are not, unhappily, in the majority.

The second issue revolves around the ethics of intervening in the internal affairs of another state. Hiring a public relations firm might seem innocuous enough, but when it involves senior figures recently retired from the host country's civil service, tensions soon arise. Even advertising campaigns or cultural diplomacy can seem acts of aggression to some regimes. Yet more problematic were the moves by the Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi to improve his international image by helping to liberate hostages in the Philippines. The paying of ransoms did not delight the western states, which nonetheless had to express public thanks for having got their citizens back.[94]

In Conclusion

If Chapter 9 dealt with the issue of how far foreign policy was primarily a domestic formation, this chapter has been concerned with the more directly political dimension of decision-makers' answerability to their domestic constituents. It is evident that with respect to foreign policy the function of intermediary institutions between government and public is even more significant than usual. Individual citizens, usually aggregated under the heading of public opinion, have few opportunities to get to grips with the substance of foreign policy, for all the conventional talk of the 'vetoes' or 'limits' imposed on those who make it. Apart from constitutional procedures, they have to rely on their parliamentary

representatives, pressure groups and the media, all of whom take on the role of speaking for public opinion with relish but less concern for accuracy. Thus decision-makers have to deal with a range of different institutions and interests, in which concern for the common weal is continuously blurred with special interests.

The foreign policy process is broadly pluralist, even where societies are not fully developed economically or liberal in their politics. Except under conditions of terror there will always be some domestic inputs from those with special degrees of concern for, or knowledge about, the outside world. Yet this is not at all to say that even in established democracies the processes of foreign policy scrutiny work well. They do not. Formal accountability usually amounts to a light and loose set of obligations on the executive, and the day-to-day influence of interest groups and the media works only in a patchy, indirect and post hoc way. Actual participation in ongoing foreign policy decision-making is still immensely difficult even for the informed and articulate, who continue to be in a small minority on all but exceptional occasions. Politicians and officials do internalize an ideology of responsibility, even democracy – what I have called 'the notional constraint' – and as a result they sometimes aim off for fear of anticipated opposition or accusations of illegitimacy. Nonetheless, they enjoy considerable space in which to interpret the needs of their people, and they rarely live up to their own self-image of responsiveness.

This Gramscian picture, of elitism fleshed out by a sense of duty and the need for consensus, must be qualified in two ways to fit modern conditions. First, the relationship between foreign policy-making and its domestic constituencies is unpredictable, and can erupt in ways which disturb both the governing elite and the pattern of international relations. Although even the foreign policy professionals among the attentive public usually struggle to shape or restrain policy, at times a conjuncture of forces will occur which empowers parts of the citizenry and cuts decisively across the normal pattern. This is why decision-makers tend to look nervously over their shoulders, even when there seems little to be concerned about. Secondly, historical (and geographical) contexts matter a great deal, and it seems clear that there is now a trend towards greater domestic interest in foreign policy in some states, not least because the scope of foreign policy has expanded to include much of what is familiar in everyday life. We thus observe a heightened activism in liberal democracies, and some other states, deriving from a generally reduced sense that foreign policy is a reserved domain, protected from normal politics, and with its own distinctive (a)moral ambience. Foreign policy always mattered to us all. It is now increasingly seen to matter.

11

On Purpose in Foreign Policy: Action, Choice and Responsibility

On the face of things the 'changing politics' of foreign policy involves a shift from the realism of the great power conflicts of the twentieth century into the ideas of liberal interdependence which many policy-makers came to espouse in the 1990s, after two decades of discussion in academic and business circles. This book has attempted to go beyond such simplicities, not least in contesting a clear correspondence between changes in thought about international relations and changes in the pattern of world politics. The association of foreign policy with realism has been challenged at a more fundamental level: not only is realism itself a broad church, but since foreign policy is an activity rather than an outlook it may be harnessed to all kinds of political positions, from crusading parochialism to abstract cosmopolitanism, of which realism is merely one. This has become gradually more apparent over a much longer period than the decline and fall of the Cold War.

All the central notions of modern politics are implicated in the conduct of foreign policy, and it is always a mistake to regard the latter as some specialized form of conduct, sealed away from the rest of public life. Civil society, the state and the values which they serve are shapers of foreign policy and may be shaped by it in turn. In an era where every society is affected by globalization and democratization this is even more true. Foreign policy faces the challenge of coping with the impact of structural economic forces which if left to themselves would have an homogenizing effect, but which individual political communities have the capacity to mediate and diversify. It must also cope with not just an increased public interest in external policy but also an increasingly