Introduction

The central purpose of this study is to encourage better communication and closer collaboration between academic scholars who study foreign policy and practitioners who conduct it. Better communication requires a better understanding by both scholars and practitioners of the three types of knowledge needed in policymaking. In addition to reliable and timely intelligence about situational developments, policymakers need (1) *conceptualization of strategies*—a conceptual framework for each of the many different strategies and instruments available to them for attempting to influence other states. Policymakers also need (2) *general, or generic, knowledge* of each strategy, based on study of past experience that identifies the uses and limitations of each strategy and the conditions on which its effective employment depends. Finally, policymakers need a sophisticated, insightful understanding of each of the state-actors with whom they interact—what I shall refer to as (3) *actor-specific behavioral models*—in lieu of a dangerous tendency to assume that they can be regarded as rational, unitary actors.

These three types of knowledge are discussed in great detail in this study to make the following points:

- Policymakers often operate with inadequate knowledge or erroneous assumptions or both regarding the strategies they seek to employ in the conduct of foreign policy.
- Conceptualization and general knowledge of many foreign policy strategies and actor-specific models are inadequate in important respects and as yet poorly developed.
- Much additional scholarly research in academic centers and within the government is needed to improve the knowledge base for foreign policy.

Many policy specialists have a strong aversion to the idea that theory can have relevance and potential utility for policymaking. In fact, as many scholars have discovered, the eyes of practitioners often glaze over at the first mention of the word "theory" in conversation. I have no desire in this study to convert policymakers into adherents of theory; in fact, I shall point out in some detail the weakness of academic theories of international relations from the perspective of the types of knowledge needed in policymaking. However, it must also be said that good theories provide relevant and useful conceptual frameworks by means of which to understand the general requirements of a strategy and the general logic associated with its effective employment. Such theoretical-conceptual knowledge is critical for policymaking. And, as a matter of fact, all policymakers make use of some such theory and conceptual frameworks, whether consciously or not. That is, in employing a strategy, policymakers rely on assumptions, often tacit assumptions, about the strategy's general requirements and logic. The gap between theory and practice that forms the starting point for this study is not in policymakers' non-use of theoretical concepts, but in the failure to analyze them more critically and to be more aware of the impact of theoretical-conceptual assumptions on policymaking.

I have discovered in my conversations with policy specialists that if I avoid the word "theory" and speak instead of

"generic knowledge" about foreign policy, they are much more receptive to the relevance of "generic knowledge" for policymaking. I believe this is so partly because policy specialists recognize that generic problems exist in the conduct of foreign policy—for example, that the task of deterrence emerges repeatedly over time and with different adversaries. Therefore, policy specialists readily agree that general, or generic, knowledge about the uses and limitations of a particular strategy, derived from study of past experience, could be very helpful when strategy must be used in a new situation. Incidentally, whether the empirical generalizations that comprise generic knowledge should also be regarded as a form of theory—or "laws," as some scholars prefer to call this type of knowledge—should not get in the way of recognizing the importance of generic knowledge for policymaking.

I have chosen to demonstrate the importance and relevance of all three types of knowledge in part two of this study in a very concrete manner by calling attention to the weak knowledge base that underlay five of the six strategies the United States pursued toward Iraq in 1988–91 and that contributed to their ineffectiveness.

The reader will want to know why I speak in the title of this book of "bridging" the gap rather than "eliminating" it. The choice of words is deliberate and of considerable importance. I will argue that the gap between the three types of knowledge I have identified (which can be very loosely referred to as policy-relevant theory) and practice can be only bridged and not eliminated. Scholarly knowledge of this kind can have only an indirect and often limited impact on policymaking. Since I also claim that the contribution of these three types of knowledge is often critical for sound policy nevertheless, I need to explain this apparent contradiction.

The types of knowledge identified in this study serve as inputs to policy analysis within the government and as aids to the judgment of policymakers. Such knowledge cannot substitute for policy analysis or for the policymaker's judgment.

Even the best conceptualization of a given foreign policy strategy and the most highly developed general knowledge of that strategy cannot substitute for competent policy analysis within the government, in which analysts must consider whether some version of that strategy is likely to be viable in the particular situation at hand. Similarly, such knowledge cannot substitute for the judgment policymakers must exercise in deciding whether to employ the strategy on a given occasion, since that judgment takes into account other relevant considerations not encompassed by general knowledge of the strategy. It is in this sense that scholarly knowledge has an indirect and often limited impact on policy. It is important that we understand why this is so, and this question is addressed particularly in chapters 2 and 10.

How, then, can policy-relevant knowledge aid policy analysis and the policymaker's judgment? First, it can assist in making a sound diagnosis of a problem situation; second, it can help identify an effective policy response for dealing with that problem. Thus, policy-relevant knowledge contributes to two essential functions in policymaking: the diagnostic task and the prescriptive one. I place particular emphasis on the diagnostic contribution policy-relevant theory and knowledge are capable of making than to their ability to prescribe sound choices of policy. Correct diagnosis of a policy problem and of the context in which it occurs should precede and—as in medical practice—is usually a prerequisite for efforts to make the best choice from among treatment options. The analogy with the medical profession is an apt one, since the policymaker, like the physician, acts as a clinician in striving to make a correct diagnosis of a problem before determining how best to prescribe for it.

* * * *

It may be useful in this introduction to recall the origins, background, and framework of this study. In 1966, while still

a member of the RAND Corporation, I saw the need to supplement efforts to formulate general theories of international relations with theories that are more relevant for the conduct of foreign policy. To this end I initiated a small research project, "Theory and Practice in International Relations." Later, upon moving to Stanford University in 1968, I elaborated the title to "Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy," and this topic has remained the focus of my research program and, in one way or another, of most of my studies since then.

Quite early in implementing this research program I concluded that it would be necessary to move beyond structural realist theory, rational choice theory, and game theory approaches that were (and are still) favored and being pursued by many talented scholars. These deductive approaches to theory development "black-box" both the process of policymaking and strategic interaction between states; that is, they deal with these processes by assumption. Instead, I felt it necessary to engage in direct but admittedly difficult empirical study of policymaking processes and strategic interaction between actors. However, I do not regard deductive and empirical ways of approaching the task of developing international relations theory as antithetical. Rather, like many other researchers, I believe the development of both deductive and empirical approaches to theory development can be improved by trying to link them more closely. Finally, the reader should keep in mind that I use the word *theory* to encompass a broad range of ways of formulating knowledge that come out of the scholarly tradition.

I found it useful in developing policy-relevant theory, which I regard as the type of knowledge needed for what historians used to refer to as statecraft, to distinguish between two types of theory. *Substantive theory*, the first type, deals with standard foreign policy undertakings and strategies such as deterrence, crisis management, coercive diplomacy, détente, war termination, mediation and dispute resolution, and

security cooperation. In selecting some of these foreign policy activities for systematic study, I was motivated by historical events that led me to believe that U.S. leaders needed a better knowledge base from which to manage Cold War crises so as to avoid war. My interest in studying deterrence, for example, was aroused by the outbreak in June 1950 of the Korean War, which I regarded as a conflict that could have been avoided. Similarly, what seemed to me another avoidable war later that year in Korea—this time with the People's Republic of China—aroused my interest in better understanding the requirements and modalities of crisis management. Later, again reacting to what I regarded as a misguided, flawed American policy, I began to study the limitations of coercive diplomacy after observing the abortive U.S. effort to use air power in early 1965 to intimidate North Vietnam. Some years later, I initiated a large collaborative study to try to gain insight into why U.S.-Soviet efforts to cooperate on security issues since the end of World War II sometimes succeeded and, on other occasions, failed. And more recently, I focused together with others on trying to understand the phenomenon of inadvertent war, that is, a war that occurs although at the beginning of a diplomatic crisis neither side wants or expects war.

Process theory, the second type of theory, on the other hand, focuses on how to structure and manage the policymaking process in ways that will improve information processing and foster sound judgments, thus increasing the likelihood of better policy decisions. My research on these matters was stimulated by studies that pointed to various malfunctions of the U.S. policymaking system that often lowered the quality of policy decisions. My conception of the contribution that process theory should make to improving the quality of policy decisions is a broad one. It rejects placing exclusive reliance on the criterion of *technical rationality* as a basis for arriving at high-quality policy decisions and emphasizes that the policymaking process needs to be sensitive as well to the

broader criterion of *value rationality* and to normative considerations.[1]

Both substantive theory and process theory have important contributions to make to the improvement of foreign policy. Quite obviously, substantive knowledge of foreign affairs can have no impact on policy unless it enters into the process of policymaking. Substantive knowledge must combine with the effective structuring and management of the policymaking process in order to improve the analytic (versus the political) component of policymaking.

The present study deals almost exclusively with substantive theory and the knowledge requirements of foreign policy. However, I have included in chapter 2 a realistic, even sober, view of some aspects of the policymaking process that tend to crowd out or reduce the impact of substantive knowledge. It is important for scholars who are interested in developing policy-relevant knowledge not to overintellectualize policymaking by assuming that it is or should be devoted exclusively to identifying and choosing high-quality policy options based on the criterion of analytic rationality.

* * * *

The present study addresses only some of the substantive knowledge requirements needed for the conduct of foreign policy. Not included are a host of important problems that affect the interests of individual nations and their peoples, to which policy specialists must be attentive. Among these problems are proliferation of nuclear weapons and other mass destruction capabilities, environmental and ecological problems, population and demographic trends, problems of food production and distribution, water scarcities, sanitation and health problems, and emergence of nationalistic, ethnic, and religious conflicts. Well-informed, objective analyses of these problems are an essential part of the knowledge requirements for conduct of foreign policy.

Scholars can make a number of other contributions to policymaking that will not be taken up in the present study but that should at least be briefly noted. Among these are the collection and orderly presentation of a variety of data and the identification of trends regarding many different aspects of the international system. Scholars also perform a useful, indeed a necessary, task by developing better concepts and conceptual frameworks, which should assist policymakers in orienting themselves to the phenomena and the problems with which they must deal. Finally, although scholars may not be in a good position to advise policymakers how best to deal with a specific instance of a general problem that requires urgent and timely action, they can often provide a useful, broader discussion of how to think about and understand that general problem—such as, for example, the problem of ethnicity and nationalism.

The present study focuses on a different kind of substantive knowledge that is needed by policymakers for conducting relations with other states. This is the type of knowledge needed for what diplomatic historians used to refer to as statecraft. From this standpoint the essential task of foreign policy is to develop and manage relationships with other states in ways that will protect and enhance one's own security and welfare. This objective requires that policymakers clearly define their own state's interests, differentiate these interests in terms of relative importance, and make prudent judgments as to acceptable costs and risks of pursuing them. (Admittedly, these fundamental tasks of policymaking are often not easily accomplished.) Policymakers must identify, analyze, and deal with conflicts of interest with other states. When an accommodation of their conflicting interests is not possible, policymakers must try to narrow and manage the disputed issues in ways that reduce the potential for destructive conflicts and contamination of the entire relationship. At the same time, the development and management of relationships with other states requires leaders to recognize and

seek out common interests and to develop policies for promoting them. Statecraft includes strategies for cooperation and the building of institutions and regimes as well as for conflict avoidance, management, and resolution.

The realist theory of international relations offers some important guidelines for the practice of statecraft. Realist theory is not a theory of foreign policy, however (see chapter 9), and it provides very little of the substantive knowledge needed for the practice of statecraft. Thus, in addition to the help policymakers get from realist theory, they require sophisticated conceptualization of the many different instruments of foreign policy and the various strategies that can be employed to influence other states. In addition, they need general knowledge of the uses and limitations of each policy instrument and strategy. This type of general, or generic, knowledge is most useful to policymakers when it is couched in the form of *conditional generalizations;* conditional generalizations identify (1) the conditions that favor successful use of each particular instrument and strategy, and (2) other conditions that make success very unlikely.

Realist theory itself provides neither conceptualization nor generic knowledge of the many policy instruments and strategies. Another limitation of realist theory is that it assumes that all states can be treated as rational, unitary actors. The conduct of foreign policy, however, requires differentiated knowledge of each adversary, ally, or neutral state with which one is interacting. Therefore, the realist model must be substantially supplemented if not altogether replaced by a discriminating actor-specific model.

These three types of knowledge—conceptualization of strategies, generic knowledge, and actor-specific models—and their role in policymaking are discussed in detail in chapter 10.

Earlier I indicated that the present study focuses on strategies and instruments of policy. However, I will not undertake the ambitious task of discussing the state of existing

knowledge of all of the many policy instruments and strategies that states employ in interacting with each other. Instead, I will focus attention in part two on a smaller number of strategies and use them to illustrate the general points I wish to make about the need for policy-relevant knowledge.

* * * *

This study is addressed to two types of readers: those whose primary orientation derives from participation in the world of scholarship, whether primarily in academic settings or elsewhere, and those whose orientation to foreign policy has been largely influenced by having participated in the policymaking process. Accordingly, I have tried to write this book in a way that will be understood both by policy specialists and by academic scholars. In addressing complex and difficult issues I have tried to minimize use of abstract jargon and have made minimal use of footnotes and references.

Bridging the gap between the theory and practice of foreign policy requires in a very real sense bridging the differences between the two cultures of academia and the policymaking world. It is important to recognize and be sensitive to these two cultures if we are to make further progress in developing policy-relevant knowledge. This task, however difficult, is by no means insurmountable. I believe that a start can be made by focusing in chapter 1 on the relationship between knowledge and action, a problem that should engage the interest of both scholars and policy specialists. Three questions are posed: (1) What contributions can knowledge make to policymaking? (2) What types of knowledge are most relevant for policy? (3) How can this type of knowledge be developed by scholars and research specialists and how can it be employed effectively by policymakers?