Reading Foreign Policy Analysis: Beyond agency and structure in the ‘War on Terror’


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Abstract:

The lack of epistemological and ontological debate in the field of Foreign Policy Analysis stands in stark contrast to the experience both of International Relations and indeed the Social Sciences as a whole. This is particularly worrying given the seriousness and real world relevance of the subject matter. However it may be that this worldliness is the very reason that such debates have not come to the fore. The main disagreements within FPA fall under what in IR terms could be called the ‘levels of analysis’ problem, namely whether the focus should be on the interstate system or on the internal workings of the state as the driver(s) of foreign policy - a debate that could be broadly termed as structure v agency. There has been little debate on the nature of the reality either stream is looking at. A third stream of scholarship has arisen that suggests that the individual policy maker should be studied as an intersection point between the domestic and the international aspects of foreign policy. That is to say that how the policy maker interprets the international system and the domestic factors he is dealing with is a crucial factor in determining foreign policy decision-making. These studies have turned to cognitive psychology and analogical reasoning in order to explain how these interpretations affect decisions. However what is lacking in these studies is a recognition of the epistemological problems presented by introducing interpretation and meaning as variables in place of rational cost-benefit analyses. The assumption governing the above approach is that the language in which policy-makers reason is transparent, that the meaning of words is simply correspondent to some observable object in the real world. This ignores the linguistic turn in philosophy in the twentieth century, which drawing on the work of De Saussure and Wittgenstein among others has problematised this correspondence theory of meaning. The goal of this paper is to draw out the implications of these developments for FPA and to suggest discourse theory as a possible corrective. The focus in the paper will be on the ‘War on Terror’ in US foreign policy as an example of how a particular discourse can delimit both the field of action and the actors for Foreign-policy makers. The goal is not to suggest that the ‘War on Terror’ is simply a linguistic construction but rather to demonstrate how a discourse analysis approach can add to our understanding of how policy makers frame decisions and how these frames affect the outcomes of decision-making.
Introduction:

The relationship between the subfield of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) and International Relations (IR) more generally has always been rather odd. In one sense all work in IR is in one way or another an attempt to explain some aspect of foreign policy (FP). However, despite this most grand theories of IR place little emphasis on understanding or even acknowledging the role played by FP itself or by those responsible for making it. The reasons for this are far too complex to be adequately explained in a paper of this length but the effects are absolutely crucial. In a sense, FPA can be considered the drunken uncle of the IR family, always invited to family occasions but rarely directly spoken to or of. The goal of this paper is, in part, to re-centre FP in IR theory, and to argue that in order to do this FPA needs to adequately take into account the various ontological and epistemological innovations that have occurred in and around debates in IR over the past 25 years or so. Of particular importance, this paper will argue, is the growth of what could broadly be termed discursive and poststructuralist approaches in IR.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First, a brief overview of the development of FPA from the 1950’s onwards with particular reference to the emergence of cognitive and perception oriented approaches. This will be followed with a more detailed look at one particular example of this approach – Yuen Foon Khong’s *Analogies At War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (1995). The problems of this approach will be highlighted with particular reference to the epistemological and ontological implications of prioritising perception, and the implications this has on the relationship between

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1 Khong’s work has been selected not only because it is considered a strong work in the field using the cognitive approach but also because he posits the strong form of the cognitive case in a systematic manner i.e. that perceptions actually effect actions in clearly definable and, for want of a better term, measurable manner.
structure and agency. I will then move on to discuss alternatives to the cognitive approach as represented by the soft constructivism of Wendt and to a lesser extent the ‘Copenhagen School’ of Security Studies before looking at the possibilities of using a strong constructivist approach derived from a Foucaultian conception of discourse and bio politics. Finally, I will attempt to give, albeit somewhat sketchily, an outline of what just such an approach would look like with reference to the ‘War on Terror’.

**FPA & Perception**

FPA emerged as a distinct sub-discipline in the two decades following the Second World War. The initial thrust of the discipline was to make the policy making process more efficient and more open to democratic scrutiny. Part of the motivation for the development of the field was in partial response to the simplistic accounts of foreign policy making in IR more generally. The behaviouralist turn in American social science in the 1950’s and 1960’s had a profound impact on FPA, leading ultimately to the emergence of the comparative study of Foreign Policy (CFP). Despite the initial promise of CFP, which lead some to suggest that FPA was emerging as a ‘normal science’, the research programmes failed to produce results that suggested that such an approach to FPA was in fact practical and possible. From the mid-1970s onwards FPA, which at one point seemed to have an emergent coherent identity, began to diffuse into an array of eclectic and often incompatible approaches. However throughout much of this period another stream of FPA

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2 The strong/weak distinction here relates to the ontological assumption of the respective approaches best perhaps summed up by Wendt’s argument that his theory is not “ideas all the way down.” Social Theory of International Politics 1999. But this distinction will be elaborated in the relevant section.
scholarship developed, with a particular focus on the role of perception and decision making in the creation of Foreign policy.³

This approach could be broadly referred to under the title ‘Cognitive perspectives’, although the influence of psychology varies widely among the different protagonists.⁴ Essentially these approaches shared a largely rationalist and positivist view of Foreign Policy makers, indeed the motivation for most of these theorists was at least in part to explain away the apparent irrational tendencies of policy makers. Following Tetlock and McGuire, the core of the Cognitive Research Program can be stated as follows: 1) The international environment imposes heavy information-processing demands upon policymakers. 2) Policy makers have limited capacity to process this information and, thus, resort to simplifying strategies to deal with this complexity. Policymakers behave ‘rationally’ but only in the context of these simplified subjective representations of reality.⁵ What we have then is a view of the world as consisting of individual actors with limited capacities and a complex international system that from time to time throws up crises that need to be dealt with. In other words, traditional cognitive perspectives maintain a dualist ontology between agent and structure, and instead focus on how agents misperception of the structural situation influences their actions, hence the focus on misperception rather than perception per se. As Jervis puts it “In determining how he will behave, an actor must try to predict how others will act and how their actions will affect his values. The actor must therefore develop an image of others and of their intentions.”⁶ Of particular interest in this approach is the reinstating of the human agent at the centre of the

³ For a more detailed discussion of this history see Walter Carlsnaes “Foreign Policy” in Carlsnaes, Walter, Thomas Risse & Beth A. Simmons Handbook of International Relations; & Steve Smith “Foreign Policy Analysis and International Relations” in ????
⁴ See for example Hoffman (1968), May (1973), Jervis (1976), Snyder & Diesing (1977)
⁶ Robert Jervis “Hypotheses on Misperception” in World Politics Vol. 20, No. 3 (April 1968) P454
policy making process. In a sense it gives a better intuitive fit of how we imagine policy making takes place.

The question for these authors is, then, how exactly do these perceptions affect policy making? I’ve chosen to focus on Yuen Foon Khong’s work *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (1995) as Khong argues, and it must be said quite convincingly, the strong case that perceptions actually do inform if not directly cause actions and he gives a reasonably detailed framework of how this occurs. The basic idea is, derived from cognitive, that people when faced with novel situations will attempt to fit the new data into existing schema based on surface similarities. The mechanism through which this occurs, Khong argues, is analogical reasoning which can be outlined as follows: AX:BX::AY:BY. What this means is that past event A and current event B have X in common, given that Y was the outcome of A, and the common factor X then if the same reaction occurs again in situation B then Y will likewise come about. To put this in less abstract terms, the Vietnam situation in 1965 was seen to have several things in common with the Sudetenland in 1938, particularly the idea that it fell victim to a hostile totalitarian power, appeasement at Munich lead to WWII, therefore appeasement in Vietnam will lead to WWIII, action must be taken to avoid this.

We can see from the example above, elements of the six diagnostic tasks that constitute the cognitive function of analogical reasoning. These are as follows, 1) Define the nature of the situation – in the example above, Vietnam is defined as crucial moment in history, 2) Assess the stakes – in this case WWIII is at stake, 3) Provide prescriptions – in the Munich case it is assumed that if the Allies had stood up to Hitler then WWII could have been avoided therefore the US must stand up to aggression in Vietnam, 4) Predict outcomes – if action is taken it will be successful, if
5) Evaluate morality – obviously the greater good of avoiding WWII is a moral one, 6) Warn about Dangers – in the Vietnam case, Khong argues that the use of the Dien Bien Phu analogy could have given more effective information about the dangers than the Munich one, which suggested the main danger was inaction. Khong argues that the Analogical Explanation (AE) framework seeks to identify what policy makers are likely to use analogies for and how analogies might affect their policy choices. It also “has allowed us to explain decision outcomes at a level of precision not obtained by other approaches.”

To sum up then, the cognitive perspectives in FPA are important because they argue the importance of perception in determining the decisions taken by actors. But they do so with a critical imperative, that is to say that the motivation of most of the works mentioned above was to explain why policymakers consistently ‘misread’ situations when making decisions and to improve this state of affairs by pointing out these mistakes. Thus actors and structure are seen as mutually independent. Khong’s work is slightly set apart in that he focuses specifically on the cognitive functions of analogies thus suggesting why policymakers stick to certain analogies even in the face of overwhelming counter evidence, he does however share the same epistemological and ontological assumptions of the other authors. The importance of these works is that they opened the door for a systematic account of the role ideas play in FP decision-making; they do so however, with a fundamentally flawed method.

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7 See Khong (1995) P254
8 Ibid. P254
Problems

The difficulty with these approaches is that they treat interpretations as unproblematic data – in a sense they took the same approach many of their IR counterparts did when attempts were made to extend the field such as feminism, cultural studies, and environmentalism. For the cognitive analysts of Foreign policy this was largely a case of ‘add perceptions and stir’ without reflecting on the ontological and epistemological implications of placing interpretation at the core of their analyses. There three main problems that largely derive from the simplistic account of language taken by the cognitive approach in FPA. These are 1) Attribution 2) Structure v Agency 3) Interpretation, all of which I will argue can be more adequately dealt with through a discourse approach to FPA.

The problem of attribution can be stated as follows; most of the ‘cognitive perspective’ approaches lack any clear account of the relationship between perception and foreign policy behaviour, leaving themselves open to criticisms that the perceptions are merely ideological. The ideological/rhetorical critique gains further from the positivist ontology adopted by many of these theorists. Khong focuses on the psychological role analogies play in order to counter these criticisms. In a sense he concedes that ideas are in one sense epiphenomenal but that they do play an important role in determining how actors respond to the actual phenomenon in hand, that is via the 6 diagnostic tasks. However he fails to give an account of where these analogies come from, or why one particular analogy may be chosen over another. For example he suggests that American interests would have been better served had the decision makers at Vietnam paid more attention to the Dien Bien Phu analogy than Munich. The problem was “that there was so strong a consensus about the lessons of Munich and Korea and their relevance to Vietnam that the lessons of Dien Bien Phu failed to
provoke new questions about the fundamentals.”\textsuperscript{9} Surely such a conclusion calls for an analysis of how such a consensus emerges and sustains itself.

The question of which analogies are chosen and why also begs the question of what events they are applied to. For example, Khong’s analysis doesn’t question the fact that the Vietnam issue was necessarily presented a security problem for the United States. Likewise Jervis’ \textit{Hypotheses on Misperception} assumes that both the subject-agent (the foreign policy maker) and the object-structure (the international system) are ontologically independent. That is to say that the international system throws up security problems for the policy maker to deal with which in turn are often distorted by the policymakers perceptions due to time constraints and a lack of perfect information.\textsuperscript{10} What this fails to acknowledge is that in many ways Foreign Policy practice is constitutive of the international system that policy makers deal with. A possible corrective to this dualist ontology of agent and structure could be Wendt’s structuration approach, derived from Roy Bhaskar’s scientific realism, which posits that the relationship between agent and structure is in fact iterative. That is that while agent’s choices are limited by actually existing structured their actions can in turn affect that structure, which, in its new state limits the choices of the next agent.\textsuperscript{11} The problem for this approach though is how to adequately to account for perception. In other words even if the structure-agency relationship is in fact iterative, the actual impact of the structure on the agents actions, following the cognitive approach, still requires the added perception/interpretation step on the part of the agent. This step

\textsuperscript{9} Khong, op cit P263
\textsuperscript{10} Jervis 1968 Passim
\textsuperscript{11} See Alexander Wendt “The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory” in \textit{International Organisation}, Vol 41, No 3 (Summer 1987), P335-370 passim, obviously it is difficult to do justice to the full range of Wendt’s argument in a couple of lines and it is envisaged that the final draft of this paper will include a more comprehensive account and critique than the one presented here.
shifts this question from the ontological level to the epistemological; that is from the
level of being to the level of meaning.

This shift to the level of meaning requires an account of the role played by
interpretation. By making cognition and perception the centrepiece in explaining
policy-makers decisions, they open up a field of contestable interpretations of what is
actually being perceived and how these perceptions affect actions. Furthermore there
is a hermeneutic issue related to the position of the academic who, in most of the
accounts outlined above appears to sit in godlike isolation, able to judge on
misperception without having to give any account of their own perspective or
cognitive map. Take for example Jervis’ Hypothesis 9, which states that “actors tend
to see the behaviour of others as more centralized, disciplined and coordinated than it
is…Frequently, too many complex events are squeezed into a perceived pattern.”12 To
which he adds in a footnote without the slightest hint of irony “The Soviets
consciously hold an extreme version of this view and seem to believe that nothing is
accidental.”13 Although this is a somewhat innocuous example, it does highlight
something of a paradox in the existing cognitive approaches, that is that it is taken for
granted that policymakers, lacking perfect information and perhaps time, necessarily
rely on heuristic devices such as analogies or cognitive maps in order to cope but that
academics operating in similar circumstances have no such difficulties. The argument
here is for at least some acknowledgement of the need for a more reflexive approach
to the study of the role of perception in decision-making. In other words such
approaches must at least give some account of the academics own ‘dasein’ (being-in-the-world).14

12 Jervis 1968 P475
13 Ibid. P475
14 ‘Dasein’ or being-in-the-world is a Heideggerian concept adopted by Hans Georg Gadamer in his
account of Hermeneutic approaches to interpretation. The basic point is that all human beings have
A major source of many of the issues outlined above is the simplistic account of language employed by much of the cognitive approach theorists. Basically, these theorists treat language as a transparent conduit of meaning where words refer to things in the world in an uncomplicated and straightforward manner. This ignores almost the entirety of linguistic philosophy in the last century from Saussure onwards. The remainder of this paper will examine how discourse theory offers an alternative means of approaching and grappling with the issues raised above. The basic points to be made are as follows:

- That particular analogies are only meaningful to the extent that they are congruent with broader social aspects, and that the present is just as constructed as the past. This is not to deny the existence of an external objective world but rather to claim that events such as the attacks on September 11th or the invasion of Afghanistan are only rendered meaningful through existing discursive formations.

- Identity – in constructing threats via analogies or other discursive devices the foreign policy maker is just as much creating the self. I will expand on this idea in my discussion of a discourse approach to the ‘War on Terror’.

- Likewise an academic engaged in this kind of research needs to make explicit their own interests and preconceptions.

- This has in turn implications for Agency and Structure, in that they should be conceived as mutually constitutive – a discourse constructs subjects and locates them in relation to an equally constructed structure embedded in a

prejudices that are conditioned by their historical and geographical backgrounds that limit their ability to engage in objective interpretation. For Gadamer this meant that people had to engage in a hermeneutics of tradition that dealt with texts on their own terms and attempted a fusion of horizons between the past and present. Habermas on the other hand argued that it was in fact possible to judge texts on universal criteria. For an interesting overview of the debate between Gadamer and Habermas on the possibility of judging interpretations see Alan How *The Habermas-Gadamer debate and the nature of the Social: Back to Bedrock* Aldershot, Avebury 1995
system of practices for dealing with these subjects. This is a form of post-
structuralism following Foucault.

- Practice – both speech and actions are implicated in the production and
  reproduction of structures in this sense and thus the relationship between
  practice and perception is mutually reinforcing. In this sense a discourse can
  be seen as analogous to a Kuhnian paradigm in that it embodies a core set of
  fundamental ideas or attitudes as to what the social world consists of and these
  in turn inform social practices which affect actually existing human beings
  rather than the objects of scientific research.

**Discourse and Foreign Policy**

The problem of course for a discourse approach to analysing Foreign policy is,
realist critics would say, that you need to explain the relationship between discourse
and ‘reality’. This is a classic misunderstanding of the ontological and
epistemological foundations of discourse theory. The critique mentioned above would
be valid if we were proposing a rhetorical study or a study of ideology in Foreign
Policy but not in the case of a discourse analysis. The crucial point being that the
distinction between knowledge and reality is itself a construct of post Enlightenment
scientific discourse. The scientific approach holds that there is an external ordered
reality that can be uncovered and explained through the appropriate application of
scientific method. An, often unstated, assumption of this method is that language is a
transparent medium of communication and that words simply correspond with the
‘real’ object they describe. Thus there is a straightforward relationship between what
words say and what they mean. That is to say that a simple statement such as ‘the cat
is black’ can be interpreted by finding a definition of cat and black and understanding the rules relating to the use of ‘the’ and the present tense of the verb ‘to be’.

However, even in such straightforward examples as this, the correspondence theory of language can breakdown. This statement could for example be a form of code used by the secret services to indicate the guilt of a particular party, or even in more everyday use the description of the cat as black may carry meaning that goes beyond describing its colour, if for example the cat had just crossed your path then either good or bad luck could be on the way. The point here is that a simple correspondence theory of language cannot account for the full range of meanings of any particular phrase and therefore a discourse approach is required which acknowledges the socially constituted nature of language. Discourse analysis is “not a matter of denying, or of supporting, vacuous notions such as ‘reality exists’ but, rather, a matter of treating all efforts to specify it, all actual descriptions or versions of reality, as particular discursive, socially occasioned productions.”15

The second point that needs to be addressed in relation to discourse is the role of the author/individual. This is the second point usually thrown up by the realist, how do we distinguish the discursive from an ideological ploy, or more straightforwardly how do we distinguish a truth claim from a tactical lie? The response to this is that in effect it is rather beside the point. In other words, following Foucault, the discourse theorist is interested in the ‘truth effects’ of statements rather than any measure of their objective truthfulness; that is their correspondence with objective reality, which, as we already discussed, is problematic. Her aim is to explore how subjects are created by the discourse, what methods are privileged in dealing

15 Derek Edwards *Discourse and Cognition* London Sage, 1997 P52
with those subjects, and how this relates to power. Therefore the discourse is a structure of regulation and its rules are to be found at the surface.\textsuperscript{16}

A third point is the relationship between discourse and practice, in other words does the discourse determine the action of individuals? In essence this is a restatement of the structure/agency problem. Do we locate causation in the structure, in this case the discourse, or does it lie with the individual? The problem can be stated as follows, if we locate agency at the level of structure, that is to say that the discourse is all encompassing then we are at a loss to explain change. On the other hand, if we locate agency in some conception of a transcendent human agent then we end up back at the problem of accounting for authorial intent. The answer it would appear lies in between the two poles. That is to say that there is a relationship between the discursive structure and the human agent, that a given discourse is not a totality and that there is always contestation at the edges. An analogy can be drawn here between a discourse and the Kuhnian notion of scientific paradigms. For Kuhn there is a fundamental conceptualisation of reality that guides the practice of normal science. This fundamental conceptualisation consists of determining what are the fundamental elements of which the universe is composed, what is there relationship to each other and to the senses and what questions can legitimately be asked about these entities and what methods are appropriate in seeking answers. Kuhn argues that these aspects of a paradigm are fundamentally embedded in the process of scientific education and therefore the practice of research in a normal science becomes “a strenuous and devoted attempt to force nature into the conceptual boxes supplied by professional education.”\textsuperscript{17} In other words the practices of normal science are determined by this fundamental conceptualisation of reality rather than simply being determined by

\textsuperscript{16} For an excellent discussion of this see Hubert L. Dreyfus & Paul Rabinow \textit{Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics} Brighton, Harvester 1982

\textsuperscript{17} Thomas Kuhn \textit{The Structure of Scientific Revolutions} Chicago, University of Chicago Press 1975 P5
reality itself. A discourse can then be seen as being analogous to the Kuhnian paradigm, in that it embodies a core set of fundamental ideas or attitudes as to what the social world consists of and these in turn inform social practices. The point of note for the social scientist is that the practices in question affect actual human beings rather than simply objects of scientific research. The goal then of discourse analysis is to explain how particular discourses represent the world and how these representations inform and affect social practices.

By way of example, Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (1977) demonstrates how such a discourse affected the social world. Foucault’s focus is on the changing nature of the treatment of criminals in the 18th and 19th century. He opens with an account of the public and gruesome execution of Damiens the regicide in 1757 and contrasts this with the rules of the house of young prisoners drawn up some 80 years later by Léon Faucher. As Foucault puts it “we have, then, a public execution and a timetable.”¹⁸ What Foucault then goes on to argue is that these differences in the treatment of criminals were not simply a reflection of the severity of crimes but rather were related to a fundamental shift in how the criminal was perceived vis-à-vis society. In the 18th century criminality was associated with religious ideas of good and evil and therefore criminals were to be punished in a manner that matched the brutality of the crime, the goal simply being retribution. Thus public torture and public executions were commonplace. Foucault argues that the ending of these practices in the 80 years or so that followed the execution of Damiens was related to a fundamental shift in the discursive understanding of criminality. By the end of the period in question the criminal was no longer understood as being simply fundamentally bad or evil and in need of punishment but

instead was seen as abnormal and in need of reform or discipline. Thus at the end of this period instead of retribution there was “a furious desire on the part of judges to judge, assess, diagnose, recognise the normal and abnormal and claim the honour of curing or rehabilitation.”\textsuperscript{19} The penal system came to focus on rehabilitation and regulation instead of retribution in Western Europe. Obviously other considerations also need to be taken into account such as the coterminous growth of the state apparatus and advances in technology in order to explain the growth of the modern prison system. The point is that these explanations also have to take into account the discursive shift that occurred. In other words how the shift in perception of a particular human subject, in this case the criminal, lead to a shift in the methods of interaction and treatment that were deemed appropriate and effective i.e. the shift from public torture to incarceration and reform. Thus a discourse in the Foucaultian sense can be described as an institutionalised way of thinking that sets boundaries for the way certain subjects and actions can be talked about or rendered meaningful. The discourse in question here is that of the ‘War on Terror’. Of course there are limitations to the analogy of Kuhnian paradigms and Foucault’s conception of discourse, but for present purposes the analogy will, I think, suffice to clarify more than it obfuscates.

\textbf{A discourse approach to the ‘War on Terror’}

The first thing that should be noted is that the kind of discourse analysis being suggested here requires a huge amount of archival and empirical work which in this case has not yet been done. This outline is, rather, suggestive of what the approach would have to establish through such research. It would begin with a look at how the

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid P304
initial act in the ‘War on Terror’, the September 11th attacks, was constructed – i.e. as an act of war, requiring an associated set of appropriate responses rather than say a criminal act which would require a different set of responses. In a sense we can see this being articulated through the analogies drawn to Pearl Harbour rather than the Oklahoma bombings. The next step then is, if the attacks are defined as acts of war then who or what are they targeted against – America? Humanity? Freedom? Democracy? The answer to this question would, from cursory analysis of the statements that emanated from the US administration be freedom and democracy. “America was targeted for attack because we’re the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world”20 A theme which continues throughout the discourse. This construction of the self has implications for the other in that it is concerned with an ethical sense of self derived in no small part from American exceptionalism. The ‘enemy’ then is all enemies of freedom – i.e. not just Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda but a generalised enemy, which for the sake of expediency we will call ‘Terror’. Enmity then is concerned with the ethical boundaries of identity, which are not necessarily coterminous with the physical boundaries of the state. The discourse of the ‘War on Terror’ is then concerned with the drawing of an ethical/moral distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’. This drawing of the boundaries between friend and foe is then embodied in a set of practices ranging from, at the extreme end, interventionary war, incarceration in a cage in Cuba, targeted killing as in the case of Qaeda Al-Harethi in Yemen, to the more mundane practices of removing your shoes to travel through the metal detectors at the airport.

Conclusion

The point of this paper is not to argue that all FPA should be discourse analysis and nor is it to argue that all discourse approaches to IR are to in fact instances of FPA. Rather it is to suggest that if perception is to be considered a crucial factor in determining the way in which Foreign Policy is articulated and acted upon then a discourse approach provides a useful way of analysing where these particular perceptions come from and how they relate to foreign policy practices. Discourse theory shifts the level of meaning from the psychological to the social. It gives an account of how these fundamental conceptualisations relate to practice. And finally, it examines how both Foreign policy threats and Foreign Policy actors are constructed and implicated in each other’s construction rather than taking them as given.

On a more general level, this paper argues for FPA to have a place at the very core of IR more generally. Many theories of IR attempt to sidestep the thorny question of Foreign Policy by shifting the question off the table by appeal to the levels of analysis. That is to say for structural analysis Foreign policy is reduced to being a side effect of whichever structural force drives the system whether that is anarchy or economics. For those at the state level of analysis, Foreign Policy is simply the articulation of pre-given interests and thus uninteresting in itself. However discourse theory allows us to explore the interrelationship between these levels and their construction and reconstruction by the practice of Foreign policy. It is here, as the intersection between agent and structure that FPA has, perhaps, the most promising future.
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