

Theories of explaining foreign policy



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Abstract:

The theoretical introductions represent the basic starting points for research in the field of foreign policy, as they provide a common path for writers and researchers in this field. For this reason, this article presents the theoretical foundations most relied upon by these researchers in analyzing the state's foreign policy.

The researcher seeks to provide an answer related to the content of psychological and systemic theories, as well as theories of alliance, defense and attack theories, which are related to understanding the foreign policy of the international actor. This includes arriving at the fact that any theory is limited in explaining foreign policy alone. Rather, this process requires the use of more than one theory, and the specificities of countries require the use of theories rather than others.

Key words: foreign policy; international system; decision-makers; theories; The state.

Introduction:

Foreign policy is generally related to the institutions and individuals involved in making it. It is also characterized by the characteristics of determinism, impermanence, and the state's constant striving to achieve its goals within the external environment. However, the margin of freedom available to the state in the international system is controlled by many determinants that control its actions, such as geography, population characteristics, economic and military components, etc. These determinants explain many of the foreign policy orientations of countries and help students of this subject understand the behaviors of the units of the international system.

Since the mid-twentieth century, many researchers have established a theoretical legacy in foreign policy analysis that no researcher can use in his research, including Richard Snyder, Joseph Frankel, and Kenneth Waltz. On the Arab level, we find Muhammad Al-Sayyid Salim, Dr. Hassan Nouri Al-Naimi, and Dr. Hamid Rabie. They presented many important theories that were linked to explaining the foreign policy of active states in the international system, and these theories still play their role in understanding the state's behavior as a major influence in the global environment.

Accordingly, we can ask the following question:

What is the content of theories explaining foreign policy? Which theories are most appropriate for this?

A-Definition of foreign policy

The state's external activity includes many dimensions, such as general trends, goals, international roles, decisions, strategies, and behaviors. This activity is described as foreign policy. However, there is no agreed upon definition of foreign policy among foreign policy researchers and writers.

Definitions of foreign policy can be divided into two types:

The first type of definition views foreign policy as the plan or program for future action or planning based on institutional bureaucratic work. The second type views foreign policy as a coherent, rational approach or action resulting from a certain perception of the external environment by the decision maker.

Within the first type, George Modelsky went on to define foreign policy as: “a system of activities that societies develop to change the behaviors of other countries and adapt their activities according to the international environment, and within this framework there are two types of activities: inputs and outputs” (bonjang, The study of Foreign Policy in International Relations., 2018. p82)

According to the aforementioned definition, foreign policy is: **“all political activities and behaviors resulting from a set of internal and external determinants, which the state practices on the external level by using various means with the intention of achieving certain goals”**.

From this definition we conclude two elements:

A- Activities: These are the various actions carried out by the state outside its territorial borders, whether political, economic, cultural, or military... by using various tools, whether diplomatic, military, propaganda, or economic... to achieve certain goals.

B- Objectives: They represent the essence of foreign policy and its ultimate goals. There are objectives related to basic values and interests related to its existence and continuity, and other less important medium- and long-term objectives.

Therefore, the common features of the foreign policy of countries can be summarized in the following points:

1- Foreign policy is considered inevitable for every country, as it cannot continue without a foreign policy, whether it is a “policy of isolation,” “policy of blocs,” or “policy of non-alignment.” States in the international environment interact in a compatible manner that includes mutual dependence between them. This is due to the fact that the state, no matter how powerful it is, represents a minority in the international system and cannot achieve its goals alone (سليم، 1998، ص10). This makes it driven to adopt a systematic foreign policy towards other countries.

2- Foreign policy does not know stability or stagnation. It has a dynamic and evolving nature, as the state interacts continuously within the international environment, receiving pressures and achieving goals and gains. (الدبار، 2019، ص7). Thus, it adapts according to the nature of the international system and the orientations of its allied and competing countries, which makes its foreign policy change according to those changes.

3- The goal of foreign policy is always to achieve the specified goals through the means available within the political scope of foreign policy making (لادمي، صص31-47، 2016). The goals represent the essence of the state's foreign policy and the reason for its existence, because the state's performance of its functions towards its territory, towards its people, and towards its bureaucratic apparatus requires cooperation with the external environment. This makes foreign policy the most effective and sustainable means of achieving goals.

B-Theories of explaining foreign policy

Since the late twentieth century, the process of theorizing in international relations has been dominated by discussions between realists and their critics. These discussions centered on the nature of the international system and its effects on international outcomes and returns, such as war, peace, cooperation, and alliances. These returns are mainly related to the basic international unit and its behavior towards the rest of the units and components of the international system, such as international organizations and global civil society organizations.

Realism made the state the unit of analysis as the only actor in international relations, relying on the experimental approach. Its assumptions can be summarized in the following points. (الديهي، 2014، ص ص12-21).

_Ethics is not the determinant of politics, and their argument for that is the incompatibility of political action with moral principles.

_Considering history as the laboratory for study, as political theory is a product of historical experiences and political practices.

_International behavior is constantly changing, but it is governed by constant factors represented by power and interest.

_International relations are often characterized by conflict because the interests between countries are not harmonious and even contradictory.

_The priority of political gain over moral principle, as the state cannot give up a political position in exchange for adherence to a certain moral principle.

_Power is the basic fact in international relations, and friendship is only the result of a temporary coincidence of interests.

_International conflict is justified by the lack of security, which pushes the state to double its power, as well as human nature, which tends to love control and domination, which pushes the state to conflict behavior.

_Realism is based on basic concepts, the first of which is power, which means the ability to influence others through threats, as well as the balance of power and the national interest.

Foreign policy is related to the state and its interactions outside its borders as a program of action and a rational, rational action belonging to a specific international actor. The theoretical explanations for these interactions examine their causes and the process of their creation according to the determinants controlling the state's behavior. These explanations are reflected in several theories:

1-Internal factors theory

This theory emphasizes the importance of internal factors in understanding foreign policy, such as ideology, economic policies, state characteristics such as geographical reality and population, and socio-economic structures. These factors determine how a state acts outside its borders, whether it is a state with a democratic system or a state with a totalitarian system (Gideon, 1998, p148).

This theory faced a fundamental problem represented by the difficulty of understanding the different and disparate actions of countries with the same internal

characteristics, as well as the similarity of the external actions of countries that differ in terms of their internal characteristics. Relying on a single level of interpretation does not lead to results that can be generalized.

2- Offensive theory

This theory is based on the perception that the international system consists of cohesive states that move according to the desire to achieve and provide security on an ongoing and permanent basis. This perception distinguishes between countries with a proactive offensive tendency to achieve their security, and countries with a defensive tendency that move according to the logic of reaction, as they are content with developing their military defensive capabilities and respond to the international system's interactions towards them in kind (Gideon, 1998, pp 144-157).

Advocates of the offensive theory believe that international chaos controls the offensive behavior of states. In light of the increasing use of nuclear technology, security becomes scarce and the state seeks to achieve it proactively by amplifying its gains. Countries begin their foreign policy defensively and then turn to attack due to international chaos. Here, the importance of internal structures, characteristics, and differences between countries declines, and foreign policy activities turn into a framework governed by force and the proactive defense of interests.

This theory according to Robert Jervis is based on two variables:

- * - Threat variable: The security threat is considered the greatest thing that the state faces, so it searches for security and mobilizes all its capabilities and efforts to secure its interests and avoid war. Its causes: war is preferred when invasion is easy and rejected when invasion is costly. On the external level, the state fears invasion and seeks confrontation. On the internal level, the state fears extremism and seeks to control its citizens (John, 2010, p5).

- *- The opportunity variable: Not all countries have the offensive tendency within the international system, but exploiting available opportunities has become a necessity for international interaction. The state moves to exploit opportunities when it is convinced of the feasibility of the goal expected to be achieved, and its proportionality to the expected cost and possible losses, and then ensures the effectiveness of its capabilities and the extent of its strength compared to its opponents, while being aware of that strength (John, 2010, p 6).

3- Defensive theory

Supporters of this theory believe that international chaos is not eternal and continuous, so the international system goes through periods of relaxation in which security is largely available. Countries also learn over time how to deal with security

problems and how to respond to security threats, which are rare. If threats occur, some countries confront them in a balanced manner by adopting a method of obstructing the opponent and dragging him into the futility of the conflict, so that the costs of the attack become greater than its gains (Gideon, 1998, p153).

This theory provides one exception to the use of force related to the desire of some states to intimidate and deter other states through military maneuvers or the purchase of weapons.

Foreign policy is crystallized through this vision of countries with a rational orientation, through keenness to preserve their internal capabilities instead of carrying out an ill-considered and irrational reaction to the international environment. However, this theory's reduction of the role of the international environment in influencing the foreign policy of countries does not make it Useful in analyzing the foreign policy of weak and underdeveloped countries.

4- Alliance Theory: by Keneth Waltz

The alliance between states is one of the historical legacy of the theory of realism, as it was linked before Christ to the ideas of the Indian philosopher Kautilya, who sought to search for ways and means to strengthen the state internally and externally by expanding its territory, or by destroying opponents, or by alliance with others. Kautilya's ideas found embodiment on the ground when the Maurya state was able to seize the entire northern Indian continent and was able to destroy the forces of Greek Macedonia that Alexander the Great had left in northern India (عدنان، ص168، 2010).

During the second half of the twentieth century, many American researchers put their ideas and theories at the service of American foreign policy, such as Keneth Waltz, who developed a theory of alliances based on a basic element that is the balance of threat.

This theory considers that the state faces many threats from neighboring countries, which prompts the state to establish friendships and relationships to maintain its security. This theory prevailed to change the course of the Cold War between the two poles at that time, as NATO was established in 1949 between the United States and its Western European allies, and then Warsaw was established in 1955 by the Soviet Union and the socialist countries in Europe, yugoslavia(John, 2010, p10).

Alliances in the Cold War period were based on ideological extension, as liberal ideology expressed the solidarity and alliance of countries that believed in freedom and valued individualism and the social contract between the ruler and the ruled. While

socialism, with its content based on equality and justice, represented the core of the alliance between the countries of the Eastern system led by the Soviet Union.

The United States of America was more interested in establishing alliances during the Cold War than the Soviet Union. While the Soviet Union worked to threaten the allies of the United States. Except for installing missiles in Cuba in 1961.

The balance of threat is based on the balance of power, which is a psychological mechanism based on the mutual perception of the threat, whereby an alliance is concluded between major powers and others with less influence in order to achieve parity in power between the poles of the international system. This fact is considered the essence of the survival of many countries, which makes this theory continue to this day in analyzing the foreign policy of countries.

5-The psychological theory of Robert Jervis

This theory helps researchers understand how decision-makers and leaders make external decisions, as this theory focuses on the dynamics of decision-making and its returns to the state and its allies. Then justify that decision to public opinion inside and outside the country (DeRouen, 2010, pp8-10).

A- The element of justification: States tend to justify their behavior, whether internal or external, with their own circumstances related to their geopolitical and sociological characteristics, and therefore they consider their regional or global role as an inevitable destiny. American presidents often use these justifications to cover their foreign behavior, as the United States of America is destined to be great and a defender of humanity's freedom and rights (John, 2010, p12). Thus, the violent behavior of the United States becomes justified by moral importance and responsibility, while the behavior of others is unjustified and has no motives.

B- The simultaneity relationship: States tend to attribute the good behaviors of others to their own efforts, and denounce the bad behaviors of some countries and attribute them to the criminal characteristics of those countries. The United States, for example, classifies rogue states according to the criterion of loyalty to them (John, 2010).

As for civilized countries, the United States considers them a product of American efforts to support them, such as Western European countries, for example, after World War II, or the oil and financial boom in the Gulf countries. Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger expressed the duality and simultaneity in the United States' dealings with international issues, when he was asked about the winners and losers in the Iran-Iraq war: "Who do you want to win in the Iran-Iraq war and who do you want to be defeated?" He replied: "I want them both to be defeated".

6- Role theory in foreign policy analysis

The attempt to benefit from the concept of role in studying foreign policy came somewhat late in the field of political science, as it was borrowed from modern psychological studies.

The seventies and eighties of the twentieth century witnessed many studies carried out by thinkers such as (Kenneth Waltz 1969 - 1979), (Holsti 1970), (Karl Deutsch 1980) in establishing and theorizing the meaning of the role in international politics, as well as the studies of the American University of Ohio in 1985, which it was carried out by researchers Herman, Hudson, and Snitker related to role definition and its use in foreign policy analysis (فهمي، ص10، 2000).

The role includes a social-psychological dimension in the first place, as it relates to the individual and society. Sadiq Al-Aswad defined the role as: “a system of social rules directed towards the individual alone and for himself as a member of a group or a representative of a group of psychologically distinct individuals.” Therefore, the role is a binding element for the individual (الخاتوني، ص13، 2019).

In the field of political science, the role is defined as the function that the state performs according to its position in the international system. Therefore, it expresses the effective behaviors and activities that the state practices to influence the behavior of other legal persons on the international stage in a way that meets its needs and the goals it seeks to achieve. The concept of role then stems from the perception of a country's foreign policy makers about the main areas of influence and capabilities that that country has to achieve goals.

At the level of international politics, in order to deal with the international system and its various units, the international unit is required to determine for itself and for others the nature of its position in this system, the main role or roles that it plays within it on an ongoing basis, and what the main international relations of the unit are. Therefore, every international unit has a role in the international system. It becomes one of the signs of its foreign policy (سليم، ص98، 1998).

The role is considered an active movement that appears in one form or another if certain conditions are met, as it takes place in light of three main dimensions, the first of which is the political decision-maker's perception of his country's position and status, the prestige it enjoys in the international community, and the associated influence, whether at the regional or international level. The second is his perception of the motivations behind the role he aspires to practice, and finally his perception of the potential impact of that role (سليم، صص 48-49، 1998).

Accordingly, the state's national role crystallizes through three stages (فهمي، 2000، ص12).

1- The stage of exploring the situation, in which the phenomenon being dealt with is understood in light of the available capabilities and capabilities.

2- The stage of defining the national role of the state in light of the constants on the basis of which foreign policy is drawn up.

3- The stage of adapting the national role to the nature of the variables surrounding the environment, or affecting the material and societal capabilities of the decision-maker's country. This means that the role is equivalent to the situation.

Conclusion:

The state can no longer live independently of other political entities, which forces it to follow a foreign policy that enables it to preserve its security and vital interests. The state is linked to other international actors in relations of cooperation and alliance, and even hostility and conflict, in which the state is driven to deal sovereignly with these actors in order to achieve its goals. The state's ability to exercise sovereignty by fulfilling its duties towards its citizens and fulfilling its obligations towards the international community is demonstrated by the ingenuity of its decision-makers in employing local resources and capabilities and adapting to the pressures of the international community as well as the needs of citizens.

These frameworks represent the most important areas of interpretation of the state's foreign policy, which were presented by many theories such as the theory of internal factors, the theory of defense, attack, alliances, psychological theory, and systems theory. This theoretical legacy often helps give theoretical statements to researchers in the field of foreign policy that enable them to provide objective answers about the actions of states and predict them in a scientific manner that serves the researchers' orientations and helps decision-makers.

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