2 | The Foreign Policy Arena

This chapter explores the foreign policy arena: that is to say, the terrain on which foreign policy is conducted, and the ways in which that terrain is 'populated' by forces which shape foreign policy making and implementation. The chapter looks at the arena in terms of the contexts within which policy emerges: the international context, the governmental context and the domestic context. It then moves on to examine three factors that structure the foreign policy arena: actors, issues and interests. The overall argument of the chapter is that the traditional insulation and 'specialness' of foreign policy has come under pressure from a number of forces which emphasise linkages and complexity, and that this has important implications for governmental decisions and actions.

Introduction

Chapter 1 dealt in general terms with a number of the ways in which foreign policy analysis (FPA) has had to cope with the impact of change. One of the most important dimensions of change, and thus of pressure on policy makers and analysts, is change in the foreign policy arena. In this chapter, the central aim is to identify the major features of this arena. By doing this, the chapter will lay the basis for a more detailed exploration of policy making and implementation in Chapters 3 and 4.

What is the foreign policy arena? In broad terms, it can be described as the terrain on which foreign policy decisions are made and actions taken. This terrain has a certain topography – in other words, it has 'landmarks' which will differ according to the foreign policy under examination. But the arena is not simply a collection of physical features; it also represents a set of potential resources for the policy maker. Some of these resources

are physical, some are human, and many are political or economic in their nature. One of the key tests of an effective foreign policy is, therefore, the ways in which a government can access the resources available in the arena, and the efficiency with which it can put them to use for policy purposes. Inevitably, the other side of the resources coin is that of constraints: no government faces a foreign policy arena in which there is no competition for access to resources, or in which all resources are equally available.

One reason why access is not assured lies in the second aspect of the arena. It is a terrain, to be sure, but this terrain is populated in various ways and by various forces, each of which is likely to have an impact on the government in the formulation of its foreign policy. The foreign policy arena is, in other words, occupied by a range of significant actors, issues and interests, all of which give it a dynamism and life. One of the key tests of an effective foreign policy is thus the ways in which the foreign policy makers can appraise the shifting array of forces in the arena, respond to those forces and use the opportunities they create. More negatively, it might be said that withstanding the challenges and insecurities of the arena is the minimum requirement of an effective foreign policy.

This chapter sets out to assess the ways in which the foreign policy arena may have changed during the contemporary era. It deals first with the arena in terms of *contexts*: the interrelated settings within which foreign policy emerges, and which are central to the 'terrain' outlined above. It then moves on to deal with those forces (actors, issues and interests) which give life and dynamism to the foreign policy arena.

Contexts

Analysis of foreign policy has invariably pointed to a special feature: the fact that policy makers simultaneously need to take account of developments both at home and abroad (Morse, 1970). At its simplest, the image is of the foreign policy maker either as a 'barrier' against the incursion of alien forces, or as a 'bridge' linking the domestic scene with the outside world. This image is fundamental to the argument that foreign policy is distinctive, and that it thus requires special processes of policy making and implementation. It is clear, however, that as the nature of the international system and domestic politics changes, there are likely to be major shifts in how these two realms relate to one another and consequently in the policy responses to which this shifting relationship gives rise. This

state of affairs is best understood by examining three 'contexts' of the foreign policy arena: the international context, the governmental context and the domestic context.

The international context

Traditionally, there has been an overriding tendency in the study of foreign policy to present the international context as the predominant concern of policy-makers (Zakaria, 1992: 179). It is in the international domain that the challenges and opportunities for foreign policy largely arise, and as a result it is here that the stakes, the uncertainties and the risks are at their most demanding. Such a view of foreign policy, as you will recognise, arises directly from the image of International Relations as a competitive system of relations among states. Here, the foreign policy-maker is seen as responsible for maximising the gains and minimising the losses that arise from such competition – particularly in the area of national security. A series of military, economic, political and geographic factors feed into the international context, something which, in turn, gives rise to hierarchies of power and influence. This hierarchy is in some senses fixed, certainly at the top and bottom ends, as the states which either possess or lack resources tend to be the same over the short to medium term (the sudden demise of Soviet power is a rare exception). That said, considerable fluctuation exists in the middle of the hierarchy as states find that the possession or non-possession of certain resources (a particular commodity such as oil) or geographic position provides them with temporary advantages or places them in a situation of disadvantage. Furthermore, the hierarchy is also affected by fluctuations in the currency placed upon resources and other factors.

What this tells us is that for any government, status will be a key concern in confronting the international context. During the Cold War, for instance, both the United States (US) and the Soviet Union tended to view the international context in terms of each others' relative power positions (for a time, the Soviet Union was also preoccupied with the position of China). For those lower down the hierarchy of states it was also the case that the international context was viewed as structured by the apparent availability of resources, for example through membership of the key alliances of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) or the Warsaw Pact. After the Cold War (and to some extent, even during it) the balance of advantage between military and economic resources has shifted towards the latter. This has not fundamentally affected the US, owing to

both its military and economic prowess, but it has had a profoundly neg-
ative impact on a state such as Russia. Similarly, geographic considera-
tions have altered. States such as Cuba, Ethiopia and Afghanistan, which
assumed a heightened importance during the years of Soviet–American
competition, are now of marginal consequence. Others, such as Azerbaijan,
Kazakhstan and Turkey, have, however, acquired a new importance
that reflects changing geopolitical and geoeconomic concerns (in this
case a proximity to newly-discovered energy resources and transportation
routes).

Broadly speaking, how can we evaluate the impact of the international
context and assess the ways in which it has altered? In response, it might
be helpful to highlight three broad dimensions of change.

A first dimension is related to shifts in the *location* of activity – away
from the Cold War concentration on Europe as the centre of international
concern and towards other locations which reflect more pressingly the
importance of new foreign policy issues. This, for some, has meant an
attention to new 'arcs of crisis', in the Transcaucasus, Central Asia and
the Great Lakes region of Africa; for others, a renewed emphasis on sites
of poverty, famine and displacement such as the Horn of Africa; and for
others still, demands for international action on environmental degrada-
tion in the Amazon Basin or equatorial Africa (White et al., 2001).

A second dimension of change concerns the *focus* of activity. This
relates to the rise to prominence of new issues, already noted in the previ-
ous chapter. In simple terms this has meant an increased attention both by
analysts and policy makers to matters of economic regulation, and social
and environmental concern. It is worth repeating that these issues are not
entirely 'new'. However, more so than in the Cold War period, they have
given rise to debates of wider relevance that relate to the global distribu-
tion of wealth, patterns of inclusion and exclusion in international life
and the need for new forms of international or global governance (Falk,
1995; Linklater, 1998). These debates have not simply been confined
to academic circles. Bodies affiliated to the United Nations (UN) have
advanced proposals for 'the management of global affairs [in a manner
that] is responsive to the interests of all people in a sustainable future'
(Commission on Global Governance, 1995: xvii) and powerful national
governments have been compelled to act (albeit sometimes begrudgingly)
in a more concerted manner on issues of debt and famine relief, and
conflict resolution.

A third dimension, finally, is that of the *instruments* of activity. We
have already noted that the traditional axes of international competition
have altered and with them the instruments used to effect policy. The

Cold War stress on military instruments was never absolute. Indeed, both the US and the Soviet Union engaged in a form of ideological warfare, backed by a range of political, cultural and economic instruments. However, these instruments of 'soft power' are now even more important (Nye, 1990). Certainly among the established democracies this has long been the case; indeed, their interactions are characterised by an almost total absence of recourse to hard military measures. Even where relations are more competitive, the military component is less prominent. Consider, for instance, the conduct of relations between the US and Russia (or, for that matter, between the US and China) where trade, diplomacy and economic assistance are at least as important as the Cold War legacies of nuclear weapons and competitive military alliance systems. Of course, this is not a uniform pattern. As noted in Chapter 1, states residing in less stable parts of the world have continued to frame foreign policy with an eye to traditional threats to their security and thus still place an emphasis on military instruments.

The governmental context

In Chapter 1 it was noted that traditionally FPA assumed that all governments were in principle the same, although each had a different version of the foreign policy problem. Governments were seen as representing national states, whose claims to sovereignty and security were the key issues in foreign policy. National policy makers, in effect, had to assume that all other governments were out for the same things as they were: maximisation of their freedom of action and security in a competitive international system.

The implications of this view of government in foreign policy have been and still are powerful and far-reaching. Essentially, it leads to a view of government which is elitist and specialised (see Chapter 1). At the same time, government is also seen as insulated, because foreign policy should not be subject to the hurly-burly of 'normal politics'. Thus, in many governments, the Foreign Ministry, and alongside it the Defence Ministry, have historically been shielded from the scrutiny of legislatures and the broader political scene.

The assumptions encapsulated in this view of foreign policy are not simply matters of philosophy or of abstract argument. They have had powerful and direct effects on the entire structure of governments the world over, often through constitutional provisions which give a special place to foreign policy. The American constitution grants special powers

to the President as Commander-in-Chief; the constitutions of the French Fifth Republic and the Russian Federation, similarly, contain provisions for centralisation of foreign policy with the chief executive (the President). In more autocratic systems both constitutional provision and political practice ensure a tight oversight of foreign policy by the executive. Indeed, in places such as Iraq, Turkmenistan, Syria and Libya foreign policy is, in effect, a special preserve of personal rule. Yet no matter how powerful the role of the executive, states almost without exception rely on specialised foreign ministries to implement and, in many case, to formulate, foreign policy. The existence of these ministries expresses in tangible form the primacy of the international context and the need to respond to it. Some would also argue that there is a powerful cultural factor at work in foreign ministries, buttressing their image as special arms of governmental policy making and providing them with a special status in society more generally (Frankel, 1963: 28–33). This does not, however, rule out frictions between the claims of foreign offices to special status and the demands of other government departments. Even the most traditional approaches to FPA allow for the fact that foreign ministries do not exist in a vacuum, and that intra-governmental politics can lead to challenges, for example where foreign policy is at odds with national prosperity or where there is broader instability in government itself. These frictions exist most transparently in established democracies but even in less democratic societies departmental competition occurs, albeit in a form that is often mysterious and not clearly observable to the outsider.

In recent years it has become ever more apparent that government structures for foreign policy making are open to challenge and change. One element of this has been organisational restructuring to reflect changes in the international context. For instance, most foreign offices had departments dealing with the affairs of East Germany, a state which in 1990 ceased to exist. During the early 1990s, the proliferation of new and newly-liberated states in the former Soviet bloc placed a great strain on the capacities of many foreign offices, both in the quantitative sense ('do we have enough people to staff new embassies or departments?') and in the qualitative sense ('is there anyone here who knows about Azerbaijan?') The governmental context for foreign policy making was in many countries thrown into a mild form of turmoil – not least in those new and newly-liberated countries which had to establish foreign policy making almost from scratch. This was not unprecedented: during the 1960s, with the ending of the British and French empires, dozens of new and often poor states had to establish foreign policy machines. In their cases as well, the international context was often challenging and turbulent.

Another type of challenge within the governmental context of foreign policy making has been the growth and diffusion of 'government' itself. The traditional approach to FPA assumed that government is unified, and that the leading role is taken by the Foreign Ministry (with the Defence Ministry often closely allied). In a way, this is not only a statement of perceived fact but also a statement of the way things ought to be in a well-regulated governmental machine. Since the 1980s it has become apparent that the idea of unified government is under pressure. One source of this pressure is simply the growth of government itself. Certainly in Western societies, the scope and scale of the governmental machine have increased, often as a response to the demands of international life. Thus, foreign offices that used to be staffed by a relatively small number of dedicated diplomats have become large and complicated bureaucracies. While this was true even before the 1980s, it can be argued that the increasing impacts of globalisation and regionalisation, and the proliferation of new states and organisations, have made for new pressures to expand. As expansion takes place, there is inevitably a problem of fragmentation, as bureaucrats develop their own distinct interests and organisational capacities. As will be seen in Chapter 3, this can lead to outbreaks of 'bureaucratic politics' and competition between government agencies.

These trends suggest that there are limits to the extent to which foreign policy is insulated from the broader process of government. When foreign policy could be defined largely in terms of diplomacy and defence, there were many reasons for the insulation of the foreign policy machine. When 'international policy' comes to include aspects of virtually every department of government, then there are clearly new incentives and challenges. In terms of incentives, many departments of government might feel that there are good reasons for international activity: contacts with their opposite numbers in other countries or in international agencies, the sheer necessity of international policy coordination, and the satisfaction to be gained from trips abroad. These incentives in turn hold the seeds of new challenges: of policy coordination across expanding areas of activity, of collective policy implementation, and so on. They also generate the involvement of a wider range of government departments, and of agencies or groupings outside government – in other words, an expanding 'foreign policy community' (Hocking, 1998: 2–3).

The notion of policy communities implies the growth of stable 'extended families' of those with an interest in international activities. Less stable or permanent are 'policy networks' – often *ad hoc* coalitions of those with foreign policy interests, which may be less easily penetrated or controlled

by government. Both policy communities and policy networks are not necessarily in opposition to traditional models of government organisation in foreign policy, but do reflect modifications to the ways in which policy is shaped or conducted (Atkinson and Coleman, 1992).

The net effect of such developments in the governmental context is that the long-established image of foreign policy as the preserve of a skilled diplomatic (and sometimes military) elite is at least modified. In some lesser-resourced societies, it may be modified by the limitations of governmental capacity and structure. In others, it may be modified by the sheer extent of the structure, and may become less of a diplomatic problem than a management problem, where coordination of overlapping structures and institutions, and the intersection of various policy communities or networks, create major problems of collective action. We shall explore many of these issues more extensively in Chapters 3 and 4, and they will resurface in the case studies conducted in Part Two of the book.

The domestic context

Implicit in much of what we have said so far are important arguments about the role played in foreign policy making by the domestic context. Traditional images of foreign policy give a largely peripheral role to the domestic political or economic setting. The presumed delicacy of the foreign policy undertaking, and the need to insulate it even within the government structure, has led to a view of domestic pressures which relegates them to the margins. It must also be noted that this elitism and insulation have been in part accepted and often supported by informed domestic opinion. It is often considered right and proper that foreign policy is kept away from the domestic hurly-burly, in order to promote consistency and stability in policy making.

The domestic political context of foreign policy has thus historically been seen as permissive, allowing the policy makers considerable freedom of action. Domestic views of foreign policy, except in times of major national crisis, have often been described in terms of a restricted 'attentive public' and a great mass of those who are uninformed and uninterested. Foreign policy making is thus seen as profoundly and necessarily undemocratic, focused not on short-term political or economic advantage but on longer-term necessities. This is not to say that the domestic context can never influence foreign policy. For example, national political crisis or economic collapse can clearly make for severe constraints on the foreign policy makers. But even in such conditions, there is a strong tendency to

argue, even in democratic political systems, that foreign policy should be insulated and untainted.

It is not surprising that such restricted views of the domestic influences on foreign policy have come under pressure, but the results of the pressures are not all in the same direction. In fact, there is a profound conflict of influences to be found (Gourevitch, 1978; Kapstein, 1995). On the one side, there has been a growth of new patterns of communication and new information sources (especially electronic media). This means that there is potentially far wider access to information about events that might have seemed impossibly 'distant' even in the recent past. There is also the potential for contacts between citizens in new and uncontrollable settings, such as the Internet. At the national level, therefore, the context is in principle less permissive than in the past, and this is so even in societies where there has traditionally been restricted access to international information, such as China and particularly states of the former Soviet bloc. Alongside the newly-informed citizen go newly-energised institutions of domestic opinion and politics. Pressure groups are more capable of informing themselves and of communicating their messages, legislatures at national and regional or local level are better able to form views on the foreign policy process and foreign policy actions.

But there is another side to this coin. While in principle there is a strong basis for a more 'information rich' domestic context which might constrain the foreign policy makers, there are trends which work to preserve or even to enhance their insulation from the domestic scene. For example, the growth of international mechanisms of governance means that the newly-informed citizen may find that decisions are taken elsewhere than at the national level, or that the increasingly complex process of coordination within the governmental machine may make it more difficult to exert pressure or make opinions felt. Thus, at the same time as the domestic context becomes richer in information and opinions, so the insulation of the foreign policy makers may increase. It is possible for the domestic forces we have described to counter this, for example by forming transnational alliances with those of similar views, but it is by no means a simple process.

Somewhat more elusive to grasp than the political features of the domestic context are characteristics which have been broadly defined as constituting national identity or culture. These are, of course, rather slippery concepts and thus difficult to define. However, taking just the former, it might be assumed that it constitutes a sense of similarity among the inhabitants of a state born from a national history, common experience and exposure to the same myths and symbols of nationhood. National

identity consequently generates a sense of the state's place in the world, its national interests and its aspirations, and thus points to the appropriateness of certain courses of foreign policy action (Hyde-Price, 1999: 57–65). Not all national identities are perfectly formed. New states often lack a clear sense of identity (a fact plain to see among some of the post-Soviet states) and it may take decades before even a rudimentary national identity emerges (hence, forty years after independence, many states in Africa are still riven by deep-seated disputes because of the weakness of any over-arching sense of commonality among their populations). However, national identities are sufficiently developed among a wide range of states, thus allowing the concept to be employed as a useful means of understanding and comparing foreign policies. Adrian Hyde-Price (1999: 62–5), for instance, on the basis of a scheme outlined by Ilya Prizel (1998: 21–33), has forwarded six 'categories of relationships between national identity and the conduct of foreign policy'. These include the institutionally or constitutionally based identities of the US and the United Kingdom (UK) which result in foreign policies with a strong legalistic streak; the cultural pretensions of French identity which generates a foreign policy premised on asserting France's self-proclaimed position of *grandeur*; and the reconstructed identities of post-war Germany and Japan which, in the German case, has given rise to a strong foreign policy commitment to European integration and involvement in multilateral institutions.

Evaluating the contexts of foreign policy

The chapter so far has presented a view of three interrelated contexts for the framing and conduct of foreign policy: the international, the governmental and the domestic. Traditionally, the linkages between these contexts have been seen as restricted: policy by necessity was composed by the designated policy makers operating with an eye primarily to the international context, and at an arm's length relationship with domestic forces. It has been suggested here, however, that trends in these three contexts have fundamentally altered this traditional picture. As a result, it could be argued that the key problem in contemporary foreign policies – notwithstanding variations between governments and their capacities – is that of extracting resources from a set of inter-linked contexts, where many policy problems are both cross-departmental within government and cross-national between societies. How can governments in such circumstances position themselves and produce consistent policy both in the procedural sense (how they do it) and in the substantive sense (what they do)? In the

second part of the chapter, we explore three features of the foreign policy arena which provide part of the answer to these questions: actors, issues and interests.

Actors, issues and interests

As pointed out earlier in the chapter, it is difficult to separate the contexts of foreign policy making from the actors, issues and interests which give dynamism and life to those contexts. We have already found ourselves talking in terms of groups, individuals and organisations, of their views and of the pressures they can exert. In this part of the chapter, we address these features of the foreign policy arena explicitly.

Actors

Who makes foreign policy? In the traditional analysis of foreign policy, the answer is obvious: the designated political and bureaucratic elites, who have a continuous responsibility for pursuing foreign policy object-ives, and who are specially qualified for the task (see Chapter 1). Foreign ministers and diplomatic officials are in many countries subject to training and experience which set them apart from the main streams of develop-ment within government. They form a restricted 'community' which has a great deal in common with foreign policy elites in other countries, and often it seems less in common with their colleagues elsewhere in govern-ment. Foreign offices are staffed according to this assumption of special-ness and specialisation, with the emphasis on close contact with the affairs of the 'target' countries or regions. The foreign policy 'machine' is set up and attuned in accordance with the geopolitical and other priorities of the country concerned, and adapts only slowly to the emergence of new challenges and opportunities.

This elitist view of foreign policy does not mean, however, that the foreign policy machine is completely sealed off. Rather, there is a key distinction to be made between those who participate continuously and effectively – the policy makers – and those who shape or influence policies from time to time. Access to the policy-making process is restricted, but it is not completely impossible to achieve. The notion is one of hierarchy, with inner and outer circles of influence. An example of the ways in which this might be expressed is in Figure 2.1, which shows 'concentric circles'
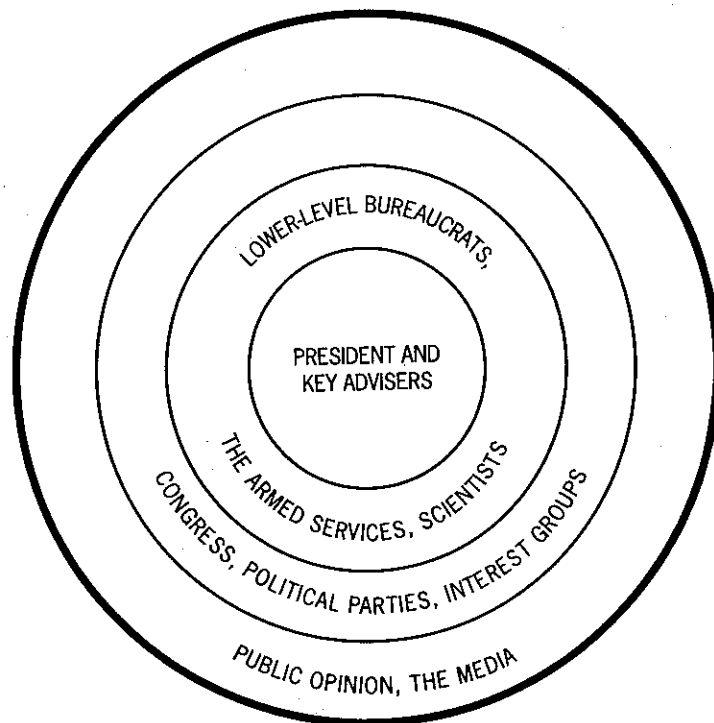
Figure 2.1 The concentric circles of power in foreign policy making

of policy making and influence in the case of the US. Although a general pattern can be discerned in which certain groups or individuals are close to the centre, it is clearly possible for movement to take place between the circles over time or in specific circumstances. Thus in wartime, for example, the military is likely to move closer to the centre of policy making (and it has often been argued that during the Cold War, foreign policy participation was 'militarised' on a long-term basis).

In looking for the actors in foreign policy making, even traditional analyses can cope with short- and long-term shifts in the level, intensity and effectiveness of participation. The traditional perspective is not unaware of problems of access and influence, or for that matter of the distinction – vital to all policy analysis – between formal structure and informal processes of participation. What traditional analyses find more difficult to cope with, however, are the problems created by changes in the context of foreign policy that create much wider participation by a broader array of actors from the international, the governmental and the domestic contexts. Participation in such a system is diffused, but remains within the

boundaries of government; this is complicated, though, by the fact that 'government' has become a more elastic concept. Thus, national policy making may be heavily influenced by international agencies (for example, the European Union), international financial institutions (as in the case of International Monetary Fund officials advising governments in parts of Africa and Latin America) and foreign militaries (as in the role of NATO officers in Albania and Macedonia, for instance).

Beyond government, we must also register the fact that influence upon foreign policy has diffused much more broadly through societies. Clearly this has much to do with the changing subject matter of foreign policy itself (see below), and it also reflects the widening awareness of international issues noted earlier in the chapter. But it must be noted that the impact of this diffusion of participation will vary enormously depending on the specific characteristics of a country and its foreign policy process. Perhaps the most obvious contrast is between countries where there is a long-standing tradition of 'managed pluralism' (such as in the US and in Western Europe) and those where the political circumstances and the political culture are much less stable and secure. It has been argued, for example, that in many of the new states emerging from the former Soviet Union, organised criminal elements can play an important role in foreign policy making. Such arguments have also been made in the past about new states in the Third World.

The relationship between the foreign policy machine and the broader society is thus important to an understanding of patterns of participation, both formal and informal. So too is an appreciation of the types of policy which are at issue.

Issues

Just as participation in foreign policy making has traditionally been seen as hierarchical and relatively restricted, so have the issues on the foreign policy agenda reflected a powerful set of priorities. As noted in Chapter 1, there has historically been a very strong and intimate linkage between foreign policy and national security. Some analysts have pointed to the growth during the Cold War years of the 'national security state', in which the pre-eminence of national security as an issue was reflected in the close relationships between foreign policy, defence policy and industrial organisation (Hogan, 1998). Both the US and the Soviet Union reflected these pressures and processes, but they were also present in different ways in a large variety of other countries. For example, newly independent states in

the Third World placed a high priority on the military not only as defenders of national independence but also as agents of modernisation within society. Governments as a result were often heavily militarised, and foreign policy along with them. In such cases, issues of national security had a high priority for the allocation of national resources, and in the competition between 'welfare and warfare' the latter tended to predominate (Clapham, 1985: 113–59).

This strongly hierarchical view of the issues on the foreign policy agenda has come under powerful attack from two directions during the past couple of decades. First, the nature of 'national security' itself has come under pressure. Partly, this arises from the fact that predominantly military indices of national security have been increasingly overtaken – hence the importance of 'soft power' noted above. Developments in military technology have also been important. First nuclear weapons and latterly 'smart' weaponry and the 'revolution in military affairs' more generally has meant that a truly modern and effective national defence can only be obtained by a handful of relatively wealthy states (the US, for instance) or attempted by those willing to sacrifice civilian needs for military expenditure (India, Pakistan and Iraq). In parallel, the leakage of military capabilities to non-state groupings such as terrorist organisations, organised criminal cartels and other interests has led again to the erosion of the military 'trump card' in foreign policy.

Second, a broadening of the national security agenda to new areas of activity has occurred and security has come to be defined in terms that range across economic, environmental and 'societal' concerns (see Chapter 1). To take just the first of these, for many countries (and for some time past) economic security has been at least as important as military security. However, only relatively recently has it become apparent that economic security might be at least as fundamental as the 'harder' military variant. For many citizens, the agenda is not dominated by fear of attack or subjection by military means; rather, it is dominated by issues of employment, welfare and prosperity (Cable, 1995). Allied to this, the agenda of foreign policy has become increasingly congested as processes of regionalisation, transnationalism and globalisation have accelerated. The traditional preoccupation with security (however broadly defined) has now to compete with a multiplicity of other, more everyday issues relating to economic management, environmental degradation, trans-border communication and cultural interaction (White et al., 2001).

These are issues at one and the same time of international (and foreign policy) concern and of local, regional or national sensitivity. They raise important questions of national or collective management, since they often

demand long-term commitments of considerable resources. Once again, we are back to the central significance of resources in foreign policy, this time related to issues. Does a government have the capacity to extract resources from the context in which it has to operate, and what are the political, economic and social constraints on this extraction and the allocation of the resources themselves? The new issues of the foreign policy agenda came, during the 1970s, to be termed 'intermestic', since they engaged the domestic and the foreign policy processes of societies, and created new types of political and organisational challenge (Manning, 1977). Thus, the intersection of a changing context with changing issues is vital to the analysis of foreign policy. It affects participation, it affects institutions, and it affects interests. It is to interests that we now turn.

Interests

Historically, it has in principle been easy to describe the interests around which foreign policy centres. Because of the close link between foreign policy and national security, the idea of 'national interest' is fundamental to traditional notions of foreign policy (see Chapter 1). This does not mean that the national interest is always easy to identify and describe or is beyond active manipulation (the national interest may merely equate to whatever the policy makers say it is at any given time). But the notion of irreducible national aims, even if these are expressed in terms of no more than survival, is persistent and pervasive in the study of foreign policy. The notion has a kind of transcendental, mystical quality, but it can also serve as an important instrument of policy itself, rationalising and justifying the actions of policy makers to both domestic and international audiences. There is, however, an inherent tension built into the concept: the national interest will inevitably compete with the interests of other states, and also with any notion of an 'international interest' expressing the common standards or goals of the world community. In principle, such tensions are easy to resolve for a state: the national interest, like national security as an issue on the foreign policy agenda, trumps all others.

The notion of a monolithic national interest expressed by the foreign policy makers is clearly difficult to relate to the untidiness of actual foreign policy making. Traditional FPA thus spends a good deal of time and energy making distinctions between fundamental national interests and the goals of foreign policy. Such goals are assumed to be directed towards ultimate defence of this national interest, but they may involve apparent contradictions. For example, it may be necessary to give up territory to

ensure national survival, or to enter an 'entangling alliance' to ensure independence. Many analysts have thus distinguished between short- and medium-term goals of foreign policy and the long-term goals expressed in the national interest. Arnold Wolfers (1962: 73–80, 91) has made an important distinction between 'possession goals' (defence of what one is or has) and 'milieu goals' (maintenance of broader international order or standards). He has also distinguished between goals of 'self-extension', goals of 'self-preservation' and goals of 'self-abnegation', each of which may in its own way contribute to fundamental national interests. The point is that even in traditional analysis, the definition of national interests is not an easy or simple matter.

Things become even more complicated when we consider the impact of the contextual and other changes dealt with earlier in this chapter. International and domestic constraints mean that no government can ever set national goals in a vacuum. Some would argue that this means that foreign policy has become essentially 'domesticated' in the sense that it is part of a seamless web of governmental policies and societal interests (Moravcsik, 1997). Others have proposed that the opposite, but nonetheless complementary, process has occurred: that the growing transnationalisation of interests has 'domesticated' the previously unruly setting of world politics (Hanrieder, 1978). The implications of both processes are the same, since they suggest that there is a growing emphasis in foreign policy on the satisfaction of sectional interests at the same time as there is an increasing incentive to respond to international interests and governance structures.

Arriving at a definition of the national interest has never been easy, and has always involved actual or potential conflicts between goals, but in the contemporary era it appears that foreign policy interests have been both diffused through society and politicised to an unprecedented degree. Much as foreign policy makers might long for the days when one could talk about the notion of national interest with some conviction, the ability of government to clearly define and pursue this interest has changed fundamentally.

Evaluating actors, issues and interests in foreign policy

Part of the conclusion from this review of actors, issues and interests in foreign policy must be that there are intimate links between the three: actors focus on issues and espouse interests, while changes in issues can shape the emergence of new patterns of participation and interests. We have argued that:

■ Traditional assumptions about 'who makes foreign policy' have been challenged and modified by the diffusion of participation and by new processes of access and influence in foreign policy, which reflect, at least in part, the changes taking place in the context of policy making.

■ The foreign policy agenda, traditionally centred on, if not dominated by, national security issues, has broadened to encompass new dimensions of security as well as new issues of welfare and humanitarian concerns.

■ The interests shaping foreign policy can no longer be expressed in terms of a monolithic national interest, and the challenge of foreign policy is that of managing and negotiating different interests as well as allocating scarce resources between them.

What does this means for the nature of policy itself? One way of bringing these elements together and 'mapping' the foreign policy arena is to relate the changing nature of issues to the changing nature of interests and participation. In doing this, we can start by identifying three types of foreign policy issue: 'high politics', 'low politics' and 'sectoral politics'. The first of these is concerned with the traditional issues of national security and independence, the second with the vast mass of technical and administrative issues confronting foreign policy makers and the last with issues such as the environment, transnational migration and crime, and external economic relations that cut across the high/low politics divide. Importantly, each of these types of issue generates a characteristic pattern of participation: 'high politics' conforms to the restricted and elitist model outlined earlier, 'low politics' to the more administrative and organisational patterns we have also noted, and 'sectoral politics' to a more pluralist and negotiated type of participation.

Summary and conclusion

This chapter has dealt with two main topics. First, it has analysed the foreign policy arena in terms of contexts – international, governmental and domestic – within which foreign policy emerges. In doing so, it has established that a number of important changes have come to fruition, affecting the ways in which foreign policy makers can recognise and respond to contextual pressures. Central to these changes is a number of factors: the focus and composition of international activity, the resources

available to and allocated by governments and the growth in awareness of international issues. The second topic on which the chapter has centred is that of the dynamics set up by actors, issues and interests in the foreign policy arena. The chapter has identified important trends in patterns of participation, in the priorities given to issues on the foreign policy agenda and in the range of interests shaping foreign policy.

At the beginning of the chapter, we noted that the foreign policy arena expressed both relatively static and relatively dynamic elements. It is firstly a terrain on which foreign policy takes place, and secondly a 'populated area' in which there is a continuous interplay of actors, issues and interests. Having explored these two interrelated aspects, we can now proceed to look at the heart of foreign policy: its formulation and its implementation.

Further reading

The notion of 'arenas' is not well developed in FPA. However, see Hocking and Smith (1995) Part 1 for its elaboration as a tool of International Relations. For the various 'contexts' of foreign policy (the international, the governmental and the domestic) the reader can turn to a number of works for conceptual assistance. A good place to start is Onuf (1995) and Singer (1961) which explore the complementary notion of 'level of analysis' in International Relations. The work of Rosenau (1980) on the 'external environment' of foreign policy and 'linkage politics' (the linkage that is between the national and international contexts of foreign policy) is also instructive, if a little difficult. For works which offer a more applied view of the various contextual influences on foreign policy, see Allen (1989) and Holsti (1992). For more on the actors of foreign policy, see Chapters 3 and 4 of this volume. On the issues relevant to foreign policy, see White, Little and Smith (eds) (2001). On foreign policy interests, see Jones (1979: 35–43) for a fairly traditional view, and Hyde-Price (1999: 32–9) for a more conceptually informed discussion.

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