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Approaches to the Study

of Foreign Policy

Derived from International

Relations Theories

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1. Introduction[1]

International Relations (IR) as an academic field studies the political interactions of states and other actors in the international arena such as international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and transnational companies large and powerful enough to act as "global players." The political interactions that intrigue IR scholars include both peaceful cooperation and violent conflict. They may be rule-governed and orderly, or they may defy any attempt to discover a pattern to which they obey. In terms of substance, they involve the consensual or contested creation, protection, and distribution of values encompassing such diverse assets as security, economic welfare, ecological stability, and human rights.

IR is not only about *international politics*, however, but about *foreign policy* as well. While "international politics" denotes the complex, more or less structured, and more or less conflictual *interplay* of several international actors, "foreign policy" is predicated on a particular actor, usually a state or, more rarely, a union of states, referring to its endeavor to protect its interests and to promote its values vis-à-vis other actors beyond its borders. Obviously, foreign policy is not an activity separate from international politics: in a sense international politics is composed of the foreign policies of actors, and if actors somehow decided no longer to engage in foreign policy there would be no more international politics, either. However, foreign policy is distinguished from international politics in that it involves a particular perspective and an "author," i.e. we talk about the foreign policy of the United States, of Germany, of the European Union, etc..[2] In short: foreign policy is about transboundary political *action* (how it comes about, how it is related to the action of others, etc.) rather than *interaction*.

Students of international relations have come up with a range of theories about international politics. Some of these theories focus on a particular type of phenomenon such as war or international trade. Others are more ambitious and claim to shed light on the whole of international politics and to identify the factors that drive international political behavior in diverse issue areas (even as they do not and could

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[1]The author gratefully acknowledges his intellectual indebtedness to members of the foreign policy analysis research team at the University of Tübingen and to Peter Mayer for his assistance in completing this text two years ago. As the volume for which this text was prepared for as a chapter never got published, yet requests for citing of this text have continued to arrive, I felt it appropriate to publish this text albeit belatedly.

[2] It is an altogether different story whether or not we can meaningfully generalize over the foreign policies of different actors at different times and places. "Positivists" in the study of foreign policy argue that we can; "interpretivists" deny this possibility (Neufeld 1995; Nicholson 1996). The *theories* of foreign policy dealt with in this chapter rest on the assumption that the subject matter they seek to illuminate exhibits certain regularities and hence share a basically "positivist" epistemological outlook. Thus, the study of foreign policy lends itself to comparison across nations as well as across time.

not claim to provide explanations for every detail). Over the years, several such "grand theories" ("schools of thought," "paradigms") have emerged and compete for acceptance in the scientific community (Viotti and Kauppi 1998; Krell 2000; Baylis and Smith 2001:part Two; Carlsnaes et al. 2002:part One). In current IR discourse, the most visible and advanced general theories of international politics include neorealism, liberalism, and constructivism (Walt 1998). As we shall see shortly, each of these approaches offers its own key concepts, assumptions, and hypotheses in order to make sense of the myriad of interactions that constitute contemporary world politics.

As we have noted, foreign policy is clearly and closely related to, though different from, international politics. Nevertheless, IR scholars have sometimes insisted that theories of international politics and theories of foreign policy are not only distinct, but unrelated – such that theorizing international politics produces few if any clues about the causes of foreign policy behavior. The most prominent and eloquent proponent of this view is Kenneth Waltz (1979; 1986), the leading figure of the neorealist school of thought. For Waltz, the central task of a theory of international politics is to work out the notion of an *international system* that cannot simply be equated to the "units" (in his case, states) that interact "in" that system. According to Waltz, the task is accomplished by defining the "structure" of this system in such a way as to make plain that there is more to it than could be rendered by a description of the actions, intentions, and other attributes of the states that comprise the system. For example, anarchy (i.e. the lack of an effective arbitrator of disputes in the international system) is an essentially structural feature that cannot be reduced to the properties of the actors struggling with the dangers and uncertainties that come with this feature. Due to this inherent "systemic" focus, however, theories of international politics, according to Waltz, have little to offer to students of foreign policy concerned with the decisions of the individual "units" (i.e. states).

Other neorealists disagree. Colin Elman (1996), in particular, has made a strong case for "neorealist theories of foreign policy." We believe that Elman is on target and that Waltz – his merits in formulating a systemic neorealist theory notwithstanding – overstates the difference between the two intellectual enterprises. Even though the "dependent variables" or *explananda* (i.e. the kinds of facts one attempts to account for) are different (remember the first paragraph of this chapter), this does not mean that the ideas (including concepts, assumptions, and causal arguments) that inform a particular perspective on international politics are necessarily of no help in explaining the foreign policy choices and practices of states. Rather than making an abstract argument to this effect, we hope to show, in the following, that leading theories of international politics – once appropriately (re-)interpreted, extended, and transformed – indeed offer potentially valuable insights into the foreign policy of states as well. These theories are neorealism, (utilitarian) liberalism, and constructivism,

respectively.[3]

2. Overview of IR Theories

Before we describe in detail the approaches to foreign policy that can be derived from these three theories of international politics, let us overview the theories themselves so readers can have an idea of what distinguishes them one from the other.

2.1. Neorealism: States as Unitary Actors Sensitive to Cost

Realism is a perspective on world politics with a long history reaching back as far as to antiquity and the Middle Ages (Forde 1992; Doyle 1997). Realists depict the world and especially the world of international relations as a dangerous place, where conflict and the threat of violence are ever-present and all to often escalate into disastrous wars which put at risk virtually everything that people value. Since *states* control the means of violence (i.e. the military apparatus), they are the crucial actors in international politics. While many classical realists have attributed the perceived inability of states to coexist in peace and harmony to flaws in human nature (Morgenthau 1946), the more recent school of *neorealism* – also referred to as "structural realism" – locates the sources of these and other observable attributes of international politics in the "international system," i.e. in the way that states are related to one another (Waltz 1979).

The most conspicuous and most consequential feature of the international system is *anarchy*, which means that there is no "monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force" (Max Weber) at the international level comparable to the domestic order of states. Anarchy, according to neorealists, creates a general sense of insecurity in actors, which often results in what they call a "security dilemma." Uncertainty makes (even) states with defensive intentions behave in ways which are perceived by other states as threatening. The latter feel forced to take "counter-measures" (e.g. increased spending on armaments in response to a similar policy by the other state or states), which, however, only serve to confirm the worries of the state(s) to whose actions they respond and to provoke further action by those states, etc..

Since there is no "world state" to protect the fundamental interests of the individual

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[3] One *caveat* is in order: Neorealist, liberal, and constructivist theories of international politics are not all of one piece, but come in several versions. Moreover, the process of transforming an interaction-centered political theory into an action-oriented one is not straightforward, thus admitting of more than one possible outcome. As a consequence, none of the theories of foreign policy based on theories of international politics that will be presented

below can claim to be the one and only authentic statement on foreign policy of the respective school of thought: one might think of somewhat different neorealist, liberal, and constructivist theories of foreign policy. For more extensive treatments of theories of foreign policy implicit in neorealist, liberal, and constructivist approaches to the study of internatioal relations see Baumann et al. (2001), Freund and Rittberger (2001), and Boekle et al. (2001), respectively.

political communities, states are bound to secure their survival and welfare ultimately through self-help. Self-help is not incompatible with cooperation, but states are reluctant to enter into relationships that might undermine their self-help capacity or *power*. According to neorealism, states take an essential interest in power (defined primarily in terms of military and economic capabilities) not for its own sake but as a necessary means for achieving whatever *security* is available to them under the circumstances. States may value their neighbors' current peaceful intentions or international norms and institutions that delegitimize aggression and foster international cooperation, but they are always aware that, ultimately, they cannot depend on the longevity and efficacy of such favorable conditions.

Power is not only an important property and goal of individual states. The prevailing *distribution of power* (in particular the number of great powers) is regarded by neorealists as another key attribute of the international system (alongside anarchy) that is responsible for the patterns of international behavior that we observe (e.g. the frequency of major wars in one period). In neorealist parlance, anarchy and the distribution of power are "constraints" (limits on the choices of states) to which actors respond in a consistent and rational way. According to Waltz, the responses of states to shifting circumstances will tend to be such that hegemony (i.e. the predominance of a single state) is avoided and a rough balance of power retained, or re-established, in the international system.

2.2. Utilitarian Liberalism: Individuals and Groups as Rational, Goal-Oriented Actors

Like the neorealist outlook on international politics, liberalism in international relations theory is firmly rooted in the history of political ideas, counting classical thinkers such as 18th and early 19th century political and moral philosophers Smith, Kant, and Bentham among its most important ancestors (Doyle 1997). The liberal perspective on international politics is sometimes broadly conceived so as to include a strong normative component emphasizing the political and social rights of individuals or to embody the utopian assumption that the interests of individuals and, by extension, those of states are harmonious at bottom. In this chapter we are dealing with liberalism as a positive (i.e. non-normative[4]) theory of international relations, which – although clearly less pessimistic than realism – holds that, depending on the circumstances, the goals of actors may as well clash as accord with one another. Like neorealism, the brand of liberalism we are looking at in this chapter works from the assumption that actors are self-interested and rationally pursue largely materialistic goals. Actors are not assumed to be altruists or to be motivated first and foremost by a

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[4] The distinguishing characteristic of a normative theory of international politics is not that it has recourse to social norms, but that it justifies (or criticizes) such norms or argues in favor of new norms that, according to the theory, actors should adopt. As we shall see below, constructivism takes social norms very seriously, but it is nevertheless a positive theory trying to account for the realities of international politics rather than making considered value judgments on international practices.

concern for the common good. To indicate this we henceforth use the qualifier "utilitarian."[5]

What clearly sets utilitarian liberalism apart from neorealism, however, is the *identity* of the actors it attributes central importance to when it comes to analyzing international relations. According to utilitarian liberalism, the "fundamental actors" of international politics are not unitary states, but individuals and groups within or without the political-administrative system such as voters, interest groups, political parties, bureaucrats, or politicians. Indeed, states are not actors at all but institutions which represent the interests of those societal actors although in a more or less skewed way. As a result, some of these interests are more likely to shape the foreign policy of the "state" (as conducted by the central decisionmakers) than others. Utilitarian liberals argue that what primarily drives international politics is not state power, but state preferences, adding that these preferences do not reflect the position of the state within an international hierarchy of power (as neorealists would have it), but the desires and differential influence of societal actors within the state. Similarly, the most important structures underlying international politics are not anarchy and the distribution of power among states, but domestic ("subsystemic") political institutions and practices affecting the process of preference formation as well as the resulting ("systemic") configuration of state preferences with regard to the issue at hand.

Particular strands within utilitarian liberalism build on these general premises to advance more specific hypotheses about the relationship between certain domestic and transnational structures and observable patterns of international behavior (Moravcsik 1997, 2002). Thus, "republican liberals" examine the contribution to international peace made by democratic governance, while "commercial liberals" emphasize the disincentives to aggression and war that come with increased economic interdependence among nations.[6] Others focus more narrowly on the process of preference formation with regard to specific issues and consequently on the structure of the particular "policy networks" in which the "state's" interests on the issue are

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[5]In moral and political philosophy, "utilitarianism" denotes an ethical theory which argues that acting morally consists in making choices which have the best possible consequences *for all affected* (including oneself). In political science (including IR), "utilitarian" is often used in a somewhat different sense referring to an actor's disposition to maximize his or her *own* utility (well-being). Our term "utilitarian liberalism" harks back to the second usage.

[6] Some authors add a third strand, referred to as "regulatory liberalism," which focuses on the ability of international institutions to ameliorate the cooperation-inhibiting effects of anarchy (Keohane 1990). In an important article, however, Andrew Moravcsik (1997) has pointed out that arguments about the causes and consequences of institution-building at the international level, although traditionally associated with liberalism, are in many respects closer to realism than to the core of the utilitarian liberal research program with its emphasis on the domestic sources of international political behavior. Consistent with an emerging scholarly consensus he therefore advocates treating "institutionalism" as a separate school of thought distinct from both realism and liberalism. Our interpretation of the utilitarian liberal perspective on foreign policy follows Moravcsik in this regard.

worked out by those societal (private and public) actors who are both capable and motivated to exert an influence. It is this latter, agency-based variant of utilitarian liberalism that we will pay most attention to in this chapter.

2.3. Constructivism: States as Role Players

Constructivism is a school of thought in IR that has joined the "menu" of theoretical approaches to international politics only recently, although work done by the so-called "English School" (Bull 1977) and others has been identified as constructivist in retrospect (Adler 2002). Drawing on a variety of sources ranging from sociology to the philosophy of language, constructivists challenge the predominant rationalist mode of analysis, arguing that rationalists – including both realists and utilitarian liberals – ignore or downplay the role of ideas in international relations. "Idea" here is a broad category encompassing all kinds of beliefs, perceptions, and meanings that actors share and simultaneously presuppose and reproduce in their interactions or "practices." The social impact of material reality (including biologically-determined physiological needs) is not denied, but constructivists insist that whatever role material conditions play in shaping our individual and collective goals, behavioral options, and choices is mediated and, as a consequence, deeply affected by our "socially constructed" interpretations of this reality (Wendt 1999).

For example, anarchy or a given distribution of military capabilities as such do not force a particular pattern of behaviors and attitudes upon the actors. Indeed, "anarchy is what states make of it" (Wendt 1992). This is because more important than the alleged causal effects of anarchy is its meaning to the actors, which is not fixed but varies with prevailing identities (i.e. images of the self and the other) embedded in a particular culture. According to Wendt (1999), the spectrum of ideal-typical "cultures of anarchy" ranges from a "Hobbesian" culture in which states regard and treat each other as enemies to a "Kantian" culture in which states define their security in collective rather than private terms, i.e. they perceive no incentive to pursue gains in security at the expense of others and regard each other's security as a common concern. Constructivists are aware that established identities and associated practices cannot be changed voluntaristically, but confront actors as "social facts" (Emile Durkheim). Still, they *are* malleable through reflection and discourse, and materialists and rationalists are wrong to elevate them to quasi-natural givens ("reification"). Constructivists are therefore particularly interested in the (learning) processes that underlie change in the identities and hence the preferences of actors.[7]

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[7] Rationalist theories "exogenize" the preferences (desires, goals) of actors, i.e. such theories make reference to actors' preferences in their explanations of behavior but refrain from accounting for these preferences themselves. To be sure, liberals seek to explain state preferences, but, as we shall see in more detail below, the preferences of what they call the "fundamental actors" (private individuals and groups) are posited.

One type of idea the behavioral impact of which is particularly obvious and which is therefore intensely studied by constructivists are social norms. Rationalist theories of international politics have not been altogether ignorant of norms, but, according to constructivism, are unable to grasp their full social meaning, depicting them as constraints which rational actors take into account while choosing their utility-maximizing course of action or as instruments that actors use to further their independently defined interests. From the constructivist point of view, this is a highly truncated interpretation of the role of norms in society, including international society. Norms do have instrumental value regulating behavior so as to help actors escape "social traps," but, at least as important, they have "constitutive effects" as well by setting the rules of the game of international politics which define who is an actor in the first place and what are its basic rights and responsibilities. "Sovereignty" is the prime example here. Moreover, what the rationalist view of norms fails to take account of is the fact that norms are not just "external data" to which actors may or may not respond, but, through processes of socialization, norms and the social roles they constitute are internalized by actors shaping their very self-understandings and their understandings of what is the appropriate behavior that is expected from them in a given social situation. Taking norms seriously thus implies that actors are more fruitfully described as "role players" than as "utility maximizers."

3. Basic Similarities and Differences Among Approaches

As has become clear in the preceding pages, neorealist, (utilitarian-)liberal, and constructivist approaches to international relations differ in many respects. At the same time, there are important features which we find in more than one theory. Since these differences and similarities carry over to the foreign policy "branches" of these theories, it is appropriate to take a closer look at them.

3.1. What Motivates the Actor

The most important difference among the three approaches is an ontological one and pertains to their underlying "actor models." An actor model is a highly stylized description of the way that social actors come to act, the kinds of considerations that enter into their decisions, their basic motives, etc.. Note that such a model is a conceptual construct guiding and informing the process of theory building rather than a purportedly faithful picture of reality whose accuracy we might discover by simply looking at the "facts." Hence, its empirical justification can only be an indirect one, namely one based on the predictive and explanatory success of the theories it helps to construct. While neorealism and utilitarian liberalism endorse the model of *homo oeconomicus*, signaling their membership in the class of rationalist theories of politics, constructivists build their accounts of international politics and foreign policy on the notion of *homo sociologicus*. Let me briefly explain what precisely this involves in

each case.

Theories that rely on the model of *homo oeconomicus* conceive of actors as self-interested (or, more generally, goal-oriented) individuals or organizations whose behavior results from rational calculations concerning costs and benefits. Actors consciously pursue goals which they strive to attain at minimum costs. From among the choices facing them, these actors pick the one that is optimal given their preferences and the constraints they face. Both neorealism and utilitarian liberalism do not normally attempt to explain actors' goals. In other words, the desires of actors are assumed rather than determined by the theory; that is, preferences are not empirically investigated but posited by assumption. According to this rationalist actor model, alternative courses of action are evaluated and then chosen in light of their expected consequences for actors' goals (March and Olsen 1989:23-24). When *homo oeconomicus* confronts several options, he proceeds by asking himself the following questions (although in most cases unconsciously and implictly rather than consciously and explicitly):

(1)   What are my options?
(2)   What are my goals?
(3)   What are the likely consequences of each of my options?
(4)   Which option is best for me in light of my goals, i.e. which maximizes my net benefit (taking into account the probabilities of the various possible outcomes associated with any given choice)?

For example, a government that, by signing a multilateral treaty, has promised to contribute to the combat against global warming might come to realize that living up to this commitment will be extraordinarily costly. It will look at its options, e.g. break the treaty openly (with or without a plea for understanding to its partners), attempt to violate the treaty surreptitiously, try to circumvent it somehow, try to renegotiate, or simply comply despite the inconvenience. It will try to anticipate the consequences of each possible course of action open to it: the responses of partners and third parties, potential damage to its reputation as a cooperation partner, longer term effects on the environment and on the economy, etc.. Finally, it will make its choice, picking the option with the most favorable balance of benefits, costs, and risks – for example, it may decide to withdraw from the treaty, because it has come to the conclusion that the others will reduce their emissions of carbondioxide anyway giving it the chance to free-ride on their efforts.

Constructivist authors reject this depiction of social actors as too calculating and self-interested. They point out that actors are always embedded in a social context that heavily impacts on their behavior. It is, therefore, appropriate to refer to their actor model as *homo sociologicus*. In contrast to *homo oeconomicus, homo sociologicus* is

not "programmed" by a given set of goals that preordain certain actions. Rather the actor plays a social role (or rather several roles) which he has acquired through a process of socialization and whose dictates he attempts to live up to in the situation at hand. As a consequence, what drives an actor's behavior are not the likely consequences of different courses of action for the attainment of given goals; rather, a certain course of behavior is adopted because it is in agreement with the intersubjectively shared, value-based expectations of what is appropriate behavior emanating from the actor's social environment (March and Olsen 1989:23-26). Once again, the decision-making process of *homo sociologicus* can be modeled by a set of questions that the actor puts to himself. (Again he need not ask these questions explicitly or in the order that they are presented here.)

(1)   What kind of situation am I in?
(2)   Which of my several social roles is called upon in this situation?
(3)   To what extent does each of the behavioral options I face conform to this role?
(4)   Which is the most appropriate course of behavior (given my situation, my roles, and my options)?

Returning to our example, constructivists would expect the government becoming aware of the high costs of cutting down CO_2-emissions to analyze, and eventually resolve, its decision problem not in terms of the effects of different options on the long-term welfare (security, power, etc.) of the country, but in terms of its obligations and responsibilities as they are linked to its roles in both international and domestic society. Since actors in any society occupy multiple roles, acting-as-role-playing is frequently neither straightforward nor free from serious internal and external conflict. In our example, the government might face the difficulty of reconciling its domestic role as "protector of the national interest" with its international role of "a law-abiding member of the international community of states," or, perhaps more specifically, "the leader of the world." Finally, there is no *a priori* reason to assume that it will reach a different decision than the government in our previous example – only that the reasons and the reasoning will be different.

These differences between the actor models of *homo oeconomicus* and of *homo sociologicus* have far-reaching implications. Depending on their respective conceptions of what the actor is like, theories of foreign policy will address different questions in accounting for the foreign policy behavior of states. A theory which assumes that actors are self-interested goal seekers has to address the question of which goals are sought by the actors under study. As we shall see shortly, the answers given by neorealism and utilitarian liberalism are, respectively, security and "power and plenty." In contrast, a theory such as constructivism which assumes that actors are role-oriented and behave in accordance with the intersubjectively shared, value-

based expectations of appropriate behavior emanating from their pertinent social environment has to inquire into these roles and expectations that may be expressed in imperatives such as "Germany must never again become a source of militarized conflict in Europe and, therefore, shall support European integration" or "The United States is 'second to none' and, thus, should not enter into binding commitments that severely constrain its sovereignty."

3.2. Influences Shaping Foreign Policy

Theories of foreign policy derived from International Relations not only disagree on how to conceive of actors and their basic motivations but they study the foreign policy of states from different angles (Hollis and Smith 1990). On the one hand, there are "top-down approaches" which, metaphorically speaking, view the behavior of states "from above," that is, from the perspective of the international system. Key to the behavior of states, according to these theories, are the incentives, constraints, or standards of behavior that arise in the international arena and, thus, are systemic in origin. Neorealism adopts this systemic point of view. In particular, actors are interested in their relative power position in the international domain and the polarity of that system. For example, India cares for its own economic and social development, but, for reasons of security, it is bound also to take an interest in how China's or even Pakistan's capabilities grow or shrink relative to its own.

On the other hand, there are "bottom-up approaches," that is, theories which, again metaphorically speaking, seek to explain the foreign policy of states "from below" with a focus on what is happening in a country. Such theories assume that the foreign policy of states is primarily determined by the confluence of domestic factors. In this sense, utilitarian liberalism is pitched at the subsystemic level. For example, an armament race involving two countries may at first sight appear to reflect their governments' mutual distrust and uncertainty – the mechanism that neorealists call the "security dilemma." Closer inspection may reveal, however, that in one or both countries there are winning coalitions (sometimes referred to as "military-industrial complex") whose members benefit from increased defense spending and who, due to the resources they control (money, media, etc.), are in a position to exert strong influence on the government's defense policy steering it towards higher military expenditures largely irrespective of what other states do.

Constructivists, in contrast, consider that both international and domestic circumstances, i.e. the norms and role-expectations prevailing at these levels, affect what states do in the foreign policy arena. Including both foci can create a difficulty for them when the international and the domestic value-based expectations of what is appropriate behavior are at odds with one another. To illustrate: Germany's NATO allies unequivocally expected Germany after unification and the end of the Cold War, for reasons of alliance solidarity, to participate in NATO "out-of-area" missions such

as the Gulf War in 1991. At the same time, the German federal government was confronted with very strong and principled domestic opposition against such action. Which set of factors takes precedence in determining what German foreign policy will result? Are international or domestic expectations more determinative of what is likely to happen?

Table 1 summarizes key features of the three theories under consideration, as they will be presented and discussed in greater detail below.

Table 1: Key Features of IR-Derived Theories of Foreign Policy

IR-source of Theory	Actor's Motivation	Independent Variable	Components of Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
Neorealism	goal-oriented	relative position of power in the international system	power resources and polarity of the international system	power politics: autonomy and/or influence-seeking policy
Utilitarian Liberalism	goal-oriented	dominant societal interests	structure of pertinent policy network	gains-seeking policy
Constructivism	role-oriented	international/ domestic social norms	commonality/ specificity of norm	norm-consistent policy

4. Rationalist Theories of Foreign Policy

4.1. Dependent Variables and "Actors' Goals"

Neorealism and utilitarian liberalism assume that actors are goal-seeking utility-maximizers. Both approaches, therefore, must account for the nature of the goals that actors pursue. Both neorealists and utilitarian liberals assume that their rational and self-interested actors, first and foremost, are concerned with securing their own survival. In each theory this fundamental goal is ascribed to a particular type of actor, however. As an international system driven approach, neorealism focuses on *states* (or *a union of states*) as the basic unit of analysis; that is, Brazil, China, the United States, and the European Union (as opposed to the Brazilian, Chinese, and U.S. governments or the European Commission) are examples of the actors in world affairs. As unitary

actors, according to neorealism, states seek to survive or, more precisely, direct their foreign policy behavior to insure their survival. Surviving, in this case, is about securing a state's territorial integrity and rightful claim to self-determination – in other words, insuring that the state continues to exist as an independent unit in the international system. In contrast, utilitarian liberalism, which focuses on the domestic factors that can shape foreign policy, views *societal actors* (organized private actors and actors in the political-administrative system) as the units to analyze and attributes to them a basic interest in survival. Survival, in this case, involves, *inter alia*, the protection of the goals of important interest groups and of political and bureaucratic actors in the country. In effect, the consequences for the foreign policy behavior and the motivation for survival as described by these two theories are quite different. Let us explore these differences in more detail.

4.1.1. Neorealism

Neorealists assume that states want to secure their survival in a competitive and potentially hostile international system. States as rational self-interested actors are constrained to make sure (to the extent possible) that no threat to their *security* emerges from such an international environment. Security is not their only goal, but it is the most fundamental one, given that the pursuit of other goals is dependent on their being able to achieve a sufficient degree of security. From a neorealist point of view, there can never be complete security for states in what is essentially an anarchical self-help international system; states must always strive to preserve or increase their security. For example, at one time in history a state may be "encircled by friends," which share its commitment to democracy and the rule of law and to which it has close and mutually beneficial economic and institutional ties. But this is not a guarantee against the possibility that one day economic conditions may worsen dramatically and durably, bringing to power governments with a nationalist and perhaps revisionist foreign policy agenda and unwilling to continue to bear what they refer to as "grossly disproportionate" burdens of cooperation, etc.. In other words, "friends" may turn into "rivals" and, if the worst comes to the worst, even into "enemies" – a possibility that, according to neorealism, states must and do take into account even in the most "harmonious" of times.

To further their security, states basically have two options. (1) They can try to protect and possibly increase their own *autonomy*, that is, their *de facto*, rather than formal, independence from other actors by curtailing the attempts of others to control them. States value their autonomy, because the lack of an effective arbitrator in an anarchical international system means that a state must ultimately rely on itself and its own resources in its conflicts with other states. In order to pursue self-help strategies successfully, however, states need to be in full control of their resources, i.e. they need to safeguard their autonomy. For example, joining a military alliance may help a state to reduce its defense expenditures. On the other hand, through its formal promise to

come to the aid of its allies if attacked, it pre-commits its resources to a cause, which, when it comes to the crunch, may turn out not it be its own. (2) States can attempt to gain influence over other states, either directly (and bilaterally) or indirectly through alliances or international and supranational organizations in which they play a dominant role (e.g., *hegemon* or *veto player*) or which, at least, provide them with *voice opportunities* (Grieco 1995). In other words: greater security can be achieved not only by maximizing control over one's own resources but by getting a say in how others use theirs. Sometimes such a strategy is pursued by intentionally creating relationships of asymmetrical interdependence, for example, when an economically strong state develops and maintains a set of bilateral relationships with lesser states from which the latter benefit disproportionately. This gives the state with the large and more developed economy political leverage vis-à-vis its partners by virtue of the credible threat to freeze or even cut down economic ties with them should their foreign policies continue to be "insensitive" to its "legitimate" interests. Another variant of this strategy works through international institutions whose formal or informal rules and procedures give the state in question a disproportionate influence on the institution's agenda and policy – where "disproportionate influence" can either mean 'more influence than other members of the institution' or 'more influence on political outcomes than the state would have were there no such institution in the first place.'

From the point of view of neorealism, therefore, maximizing autonomy and influence are the most immediate foreign policy goals. Consequently, states in their foreign policy engage in both autonomy-seeking and influence-seeking behavior, which, in turn, are variants of *power politics*. There are situations, however, in which the goals of maximizing autonomy and influence are in conflict with one another such that a substantial increase in influence upon other states can only be achieved at the price of a significant loss of autonomy (or vice versa). For example, in multilateral settings such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), enhancing one's influence over others may require sacrifices in one's autonomy. For one thing, a state attempting to persuade other members to change their trade policies to its favor is likely to be unsuccessful unless it offers concessions of its own. For another, new rules will be binding not only on others but on itself, too. Our example of the state considering joining a military alliance is also a case in point. The very rules (of solidarity) that will reduce its capacity to autonomously decide how it will use its military capabilities in a crisis provide this state with some measure of influence on the choices of others – an influence that may well turn out vital in a situation in which it becomes the target of an aggression or even at an earlier stage, i.e. when another state weighs the benefits and risks of attacking it.

How do neorealists expect states to decide when confronting this type of dilemma? Inspecting the literature reveals that, at this point in time, neorealists disagree among

themselves in a systematic fashion. Indeed, there are currently two variants of neorealist foreign policy theory coming down on different sides on this issue.

The *standard version of neorealism* (Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2001) solves the dilemma by assuming that states always give priority to securing their independence or autonomy because they make foreign policy choices on the basis of worst-case scenarios. According to standard neorealism, the very fact that there are more powerful states or more powerful (actual or potential) alliances "out there" induces in states a constant fear for their security. Even when a state's security is not currently threatened and a military conflict does not seem to be imminent, a state must reckon with the possibility (however remote it may be) that "the worst comes to the worst." The best way for a state to prepare for this possibility is to safeguard or increase its autonomy. Influence as, for example, that derived from voting rights in international organizations is of little use when a conflict escalates into a confrontation involving the threat or use of military force; more powerful states may simply decide to ignore these rights or, more likely, to render them valueless by circumventing the organization. Consider how the U.S. and its allies failed to get authorization from the United Nations Security Council when NATO decided to intervene militarily in the former Yugoslavia during the Kosovo crisis in 1999 thus preventing Russia and China from having any decisive say in what happened. Whenever there is a trade-off between autonomy and influence, states will decide in favor of maintaining their independence. They will not accept losses in autonomy in exchange for higher levels of influence.

In contrast, *modified neorealism* assumes that states do not invariably base their decisions on worst-case scenarios (Brooks 1997; see also Snyder 1996; Schweller and Priess 1997). Rather, states take into account the probability (as opposed to the mere possibility) of threats to their security. They are aware that this probability, and hence their insecurity, varies due to a variuety of factors such as technology, economy, and geography. When the probability of a threat to a state's security is low, it may well be rational for that state to trade autonomy for influence – to be willing to give up part of its capacity for independent action if this is a prerequisite for gaining a significantly greater degree of influence upon the behavior of other states or upon the decisions, programs, or operational activities of alliances or international and supranational organizations. For example, proponents of standard neorealism would be hard pressed to explain why many states, though having the technical capacities to produce nuclear weapons, have renounced the option to acquire such weaponry or why a state such as Ukraine has given up voluntarily a nuclear arsenal that it already possessed. Here modified neorealists could point out that, in the absence of high security pressures, such choices are consistent with power politics as they help to preserve and strengthen institutions (here: the nuclear non-proliferation regime) through which the states in question are able to influence the security policies of others to their favor (Brooks

1997:465-466).

To sum up, both versions of neorealism agree that states engage in *power politics* as a means of securing their survival. In so doing, they practice both autonomy-seeking and influence-seeking policies. The only case in which the two versions of neorealism arrive at different predictions is when there are: (1) no significant present threats to the security of that state and (2) the gains in influence that could be reaped as a result of yielding a small or moderate degree of autonomy are sizeable. In such a case, *standard neorealism* still predicts that the state will not compromise its autonomy even if that means forgoing substantial gains in influence, whereas *modified neorealism* expects that the state will trade part of its autonomy for an improved opportunity to exert influence on other states' behavior.[8]

4.1.2. Utilitarian Liberalism

Neorealism's basic assumption is that the pressures on states emanating from the structure of their international environment (viz., anarchy, distribution of power) are strong enough to elicit similar behavior from states with similar position in the international system. Utilitarian liberalism, while not denying that states are constrained by the international system, argues that the sources of foreign policy lie primarily in the domestic environment of states. More specifically, utilitarian liberalism argues that a state's foreign policy goals are determined by the interests of dominant societal actors; in other words, a state will pursue that policy which best serves the interests of these actors (Moravcsik 2002, 1997).

Utilitarian liberalism agrees with neorealism that actors' desire to survive is a key category in theoretical foreign policy analysis. However, this theory attributes such a desire to a different type of actor than does neorealism, substituting, in effect, societal actors for states. As noted before, societal actors are a heterogeneous class of decision-making and decision-influencing "units," encompassing both actors belonging to the "private sector" and actors in the "political-administrative system." Private actors are companies such as DaimlerChrysler or AOL Time Warner, economic pressure groups such as trade unions or employers' associations, and political advocacy groups such as Human Rights Watch, Greenpeace or, occasionally, religious communities; similarly, actors in the "political-administrative system" break down into politicians (who often come to power through elections) and administrators and bureaucracies entrusted with certain tasks, e.g., in the making and executing of laws and regulations.

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[8] The jury is still out on the question of which of the two variants of neorealism does a better job in explaining the foreign policy behavior of states, i.e. whether the loss of parsimony that modified neorealism accepts by adding further variables (accounting for the probability of violent conflict) is offset by gains in predictive power. Case study based research strongly suggests, however, that adding some complexity may have indeed been worthwhile and that modified neorealism may enjoy significant advantages over standard neorealism with respect to explanatory leverage (Brooks 1997:463-469; Rittberger and Wagner 2001).

Shifting the focus from states to societal actors as the subjects of interest involves a modification in the meaning of "survival" and "security." The quest for survival on the part of societal actors is not confined to securing one's physical existence but, indeed, centers on preserving or improving one's social status. "Survival" in this context, therefore, really means "survival as X (e.g., as a highly competitive firm on the world market, as the head of government, etc.)." In general, societal actors can secure their survival in two (mutually non-exclusive) ways: (1) they can act to safeguard or increase their income and assets, or (2) they can take steps to protect or expand their competencies (making them ever more indispensable). Thus, according to utilitarian liberalism, societal actors strive for "plenty" and "power." Which of the two goals an actor gives priority to is contingent on that actor's function in society. Bureaucratic and political actors are primarily concerned with their competencies and only secondarily with income, in particular control over budgetary resources; in contrast, private actors such as firms and interest as well as advocacy groups seek to maximize their income and, more specifically, attempt to increase their collective income by means of the growth in sales, donations or members' contributions that comes with achieving the (material or immaterial) goals of the organization. For example, through its various, sometimes high-profile activities Greenpeace seeks to attract and keep up the financial support by both members and sympathetic outsiders that it needs in order to be able to continue these very activities.[9]

Thus, at a more general level, *gains-seeking* is the primary motivation common to all societal actors. Gains are either material (income, assets) or immaterial (competencies). Since utilitarian liberalism claims that the goals which are pursued by the most assertive societal actors translate into the goals of the state in its dealings with other states and societies, the nature of foreign policy, according to this theory, is appropriately conceived of as policy that is directed toward *seeking gains* rather than the *power politics* of neorealism.

4.2. Independent Variables

In the preceding section, the dependent variables studied by our two rationalist theories of foreign policy were derived from the basic assumptions these theories make about the goals of actors. Now, we turn to how these theories explain the variation in the foreign policy behavior of states. What are their independent

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[9] Aren't we putting the cart before the horse when we attribute to such organizations a basic interest in increasing their financial means rather than, e.g., saving the planet? And aren't we blurring the distinction between business firms and non-profit organizations this way? The perspective adopted here may indeed appear, at first sight, a cynical one. However, the point is not to denounce the motives of such groups as Amnesty International or Friends of the Earth but to acknowledge that sufficiently abundant and possibly growing funds are a necessary immediate goal even of such public interest groups or advocacy coalitions if they wish to be able to work successfully for their pro-social goals – a fact that is exploited here to keep the complexity of the theory at bay.

variables? What factors do the theories propose shape states' foreign policy activities?

4.2.1. Neorealism

Even though neorealists postulate that all states pursue the same goals of maximizing their autonomy and influence, these theorists believe that states behave differently because they differ in the extent to which they are able to translate these goals into action. "Weak" states are hardly in a position to evade the influence exerted upon them by the international environment or to exert much influence on that environment themselves. In contrast, "strong" states have the capability to successfully defend or even increase their autonomy or their influence upon others. Consequently, such states are more likely to display effective autonomy- or influence-seeking behavior. To put it differently: the more powerful a state, the more likely it is to engage in power politics. Hence, the *relative power position* of a state is the factor neorealists posit as the most critical in accounting for a state's foreign policy; it is the independent variable in neorealism. A state's relative power position in an international system is a function of both its share in the overall sum of power resources (capabilities) in that system and the polarity (uni-, bi-, or multipolarity) of the system.

Power is defined here as *control over resources* and is based, above all, on the availability of the economic and military capabilities that allow a state to assert its interests in dealing with other states. Capabilities are seen as highly fungible, meaning that power is a general potential which can be used in disparate areas of foreign policy. Although the concept of power is a central analytical category to neorealists, they have yet to indicate satisfactorily what the significant capabilities for the pursuit of power politics are and how such capabilities are to be measured. While we cannot fall back on a generally accepted canon of capabilities, it is undisputed among neorealists that a state's economic and military strength are core components of its power. To measure economic strength, neorealists evaluate a country's GDP, export volume, and currency's share in world reserves, while military spending, the size of the armed forces, and the possession of nuclear weapons are taken as indicators of military strength. Other capabilities that are at times taken into account are population size and territory. As "power" is a relative concept, any measurement of a state's power must consider the relative size of its capabilities in comparison with those of other relevant states. To illustrate the notion of "relative power position," let us take a look at two large states in Europe and compare the capabilities of France with those of the United Kingdom. Relative to each other these two countries are more or less on par with one another: both are nuclear powers, their population size is roughly equal, and the difference in their GDP is small. However, relative to the U.S., their overall power position is considerably weaker. According to neorealism, these relationships translate into France and the UK enjoying similar latitudes in their foreign policies but having considerably less room for maneuver internationally than the United States.

Neorealists also regard the polarity of the current international system as a decisive determinant of the durability and war-proneness of the system. Polarity is defined by the number of great powers or, if there are any, "superpowers" in the system. Above all, neorealists distinguish between bipolar and non-bipolar (multipolar and unipolar) systems. The polarity of the international system influences a state's relative power position (and hence its ability to engage in power politics) because the number of major powers determines the freedom of maneuver of states in the system and how easy it is for states to employ their capabilities. In a bipolar system, even major powers are confronted with the need to align themselves with one of the two "superpowers" in order to maximize their chances of survival, thus facing restrictions on employing their capabilities. When a bipolar system is being transformed, the power positions of the former superpowers are posited to depend on whether there is a shift toward multipolarity or unipolarity. In the case of multipolarity, the power positions of former superpowers decline approaching that of other major powers whereas, in the case of unipolarity, the sole remaining superpower's relative position in the system becomes the standard to which others are compared while the position of its erstwhile competitor is reduced to that of a "normal" major power. The transformation of a bipolar system into a non-bipolar one will invariably improve major states' relative power positions, even if their shares in the capabilities available in the system have not increased. Taking the structural condition of the international system after the Cold War as an example, neorealists infer that there has been, at least termporarily, a movement toward unipolarity resulting in increased strategic leeway for the major powers in the system: these states can choose to *balance* – attempt to form a counter-alliance against the sole remaining superpower, the U.S.; to remain *unaligned* – not to tie themselves firmly to other states; or even to *bandwagon* – attach themselves to the U.S. –, because balancing would seem futile or even counter-productive, and hence to pick an option which, according to neorealists, would be anathema to them under most other circumstances (Waltz 1979).[10]

4.2.2. Utilitarian Liberalism

The core idea of utilitarian liberalism is that the foreign policy preferences of states – and, as a consequence, their behavior vis-à-vis other states – do not originate in the state's international environment, but reflect instead the interests of the private actors who are in a position to impose their goals on the agents representing the state in the international arena or those of the most assertive political and bureaucratic actors in instances when these enjoy sufficient autonomy from organized private actors. The

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[10] Once bandwagoning has come to be seen by major powers as more rational than balancing, they may even engage in what might be called "competitive bandwagoning," i.e. try to create and nourish "special relationships" with the superpower in pursuit of extra benefits such as enhanced status and greater influence. Britain's foreign and security policy toward the U.S., on the one hand, and toward the European Union, on the other, may be a case in point.

critical factor, then, for utilitarian liberalism in explaining a state's foreign policy – this theory's independent variable – focuses on the country's *dominant societal interests*. These interests are always specific to the issue area or problem facing the country. They emerge from policy networks composed of actors who have a stake in the issues at hand. Policy networks involve organized private and political-administrative actors bound together in an interdependent and relatively stable relationship. Members of the network exchange information, consult with one another, offer or threaten to withdraw political support, allocate public tasks, and enter into bargaining processes with respect to the formulation and implementation of policy (Freund and Rittberger 2001:74-75). Since there will be different policy networks for different kinds of problems, utilitarian liberalism cannot be as parsimonious a theory as neorealism. Nevertheless, it aspires to provide an explanatory model that, in principle, is capable of predicting the foreign policy goals a state will pursue with regard to a given issue. This model seeks to capture the essence of the process of interest intermediation from society to the state. As any model in social science, it employs simplifications and assumptions.

The explanatory model that utilitarian liberalism proposes is built from the following component parts: (1) an account of the basic interests of the societal actors most directly involved in dealing with particular issues of political relevance to the country, (2) an account of the composition and the structure of foreign policy networks that form around particular issues, and (3) an account of the factors which determine which actor is likely to dominate a given policy network and thus whose basic interests are likely to be reflected in the state's foreign policy with regard to that specific issue. Let us look at each of these components more closely.

As to the first component, we have already seen that each domestic societal actor enmeshed in a policy network is motivated by a basic interest in survival and that the means of choice to secure one's survival – i.e. survival as an organization or as an occupant of a certain role or office – are "power" (policy-making competencies) and "plenty" (financial income and assets). While political and bureaucratic actors strive most of all to retain or extend their policy-making competencies, i.e. to remain in office and to claim additional tasks, responsibilities or resources, organized private actors such as companies or unions are primarily concerned with securing and increasing their income and wealth and that of their members. For example, presidents and prime ministers want to be re-elected; national administrators, fearful of gradually becoming side-lined, are reluctant to give up competencies, for instance, in favor of a supranational organ such as the EU's European Commission; companies seek to maintain and improve their competitiveness on global markets and expect their governments to support them in this endeavor; unions expect governments to pursue macroeconomic policies with a view to enhancing employment opportunities since they are concerned about a decline in membership and the concomitant losses of

contributions.

These basic interests are still too coarse to sustain explanations of political behavior both within and without policy networks. Utilitarian liberal theory therefore proceeds to specify actor-specific "foreign policy preferences," which derive from the basic interests of the respective type of actor. These foreign policy preferences can be expressed most conveniently in the form of maxims or self-directed imperatives. For example, political actors such as members of government follow the maxim: "Support foreign policies that satisfy expectations of voters by improving the performance of the economy, by meeting partisan objectives, and by maintaining intra-governmental cohesion." This is because they know that voters evaluate the success of the government predominantly in economic terms and dislike intra-governmental conflict which they believe undercuts the effectiveness and efficiency of policy (Freund and Rittberger 2001:81-84). Administrative actors, economic pressure-groups, and political advocacy groups all share the maxim: "Fulfill the organizational purpose," although the precise content of this rule of course varies with the type of actor. For example, economic pressure groups fulfill their purpose by increasing their members' opportunities to make profit or securing higher wages for them. Policy advocacy groups (environmental activists, human rights organizations, etc.) have different mandates and so – often, but not always – seek different foreign policies in order to satisfy their members and supporters, e.g., they try to persuade their government to assume a leadership role in the fight against world poverty or climate change or to commit itself to put pressure on human rights violators.

Both the priorities set by these societal actors and the nature and hierarchy of their more specific foreign policy preferences are grounded in their dependencies on particular types of resources (in the broadest sense). In order to secure their (social) survival, societal actors need certain resources, and these resources, in turn, are controlled by other societal actors in their environment. For example, heads of government in many democracies depend for their survival in office on votes delivered by various constituencies or voting blocs. According to utilitarian liberalism, this resource dependency has important consequences: it gives societal actors in policy networks strong incentives to advocate policies that are consistent with the expectations of those actors who control the resources that are of critical importance to them.

We now turn to the second and third components of the utilitarian liberal explanatory model, i.e. utilitarian liberalism's general arguments about how policy networks are set up and who is most likely to get its way in such a network and hence to determine the basic direction of foreign policy with regard to the issue concerned. Two concepts are at the core of these arguments: (1) the level of mobilization of societal actors and (2) the degree of autonomy of political and bureaucratic actors from private actors.

The level of *mobilization* helps to determine with regard to the foreign policy issue at hand who will be part of the relevant policy network and also who among the political and bureaucratic actors involved and who among the private actors within the network will be most influential or "assertive" on the particular problem. Only actors with some degree of mobilization will be part of the network, and the kind and intensity of mobilization account for the degree of "assertiveness" an actor exhibits in the network. Finally, whether the most assertive political and bureaucratic actor's desires or instead the most assertive private network member's interests will eventually prove dominant in shaping the state's foreign policy on this issue turns upon the degree of *autonomy* that the actors in the public sector enjoy from the more highly mobilized private actor(s) within a specific policy network. Let us explain what each of these concepts refers to and how they work together to produce utilitarian liberalism's causal argument.

Mobilization of a particular societal actor roughly corresponds to its potential power and the intensity of its preferences with regard to the issue at hand. Thus, in the case of actors from the private sector (companies, trade associations and unions, political advocacy groups), mobilization is a function of factors such as the number of individuals it represents or its capacity to generate policy-relevant technical or social information and expertise. Utilitarian liberals call this type of mobilization "structural mobilization," since it indicates the capacity an actor has for exerting influence. Mobilization also appears to be high when the actor's (or its constituency's) interests are strongly affected by the issue under consideration – what is considered "situative mobilization." For example, when under the WTO-based international trade regime negotiations get under way with a view to cutting down subsidies for the agricultural sector, farmers and their associations' basic interests will be strongly affected by these negotiations and hence they will display a high situative mobilization. Utilitarian liberalism predicts that an issue-specific policy network is formed by those public and private sector actors who have at least some minimum level of both structural and situative mobilization. To keep things manageable, proponents of this theory, then, focus on those actors who are the most assertive ones within the two sectors, proceeding to ask which of these is likely to impose its preferences on the policy network as a whole and, hence, on the state with respect to this foreign policy issue.

It is postulated that the winner of this "end game" will be the most assertive public sector actor(s) if its (their) dependence on the cooperation of the most assertive private sector actor(s) is low; conversely, the latter will tend to call the shots if the most assertive public sector actor(s), in order to fulfill its (their) organizational purpose, is (are) highly dependent on accessing the private sector actors' resources. In other words, only if the most assertive political-administrative actors are capable of relatively autonomous choice their preferences will prevail. Note that this procedure does not necessarily result in a single dominant societal interest. For example, there

may be (symmetrical) interdependence rather than a one-sided dependence between the key public and private sector actors in the policy network. In such situations, utilitarian liberalism must remain agnostic with regard to the outcome, unless the foreign policy preferences of the dominant public and private actors happen to converge.

To sum up, according to utilitarian liberalism, the foreign policies of states are shaped by the interests of the dominant societal actors. The structure of the pertinent foreign policy network reveals which actors are dominant in the respective issue area. Membership in, and dominance of, a foreign policy network is determined, first, by the extent to which public and private sector actors are structurally and situatively mobilized and, second, by the extent to which public sector actors are dependent on the resources the actors from the private sector can provide them with. Once the dominant actors are known, a state's foreign policy preferences in the situation can be derived from their basic interests in either "power" or "plenty." These domestically constituted foreign policy preferences account for the external behavior of the state in a particular situation.[11]

5. Constructivist Theory of Foreign Policy

5.1. Dependent Variable and "Standards of Behavior"

As suggested in the beginning of this chapter, constructivist foreign policy theory has recourse to an actor model that is markedly different from the one employed by rationalist theories (neorealism and utilitarian liberalism). *Homo sociologicus* does not act to secure a set of selfish goals; rather, he seeks to conform to the intersubjectively shared, value-based expectations of appropriate behavior emanating from his social environment. Hence, a theory of foreign policy which builds upon this actor model has to identify the standards of behavior that a state recognizes as binding.

From a constructivist point of view, actors follow social norms they have internalized in the course of their socialization into relevant social systems. These systems may be domestic or international. Social norms are distinguished from other ideational variables such as beliefs, world views, identity, and culture by virtue of three characteristics. (1) Norms have prescriptive status, i.e. they orientate actors' behavior immediately and can be translated easily into imperatives for action ("Do this!" "Don't do that!"). Norms are value-based involving "issues of justice and rights of a moral or ethical character" (Goertz and Diehl 1992:638-639) and exert a "compliance pull" on actors (Franck 1990; Hurrell 1993). By contrast, ideas or beliefs may but need not

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[11] For reasons of space, the utilitarian liberal theory of foreign policy has been somewhat simplified in here. For a more complete and detailed description consult Freund and Rittberger (2001).

involve a prescriptive and categorical semantic component: i.e. many are either descriptive (telling us what is the case) or causal (telling us what it is necessary to do to get some desired result, but not telling us whether this result is desirable) in nature (Finnemore 1996:22-23; Florini 1996:164). (2) Norms are intersubjectively shared and, thus, not reducible to individual beliefs: i.e. they are to be distinguished from personal ideals, values, or aspirations, and they must not be equated with mere collections of individual beliefs about what people should do in particular kinds of situations even if these beliefs happen to converge; norms represent mutual expectations of appropriate behavior shared by a group of people (Klotz 1995:32; Finnemore 1996:22). (3) Norms possess "counterfactual validity," i.e. norms are not simple predictions, or summary descriptions, of collective behavior; rather, a given norm may be said to exist even as many of those whose actions it is supposed to direct often violate it in practice – as long as they stop short of rejecting the norm in question as invalid or obsolete, perceive the need to offer justifications or produce excuses for their deviant behavior, etc..

The effect of social norms on a state's foreign policy is attributed to the *socialization* processes which its foreign policy decision makers undergo. Since these agents are located at the interface of two social systems – international society and their respective domestic society –, they are simultaneously involved in two analytically distinct socialization processes. By virtue of their *transnational socialization*, foreign policymakers internalize value-based expectations that are shared among states and originate from states, intergovernmental institutions, or even international non-governmental organizations operating as "norm entrepreneurs" (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). International norms have a socializing effect on states' agents because the latter are concerned with maintaining a reputation not just as reliable allies or partners in specific instances of institutionalized cooperation (e.g., international regimes) but as members of international society in "good standing" (McElroy 1992:46-53; Chayes and Chayes 1993:177; Mercer 1996).

Then there is the socialization that occurs domestically. Constructivism posits that it is through processes of *societal socialization* rather than by means of public pressure that domestic social norms shape a state's foreign policymakers' behavior. There are three ways, from a constructivist point of view, that societal expectations about what is appropriate behavior impact on the activities of foreign policymakers. (1) As citizens of a country, they internalize certain social and cultural norms; (2) as politicians having run through national political careers, they internalize specific societal expectations concerning what is appropriate political behavior; and (3) in their desire to maintain legitimacy as the duly selected representatives of their countries in the international environment, they behave in ways consistent with relevant societal norms.

Within the international arena, there are both general norms, which generate identical value-based expectations for all states, and special norms, which apply to some states (e.g., the members of a regional international organization) but not to others. And there are norms which define different social roles for states, thus producing varied expectations for how these countries will act (e.g., for donor countries, on the one hand, and recipient countries, on the other, around issues of development). At the same time, there are also varying kinds of norms regarding a state's foreign policy that originate in its domestic society. Among these norms, we can distinguish two groups: one consists of norms which directly apply to foreign policy, the other comprises norms which, although they regulate the internal relations of a state, affect its foreign policy and, consequently, have secondary effects that can be explained with reference to the methodological construct of the "domestic analogy." An example illustrating this domestic analogy, i.e. the transfer of domestic norms to foreign policy, is from U.S. foreign economic policy. As Anne-Marie Burley (1993) has argued, U.S. foreign policy in the wake of the Second World War was concerned with transferring the domestic practices of the New Deal to the international level. This was because U.S. policymakers had realized that the basic New Deal norm that the government should safeguard citizens' economic and social welfare by correcting market failure was not only valid at home, but had immediate implications for the country's world order policy: relying on economic openness and increased interdependence it sought to establish and work through international regimes which allowed governments to reconcile trade-stimulated growth and the provision of commensurate international liquidity based on stable exchange rates with the protection of basic social goals and expectations (including reasonable protection against external shocks) (see also Ruggie 1983).

To summarize, in both the international arena and domestic society, there are a wealth of intersubjectively shared, value-based expectations of appropriate behavior that states seek to live up to in their foreign relations. These are the standards of behavior which, according to constructivism, states feel bound to adhere to in their foreign policy. Constructivism, thus, comes up with a conceptualization of foreign policy behavior which rivals both neorealism's notion of *power politics* and utilitarian liberalism's postulate of *gains-seeking policy*. This alternative understanding of the essence of foreign policy henceforth will be referred to as *norm-consistent policy.*

5.2. Independent Variables
This leaves us with the question of how constructivists account for variation in states' foreign policy behavior, that is, with identifying what factor or factors they believe shape what countries do in the international arena – their independent variable(s). Given what we have said so far the answer is straightforward: differences in the behavior of states are put down to differences in the intersubjectively shared, value-based expectations of appropriate behavior they confront as a result of pertinent

international and domestic norms.

Historically, an important point of departure for constructivist arguments about the impact of norms on state behavior has been the discovery that the international (and domestic) practices of states are characterized by a considerable degree of isomorphism across a wide range of issue areas, including but not limited to the field of security (McNeely 1995:2-3, 20; Finnemore 1996:22). Constructivists have attributed this high degree of similarity in the behavior of states to the impact of international norms rather than to the exigencies of the security dilemma in an anarchical international system. Obviously, however, this isomorphism is a limited one; states behave differently in some ways. Constructivists have three explanations for this fact: First, all international norms are not global in reach. Some emerge in, and are restricted in their validity to, particular regional contexts, producing cross-regional variation in state behavior. For example, the norm that a state's system of rule has to be democratic and respectful of human rights and due process of law is one that is valid in Europe (remember EU member states' sanctions against Austria when a right-wing party became part of the governing coalition) but not (yet) globally. Second, some international norms differentiate among their addressees as we have already noted. Finally, and perhaps most important, variation in states' behavior derives from varying domestic social norms.

How do we know which norms exist in a given social context? Constructivists have devised procedures to identify the kinds of behavior that actors regard as appropriate and obligatory in a given (section of) society. Thus, norms in the international domain can be garnered from international law, the legal acts of international organizations, and the final acts of international conferences. Societal norms may be derived from the constitutional and legal order of the society under study, from relevant party programs and election platforms, and from parliamentary debates as well as from survey data.

Whether or not a given social norm can be expected, from a constructivist point of view, to guide the behavior of a state in a given situation depends on its strength. Only norms which are sufficiently strong will affect a state's policy in the first place. Constructivists are well-aware that norm strength needs to be ascertained *ex ante* in order to avoid the risk of "explaining" foreign policy *ex post* by choosing that expectation of appropriate behavior from among several potentially relevant expectations which comes closest to the observed behavior (Legro 1997:33). The strength of a norm is a function of two elements. It is contingent on (1) the extent to which the norm is widely shared by the actors in the relevant social system ("degree of commonality") – the more generally accepted the norm, the better it serves as a predictor of behavior; and on (2) how precisely the norm defines permissible (or inadmissible) behavior ("degree of specificity") – the less clear it is to the actors what

they are expected to do or not to do, the more difficult it is for them to conform to the norm and presumably also the less seriously they take it.

Commonality presupposes a "critical mass" within a social system of actors who share a particular set of values in order to reach the "tipping point" when social norms can be assumed to have an impact on collective behavior (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998:901). What constitutes such a critical mass is in dispute. In a recent study on German foreign policy it has been argued that, in order to avoid the risk of facile accounts of foreign policy, no less than the vast majority of actors in the pertinent social system should share the expectation of appropriate behavior in question for the assumption of the norm exhibiting sufficient communality to be justified (Boekle et al. 2001:109). For example, at the international level, the general prohibition of the use and the threat of force (as laid down in art. 2, para. 4 of the United Nations charter) is a norm that meets this criterion, whereas, e.g., the norm that states must intervene forcibly into a state that commits very serious human rights violations against its citizens arguably falls short of this for the time being. As to the *specificity* of a social norm, a reasonable criterion appears to be that, from among several behavioral options available to foreign policymakers, at least one option must be ruled out by the norm as clearly inappropriate. If virtually every conceivable or minimally defensible course of action could be regarded as consistent with the norm, the norm in question is surely too weak to be assumed to have a significant impact on foreign policy behavior. Norms which prescribe that actors "make efforts" to achieve or approach a commonly accepted goal (e.g. in the area of environmental protection), without setting any time frames or offering other criteria by which to judge "effort," may be a case in point (Boekle et al. 2001:109-110).

Predicting the foreign policy of a state is straightforward whenever the relevant international and societal norms produce a clear and convergent expectation of appropriate behavior with respect to the state for a particular situation. Here, constructivist accounts of foreign policy can be said to be particularly powerful. For example, both international and domestic norms enjoined Germany to keep its armed forces integrated in NATO's military force structure after the end of the Cold War and unification – which it did (even though at least one version of neorealism would have led us to expect otherwise) (Baumann 2001:146-159). However, an expectation of appropriate behavior does not need to be present simultaneously at both the international and domestic levels for the expectation to guide foreign policymakers. If there is a pertinent social norm with sufficient commonality and specificity on only one of the two levels, the degree of its internalization by foreign policymakers (and, thus, its effect on their behavior) may allow a clear prediction of behavior. For example, at the international (here: the European) level there is no norm guiding Germany with respect to the issue of its net contributions to the EU budget, whereas there is one on the societal level, requiring that Germany increase its efforts to achieve

a reduction of its net payments – which it did (although some of the associated behavior it displayed in this context is not well explained by constructivism) (Wagner 2001:209-220). Making a prediction becomes problematic for constructivists, however, when there are international and domestic norms of sufficient commonality and specificity which place contradictory norm-based demands on the state concerned. Remember the case already mentioned of the German government being torn in the early 1990s by conflicting expectations from its international partners and its domestic society with respect to Germany's participation in "out-of-area" military operations. In such cases, there is arguably no behavioral option open to the state which it can select without, in turn, violating at least one pertinent social norm. As constructivism assumes that states avoid inappropriate behavior, the theory is incapable of generating predictions regarding the foreign policy of states in such a situation. Table 2 summarizes this discussion.

Table 2: Predictive Power of Constructivist Theory

international level	societal level	norms' relationship	predictive power
norm present	norm present	convergent	very high
norm present	norm absent	-	high
norm absent	norm present	-	high
norm present	norm present	contradictory	nil
norm absent	norm absent	-	nil

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have looked at theories of foreign policy derived from three competing "schools of thought" or "paradigms" in current International Relations, viz. neorealism, utilitarian liberalism, and constructivism. Both neorealist and utilitarian liberal theories of foreign policy work from the assumption of rational actors making decisions based on the self-interested calculation of benefits and costs of available behavioral options. They differ sharply, however, with respect to the question of who are to be regarded as the fundamental actors of international relations and, by implication, of foreign policy making: for neorealism, foreign policy is the exclusive domain of black-boxed, unitarily acting states; utilitarian liberalism, by contrast, envisions states not as actors in the first place but as institutions which domestic societal actors (including both organized private actors and politicians and bureaucrats) use to further their interests at home and abroad. Constructivism breaks with the rationalist consensus shared by the other two theories, replacing *homo oeconomicus* with *homo sociologicus* and hence advocating, and building upon, an image of actors as norm-guided "role players" rather than "utility maximizers." In another respect, constructivist foreign policy occupies a middle ground between neorealist and utilitarian liberal theories, i.e. the level at which the most important sources of foreign policy behavior are located. By taking into account norms at both the domestic and international levels, constructivism comes down neither on the side of "top-down" theories (as neorealism) nor on the side of "bottom-up" theories (as utilitarian liberalism).

Each of the three theories of foreign policy frames its dependent variable in a characteristic way and specifies a key explanatory variable to account for the bulk of variation on that variable. Neorealism conceptualizes foreign policy as power politics and attributes the nature and intensity of power politics states engage in at a given point in time, above all, to their position in a global or regional hierarchy of power and, secondarily, to variable external security pressures (in the case of modified neorealism). Utilitarian liberalism analyzes foreign policy as variations on the theme of "gains-seeking" and accounts for these variations by delineating the basic interests and foreign policy preferences of relevant societal actors and employing a policy network approach to identify the societal actors whose preferences are most likely to be reflected in the foreign policy of the country. Finally, constructivism studies foreign policy under the perspective of its consistency with norms, supplying a procedure to establish both the prescriptive content and the strength of the domestic and international norms that guide a given state's foreign policy choices with respect to some issue. Together these three theories offer the student of foreign policy a reasonably rich menu to choose from when he or she wishes to approach his or her subject matter from a theoretical point of view and, in doing so, to keep in touch with broader theoretical developments in the study of international relations.

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