Psychological Research on Foreign Policy

A METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

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What contributions can psychologists make to our understanding of international relations? Frequently debated, but infrequently resolved, this question has provoked a great deal of theoretical controversy (for example, Greenstein, 1975; Hoffman, 1960; Holsti, 1976; Jervis, 1976; Kelman & Bloom, 1973; Verba, 1961; Waltz, 1959). Many writers have argued that important decision makers are so tightly constrained by their political roles and the international balance of power that they have little, if any, discretionary power. By the time one has taken into account the international, societal, domestic political, and bureaucratic pressures on decision makers, one has already explained most of the variance in foreign policy. Others have argued that there often remains a great deal of room for individual preferences and styles to influence policy choice.

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I certainly do not propose to resolve the long-lived levels of analysis issue here. My position on this issue is similar to that of Holsti (1976) and Jervis (1976). There is no simple answer to which level of analysis is most important. Many variables—psychological and systemic—jointly influence the conduct of foreign policy. The relative importance of any given level of analysis depends on a variety of factors. For instance, how specific and detailed an explanation of foreign policy do we seek? Systemic variables may shape the overall direction of a nation's foreign policy, but not its exact responses in a particular situation. Thus, economic and geopolitical forces might have made a major European war in the early twentieth century very likely; however, a psychological analysis of crisis decision making and of the personalities involved is needed to explain why World War I occurred in August 1914. The importance of a level of analysis also depends on the extremity of variables at other levels of analysis. No doubt, systemic pressures are occasionally overwhelming. Policy makers may indeed have no choice but to act in certain ways to prevent devastating domestic or international repercussions. However, psychological variables may be of considerable, even primary, importance in other situations: for instance, in crises in which top leaders (relatively free from bureaucratic constraints) must make important decisions quickly in response to ambiguous and contradictory information (Holsti, 1976). Finally, I should emphasize that the level of analysis controversy is ultimately an empirical issue (albeit an extremely difficult one), and our understanding of the controversy is not likely to be advanced much further by purely theoretical debate. What is needed now is careful, systematic empirical work designed to assess the types of explanatory contributions that different levels of analysis can make.

The present chapter focuses on a basic evidentiary problem in the level of analysis controversy: What types of data are needed to make a strong case that psychological variables exert an important influence on foreign policy? The chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I examine the diverse methodological strategies that investigators have employed to assess psychological determinants of foreign policy. These strategies include laboratory experiments and simulations, self-report attitude and personality questionnaires, case studies of particular individuals or major decisions, content analysis studies of archival records, and expert ratings of the personalities of policy makers. I note the major strengths and weaknesses of each strategy for assessing psychological determinants of foreign policy.

In the second section, I argue that convergence in the findings of methodologically dissimilar studies provides the best evidence for the importance of psychological processes in foreign policy. I then examine actual examples of multimethod convergence in the research literature. I discuss work on personality correlates of policy preferences, the effects of crises on cognitive processing, the groupthink syndrome, belief perseverance, and the relationships between influence tactics and conflict resolution. These lines of evidence point to a variety of ways in which psychological variables appear to shape the conduct of foreign policy. I conclude by considering theoretical and practical implications of these research findings.

METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES

Political psychology is, in Greenstein's (1973) words, a methodologically "pluralistic universe." Most researchers recognize that it is impossible for any single study in this area to encompass all of the diverse data, methodologies, and perspectives that are relevant to the issues it seeks to cover. For instance, in the psychological study of foreign policy, we rely on traditional research methods (for example, laboratory experiments, personality inventories) to provide basic knowledge about the effects of situational and individual difference variables on behavior; we rely on more naturalistic research methods (for example, content analysis, observer ratings, case studies) to assess the relevance of such basic psychological processes to the actual political events and outcomes we seek to explain. There is no simple, elegant way to integrate these diverse activities. At best, we can realistically aspire to what Campbell (1969) called a fish-scale solution to the unity of knowledge: Investigators should try to organize their inquiries in such a fashion that each investigation partially overlaps with others (analogous to the successive overlappings of the scales of a fish).

I examine here five of the most frequently used methodological strategies (fish scales) in psychological research on foreign policy. Constraints of space do not permit an exhaustive or detailed review of each strategy. Rather, I attempt only to sketch the general logic of each approach and its most conspicuous advantages and disadvantages as a source of evidence on the level of analysis controversy.

Laboratory Experiments and Simulations

Investigators have attempted to use laboratory experiments and simulations to study a variety of psychological processes relevant to
foreign policy: for instance, bargaining and negotiation tactics (see Lindskold, 1978; Pruitt, 1981; Swingle, 1970) and decision making under uncertainty and stress (Driver, 1965; Guetzkow, 1962; Schroder, Driver, & Streufert, 1967). The internal validity advantages of exploring basic processes under controlled laboratory conditions are well known. Investigators are in a position to make relatively strong inferences concerning determinants of the response class of interest. They can isolate the effects of particular independent variables, experimentally control for confounding variables, systematically assess interactions among independent variables, and test detailed models of the processes mediating relationships between independent and dependent variables.

Experimental work in this area takes many forms, from highly schematized pay-off matrix studies (for example, mixed motive games such as the prisoner’s dilemma) to much more elaborate and involving scenarios (for example, the inter-nation simulations). Regardless of form, however, skeptics have been more impressed by the dissimilarities than the similarities between laboratory studies and real-world political decision making. The skeptics note the many differences between the almost always college student subjects and high-level policy makers: maturity, training, background, and ego involvement in the task (policy makers are presumably highly motivated to do the best possible job). They note the existence of organizational and systemic constraints on actual policy makers that are not present in the laboratory (complex networks of intra- and interorganizational accountability and competition). Finally, they contrast the brief duration of experiments (which last at most five or six hours) with the frequently protracted course of foreign policy deliberations. In short, one can identify many threats to the external validity of experimental studies of foreign policy.

Although it is easy to point out ways that laboratory experiments differ from the real thing, it is much more difficult to specify the implications of the differences. Do the differences, in other words, make a difference? On this topic, we find a great deal of conjecture but little data. The issue is thus left suspended in considerable uncertainty. Suffice it to say here that two types of research can prove helpful in reducing the uncertainty: (1) experiments that attempt, to the degree possible, to incorporate features of the real world as independent variables in research designs (for example, frequency and duration of interaction among participants in inter-nation simulations, drawing subjects from populations of policy makers as well as college students); (2) systematic research on foreign policy makers that assesses the generality of laboratory-based findings to real world settings.

Self-Report Questionnaire Studies

Laboratory experiments, by their very nature, focus on situational determinants of foreign policy (for example, the effects on decision making of environmental threat, time pressure, or information load; the effects on negotiation behavior of opponent hostility and intransigence). However, laboratory researchers have also shown interest in relatively stable individual difference correlates of foreign policy. For instance, are certain individuals more simplistic information processors than other individuals? Are certain individuals more likely to prefer violent or aggressive ways of coping with conflicts than other individuals? Under what conditions will these individual differences be especially pronounced?

The most common (and convenient) method of exploring such issues has been by computing correlations between, on the one hand, well-established measures of trait constructs (dominance, self-esteem, tolerance of ambiguity, authoritarianism) and, on the other hand, measures of policy preferences (behavior in experimental paradigms such as the prisoner’s dilemma or the inter-nation simulations, responses to attitude scales that assess perceptions of other nations and preferred ways of dealing with them). Investigators often interpret significant relationships between measures of trait constructs and policy preferences as supportive of (or, at least, consistent with) the hypothesis that personality dispositions influence foreign policy orientations (for example, Christiansen, 1959; Eckhardt & Lentz, 1967; Etheredge, 1978; McClusky, 1967; Terhune, 1970).

Such evidence is suggestive but far from definitive. Studies of the above type are subject to all of the threats to external validity that I discussed with respect to laboratory experiments and simulations. It is one thing to observe strong correlations between personality variables and college students’ responses in laboratory studies or to paper-and-pencil tests; it is quite another to observe the same pattern of relationships between personality variables and important policy stands of elite decision makers.

To make matters worse, many personality-policy studies are purely correlational and do not even enjoy the internal validity advantages of experiments. The familiar lists of threats to valid causal inference in nonexperimental designs thus become relevant (see Cook & Campbell, 1979). I shall simply note two particularly serious threats here.

1. The response bias problem: Administration of personality and policy preference measures in the same testing session or by the same investigator may sensitize subjects to the hypotheses being
tested or to the need to be consistent in their responses. Spuriously high relationships may thus emerge between personality and policy preference variables (for example, giving tough or dominant responses to personality test items may predispose people to give the same types of responses to scales designed to measure policy preferences).

(2) The multivariate nature of personality: Relationships between a measure of a trait construct and policy preferences may disappear when one controls for the influence of other (correlated) individual difference variables.

Archival Content Analysis Studies

Partly in response to serious questions concerning the generalizability of laboratory and questionnaire studies, some investigators have turned to more naturalistic methods of research. One major form of naturalistic research relies on the systematic coding or content analysis of archival records (see Holsti, 1969, for a detailed discussion of this approach). In principle, there is no limit to the range of coding systems that may be used or to the types of material that may be coded. For instance, investigators have used content analysis to assess perceptions of threat and hostility (Holsti, Brody, & North, 1969), diplomatic influence strategies (Leng & Wheeler, 1979), motivational imagery representing needs for affiliation, approval, and power (Winter & Stewart, 1977), integrative complexity (Suedfeld & Tetlock, 1977; Tetlock, 1979, 1981a, 1981b, in press-a), polarization of attitudes toward ingroups and outgroups (Tetlock, 1979, 1981b), self-esteem, internal-external locus of control, dominance, and ethnocentrism (Hermann, 1980). Examples of documents coded have included senatorial and presidential speeches (Tetlock, 1981a, 1981b; Winter & Stewart, 1977), diplomatic communications (Holsti et al., 1969; Suedfeld & Tetlock, 1977), diaries and letters (Suedfeld & Rank, 1976), confidential interviews (Tetlock, in press-b) and journalistic/historical accounts of events (Leng & Wheeler, 1979).

Content analytic investigators generally place high priority on developing explicit operational definitions of theoretical constructs (some have computer-programmable coding schemes; Hermann, 1980) and on achieving adequate levels of intercoder reliability. They have also had considerable success in demonstrating the predictive validity of their coding systems. Content analysis variables have proven to be fairly strong predictors of such important political outcomes as war (Holsti et al., 1969; Ries & Tetlock, Note 1; Suedfeld & Tetlock, 1977), presidential conduct in office (Winter & Stewart, 1977), senatorial voting records (Tetlock, 1981, in press-a),

and the ability of revolutionary leaders to retain office in the post-revolutionary era (Suedfeld & Rank, 1976).

Skeptics can, though, raise important criticisms of content analytic research. One objection concerns the tendency to rely on readily available public statements for inferring psychological states or processes (Graber, 1976; Jervis, 1970). Government leaders use public statements as means of achieving political objectives: reassuring some nations, firmly warning others, and projecting desired images to various constituencies within their own countries. One could argue that public statements should be viewed as purely strategic political acts that offer little insight into the psychology of high-level policy making. Correlations between properties of such statements and major political decisions do not require psychological explanations; they reflect persuasion or propaganda goals that policy makers in particular situations believe to be effective in furthering their political interests. A second objection concerns threats to the internal validity of content analytic research. Although one can statistically control for many confounding variables in content analysis studies (e.g., Tetlock, in press-a), and create quasi-experimental designs that serve the same basic function (Simonton, 1981; Tetlock, 1981a), one cannot eliminate alternative interpretations of data as efficiently as in well-controlled laboratory experiments. Content analysis studies simply lack the internal validity of many experimental studies.

Observer Ratings of Policy Makers

Another approach to studying foreign policy in the real world involves the systematic collection and analysis of observer ratings of policy makers (e.g., Etheredge, 1978; Historical Figures Assessment Collaborative, 1977; Milburn, 1977; Stogdill, Goode, & Day, 1977). These studies share certain methodological common denominators: Investigators ask observers to report their overall impressions of particular government leaders on trait scales or other dimensions of judgment (e.g., the California Q-sort, Adjective Check List, Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire). Investigators then use standard statistical techniques to assess interobserver agreement as well as relationships between observers’ ratings and external criteria (for example, political decisions, success in office, conclusions of other studies).

Researchers have only begun to employ observer ratings in the study of foreign policy. However, previous work in personality assessment (Block, 1971) and leadership behavior (Stogdill, 1974) suggests that the strategy is likely to be fruitful. In both of these research contexts, investigators have developed and validated standardized
techniques for quantifying observer judgments of behavior. There is
good reason, then, to expect that the informed human observer can
also be a useful tool in political psychology.

Still, caution is appropriate until important methodological issues
are clarified. The results of observer rating studies of foreign policy
makers may depend on a number of basic procedural parameters.
Who, for example, are the observers? Are they selected in advance as
experts on the individuals under study? If so, what effects (if any) do
prior theoretical or political commitments exercise on the judgments
they express? Or, are the observers unaware of the identity of the
individuals under study and asked to form impressions from detailed
descriptions of the lives and behavior of those individuals? If so, who
is responsible for compiling the objective data base from which
observers work? How exactly will the information be presented to
observers? We also know very little about the comparative validity of
different formats for eliciting observers' impressions (see the
Historical Figures Assessment Collaborative, 1977).

Serious questions have also been raised concerning the usefulness
of observer ratings in general. Some writers have suggested that
observer judgments are of little value. Observers, it is argued, are
insensitive to situational determinants of behavior and too quick to
attribute traits to others (the "fundamental attribution error"; Ross,
1977). It is also maintained that interrelations among traits that
observers do attribute to others are best understood as products of
implicit theories of personality with little or no relationship to the
real world. In the words of Schweder (1975, p. 455), in forming impressions
of others, we (meaning everyone) "unwittingly substitute a theory of
conceptual likeness for descriptions of actual behavioral co-occu-
rences" (see also Schweder & D'Andrade, 1979). Although the
critics probably have overstated their case (Block, Weiss, & Thorne,
1979), they do make an important point: Observer ratings provide us
with at best imperfect pictures of the world.

Case Studies

All of the previous methods—whatever their failings—attached
high priority to defining and maintaining clear standards of evidence
and procedure. Investigators collected, processed, and analyzed data
in standardized and replicable ways. I turn now to the least structured
and scientific form of psychological research on foreign policy, the
case study.

The research literature is replete with case studies of the influence
of psychological variables on foreign policy. Most of this work has

consisted of psychobiographies that focus on the role of psychodynamic
conflicts and processes in shaping policy preferences (for reviews,
see Greenstein, 1975; Tetlock, Crosby, & Crosby, 1981). However,
case studies grounded in other theoretical perspectives also exist, for
instance, small group processes (Janis, 1972), crisis coping responses
(Janis & Mann, 1977; Lebow, 1981), and cognitive social psychology
(Jervis, 1976).

Defenders of the case study approach argue strongly against what
they see as trends toward premature formalization of psychological
research on foreign policy (or, for that matter, psychological research
in general). In studying determinants of foreign policy, they note that
it is often unclear what one can or ought to measure. Investigators in
many research projects simply end up measuring what is measurable
without regard to its significance or relevance to the problem at hand.
Our first concern should not be to acquire the superficial trappings of
hard science (quantification, clear separation of independent and
dependent variables, statistical tests); our first concern should be to
develop careful, detailed, and critical descriptions of the lives or
events we are interested in explaining (see Eckstein, 1975). To this
end, researchers must proceed more by feel and improvisation than
by plan. They must rely on participant observation and verstehen
(trying to understand the meaning of actions and events from the
viewpoints of the key individuals involved).

One can construct a strong argument for the importance of case
studies, especially in the early or hypothesis-formation stage of theory-
building. Skeptics have, however, raised serious objections to the
case study approach. Without well-defined standards of evidence
and procedure, statements about relationships among variables
become difficult, if not impossible, for there is no clear or precise way
of describing changes in the values of those variables. This same
weakness also renders case studies particularly vulnerable to many
sources of inferential error and bias. Have investigators paid too
much attention to hypothesis-supportive evidence and too little
attention to contradictory evidence? Have they given rival hypotheses
a fair chance (whatever that may mean)? Have they fallen prey to the
certainty-of-hindsight bias (Fischhoff, 1975), the tendency to perceive
past events as having been inevitable? Finally, and perhaps most
seriously, case studies do not easily add up (Verba, 1967). Case
studies may be beautifully written, they may elegantly organize a
wide range of facts, and they may be subtle and persuasive. Nonethe-
less, because of idiosyncrasies in fact-collection and presentation, it
is extraordinarily difficult to derive reliable and valid theoretical
statements from a set of case studies.
MULTIMETHOD CONVERGENCE IN THE RESEARCH LITERATURE

The previous discussion underscores the inconclusiveness of relying on only one research strategy to assess the importance of psychological variables in foreign policy. Serious challenges have been raised to each major methodological approach. The great strength of laboratory experiments—the power to rule out alternative explanations—is offset by the uncertain generalizability of such studies to policy makers dealing with actual problems. The great strength of case studies—the power to describe the rich complexities of particular life histories and political decisions—is offset by the serious inferential limitations of the case study approach. Other methodologies—self-report questionnaires, content analysis, and observer ratings—have their own distinctive strengths and weaknesses.

Although no one methodology can stand entirely on its own, the strengths and weaknesses of each approach are largely complementary. Where one approach is weak, others tend to be strong. This state of affairs suggests that we can often best approximate the truth by encouraging investigators to approach shared theoretical problems from a variety of methodological perspectives (see Campbell, 1969; Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Knutson, 1973). The best means of building a cumulative and reliable body of knowledge on the psychology of foreign policy is through a multimethod (multi-fish-scale) strategy. Whenever possible, investigators should seek methodological cross-validation of their findings: that is, attempt to assess the validity of research findings based on one methodological approach by testing the same hypotheses using other, very different, methodological approaches. Thus, experimenters should try to determine whether empirical relationships observed under laboratory conditions hold up in the real world via content analysis, expert ratings, or case studies. In contrast, researchers who study real world decision making should draw upon experimental techniques for rigorously testing the cause-effect hypotheses underlying their theoretical analyses.

The basic objective of such a multimethod strategy is well known: to ensure that our empirical results are not merely the result of artifacts peculiar to whatever methodology we initially employed (for example, demand characteristics of laboratory or questionnaire studies, political posturing in content analysis studies of public statements, judgmental biases of expert raters, the insensitivity of many case study investigators to disconfirming evidence). To the extent we find the same basic pattern of results across a number of methodologically dissimilar studies, we have reason to increase our confidence in the psychological reality of the effects observed (although the possibility of unrelated artifacts leading to the same spurious conclusion cannot be totally eliminated). To the extent we find markedly different patterns of results, we may question either the reality of the phenomenon or the appropriateness of the research methods employed to study the phenomenon. In both cases, though, our understanding of the psychology of foreign policy has been advanced. We have a fuller appreciation of the generalizability or lack of generalizability of support for particular theoretical claims.

I shall limit my discussion here to some of the most promising examples of the multimethod research strategy. I shall focus on

(1) personality correlates of policy preferences;
(2) crisis decision making;
(3) groupthink;
(4) belief perseverance effects; and
(5) influence tactics and conflict resolution.

Each line of work highlights a distinctive way in which psychological processes may influence foreign policy.

Personality Correlates of Foreign Policy Preferences

Foreign policy problems usually fall into the class of what Newell and Simon (1972) have called “ill-structured” problems. There are rarely clear right answers. Policy makers must deal with incomplete and unreliable information on the capabilities and intentions of other states. The range of policy options is indeterminate. The probable consequences of these options are shrouded in uncertainty. As Henry Kissinger (1979) has noted, policy makers work in darkness; they must make choices not only without knowledge of the future, but usually even without adequate knowledge of what is occurring in the present.

This “structural uncertainty” (Steinbruner, 1974) of foreign policy problems has led some analysts to propose an analogy between international politics and projective tests. It is assumed that the international political scene, in much the same way as a good projective test, evokes psychologically important response themes from national leaders. Policy makers react, in part, intuitively to the world; they often adopt “the most subjectively plausible self-expressive responses to the situations in which they find themselves. Self-expression and projective intuition combine to form a self-deceptive, pseudorationality” (Etheredge, 1978, p. 101). To paraphrase Lasswell (1930), foreign policy is the product of private motives displaced onto the international scene and rationalized in terms of vital national interests.
Evidence on relationships between personality and foreign policy preferences comes from the full range of methodological sources, including laboratory experiments, questionnaire studies, archival content analysis studies, expert ratings of policy makers, and case studies (Christiansen, 1959; Eckhardt & Lentz, 1967; Etheredge, 1978; McClosky, 1967; Terhune, 1970; Tetlock, 1981b; Tetlock et al., 1981). Particularly impressive multimethod convergence of findings has occurred in two lines of research: work on the relationships between authoritarian interpersonal practices and foreign policy choices and work on the psychology of isolationism.

Authoritarian interpersonal practices. Christiansen's (1959) pioneering research on interpersonal generalization theory represented one of the earliest systematic attempts at exploring links between everyday interpersonal behavior and foreign policy preferences. His major hypothesis and approach to testing it were straightforward: He presented Norwegian naval cadets with a questionnaire containing descriptions of 40 everyday conflict situations and 40 potential international conflict situations. Respondents were asked to describe how they would act in the everyday scenarios and how they wished their country would act in the international scenarios. Strong support was obtained for the hypothesis that individuals who tend to blame and threaten others in interpersonal disputes also blame and threaten other nations in international conflicts. For example, subjects who would angrily reproach a friend who absent-mindedly burnt a hole in their table with a lighted cigarette were also more likely to favor strong retaliation if a Russian radio station jammed Norwegian foreign broadcasts (for example, by jamming Russian foreign broadcasts).

Many other attitude and personality questionnaire studies—mainly of American respondents—have yielded similar findings. Thus, Eckhardt and Lentz (1967) reviewed and factor analyzed a large amount of evidence indicating that Americans who favor authoritarian interpersonal practices (willful compulsion of others) tend to favor more punitive and extreme responses to international conflicts and provocations. For example, he found that persons who believe that children need strict discipline from their parents are more likely to advocate using nuclear weapons in serious international disputes.

Unfortunately, as noted earlier, data on the responses of the public or college students to hypothetical situations shed limited light on foreign policy. Policy makers are typically well informed and highly motivated to make wise decisions (their careers and the future of their countries may depend on it) and subject to political constraints that may greatly reduce the importance of systematic individual differences. For this reason, research on actual policy makers assumes special importance. Here again, however, the data reveal consistent and rather powerful relationships between personality and policy.

Etheredge (1978) carried out one of the most sophisticated attempts to assess personality characteristics of political leaders. He explored the relationships between the interpersonal dominance of major American policy makers and their willingness to resort to force in 49 international crises between 1898 and 1968. Several features of the study deserve special note. First, Etheredge took great care in defining dominance (the tendency to direct and control subordinates in role hierarchies) and in checking the reliability and validity of his measure of dominance. He assessed dominance by presenting expert raters (unaware of the purpose of the study) with detailed biographical information on the personal lives of each of the 36 top officials under study. High levels of intrarater agreement were obtained on the trait assessments. In addition, Etheredge reported evidence on the convergent validity of the dominance ratings. For the 11 presidents in his sample, Etheredge computed correlations between expert dominance ratings and motivational imagery scores derived from Donley and Winter's (1970) content analysis of presidential inaugural addresses. Significant correlations existed between dominance and need for achievement ($r = .54, p < .05$) and need for power ($r = .77, p < .01$).

A second important aspect of the study was its focus on crises in which significant disagreements existed among top policy makers over whether to use force, cases of intra-elite disagreement. In this way, Etheredge controlled for the nature of the international situation. Different policy makers confronted the same foreign policy problem. The key question was whether one could predict who would take the more militaristic position from knowledge of the interpersonal dominance of the policy makers involved. The answer was positive: Etheredge correctly predicted the direction of disagreements among policy makers over 75% of the time. Policy makers who exercised dominance over subordinates were much more likely to prefer military solutions than were less dominant policy makers.

Psychology of isolationism. Research on isolationist attitudes in the United States has also revealed important linkages between personality and foreign policy. McClosky (1967) performed the initial work on this topic. He defined isolationism simply: opposition to aid or commitments to other nations. To the isolationist, there is no
community of international interests, and Americans have little to
gain and much to lose by participating in international affairs. In its
extreme forms, isolationism involves a xenophobic aversion to other
nations: the view that the purity and vitality of the United States is
threatened by the immorality and corruption of other nations.

Isolationism is not, however, a monolithic ideology. There are
different types of isolationism, including the aggressive or jingoistic
and the peaceful or conciliatory. The jingoist advocates quick and
punitive responses to external threats and seeks to insulate the United
States by overwhelming superiority of force. The peaceful isolationist
prefers to avoid conflict whenever possible and to withdraw into the
North American continent.

On the basis of three national surveys in the 1950s, in which a large
number of personality and attitude scales were administered,
McClosky (1967) concluded that isolationists—especially jingoistic
ones—differed from nonisolationists on a variety of dimensions.
Isolationists were more intolerant of ambiguity and cognitive inconsist-
ency, more prone to dichotomous (good versus bad) forms of
thinking, and more likely to possess strong positive affect toward
ingroups (patriotic Americans) and strong negative affect toward
outgroups (other nations, political opponents). McClosky argued
that psychodynamic processes similar to those hypothesized to
underlie the authoritarian personality (Adorno et al., 1950) influence
the content and structure of isolationist belief systems. For instance,
he proposed that the rigidly chauvinistic overtones in isolationism
represented means of coping with severe inner conflicts and feelings
of inferiority.

Tetlock (1981b) attempted to test the generality of McClosky’s
psychological portrait of the isolationist to an elite sample: members
of the U.S. Senate. He did so by subjecting the speeches of senators to
detailed content analysis. He relied on two coding systems:

1. Integrative complexity coding—a technique used successfully in
   a number of other archival studies of political elites (Levi & Tetlock,
   1980; Suedfeld & Rank, 1976; Suedfeld, Tetlock, & Ramirez,
   1977; Tetlock, 1979, 1981a). This coding system measures the
degree to which speakers favor simplistic, black-and-white forms of
thinking as opposed to less rigid and more multidimensional forms of
thinking (see Schroder, Driver, & Streufert, 1967; Streufert & Streufert,
1978);

2. Evaluative assertion analysis (Osgood, Saporita, & Nunnally,
   1956—a technique also used successfully in a number of previous
   studies (see Holsti, 1969, for a review). This coding system
measures the intensity of speakers’ attitudes toward particular
groups or issues (in this case, ingroups and outgroups).

Tetlock used these coding techniques to analyze the speeches of
senators who had been classified—on the basis of Guttman scaling
of their voting patterns on foreign policy issues—as isolationist, ambiv-
alent isolationist, or nonisolationist. The results were highly consistent
with McClosky’s analysis of isolationism. Isolationists were much
less integratively complex than nonisolationists. Isolationists also
held more extreme or polarized attitudes. Relative to nonisolationists,
isolationists evaluated outgroups more negatively and ingroups more
positively. Ambivalent isolationists tended to fall between the two
extremes on these dependent variables. Discriminant analysis indi-
cated that the content analytic indicators were powerful joint predictors
of isolationist sentiment. One highly significant discriminant func-
tion emerged (p < .001) that accounted for 41% of the total vari-
ation and permitted correct classification of 66% of the senators into the
isolationist, ambivalent, and nonisolationist categories, against a
chance accuracy rate of 37%.

It is not too difficult to dismiss the relevance to foreign policy of the
McClosky and Tetlock results when one considers each study separa-
ately. With respect to the McClosky data, one can point to possible
response bias problems (consistency pressures, social desirability)
as well as the familiar obstacles to generalizing from how the public
answers questionnaires to how policy makers actually think and act.
With respect to the Tetlock data, one can point to the problems of
relying on senatorial speeches as evidence for inferring the existence
of psychological constructs. Differences in the complexity and affect-
ive polarization of speeches may not so much reflect variation in
cognitive style as in rhetorical style. (Isolationists may have more of a
“give ‘em hell” style of speaking.) However, considered together, the
McClosky and Tetlock results are mutually reinforcing. Drawing on
very different sources of data and analytic techniques, the two studies
lead to very similar conclusions concerning isolationism. Both support
the hypothesis that early post–World War II isolationism represented
a posture of belligerency in international affairs, that it had more to do
“with hostility against foreign nations and disavowal of the well-
being of others than with considered assessment of the risks arising
from foreign entanglements” (McClosky, 1967, p. 104). Both studies
indicated that isolationists related heavily upon “dichotomous thought
processes that lack breadth of perspective, and that seek to exclude
whatever is different, distant, or unfamiliar” (p. 107).
Crisis Decision Making

Foreign policy makers do not always have a lot of time in which to consider alternative courses of action. They frequently work under highly stressful crisis conditions in which they must process large amounts of ambiguous and inconsistent information under severe time pressure, always with the knowledge that miscalculations may have serious consequences for both their own careers and vital national interests (Hermann, 1972; Holsti, Brody, & North, 1969). Under such conditions, one can hardly expect optimal cognitive performance. As Suedfeld and Tetlock (1977, p. 170) write,

The combination of an imperative demand for crucial decisions to be made quickly and correctly, with massive information overload is a form of psychological stress likely to reduce the information processing complexity of the individuals involved.

Both laboratory experiments and content analysis studies of archival records offer suggestive support for this hypothesis. People often seem to view events and policy options in increasingly simplistic terms in highly stressful environments.

The experimental literature on the effects of stress on cognitive processing is enormous (for partial reviews, see Easterbrook, 1959; Janis & Mann, 1977; Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981). Basically, however, there is agreement that high levels of stress decrease the complexity of information processing. This impairment includes a lessened likelihood of accurately identifying and discriminating among unfamiliar stimuli (Postman & Bruner, 1948), rigid reliance on old, now inappropriate, problem-solving strategies (Cowen, 1952), reduced search for new information (Schröder et al., 1967), and intolerance for inconsistent or counterattitudinal evidence (Streufert & Streufert, 1978).

The most relevant laboratory findings come from the inter-nation simulation (INS) studies (Guetzkow, 1962; Schröder et al., 1967). In the INS, subjects are assigned the roles of major national decision makers who must establish foreign and domestic policy priorities. The simulation environment is somewhat artificial; the nations that subjects represent have fictitious names and there are computer-programmed relationships between what subjects do and the security of their nations. However, subjects do enjoy much freedom: They can enter or leave alliances, behave peacefully or aggressively, and invest national resources in projects as they see fit. In this way, the INS presents subjects with complex and open-ended decision making tasks, but is still very much under experimental control. Researchers can manipulate whatever environmental variables are of theoretical interest. For instance, investigators concerned with crisis decision making have manipulated independent variables such as threat-opportunity stressors (the likelihood of large losses or gains in national security), time pressure (the amount of time to make a given decision), and information load (the amount and diversity of information that needs to be analyzed per unit of time).

To assess the impact of these experimental manipulations, researchers monitor subjects' behavior and perceptions in the INS closely. Thus, Driver (1965) used multidimensional scaling of participants' repeated ratings of other nations to assess complexity of information processing during the development of crises in the simulated world. Consistent with previous work, Driver found an inverted-U relationship between complexity of information processing and the stressfulness of the environment. As crises intensified beyond an optimal point, subjects perceived far fewer multidimensional differences among other nations (see Streufert & Streufert, 1978). Driver (1965) also found that violence as a response to frustration was much more likely among simple-thinking than among complex-thinking subjects.

Do these laboratory studies reveal psychological processes that occur in actual international crises? Content analyses of archival records indicate that decision makers in at least certain crises have indeed exhibited simplification effects: tending to repeat actions taken in prior, "similar" situations; to perceive few options as available to them; to emphasize short-term as opposed to long-term consequences of options; and to see possible outcomes in absolute victory or defeat terms (Holsti, 1972; Milburn, 1972; Paige, 1968; Raphael, 1982). For instance, Suedfeld and Tetlock (1977) coded the integrative complexity of diplomatic communications exchanged during international crises that resulted in war (the pre-World War I 1914 crisis and the 1950 crisis produced by the North Korean invasion of South Korea) and crises that were resolved peacefully (the 1911 Agadir crisis, the 1948 Berlin blockade, and the 1962 Cuban missile crisis). They found that the complexity of messages produced by government leaders was significantly lower in crises that resulted in war. In addition, they found that as the 1914 crisis approached its climax, complexity declined; in contrast, complexity actually increased as the 1962 crisis approached its climax. Suedfeld and associates (1977) observed similar effects in a study of the integrative complexity of United Nations speeches concerning the Middle East conflict.
made by representatives of Israel, Arab countries (Egypt and Syria),
the United States, and the Soviet Union. Complexity of speeches was
significantly lower in the months immediately preceding the outbreak
of major wars (1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973), except in the case of the
Soviet Union. Finally Reis and Tetlock (Note 1) found a significant
simplification trend in communications exchanged between China
and India prior to the brief, but sharp, border war of 1962.

Such studies suggest that crisis-induced stress can disrupt complex
information processing among actual foreign policy makers as well as
among subjects in INS experiments. However, there are good reasons
for being cautious in interpreting these findings. We do not know, for
example, whether decreasing complexity prior to war is a sign or
causation (or both) of the breakdown of negotiations. It may be that crises
resulting in war are more stressful than peacefully resolved crises
from the outset and that this difference leads to reduced complexity
and to war. Or, lower levels of integrative complexity prior to war
may play a causal role. Simple-thinking policy makers may be less
likely to perceive peace solutions to conflicts (Pruitt, 1981). We should also remember that simplification effects observed
in public statements prior to war may not so much reflect changes in
policy makers' perceptions as changes in bargaining tactics designed
to convince opponents of one's resolve and determination (the adoption
of increasingly hardline postures). Further work—content
analyzing the private and public statements of policy makers before,
during, and after a large number of crises—is needed to clarify which
of these (by no means mutually exclusive) interpretations better
account for the data.

Yet another reason for caution is that simplification effects do not
always occur in crises that result in war. For instance, Levi and
Tetlock (1980) found no evidence of simplification in either the
private or public statements of Japanese leaders prior to the attack on
Pearl Harbor (although all available evidence indicates the leadership
experienced a great deal of stress). We need a theory—perhaps
similar to the Janis and Mann (1977) conflict model of decision
making—that allows for the possibility that high stress does not
always disrupt (and may sometimes encourage) complex informa-
tion processing. The effects of stress may depend on many
psychological and cultural factors (for example, optimism-pessimism
regarding the chances of finding a good solution, perceived control
over one's fate).

Groupthink

Foreign policy is often the product of a group decision process. The
chief executive and key advisors come together in policy meetings to
assess the strategic situation confronting them, the available options,
and the likely consequences of those options. There are good reasons
for supposing that basic processes of interpersonal and group behavior
play an important role in shaping the course of these deliberations
(see Bales, 1970; Moscovici, 1981).

Janis (1972, 1982) has offered the most systematic analysis to date
of the impact of small group processes on foreign policy. In a series
of detailed historical case studies of major American government
decisions, Janis argued that clear signs existed of the emergence of
groupthink among key policy makers. Groupthink refers, in essence,
to the development of intense pressures toward uniformity and ingroup
loyalty within decision-making groups—pressures that can build up
to the point where they seriously interfere with both cognitive effi-
ciency and moral judgment.

In his case studies, Janis attempted to trace the effects of these
social pressures on decision making. He selected for analysis cases in
which he felt the signs of poor decision making as a result of concurrence
seeking were unmistakable. These included the lack of military
preparedness for the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the pursuit of
the defeated North Korean army beyond the 38th parallel, the Bay of
Pigs invasion, the escalation of the Vietnam war and most recently,
the Watergate coverup. In each situation, Janis identified similar
predisposing conditions to groupthink. The policy makers invariably
belonged to cohesive groups characterized by high levels of attraction
among the members. The policy-making groups insulated themselves
from the judgments of qualified outsiders and lacked systematic
procedures for searching out new evidence relating to the problem.
During the deliberations on the particular issues, the group leaders
tended to promote their preferred solutions rather than encourage
careful, open-minded analysis of policy alternatives. Finally, all
decisions were made in stressful situations (threats to core values
were perceived to exist) in which policy makers were not optimistic
about finding an alternative superior to the one the group currently
favored.

Under these conditions, certain distinctive attitudes and patterns
of interaction emerged within the groups. Decision makers appeared
to believe that the group and its cause were invincible, a belief that
encouraged excessive optimism and risk taking. Group members ignored warnings concerning the popularly agreed-upon solution and exhibited unquestioning belief in the inherent righteousness of the group's policies and the inherent immorality and incompetence of the enemy. Decision makers often self-censored their personal doubts about the wisdom of the group's policies. The group applied direct pressure to those few members who showed signs of deviating from the consensus. Self-appointed mindguards shielded the group from external sources of dissonant information.

In a social atmosphere so inhospitable to rigorous analysis of policy options, decision making fell far short of ideal "rational actor" standards (Allison, 1971). Indeed, according to Janis, decision making in groupthink situations failed to meet any of the major procedural criteria widely regarded as signs of high quality policy analysis. Groupthink policy makers did not survey the full range of options open to them, obtain adequate information for evaluating those alternatives they did consider, take careful account of information that contradicted prior beliefs and preferences, or develop contingency plans for coping with known risks. As Janis (1982, p. 9) noted, the outcomes of groupthink decisions deserved to be fiascos because of the grossly inadequate way the policy makers carried out their decision-making tasks.

Janis contrasted the groupthink decisions with two examples of what he viewed as well-worked-out foreign policy decisions: the development of the Marshall Plan and the handling of the Cuban missile crisis. In these cases, the decision-making groups gave high priority to critical appraisal and open discussion of options. "Decision makers had to undergo the unpleasant experience of hearing their pet ideas critically pulled to pieces" (Janis, 1972, p. 165). The policies ultimately developed within these groups were based upon careful analysis of the likely consequences of numerous options, with frequent attempts at proposing new solutions that maximized the advantages and minimized the disadvantages of options already analyzed.

Was Janis correct? It is hard to say. All of the familiar objections to case studies can be raised here. Janis provided no quantitative evidence bearing on the validity of his classification of decisions into the groupthink and nongroupthink categories. Moreover, the most appropriate documents for testing the groupthink analysis—verbatim transcripts of meetings among decision makers—were available in only the Watergate case study. The historical clues upon which Janis had to rely—observer accounts of private conversations and participant memoirs—were susceptible to serious retrospective distortion of a motivational or cognitive nature (see Fischhoff & Beyth-Marom, 1976). In addition, Janis did not specify the criteria he used in deciding to include or exclude data. He may inadvertently have given too much weight to evidence that supported groupthink hypotheses and too little weight to contradictory evidence. Obviously, further work exploring the validity of the groupthink analysis is needed.

Researchers have taken two very different approaches to testing Janis's groupthink analysis: content analysis studies of actual policy makers (Tetlock, 1979) and laboratory experiments (Courtwright, 1978; Flowers 1977; Fodor & Smith, 1982). For instance, Tetlock (1979) performed detailed content analyses of policy statements of key decision makers involved in both groupthink and nongroupthink crises. He used two different content analysis techniques: integrative complexity coding (designed to assess the complexity of policy makers' thinking) and evaluative assertion analysis (designed to assess the direction and intensity of attitudes toward ingroups and outgroups). The results were highly consistent with Janis's analysis. Tetlock found that relative to nongroupthink decision makers, groupthink decision makers were more simplistic in their perceptions of policy issues and made more positive references to the United States and its allies (ingroups). There was also a nonsignificant trend for groupthink decision makers to make more negative references to domestic and international opponents (outgroups). Discriminant analysis underscored the power of these content analytic indicators to distinguish groupthink and nongroupthink crises. The discriminant function was highly significant, accounted for nearly 45% of the total variation between groups, and permitted correct classification of the groupthink and nongroupthink origins of 78% of policy statements. Overall, then, the Tetlock results converge impressively with the conclusions of Janis's intensive case studies. The convergence is particularly impressive because the Tetlock and Janis studies are based on markedly different types of data (public statements versus retrospective accounts of participants and observers) that have been analyzed in markedly different ways (quantitative content analysis versus intuitive reconstruction of historical episodes).

Although these results may tip the scales of plausibility in favor of the groupthink analysis, they do not eliminate all possible alternative explanations. I have noted earlier that content analysis studies of public statements are open to impression management or propaganda interpretations. For example, the more simplistic and evaluative tone of groupthink statements may reflect the attempts of policy makers to justify the militaristic lines of action they plan to pursue (all the
as groupthink in the real world. Questions will probably always remain, however, concerning the ability of such studies to rule out alternative explanations (internal validity). The two types of studies thus both serve the cause of theory development and refinement, but in markedly different ways.4

Belief Perseverance

Policy makers virtually never approach decisions without preconceptions (George, 1980; Jervis, 1976). These preconceptions take many forms: What are the intentions and capabilities of other states? How are other states likely to react to different policy initiatives? (See Tetlock, in press-c.) These preconceptions also frequently appear to exert undue influence on the policy-making process. Once government officials have committed themselves to a particular image of the international scene, they seem very reluctant to modify or change that image in response to new evidence.

Considerable experimental and case study evidence has accumulated on the profound influence that preconceptions can exert on our interpretation of ongoing events. The laboratory evidence comes from a number of sources, including research on primacy effects in impression formation (Jones & Goethals, 1971), the resistance of political attitudes and stereotypes to change (Hamilton, 1979; Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979), rigidity or set effects in problem solving (Luchins, 1942) and the persistence of causal attributions even after the total discrediting of the information on which the attributions were initially based (Nisbett & Ross, 1980, ch. 8). Public commitment to beliefs, moreover, seems to exacerbate some of these effects (Wicklund & Brehm, 1976). People become even more determined to “stay the course” with positions they have explicitly endorsed in front of others.

All of the usual caveats regarding external validity apply to this literature. Much of the evidence is based on the reactions of college student subjects to unfamiliar or unusual stimulus materials. The subjects, moreover, do not believe the judgments they make will have significant long-term consequences for themselves or others. Research on actual policy makers is obviously necessary to substantiate the claim that belief perseverance effects intrude into the decision processes of the highest levels of government.

The insightful work of Jervis (1976) has done much to bridge the gap between the experimental literature and the real world of foreign policy. Interweaving historical case studies with laboratory findings,
Jervis makes a strong case that belief perseverance effects occur among top policy makers as well as among experimental subjects. At the same time, he is sensitive to the logical and methodological traps that await the unwary. It is extremely hard to document the existence of belief perseverance in foreign policy. In international relations, unlike many experimental situations, we rarely know how much people should change their minds in response to new information. In Bayesian terms, we do not know the diagnosticity of the new information. It is important in principle (although very difficult in practice) to distinguish between rational and irrational consistency (Jervis, 1976). Reliance on prior beliefs and expectations is not irrational perse (we would expect it from a good Bayesian). It becomes irrational only when perseverance and denial dominate openness and flexibility. The fundamental task confronting policy makers is how to strike an optimum balance between existing images and incoming evidence, between old and new facts.

Do policy makers do a good job? Jervis (1976) argues convincingly that they often do not: They err in the direction of protecting prior beliefs and expectations, retaining images and policy stands that have outworn their original value. He notes that case studies of political decision making abound with references to government leaders who have treated belief-supportive information very uncritically, while simultaneously searching for all possible flaws in arguments or evidence that challenged existing beliefs. For instance, John Foster Dulles quickly accepted almost any information about the Soviet Union that conformed to his image (for example, extreme aggressiveness, domestic unrest, economic inefficiency), but required enormous amounts of evidence before he would take image-challenging information seriously (Holsti, 1967). Joseph Stalin ignored a variety of evidence and warnings concerning German preparations to invade the Soviet Union right up until June 22, 1941, preferring to view the preparations as essentially defensive in nature. During World War II, Hitler frequently refused to listen to intelligence estimates of enemy strength. Israeli government leaders in 1973 discounted substantial evidence that Egypt and Syria were preparing to attack, largely because these leaders were confident that Israel possessed clear military superiority and the Arabs would not attack under such unfavorable conditions. Indeed, Heuer (1981) has gone so far as to argue that strategic attempts to deceive other states virtually always succeed when the deceiver exploits the target’s preconceptions.

Although the volumes of case study evidence are surely suggestive, we still need more systematic evidence of belief perseverance effects in foreign policy. We also need more evidence on limiting conditions for belief perseverance effects. For instance, laboratory studies suggest there are individual differences in tendencies to stick with initial impressions of events (Schroder et al., 1967; Streufert & Streufert, 1978, ch. 2). Do such individual differences also emerge among policy makers? One approach to studying this issue might be to use systematic content analysis procedures (such as cognitive mapping, Axelrod, 1976) to assess changes in the content and structure of policy makers’ perceptions of an environment that increasingly challenges those policy makers’ preconceptions. For example, how did American government officials deal with the growing evidence in the early 1960s that the Sino-Soviet conflict was both real and serious? How did British government officials deal with growing evidence of the failure of the Chamberlain appeasement policy in 1939? Time-series content analysis data on changing (or unchanging) perceptions could provide important insights into: (1) when different policy makers change their minds; (2) how policy makers reconcile changes in one part of their belief systems with the remainder of their belief systems (see Abelson, 1959).

Influence Tactics and Conflict Resolution

Foreign policy is fundamentally social influence: The ultimate objective is to persuade other nations to act in desired ways (for example, to join or leave alliances, to make trade agreements or concessions). Policy makers choose those influence strategies they deem most likely to induce other states to act in these desired ways. Obviously, they may choose any one or some combination of several basic influence tactics: for example, they might try to bully the other party into submission, to pursue a tit-for-tat reciprocity strategy, or even attempt to appease the other party through unilateral concessions.

There is, of course, no all-purpose formula that specifies how policy makers should handle particular adversaries in particular situations. However, there are some intriguing signs of multimethod convergence between laboratory and field research on the effects of different influence tactics on the conflict resolution process. Both lines of research suggest that a reciprocity strategy is generally more effective than either bullying or appeasement as a method of achieving mutually beneficial compromise agreements (avoiding all-out conflict, on the one hand, and surrender, on the other). Reciprocity here refers to a “firm-but-fair” strategy (Esser & Komorita, 1975): One begins
with a cooperative move and thereafter responds in kind to the other party's responses on each successive exchange. Bullying relies on negative inducements: Any response by the other party short of complete compliance is met with severe threats or punishments. Appeasement is almost the opposite of bullying: One tries to gain the compliance of the other party through positive inducements.

Social psychologists have performed a large number of controlled experiments on the effects of different influence strategies (such as the above) on bargaining and negotiation outcomes. These experiments tend to be extremely stylized: Participants do not know each other beforehand, do not expect to know each other afterward, and play to gain hypothetical rewards or avoid hypothetical losses. These controlled studies do quite consistently indicate, however, that reciprocity strategies lead to more mutually advantageous patterns of play than do policies of unilateral concessions (appeasement) or belligerency (bullying) (see Esser & Komorita, 1975; Lindskold, 1978; Oskamp, 1971; Pruitt & Dreng, 1969; Smith & Anderson, 1975). Reciprocity usually prompts high degrees of cooperation whereas unilateral concessions often lead to exploitation and bullying often leads to a conflict spiral of hostility and distrust that is very difficult to reverse.

Many case studies of international diplomacy underscore this point (George, Hall, & Simons, 1971; Snyder & Diesing, 1977). Concessions in conjunction with firmness on key issues (what Pruitt has called flexible rigidity) frequently seem to facilitate diplomatic solutions that both parties prefer to war. The most often cited example of this approach is the Kennedy administration's handling of the Cuban missile crisis (an uncompromising stand on the withdrawal of Soviet missiles coupled with a somewhat flexible naval blockade and face-saving assurances to the Soviets that Cuba would not be invaded). Other historical examples might include the Fashoda crisis of 1898, the Moroccan crises of 1905 and 1911, the Bosnian crisis of 1908, and American-Soviet confrontations over Iran (1946) and Berlin (1949-1949, 1958-1962).

Leng and Wheeler (1979) offer quantitative historical data in support of the reciprocity hypothesis. These authors coded diplomatic influence tactics employed by the key states involved in 20 international disputes in this century (11 of the disputes were resolved peacefully; 9 culminated in war). Working from events data—detailed chronological accounts of each crisis in the New York Times—they reliably classified each nation's influence tactics into several behavioral categories: promises, threats, requests, and comments. Their findings were clear-cut: The reciprocity strategy was the surest (albeit not perfect) means of avoiding diplomatic defeat without going to war. This was especially true, moreover, when a state was confronted by a very aggressive or bullying opponent. Leng and Wheeler advance an interesting social psychological interpretation of the effectiveness of the reciprocity strategy. They attribute the strategy's success to the importance of reciprocity as a norm of equitable exchange in international politics and human relations in general. They also emphasize the face-saving role that can be played by properly timed concessions from one party (see Snyder & Diesing, 1977). Such concessions make it much easier (psychologically and politically) for the other party to back down without looking foolish or weak in public. Many experimental social psychologists would doubtless agree with this emphasis on the importance of saving face. Concern for social image or identity often appears to impede conflict resolution among subjects in laboratory situations (Chertkoff & Baird, 1971; Lamm & Rosch, 1972; Pruitt, 1981).

Although impressive strands of consistency run through the experimental and archival findings, I do not wish to imply that we now fully understand when different types of influence tactics will be effective in international conflicts (or why such tactics will be effective). Many potential moderator variables exist that have yet to be adequately explored. The effectiveness of different tactics may well depend on

1. the interests at stake (for example, when policy makers are desperate, as Japanese leaders were prior to World War II, they may be willing to take extraordinary risks);
2. the relative power of the participants (Leng & Gochman, 1982);
3. the domestic political balances of power within the states involved;
4. the reasonableness of the top policy makers in the states involved (for example, some historians believe Hitler wanted to go to war over Poland in 1939 and was determined to avoid a negotiated settlement).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The evidence I have discussed builds a very strong case that a variety of psychological processes influence the conduct of foreign policy. In a number of topic areas, very different research techniques have pointed to surprisingly similar theoretical conclusions concerning psychological determinants of foreign policy. True, the multimethod
convergence was not always perfect and many gaps in our understanding still exist. Nonetheless, the degree of convergence was impressive and is certainly difficult to reconcile with the view that psychological explanations can contribute little to our understanding of international relations.

In closing, I shall briefly mention some of the theoretical and practical implications of work on the psychology of foreign policy. On a theoretical level, the results should be hearkening to social and personality psychologists concerned with the generalizability of their scientific results beyond college student samples responding to paper-and-pencil tests in return for course credit or modest remuneration. Many findings derived from traditional research methods may hold up in consequential real-world settings as well as in other cultures and historical periods (see the social psychology as history debate of Gergen, 1973; and Schlenker, 1974). It is possible, moreover, to develop and employ reliable and valid empirical techniques for assessing the generalizability of these findings. As Simonton (1981) noted, archival data (such as those derived from content analysis or expert ratings) provide a tremendous wealth of information available for testing nomothetic hypotheses about human behavior. Psychologists have a scientific responsibility to exploit the enormous hypothesis-testing potential of the archival data banks that exist in our libraries.

The practical policy implications of work on the psychology of foreign policy also deserve note. The research literature points to serious threats to good judgment or rationality in the foreign policymaking process (Tetlock, in press-c). Psychological variables may lead to a variety of miscalculations in the making of key national decisions, miscalculations that, needless to say, can affect the lives and well-being of millions. For instance, there is the danger that the personalities of policy makers will blind them to alternative interpretations of the international scene and to the merits of viable policy options. Small group and organizational norms may discourage careful, critical appraisal of the problems national leaders face and of the solutions they are tempted to enact. Belief perseverance effects may increase the likelihood that policy makers will be too slow in revising old opinions to accommodate new evidence. Psychologists have a social responsibility to alert the policy-making community to these potential sources of error and bias as well as to discover ways of minimizing the impact of such variables on the policy-making process.

NOTES

1. The strongest version of this argument maintains that no documents can be trusted to reveal individuals' true perceptions or feelings: Even supposedly private statements (memoranda, letters, diaries) may be intended for public consumption. This position is probably too extreme. As Ihiel de Sola Pool (1959) argued, researchers need to be sensitive to both the representational and instrumental functions of language. What politicians (or more generically, people) say can be viewed as representative of internal thoughts and feelings, as instrumental attempts to manipulate the thoughts and feelings of others, or as a complex mixture of representational and instrumental functions (see Tetlock, Bernzweig, & Guest, Note 2).

2. I do not wish to imply that all case studies are equally vulnerable to these criticisms. Case studies—like other forms of research—vary in the quality and thoroughness of analyses reported. At one extreme are those all-too-common impressionistic studies in which the narrator selects anecdotes and details as suits his or her theoretical convenience (see Tetlock et al., 1981, for a review). At the other extreme are those all-too-rare systematic studies in which the investigator conscientiously examines all available evidence and tries to test the applicability of a number of alternative hypotheses (see Janis, 1982; Scriven, 1976, on the modus operandi method of individual case analysis). I should also mention that comparative case studies can, to a considerable extent, address the adding up problem (George & Smoke, 1974, on the method of structured, focused comparison).

3. Stress in this research tradition is treated as a composite variable defined in terms of cost-benefit stressors ("noisiness" and "cucuyity"), time pressure, and information load (Schorer et al., 1967).

4. A third as yet untried methodological strategy may reveal important evidence on groupthink processes. I refer here to comparative case studies in which trained analysts (unaware of the hypotheses being tested) rate historical records for symptoms of groupthink as well as antecedent conditions (Janis, personal communication). This approach holds up the promise of combining the quantitative rigor of observer rating studies with the idiographic sensitivity of case studies.

5. A noteworthy example of what can be done to address the above issues comes from the work of Bonham, Shapiro, and Trumble (1979). These investigators interviewed a sample of American foreign policy officials about the Arab-Israeli conflict at two times: before the October 1973 war (1971-1972) and after the war (1974-1975). They also constructed detailed maps of each respondent's perceptions of the Middle East situation at each time. Comparison of the prewar and postwar maps revealed results very compatible with the belief perseverance hypothesis: Although the 1973 war was a highly unexpected event, there was almost no cognitive restructuring of beliefs. Those officials who did show belief change exemplified the principle of least effort; they limited changes to revising estimates of the strength of causal relationships among small numbers of variables.

6. It is one thing to say that reciprocity in general works; it is quite another to implement a reciprocity strategy in a particular conflict. The key issue for negotiators is how to strike the right balance between appearing both conciliatory and resistant to exploitation. Unfortunately, there is no nonarbitrary rule that specifies how much exploitation one should absorb before it is necessary to retaliate to counter the appearance of weakness and vulnerability. Scaling responses to be appropriate to the
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