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POLI SCI

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Explaining and Understanding State Action [1976]

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EXPLAINING AND UNDERSTANDING STATE ACTION

[1976]

Précis: Conflicting interpretations of state action reflect, often unwittingly, the confusions and disputes that arise among opposing views of explanation. The aim here is to clarify the explanatory process, particularly in individual studies of foreign policy. It presents a purposive model of explanation which, compared with the injunctions of naturalistic models, appears better attuned to the descriptions and answers we request in such studies. In the end, however, a critical assessment is made of this model, for purposive accounts may remain on the surface; they are not self-explanatory. Even though grounded in actors' self-understandings and shared frames of reference, they often require their own translation or explanation —- to excavate the domestic context which is presupposed. Yet such a contextual treatment need not take a naturalistic form, emphasizing the antecedents which determined the purposive dimensions. It can instead supplement a purposive understanding by treating the shared projects of a state elite as social acts, embedded within (and intelligible in the light of) a particular domestic setting.

We speak of explanations as though we all know what explanation consists of. Here, it seems, we have beguiled ourselves — by depending upon a level of agreement which does not exist, or by taking from the natural sciences a model of explanation whose appropriateness to the tasks we set for ourselves is open to serious doubt. And it might, as a start, be said that these difficulties have a familiar source. Investigators have dealt with one of the most basic matters of political inquiry in a glancing fashion, leaving whatever

clarification needs to be achieved to others — who are, in turn, rarely consulted. The necessary conceptual efforts and controversies continue, but are rarely allowed to guide or "impede" the empirical work except in the most tangential of ways. In studies of international behavior these tendencies are pronounced. So are the confusions which usually accompany them. Yet, even granting this, such impairment need not be inevitable. Or at least: this is a claim I would like to entertain in this essay. For instead of relying upon apparent orthodoxies in the philosophy of science, or proceeding in an unself-conscious or ad hoc way, newer models of-explanation might be developed. It is no use digging our heels in unless we can be sure we are on solid ground.

One approach, instantly familiar, has been to follow the methodological injunctions of a naturalist style of inquiry.[1] We have tended, for example, to identify as explanations only those accounts in which the behavior to be explained is made to seem regular, predictable. The light at the end of the explanatory tunnel illuminates the behavior by showing us why, given certain initial conditions, it had to happen. It was necessary, or at least — in a statistical way — very likely. Also, from the presence of broader generalizations or laws, these statements about the regularities involved can be deduced. It is from this additional covering element that our causal expectancies gain their explanatory power. The objective is always to specify the antecedent conditions to the point where (in light of the generalization) as few other outcomes as possible could have resulted. From the pre-existing generalizations and the specified set of background conditions, we could have forecast the event, for it is tied to them by a process of logical entailment.[2] Retrodiction thus becomes the gauge of success.

One question quickly arises, however: is this the gauge with which we are concerned in attempting to understand an individual state action or foreign policy? To answer this question, we must examine at close range the interests presupposed by the form of our explanatory questions and our notions of understanding, as well as the limitations of a naturalistic description of international behavior and the style of interpretation that frequently accompanies it. The assumptions and implicit theses involved here must be brought to the surface.

By analyzing the special vulnerabilities to which the familiar models are subject, I hope to demonstrate the need for a different approach to explanation and to give some indication of its possible range and format. In so doing, I will be mining and sifting some of the contemporary work in the philosophy of action in order to see to what extent its insights may be of use. Many of these issues are of course familiar; some are not. Nevertheless, I have not found nearly enough attention being paid to them specifically in the literature on international politics; instead, partially as a result, great confusion reigns, muddying the problems of explanation as they apply to an individual state action. Conflicting interpretations of foreign policy reflect, often unwittingly, intellectual differences on these matters — differences that have been too casually papered over in the hopes of protecting a consensus. No such consensus exists, nor can we evolve one from the lip-service which a neo-positivist epistemology has commanded. Stances concerning the level-of-analysis problem, bureaucratic models of decision-making, as well as discussions of the political economy of imperialism have been tangled in these matters. The demands of guidance and clarification are immense.

ACTION AND BEHAVIOR

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> And the problem arises: what is left over if I subtract the fact that my arm goes up from the fact that I raise my arm.[3]

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Certain treatments of international behavior are notable for disregarding not so much the immediate aims of state leaders as the purposive nature of state action. Even as they acknowledge that the goals of state actors are important elements worth examining, this widely shared acknowledgment goes on curiously to the side. It does not appear to affect the prior conception of the phenomenon at hand. Although, unlike much analysis in the natural

sciences, the purposive features are not usually excluded in a stipulative way, what this conception does not accredit is the idea that these features — the intentions, goals, and reasons of state actors, for example — are defining, or distinguishing characteristics of social conduct.

At times even the more limited acknowledgment is not made. The regularities which a causalist predictive account will highlight may be cast in an exclusively behavioral language of description. The policies of a state, for example, are sometimes said to resemble a series of physical events that occur in the environment. The hope of the analyst, then, lies in their prediction or control, in gaining power "over" their physical manifestations. Graham Allison, for example, has made this denigration of purposive elements rather explicit:

> From the basic conception of happenings as-choices to be explained by reference to objectives (on analogy with the actions of individual human beings), we must move to a conception of happenings as events whose determinants are to be investigated according to the canons that have been developed by modern science.[4]

Now I do not wish to deny that there is any value at all in this sort of recommendation. But I think it is important to show that the conception involved proves much more quarrelsome than some have commonly assumed. When we narrow our attention so that only the behavioral aspects of these happenings fall within it, we stumble over obstacles which the orthodoxies of our method have failed to remove. For the most common ways in which we ask an explanatory "why?" question and for much of our point in asking, we will be frustrated. An answer would be forthcoming, but phrased in a form of locution quite different from that of the question. Those questions usually presume that we are talking about dealings and doings and deeds — actions performed by someone in accordance with their purposes — and not merely about occurrences or something that happens. Actors are thought capable of consciously monitoring and directing their performance and not simply of

responding to environmental contingencies. Notice also that our questions often presume that actors had goals in mind and that they had reasons for achieving those goals. They presume in addition that these are some of the most important things one wants to reconstruct. Yet that presumption does not stay to one side; instead, it takes center stage. Action and behavior are not terms to be used interchangeably. The purposive or intentional aspects are essential, constitutive ones — for an *action* as different from an instance of *behavior*, which remains the more inclusive category. From such general distinctions, in fact, there have evolved opposing traditions of social inquiry, ones which can help guide us toward a more fruitful conception of what represents an understanding.[5] For a preliminary distinction in the case at hand, one difference would be between *international behavior* and *state action* and between the ways in which we might approach their analysis.

To a "why?" question encountered in everyday life, for instance, a probabilistic account of causal sufficiency may seem largely irrelevant, for the sort of understanding that is being requested can rarely be satisfied by a prediction. It may in fact preclude a predictive treatment. We will want to know what the actors had in mind, or what frame of reference they shared in the face of their situation. Our interest in these things sheds light as well on the differences in perspective between agents and spectators and the questions appropriate to each. Those points of view are not identical, nor should those of the actor be sacrificed to, or identified with, those of the spectator. Actors' conceptions, for example, are rarely cast in terms of the antecedents that would be, in some unacknowledged way, sufficient to generate their behavior or even their purposes. A reconstruction framed in such causal and spectatorial terms would surprise the respondent, perhaps as much for its virtuosity as for its superfluity.

An action is in fact generally regarded as a means to some end, as something an actor engages in "for the sake of" that end, rather than as an unintended consequence or the physical effect of some cause, or the predictable response to certain stimuli. In the problems at hand—those of an individual account of a state action — a "why" question carries with it a similar demand: for an answer cast in purposive form, grounded in the concep-

tions and aims of the actors, rather than in the background phenomena that enable us to predict the event. "Why did you — or they, or even: we — do that, or not do that, or plan to do that, or plan on doing that?" Elaborate hypotheses may have at their heart little more than abstracted versions of such questions. A naturalistic description framed "according to the canons that have been developed by modern science" might be beside the point. Many of our constructs must instead be "second order" ones, fashioned from those of the actors involved,[6] and the form of explanation would follow suit.

The action of a woman taking her life, as one example, would not be understood simply in terms of the regularities involved in a body approaching and then hurtling down a mine shaft. The description would seem perverse. Nor can we comprehend the distinctive character of most state actions by treating them as though they are simply physical happenings. If purely behavioral accounts of this sort are more familiar to us than in the case of individual human action, in many ways they seem no less perverse. Of course alternative descriptions are always possible. But while they may not cancel out each other, some are clearly more useful for what we want to know and how we want to understand something. And there is a price to pay, especially when certain ways of characterizing behavior prove intractable, or impossible to translate into other terms.

Purposive descriptions, for example, cannot be extracted from a naturalistic treatment, or one which deals with international behavior solely as an environmental occurrence. This is partially because any one outcome could be consistent with a host of different purposive descriptions. Outcomes are in this sense equivocal. By letting them monopolize our attention, we can often find out what "happened" in a topographical sense, but still remain far from comprehending what was done, or what was intended, let alone the reasons that surrounded the aims involved. As one example, the most obvious overt features of different foreign policy interventions may appear quite similar (troops landing on the beachheads, bombers strafing the countryside, etc.). Although the horrors of such conduct may threaten to blur any further distinctions, this blurring can easily mislead. However hypnotic the outcomes, they are still not sufficiently revealing or differentiating. The behavior

involved might have been characterized by different or even opposite considerations in the minds of the actors (those of the policymakers and their domestic constituencies, for example). Phenomenally similar events, on such an occasion, may be accorded an entirely different status as deeds or actions.

Examining the aims and reasons for state action will be useful in another, perhaps less obvious way: the project of a state elite is rarely exhausted by any single outcome. That outcome may even be stimulating, rather than definitive. Doesn't this sort of continuity provoke our concern for the blueprints and the aspirations of state leaders, for the "rehearsed thing" as well as the 'done thing!'? Actions do not of course flow unproblematically or in a directly determined way from the "definitions of the situation" which actors hold. Nevertheless, such goals and frameworks give us insights into the realm of possible conduct—conceivable actions that could be located coherently within the actors' agenda in the past as well as in the future. One should also not neglect "negative actions," or intentional refraining from action, or especially the phenomena of "nondecision-making" which can operate in the policy arena without showing up except as an implicit exclusion.[7] Yet abstention and forebearance may be much more difficult to recognize within a purely spectatorial perspective.

Also, not only do goals exist apart from any specific fulfillment, they extend in time beyond any one action, not as a separable but as an intrinsic element or form of meaning. Therefore they encompass a whole series of actions — some tried, some untried, some to-be-tried. In politically complacent (or amnesiac) times, such a fact is conveniently overlooked. In fact, a disastrous outcome can often be persuasively and rhetorically unhinged from its underlying structure of goals, even when those goals have outlasted the disaster. Official interests may find great use in such a persuasion, especially if the outcome is a recent one, and many might otherwise suspect that the goal has not been exhausted at all. United States policy in Southeast Asia affords many instances of this. Continuities can be sometimes an excuse (as they were for Lyndon Johnson), and sometimes an embarrassment (as the Nixon administration later learned). The analyst, on the other hand, may find in such continuities of intent an illuminating record, even more so than the patterns we

can discover among the outcomes.

A generalizing behavioral treatment, thought to represent the building block for a more general theory, is tempted to ignore these differences in the intent and outlook of actors. Such an emphasis may be misguided. One could say, in elaboration, that knowing the way the overt behavioral aspects are patterned over a range of diverse cases is neither a sufficient nor even a necessary condition for understanding a particular policy. A commitment to act in a certain way, for example, might exist and demand an explanation even without being put into motion. Under other circumstances, it might take a vague form that could suggest, at the surface level, some quite different phenomenon.

The term "different," as used here, cues us into a larger descriptive problem in which it figures: the problem of translation and synonymy. These are issues which can, I think, eventually shed a great deal of light on the conceptual basis of political inquiry but which have scarcely begun to be considered. What are the criteria for positing relevant differences? To take a preliminary position, I think it can be argued that two state actions are not "the same" unless we can find in them a similarity of' intent and not only of appearance. The purposes and reasons are what differentiate them, what make them an instance of one action rather than another — of military provocation or intelligence gathering, for example, in the case of America's patrols in the Tonkin Gulf in mid-1964.[8] This is just as true in foreign policy as it is with language. To go beyond the equivocal nature of happenings in the environment, and to avoid bystepping the vexing issue of *what* is being done, the conceptualizations and understandings and reports of the actors themselves must be taken into account — whether in the state's action is direct (on the part of leaders, advisors, etc.) or indirect (by the electorate, pressure groups, classes or elites). Analyses that blithely separate the outcome from the actors' specific aims and reasoning, on the other hand, proceed differently: however great their ingenuity, the artificial nature of the original descriptions cannot be concealed. Actors' conceptions and discourse do not simply ornament an action. They are an integral part of an action's makeup, and therefore of its description, and therefore of its explanation. One should follow from the other.

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> To a certain extent, the situation in the social sciences would appear to be the converse of that obtaining in physical science: the more universal the laws, the more devoid of content they become or rather: the less explanatory value they have.[9]
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> The difference is precisely analogous to that between being able to formulate statistical laws about the likely occurrence of words in a language and being able to understand what was being said by someone who spoke the language. The latter can never be reduced to the former.[10]

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PURPOSIVE EXPLANATION

In the way we usually think about them, as I have said, the important behavior of states is characterized by the preconceived aims of state actors, or at least grounded in the framework of a broader intentional project. We do not usually treat them as a series of physical episodes that happen to occur according to some regularity which could subsume them, yet of which the actors are unaware. As such, they lend themselves to a purposive style of interpretation, resembling in many ways the kind of ordinary language account we receive when we ask someone why they did something. Now the pattern of choices and assumptions and reasons which surround a state action may be quite complex and untidy, much more so than in everyday life. Yet if we wish to understand this action (in the ways we customarily use that term), our task involves elucidating a project or policy in which it can be located.[11] The action is embedded in that pattern. We might for example ask the actors (and we might attempt to discover through documents and other revealing expressions) what reasons they shared for engaging in a particular activity. What were the contours of the *purposive consensus* within which bureaucratic bargaining and compromise took place. This may imply that although we know

what the behavior was, we are not exactly sure where it was intended to lead. We sometimes ask for the reasons behind an action when we are not sure what goals were being sought. We also tend to ask this when the aim is fairly clear but the reason for pursuing it (the "why" of an aim) is not.

When we ask a "why" question of an actor, the answer customarily comes to us prefaced with "because." Even so, a Humean conception of causation is rarely implied. Rather than reporting on those independently specifiable factors that were sufficient for their movements to be generated, actors usually give us their reasons for acting as they did. Spokesmen from the American policy elite, to repeat a previous example, claimed that the U.S. intervened in Indochina because they could not afford the local balance of power being placed in jeopardy, because they wanted to stop the contagion of communist aggression and social revolution, because America's reputation and credibility in other areas had to be protected, and so on. These reasons are not cast in the form of separable antecedents; instead, they are given as interpretative elements of the actions planned, as an inseparable part of the mosaic that we call a deliberate act. They help constitute it or make it what it is. The action displays a plan; the plan expands the description. By providing the reasons behind their conduct, the actors have already begun to make the action intelligible by locating it within a larger "reasoned" policy. They have transformed it into what I would call an *interpreted action*.

By showing the fittingness of the actions in light of the goals and reasons which the actors had entertained, a degree of intelligibility is provided. Set against the orthodox style of causal explanation (which appears to do violence to the way actors conceive of their own conduct), this is a procedure which can yield a purposive explanation. It allows us to look at and characterize state actions rather differently, to appraise goals (and not merely the means one uses to achieve them), and to assess certain areas of responsibility which are sometimes shielded in more naturalistic accounts. Also, though it may pose needless complications for those who want simply to generalize about environmental happenings, a purposive treatment can help us discern intentional patterns across a host of physically dissimilar actions (and even inactions) that one state may sponsor. It does not hope to fill in the "black

box" of the national actor with a developmental sequence of inner mechanisms or intervening determinants. Instead, such an explanation lends itself to another form of accounting and explanatory concern — a variety we associate with the textures of everyday life and sometimes with the process of social or political understanding itself.

There are of course other sorts of explanation, of which the causal and deductive varieties seem by far the most common. A causalist account of individual behavior, for example, tends to be offered, sometimes metaphorically, when the purported actor does not wish to take responsibility for the behavior. Not infrequently we even hear someone invoke a causalist account to "cover" himself, in the dual sense which that term has taken on — of subsumption and the avoidance of blame. People do this by reciting a list of factors that would, in the presence of certain regularities, aid an observer in framing either a prediction or retrodiction of their behavior. We hear this especially when someone does not want to be associated with what they "did," but, instead, would like to have it felt as something that "happened," or, as it is often said, "just happened." This frequently takes on a quietistic tone. The very ideas of responsibility and political appraisal, even as metaphors, begin to loose their solid moorings when we subject them to this contrary form of discourse—to the assumptions we make about happenings as different from those with which we treat purposive action.[12]

> "It was not our fault,, actually; we were forced into it."
>
> "No one can in fact be blamed, for the real lesson of this disaster was that of unintended consequences and the tragedies of inadvertence."
>
> "No one *chose* the outcome; it simply happened. It was just the result of certain standard operating procedures over which no one had any real control."
>
> "It just grew like topsy, and that was that."
>
> "A is not at all responsible. B said this to C, and C convinced D and E and F of its merit; B, then, with his great persuasive powers, prevented the disaffection of G and H and kept them on board for valuable support; and so, finally, A was

faced with a consensus he could not refuse. The policy was merely the resultant."

In all such cases the shared intentions that underprop the broad contours of a policy are slighted, even though many of the component happenings are dependent on those very contours for their significance and often enough make very little sense without them.

Now perhaps because of their emphasis on habitual unreflective behavior or on consequences that are unintended, explanations in the social sciences have often ascribed neither responsibility nor conscious goals to the actors. This point is worth stressing, but it is not one which can carry the argument a great distance. If a policy seems puzzlingly haphazard, we may wonder if it has a "point," We may ask if it makes sense in terms of any conscious aims, or if any significant calculations were involved. As a prominent example, the behavior might resemble a collage, a sum of disparate events with no single locatable repository of responsibility and without a *raison d'être.* A search for causal mechanisms, obstructions or sidetrackings might enter into the analysis at this stage, whenever the intentional elements seem unable to account for the conduct or when actors invoke compulsions as a form of alibi. Yet the temptation arises: this stress on causal mechanisms, even of a supplemental nature, may come to undermine the original characterization of the phenomenon as purposive conduct. If behavior is equivocal, such outcomes may threaten to appear simply mute — and be allowed to remain so.

This has been one of the major failings of the bureaucratic conception of foreign policy,[13] or of accounts making such claims as the following, which was presented to account for the most significant outcomes of American policy in the 1960s: "But the inertial dynamics of the bureaucracy is the major explanation of the disasters of the decade."[14] Such "explanations" have received their share of criticism, Even so, all too often the entire issue has been obscured or cast in terms of the level-of-analysis problem. Causalist explanations which stress organizational processes, for example, are rightly set against a purposive form of analysis which stresses the shared goals and reasons of the policy elite. At this point, however, concern with levels of analysis frequently

takes over, so that much of the emphasis comes to be placed on the topographical location of the action described (is it at the level of the nation-state, or is it inside the black box in the institutions which comprise the state, etc.). Actually, in disputes such as this, the most important distinction for political analysis is that *two quite different forms of explanation are involved.* The degree of self-consciousness about these matters unfortunately remain slim — a fact not unrelated to the hegemony of the orthodox causalist style. This, in turn, merely encourages the attempt to clear away all the interpretative tangles while staying within the boundaries of that style. Can't actors' objectives be assimilated to the language of causation and determinants? Can't reasons for acting? Can't desires or motives; can't intentions?[15] In fact those tangles may simply result from a prior, and arguably suffocating, intellectual confinement.

Now this is not to deny that some things are carried out unwittingly, accidentally. Events do have a "senseless" dimension. As different "microscopic" courses of action come together, they may lead to a larger-scale result which no one intended and for which no one can be held responsible. Yet if naturalistic analysis has often satisfied the social sciences, there have always been exceptions. The study of foreign policy may be one, for the important state actions which seem to warrant a specific accounting do not bear enough of the insignia of senseless happenings. Conditions and consequences have rarely sufficed. When we request a purposive account, our very asking in fact presupposes that the action had a "point." Therefore we want to set the action squarely within a network of plans and aims, which are located in a wider setting of reasons and interests. In this concentric movement, environmental happenings are replaced by purposive conduct; instances of conduct are in turn replaced by (or elaborated into) what I have called interpreted actions.

Also notice that in political systems, the idea of representation is one which further codifies these assumptions of intended and responsible conduct. Among the countless interpretations of American foreign policy, for example, most rely heavily on some notion of a national actor or national actors, along with a close regard for their concerns and reasons. They do so even as they mix such interpretative terms carelessly and inappropriately with the language of compulsions and determinants. Of course purposive conduct

often takes the form of learned and, thereafter, habitual dealings with familiar situations — where no conscious process of calculation may arise. Many such deeds are simply ... done; they leave no trail of public reasoning or accounts. Nevertheless, the thing to be noticed about governmental actions is that these habitual moves, and the "learning" process that preceded them, are much more commonly monitored — not only by the state actors themselves but by kibbitzing domestic constituents. For their actions, leaders are supposedly held responsible and, like unpardonable conspirators, sometimes even for their goals and plans. The political character of state action makes these articulated deliberations more familiar to us. It therefore facilitates the task of reconstructing the perspectives and self-understandings of those who have been centrally involved.

To elaborate further through the use of an analogy, in a therapeutic model, we find a somewhat related process, but one in which the actor assumes a different role: she or he becomes the interlocutor. Psychoanalytic theory provides examples. Here, quite unlike the opposing model of a completely somatic or physicalist medicine, behavior is not something that happens "to" the patient.[16] To simplify drastically, it is a pattern of action that a person desires and wills, for which she or he has uncoverable reasons. The actor-questioner then attempts to ferret out and bring to self-consciousness those latent purposes and reasons which lie behind an activity and give it its point. An analogy might lie with reducing the temptation to deflect responsibility toward the international or bureaucratic environment and its apparent determinisms, with regarding that environment as a nexus of incentives for acting in various ways rather than as a structure of compulsions. In this way, things which had just previously seemed to happen in the "natural" course of events or with a certain regularity (i.e., in causalist or deductive imagery) are transformed into arenas of conscious conflict or (admittedly somewhat vague) purposive responsibility. As Mischel puts it, "The difference between free and compulsive behavior might then be construed as the difference between acting in accordance with one's aims and intentions, and being 'driven' by aims and intentions which one cannot (without therapy) acknowledge as one's own." [17] The word "driven" belongs largely to a causalist, not a purposive lex-

icon. It implies that the realm of hidden intentionality may even operate quite mechanically, and in a subterranean way, as determinants. These are unwitting compulsions from which an emancipatory therapy would hope to set the patient free, or, carried to the plane of governments, which social analysts or the proponents of *Ideologiecritik* would try to uncover. Changes in perception or representation might be effected through *influence,* rather than the changes in "contingencies of reinforcement" which a model of *power* would suggest.[18] An acceptance of responsibility, at both the personal and the political level, might come to replace projections or excuses of inevitability that are little more than "self-service."

Such differences are not trivial, aside from whatever merit they show when it comes to describing the actions that are to be understood. A purposive account, for example, sheds light also on the ways that the reigning goals and considerations of a foreign policy might come to lose their significance and transparency, as the reasons that are offered for an action begin to appear inappropriate or incoherent. The unintelligibility of a continuing action can presage a breakdown in whatever domestic consensus may support it. Even though uncovering the goals and reasoning behind state behavior may therefore be of great moment if we are to transform the policy, some have ignored this lesson. Unlike the manipulation and technical exploitability of objectified processes that has been an aspiration guiding much of the natural sciences, a *dialogue* is suggested between social actors (or subjects). In some ways, the normative implications of political or social prevention and shared understanding therefore would differ from those of behavioral forecasting; the differences (and the advantages) show up within the corresponding styles of interpretation.[19] Now, in very sketchily stating the case for this one style, I do not question the value, even great value, of others. But the use of this approach, in keeping with the character of most state actions, is the logical first step and, in any event, an essential one. In light of such considerations for the task of understanding state policy, a purposive model can be relied upon.

BENEATH THE GOALS: EXPLANATION AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

Some of these remarks may be readily accepted. In fact, most analyses of foreign policy have accepted at least implicitly the value of a purposive *description*. At the same time, though, they have — often without careful thought and, I believe, inappropriately — pledged their allegiance to more naturalistic models of *explanation*. My arguments are aimed therefore at bringing these assumptions to the surface so that the confusions that bedevil our choice of explanatory styles might begin to be dispelled. At least where we undertake studies of an individual foreign policy, some of the talismanic value of more predictive or deductive models will have to be sacrificed if the overall self-monitoring character of the actions is to be respected. To summarize: the logic by which we explain foreign policy simply cannot be divorced from the purposive way in which we characterize it.

Unfortunately, even this model leaves dangling a number of questions which deserve an answer. The difficulties involved in reconstructing aims or reasons are legion, and the problems implicated here have only begun to be systematically addressed. But what I have been concerned to show are the kinds of tangles which arise when it is imagined that these problems can be avoided by bypassing the realm of intentionality or subordinating it to the concern for causal necessity. Such a "cure" is worse than the difficulty; the problems will not go away.

While dealing with an action from the actors' point of view has been a hallmark of the diplomatic literature, its fragmentary and often uncritical nature should serve as a warning. Too often it degenerates into other popular genres: court history, justification, advocacy. Actors can for example be deficient in their understanding of their own moves. They do not always know where they stand in regard to their situation. Supposedly trained in reading the beliefs of others, they can be hopelessly illiterate in the presence of their own. Here, the hypotheses of psychoanalytic theory (or of cognitive dissonance theory) should caution our enthusiasm over an account that relies too heavily on publicly articulated reasoning. Though political actors may decline

the option of silence, frequently they disguise the springs of their action, "beautifying" their objectives in an effort to soothe particular audiences. Rhetoric must therefore be treated seriously, but not innocently. If given a critical eye, actors' accounts at times reveal an artful arrangement of sublimations, rationalizations, pretexts and lies which themselves demand an explanation. [20]

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"Actions lie louder than words."

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Even if we are confident about the prominence of a particular aim or plan, our problems are far from solved. For, except in rare cases, an explanation will demand more than reconstructing the actors' shared frame of reference. The interpreted action may remain intelligible. The mere presence of some recognizable goal or reason does not in and of itself rid the actions of all opaqueness. As artists have learned, it is hardly enough to say that "the question of clarity is one of intention."[21] This has also been the signal failing of Rational Actor models of foreign policy[22] — much more crippling, in fact, than their reliance upon assumptions about a unitary actor. A purposive model need not be a rational model, but neither one may make an action sufficiently intelligible. Both give us a way of accounting for decisions *in terms of* the objectives and reasons which an actor could present (or, more problematically, which an analyst can infer). Yet knowing the deeds were appropriate to certain purposes will not do, unless we ascribe to those purposes a quality of self-evidence. One deficiency is clear: the shared purposes are in no way accounted for.

In the received conception, the adequacy of an individual explanation is thought to depend upon our ingenuity in contriving a broader generalization—a generalization that can subsume, and thus account for, the regularities which the explanation has revealed. The adequacy of a purposive treat-

ment, on the other hand, might be gauged by the fittingness of the actions in terms of those objectives and reasons which the actors entertained. The "practical inference"[23] rather than the deductively-interrelated set of causal hypotheses, lies at the heart of the aspiration. By "describing the end or the intention which the action realizes, we [are said to] explain why the action was performed."[24] But isn't this overstated? The same deficiency is revealed. The major premise of such an inference pattern (the characterization of a future state of affairs as a highly valued one) may be inexplicable.

It is just not convincing, even in cases of rational conduct, to contend that a person's "behavior can be fully explained in terms of the goals he is trying to achieve."[25] Too much would be taken for granted or withheld from scrutiny. Why were those objectives ones which the state actors intended to realize? *Goals themselves are problematical. Reasons are not self-explanatory.* The intentional qualities of an action, once uncovered, may continue to strike us as odd or even pathological. Because of its surface nature a purposive account therefore often *requires its own explanation.* It is a necessary first step, but it need not be the final one.

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> Intending something… involves selecting or accepting a context.[26] Context is everything.[27]

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If the purposive elements of an action appear "reasonable" to us (taking our criteria from some presupposed context or shared cultural background), we often accept the actors' reasons[37] as a very offhand account, one which can at least partially answer the question of why they did what they did. A plausible statement of the intended effect of an action may satisfy us: an interpreted action may suffice. This will in fact be the tendency of an official account: to try to stay on the surface, thereby *avoiding* certain types of transparency. The role of justification would overwhelm that of revelation, Yet, giv-

ing this last point some finer detail, I want to say: if the purposes and reasons which inform a foreign policy are not comprehensible in light of the domestic circumstances, a purposive action may remain as opaque as an author's use of an unfamiliar word. Why — or, in what context — is a particular foreign policy objective so desirable? As one writer put it, "To discover empirically what someone is doing we have to discover what *sense* is attached to his action in the society or cultural framework within which he is acting."[28] These are questions we might well address. And several related issues come to mind. Often we will want to ask why a national concern is played out in a particular arena, why (or how) it has come to be defined in this way, and what significance we might attach to these facts. A fuller understanding would require us to ask what exclusions are taking place between the state and domestic society, as well as which representations. We should also find some way of accounting for the intensity of the nation's purpose in relation to its possible costs, to alternative courses of national action or inaction, and to alternative social projects or competing social goals which the state could have entertained in its stead.[29] In regard to the sources of this intensity — and, along with it, the entire process of "nondecision-making" — many questions are left unanswered.

There are also other issues to which our eventual answers might respond. Explanation is, first of all, a matter of translation. The actions dealt with in a study of foreign policy will depend upon a particular social setting for their meaning as well as their significance. In order to get beyond the face value of either an expression or an action, it must be seen as more than a project. Something that is already meaningful in terms of a purposive framework needs to be translated into substantive social terms, by giving attention to its particular use and role in its domestic situation and not merely to the actors' international aims.[30]

Such a reference will be needed even if we are to successfully differentiate the actions, one from the, other. With this assertion, I am going beyond the earlier purposive approach to the problems of comparison and synonymy by suggesting the adoption of an approach which underscores the *conventional* as well as the intentional nature of these actions:

> Two things may be called 'the same' or 'different' only with reference to a set of criteria which lay down what is to be regarded as a relevant difference. When the 'things' in question are purely physical the criteria appealed to will of course be those of the observer. But when one is dealing with intellectual (or, indeed, any kind of social) 'things,' that is not so. For their *being* intellectual or social, as opposed to physical, in character depends entirely on their belonging in a certain way to a system of ideas or modes of living. It is only by reference to the criteria governing that system of ideas or mode of life that they have any existence as intellectual or social events. It follows that if the sociological investigator wants to regard them as social events (as, *ex hypothesi*, he must), he has to. take seriously the criteria which are applied for distinguishing 'different' kinds of actions and identifying the 'same' kinds of actions within the way of life he is studying. It is not open to him arbitrarily to impose his own standards from without. In so far as he does so, the events he is studying lose altogether their character as *social* events.[31]

A search for explanations, as already noted, need not be seen as a demand for a nexus of causalities, for separable antecedents sufficient to generate the happening in a predictable way. Nor need it be grounded exclusively in a view which sees the actors' self-understandings as an absolute source of signification. On the contrary, in many ways it resembles a search for the most revealing social context in which an interpreted action can be placed and in the light of which it can be rendered transparent. Even the tasks of differentiation and description will suggest such an approach. It allows for a more expansive characterization of *what* is being done, and a context in which the logic (or incoherence) of doing such a thing moves more clearly into the foreground. "The action needs explaining because there seems to be no 'connection' between the situation confronting the agent and what he does about it, at least when we describe the situation and appeal to commonly accepted rules of conduct concerning the thing to do in such a situation."[32] "Why?" may, in

other words, be a request for knowledge about a situation whose conventions make our specification of "what is being done" appear appropriate. We might first look for a particular domestic context which underlies the state's actions and its official definitions, one that provides a setting of constraint and intelligibility — especially in instances where the constraints of the international environment do not seem so overwhelming that we would be satisfied with a prediction of the "behavioral externalities."[33] That context (often meaning: the organization of socio-political reality) gives us insight into why certain reasons are felt to be "good reasons," and why what the actors are *intending* to do are things which they are also *intended* or expected to do. Such a setting is often *presupposed* by the actors' self-understandings. It would help us specify whatever other features of a situation will need to be "taken into account" (and cease to be taken-for-granted) before a reconstruction of the actors' shared frame of reference can make conduct understandable. This becomes, then, an account of an account.

At this point, many suggest instead that we seek the causes of a set of goals or reasons, possibly in a historical narrative or chronology of determinants. "Even when the reasons for an action are quite credible," as one writer put it, "the explanation they provide is bound to be incomplete. After all, there are reasons and causes for reasons, and there are causes of causes ... The explanatory chain (or, more accurately, network of chains) is endless."[34] Such a demand is often related to a search for the sources of domestic *power.* Power is frequently seen in mechanical terms as a property of an event, or series of events, which necessitate the intentional features of behavior — which are then given the status of dependent variables. Much of the discussion centering around the domestic sources of foreign policy has been inhibited by this approach. The relationship between goals and "causes" takes the form of instances where there has been a determinative change in sanctions or in "contingencies of reinforcement" in such a way that the frame of reference of the actors begins, paradoxically, to lose its prominence. The purposive aspects tend to submerge themselves within a nexus of antecedents.[35]

Actually the demand for the causes of purposes and reasons suggests an unregenerate attempt to get the purposive form of our ordinary language

discourse back onto the solider ground of event-causation. Yet the supplementation we really require may be quite different. It may represent a request for the social conventions behind the purposes: not the causes of, but the rules and reasons for, the actors' reasons. In this case, the explanatory chain is not endless, if it is a chain at all.

If the reasons are credible on their surface, in terms of what (presupposed) domestic context are they credible? By giving greater weight to the perceptions of the actors, the relationship those intentional features bear to that context appears closer to that of influence than to power. In such a case, the setting achieves its prominence by being the source of the incentives and information which are provided to the actors. Such things neither determine objectified regularities nor compel events; rather they affect the state actors' calculations and predictions as they ask themselves questions about what is likely to occur. Rather than a set of separable independent variables, the social context allows for varying degrees of "sociability" and influence. The explanatory task would then involve tracing out an argument through which those purposive dimensions ("for the sake of which" the action was undertaken) can appear intelligible. *The actions would be made to seem socially and situationally comprehensible, rather than causally predictable.* Why under the domestic circumstances (and what were the circumstances) did the action count as "the thing to do." [38]

In this conception, the social context is said to provide considerations and interests that delimit state action in a particular fashion, by standing "between" the actors' goals and their perception of the international setting. They give to those goals their "illocutionary force."[39] They allow their necessity and domestic logic to be made apparent, perhaps with a different sense applied to those words than usual.[40] Here I have in mind a relationship between national goals and domestic society which can be seen as a vertical one — of degrees of fittingness and embeddedness and coherence, rather than of causal sufficiency. At all times, what should be recognized and not merely evaded is the contextual nature and constitution of state policy. Rather than simply weighting the different considerations of the policymakers, as if that were sufficient, we would want to see how they are interwoven with (and rep-

resentative of) a particular domestic system and its distribution of values, images, and interests. Much of our discussion of terms like "the national interest" or "national security" demands a similar repertoire of questions.

In this light, the tasks of understanding and analysis appear rather differently than they have in the received conceptions. And a number of related issues assume a different character as well. More importantly, a recommendation has been made: that we refocus our view of foreign policy and, when it comes to explaining state action, significantly redirect the questions we are concerned with asking and the ways in which we ask them. Those questions have for too long been either ungrounded in any articulated model of explanation, or they have tried to draw sustenance from an orthodoxy into which they did not easily fit. Neither approach has been able to provide the kinds of guidance and clarification that are needed. Those needs require close attention. In this essay, by emphasizing a concentric movement outward, from purposive description to interpreted action to contextual explanation, an alternative procedure has been suggested. Understanding foreign policy, viewed in terms of this argument, involves not only a statement of the purposive aspects of an action, although this is where we must begin. It also recognizes the importance of expanding the action, of placing a policy perspective within a setting which might be wide enough to render it intelligible in substantive social terms. It becomes a continual locating of relevant contexts.

NOTES

I'd like to thank those people who commented on an earlier paper covering some of the material included here; in particular, Terence Ball, Owen Flanigan, Robert Jervis, Charles Lipson, Donald Moon, Vernon Van Dyke, and Kenneth Waltz.

1. For perhaps the most subtle and far-ranging presentations, see the work of Carl G. Hempel, collected in his *Aspects of Scientific Explanation* (New York: Free Press, 1965). For excellent critical treatments, see John G. Gunnell, "Social Science and Political Reality: The Problem of Explanation,"

Social Research, 35 (Spring 1968), and J. Donald Moon, "The Logic of Political Inquiry: A Synthesis of Opposed Perspectives," in Fred Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), vol. 1, pp. l34-l54.

2. At this point it is impossible to go into the labyrinthine problems raised by the deductive (or covering law) model of explanation — especially in regard to the status of case studies, statistical or inductive accounts, intentional and purposive descriptions, practical inferences, etc. — without getting lost. These are, nevertheless, issues well deserving of an extended treatment in regard to the study of state action and international relations.

3. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Macmillan, 1958, Third Edition), §621.

4. Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 19.71), p. 255. No clearer statement of the longevity of positivist categories of thought need be hoped for. It is possible, in fact, that the popularity of a reductive physicalism for international relations scholars may have been underestimated. It would be helpful to examine such a proposition in the light of the efforts in events data analysis, studies in comparative foreign policy relying upon aggregate data or on a schema of "mediated stimulus-response" or other formal modeling attempts, and in generalizations made about the economic causes of hegemonial behavior. The status of purposive elements may have become more precarious than many assume.

5. For help in charting a path through this literature, see Georg Henrik von Wright, *Explanation and Understanding* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,1971); Gerard Radnitzky, *Contemporary Schools of Metascience* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1973, 3rd edition); R. Harré and P.F. Secord, *The Explanation of Social Behavior* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972); Jurgen Habermas, Appendix to *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon, 1971): Theodore Mischel, "Psychology and Explanations of Human Behavior," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research,* 23 (June 1963) and "Pragmatic Aspects of Explanation," *Philosophy of Science,* 33 (March-June 1966), A.I. Melden, *Free Action* (New York: Humanities Press, 1961); Richard

Taylor, *Action and Purpose* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), William Dray, *Laws and Explanation in History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957); Gunnell, *op. cit.*; Moon, *op. cit.* and "In What Sense are the Social Sciences Methodologically Distinctive?" (Prepared for delivery at the 1974 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association). Von Wright, Moon, and Radnitzsky have especially wide-ranging bibliographies.

6. For discussions, see Roy Turner, "Functional Analysis and the Problem of Rationality," *Inquiry,* 9 (Autumn 1966) on the distinction between participant and observer transcriptions of scenes. Also, see Harold Garfinkel, "Common-Sense Knowledge of Social Structures: The Documentary Method of Interpretation," in Jordan M. Scher, ed., *Theories of the Mind* (New York: Free Press, 1962), Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), chapters 11-12; Gunnell, op. cit. and "Political Inquiry and the Concept of Action," in Maurice Natanson, ed., *Phenomenology and the Social Sciences* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1973); as well as Stanford N. Lyman and Marvin B. Scott, *A Sociologv of the Absurd* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970), chapter 1.

7. On these points, note Alfred Schutz, "Concept and Theory Formation in the Social Sciences," *Journal of Philosophy,* 51 (April 29, 1954), Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, "Decisions and Nondecisions: An Analytic Framework," *American Political Science Review,* 57 (September 1963), and K.W. Kim, "The Limits of Behavioral Explanation in Politics," in Charles A. McCoy and John Playford, eds., *Apolitical Politics* (New York: Crowell, 1967), p. 47ff on "non-events."

8. See the controversial discussion in Peter Dale Scott, *The War Conspiracy* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972), chapter 3, which stresses the complicated quality of the leadership process and highlights some features of it that have gone unnoticed.

9. Albrecht Welimer, *Critical Theory of Society* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), p. 35; also, see p. 37. Compare John G. Gunnell, "Deduction, Explanation, and Social Scientific Inquiry," *American Political Science Review,* 63 (December 1969).

10. Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul,. 1958), p. 115.

11. A *policy* might best be defined as a combination of aims and reasons.

12. See Harré and Secord, op. cit.; J.L. Austin, "A Plea for Excuses," *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961); Marvin B. Scott and Stanford M. Lyman, "Accounts," *American Sociological Review,* 33 (1968), reprinted in Lyman and Scott, *op. cit.*, and, for a related application, Stephen D. Krasner, "Are Bureaucracies Important?," *Foreign Policy*, No. 7 (Summer 1972), esp. pp. 159-169.

13. Allison, op. cit.; Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications," *World Politics*, 24 (Spring 1972), Supplement; Raymond Tanter and Richard H. Ullman, eds., *Theory and Policy in International Relations*; Morton H. Halperin and Arnold Kanter, "The Bureaucratic Perspective: A Preliminary Framework," in Halperin and Kanter, eds., *Readings in American Foreign Policy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973); Morton H. Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1974); Krasner, op cit.; and Robert J. Art, "Bureaucratic Politics and American Foreign Policy: A Critique," *Policy Sciences*, 4 (1973) represent the more prominent discussions.

14.. John Kenneth Gaibraith, "The Plain Lessons of a Bad Decade," *Foreign Policy,* No. 1 (Winter 1970—1), p. 42.

15. For the outlines of a persuasive negative response, see Melden, op. cit.; Taylor, op. cit., chapter 10; Mischel, "Psychology," op. cit.; Alan F. Blum and Peter McHugh, "The Social Ascription of Motives," *American Sociological Review*, 36 (February 1971). A complex debate continues to surround the issue of the explanatory status (and compatibility) of goals and causes. I hope to show its relevance to foreign policy analysis in a future piece.

16. See Radnitzsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-250 for an interesting analysis on which I am drawing. In somatic treatment, the "patient" need not understand, so a sublanguage is used which diverges from that of the participant. He is not "brought around" as an agent; rather, he is acted upon. At its extreme, we have

"veterinary medicine."

17. Mischel, "Psychology," *op. cit.*, p. 591.

18. David V.J. Bell, *Power, Influence, and Authority* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); Terence Ball, "Power, Causation & Explanation," *Polity,* 8 (Winter 1975).

19. In particular, see Habermas, *op. cit.*; and Radnitzsky, *op. cit.*

20. One study worth noting is F. M. Kail, *What Washington Said* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973). Compare Scott and Lyman, op. cit. Also Gardner's distinction deserves consideration: "by a man's 'real reasons' we mean those reasons he would be prepared to give under circumstances where his confessions would not entail adverse consequences to himself.." Patrick Gardiner, *The Nature of Historical Explanation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961; originally published in 1952), p. 136, fn. 1. Yet while actors may be deficient in their understandings of their actions, here we must distinguish between levels or kinds of deficiencies. I owe this point to a comment by Donald Moon. There is a vast difference between the behavior of a psychotic and the policies of a government leader adhering to a world view rooted in a specific social structure. Notice that in the former case, we may be left with scarcely any interpretative handle on the behavior without engaging in some further supplementation of a causal variety. (Radnitzsky's idea of "tacking" between the hermeneutic and the quasi-naturalistic levels suggests one way in which this supplementation might be carried out). In studies of foreign policy, however, such cases are not the norm on which we can construct a satisfactory model. Yet if no such distinction were made, and the impression left that the deficiencies in the reportage of actors were uniform, then the entire case for beginning with actors' self-understandings might be noticeably weakened. In this latter case, on the contrary, we can make a purposive reconstruction that is shallow, but which can nevertheless be expanded.

21. Barnett Newman, cited in Donald B. Kuspit, "A Phenomenological Approach to Artistic Intention," *Artforum,* 12 (January 1974), p. 52. Compare Rosalind Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility," *Artforum, Ibid.*, especially pp. 46—50,

22. See Allison, *op. cit.* At some point the argument should be

extended to show the connection between the explanatory status of Allison's Rational Actor model and Dray's notion of "rational explanation." This would also allow us to see the significance of the "disaggregating" efforts of bureaucratic analysts and their attempt to create a model of the chronology and narrative of decisions. This differs quite a bit in its epistemological assumptions from the project of deciphering and contextually "reading" a shared frame of reference.

23. Von Wright, *op. cit.*, also, Moon, "Logic of Political Inquiry," pp. 156-166.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 162.

25. John Harsanyi, "Some Social Science Implications of a New Approach to Game Theory," in K. Archibald, ed., *Strategic Interaction and Conflict* (Berkeley, 1966), p. 139, cited in Allison, *op. cit.* 31. Also, note Rolf Gruner, "Understanding in the Social Sciences and History," *Inquiry,* 10 (Summer 1967) for a discussion of such a denatured "rational understanding," where a previous focus on an entire "mental habitude" becomes an exclusive concern with ends/means relationships.

26. Terry Fenton, "An Exchange," *Artforum,* 7 (April 1969), p. 61. See also Roman Jakobson, "Concluding Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," in Thomas A. Sebeok, ed., *Style in Language* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1960), p. 353 and *passim* for an important discussion. A message *implicates* a context.

27. Frederic Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 17.

28. Arnold Levison, "Knowledge and Society," *Inquiry,* 9 (Summer 1966), p. 142.

29. How articulately those other interests must be demanded is a more complicated question. Here see, for example, Bachrach and Baratz, op. cit., and "Power and Its Two Faces Revisited: A Reply to Geoffrey Debnam," *American Political Science Review,* 69 (September 1975); Isaac D. Balbus, "The Concept of Interest in Pluralist and Marxian Analysis," *Politics and Society,* 1 (February 1971).

30. Compare Erving Goffman's analysis in *Frame Analysis* (New York:

Harper & Row, 1974), chapters 1-3, where one looks to see what "keying" or transcription the deed can sustain.

31. Winch, *op. cit.*, 108. The conventional nature of these criteria is underscored. Compare Wittgenstein, op. cit., §225: "The use of the word 'rule' and the use of the word 'same' are interwoven."

32. Mischel, "Pragmatic Aspects," p. 54. The request is therefore for the elucidation of a *pattern*, not a history of causes. See Quentin Skinner, "'Social Meaning' and the Explanation of Social Action," in Peter Laslett et al., eds., *Philosophy. Politics and Society,* Fourth Series (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), Melden, op. cit., chapter 9, and D.S. Shwayder, *The Stratification of Behavior* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 183-200.

33. Singer, op. cit., 82. Compare Arnold Wolfers' famous essay, "The Actors in International Politics," reprinted in *Discord and Collaboration* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), esp. pp. 12-19.

34. Vernon Van Dyke, *Political Science: A Philosophical Analysis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), p. 25; also, p. 28.

35. See the criticisms of this approach in Ball, *op. cit.*, and Bell, *op. cit.*, on which I am relying in these brief remarks.

37. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

38. Although there will be pressure for it to do so, such an attempt should not degenerate into an exercise in justification. Fitting a repertoire of goals and. self-understandings into a particular domestic context may mean rehearsing the calculations of the actors, but it will also transcend such activity, particularly to the extent that observer is able to gain some distance from the prevailing premises. Otherwise the analyst may not even see the need for such a contextual approach; the goals may seem "obvious" and the explanation may remain on the surface. See Ernest Gellner, "Concepts and Society" and Alasdair Maclntyre, "The Idea of a Social Science" in Bryan Wilson, ed., *Rationality* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970); and Frederic Jameson, *op. cit.*, chapter 3 on "contextual hermeneutics." Finally, Mischel's remarks are suggestive: "If the criteria in terms of which the agent decides what sort of situation confronts him, and what to do about such situations, are similar to ours, then redescribing his action is likely to explain it." ("Pragmatic Aspects," *op.*

cit., p. 54). This sort of explanation is the kind of which the salesmen of policy are fond.

39. These provide us a glimpse of the intentions *in* acting, the social "point" of an act, rather than the intentions *prior* to acting. See Skinner, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-146, relying on J.L. Austin's famous distinction in *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. by J.O. Urmson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), lecture viii, ff. Compare William P. Alston, *Philosophy of Language* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 35-49, and 73ff; and the different emphasis in Moon, "Logic," op. cit., pp. 167-182 and "In What Sense," op. cit., pp. 9-15, 22-26, 32; as well as Gunnell, "Political Inquiry," op. cit. pp. 243-265.

40. "The notion of historical necessity," as Frederic Jameson put it, "is therefore something like a historical trope, the very temporal figure of the process of historical understanding;" not a deterministic connection so much as a grasp of the appropriateness of a policy in a setting which is in no way natural or self-evident or inevitable. It "presupposes an ever closer approximation of the concrete, an ever greater enlargement of the context of the historical mediation, such that the alternative feeling of chance is not so much disproven as it is rendered inconceivable and meaningless." *Marxism and Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 41. He also notes that "The concept of historical necessity or inevitability [as an explanatory metaphor] is therefore operative exclusively *after the fact*..." It is not, in other words, a retrodiction so much as a corrigible interpretation.