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The Making of Foreign Policy: On Paradigms and Grand Strategies

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A foreign policy paradigm is the way policy makers perceive their country's foreign policy goals and their country's political and military position in the international community. The strategy used to implement this foreign policy paradigm serves as a link between many discrete components of policymaking. It represents a state's grand strategy, which aligns foreign and domestic policy, advances the country's interests in interaction with the policies of other countries in the international system, and helps with the allocation of resources between short-term needs and long-term goals. This essay analyzes the concept of a foreign policy paradigm and its link to grand strategy, discusses its effect on foreign policy, and considers situations in which foreign policy paradigms might change.

A. Introduction

The role of a policymaker is sometimes compared to that of a pilot. A pilot is expected to lead a group of people from one place to another. She might have many flight routes to choose from, and she will choose her actual route based on certain criteria (such as length or safety) and given certain conditions (such as weather or traffic). If she plans her route in advance, she will probably be able to choose a more efficient route. But if she first takes off and only then decides on her route, the result might be a slower, less efficient, or less safe journey.

This simple (indeed, simplistic) analogy captures the general idea of a foreign policy "paradigm." To say that a leader "lacks a foreign policy paradigm" does not mean that she is unable to execute her policies—a leader can always conduct foreign policy on a case-by-case basis—but rather simply suggests that the leader might have executed her policies more effectively if she had had greater goals to

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which she leads her foreign policy, that is—a foreign policy paradigm. A foreign policy paradigm is the way policy makers perceive their country's foreign policy goals and their country's political and military position in the international community. The strategy used to implement this foreign policy paradigm serves as a link between many discrete components of policymaking. It represents a state's grand strategy.

What we call "foreign policy" is the sum total of a country's various principles and courses of action in regard to its interaction with other countries and to events that take place in the international arena. The scope of this interaction ranges from open warfare or preparations for fighting to peaceful cooperation, economic dealings, diplomatic relations, and cultural exchange. It is important to understand that a grand strategy, or paradigm, for foreign relations does not consist solely of a military/defense strategy. It covers a vast range of transnational activities that are aimed at advancing a state's interests in the international environment.

This essay is an attempt to analyze the concept of a grand strategy and foreign policy paradigm. In the course of my analysis, I will examine the difficulty of defining the concept of "grand strategy", explanations of strategic thinking, factors that can lead to a change in foreign policy paradigm, and the debate over whether having a grand strategy is a necessity for policymakers. I will also touch upon the role think-tanks have in leaders' formation of foreign policy paradigm, and thus, of the formation of grand-strategy.

Forming a paradigm and a grand strategy involves deciding on the broader goals of a country's foreign policy and choosing the best way to achieve these goals based on the costs and benefits of each alternative. In other words, a foreign policy paradigm is the prioritization of a country's foreign policy goals and grand strategy is the prioritization of a country's actions based on its goals.

B. What is a strategic policy?

The literature defines grand strategy as a country's long-term strategic policy. However, the meaning of the term *strategy* in this formulation is somewhat unclear. What is a *strategic* policy? And how are strategic policies made? An attempt to understand grand strategy should start with an understanding of the term "strategy".

Strategic thinking—in politics, business, or everyday life—starts with an objective. What does one want to gain? And in the case of a country's grand strategy, this thinking starts with a country's policy objectives. To this end, a strategic decision maker forms a plan of action and particular policies aimed at executing the country's strategy.

Leaders' strategic policies, however, are not formed in a vacuum. Their policies interact with the countless other strategic moves being made by leaders of other countries. Thus, strategic policy is not only about the subject government's objectives and actions; it is also about how the subject government perceives *other* governments' objectives and actions. The incorporation of other actors' potential behavior into an action plan is called a strategy. Based on their anticipation of how other actors will act, policymakers make decisions and set policies that will maximize their goals.

Thus, the uncertainty embedded in a strategic policy is an uncertainty not only about future events but also about other actors' reaction to the policy. Accordingly, if all policymakers knew exactly how other policymakers were planning to act, all parties could achieve their goals in a much efficient way. So why don't states make the entire process easier and just reveal their intentions?

There are several reasons why states might hesitate to reveal their full intentions. First, governments do not always know themselves what they intend to do; not all states have a grand strategy that dictates how they should act. Second, states sometimes gain an advantage from being unpredictable and concealing the extent of their power. Third, since states know that they themselves might benefit from not exposing their intentions, a given state can never be sure that other states are sincerely communicating their intentions (Fearon, 1995; Deibel, 2007). In the case of grand strategy, this uncertainty means that governments take on some risk in assessing the way their decisions might lead to different actions by the other actors, and in assessing the probability that these actions will lead to a certain outcome.

An example of this risk can be found in Benjamin Netanyahu's moves in Israel's most recent military campaign against Hamas in Gaza, *Operation Protective Edge*. On July 15, 2014, Egyptian leaders approached the leaders of Israel and Hamas with an initial proposal for a cease-fire. Let us put ourselves in Netanyahu's shoes at that moment. The Israeli Prime Minister has to decide whether to accept or reject the Egyptian proposal, and to evaluate the possible scenarios that could result from each course of action. If he rejects the deal but Hamas accepts it, Netanyahu risks being perceived as the bully in this round of conflict. He might gain support at home, but he will likely find it much harder to justify his moves at the international level. If he rejects the deal and Hamas rejects it as well, the fight continues, and Netanyahu might still find it hard to justify his moves at the international level. If Netanyahu accepts the Egyptian proposal but Hamas rejects it, Netanyahu might be perceived as the one who wanted to end this round of fighting, and Hamas might be perceived as the bully in the conflict. This would give Israel legitimation for continuing the military operation. If Netanyahu accepts the deal and Hamas does as well, Netanyahu might have to face strong domestic opposition and a decline in public support even as Hamas maintains its current military power. On the other hand, he may also gain from

having saved soldiers' lives by avoiding a ground operation in Gaza, an operation which would have a low likelihood of actually eliminating Hamas.
In this example of strategic thinking, Netanyahu has to estimate his possible strategic moves, the different scenarios that might ensue from each move, the probability of each scenario, and, finally, the outcomes that these scenarios might lead to. Based on his evaluation of these outcomes, he returns to the original question of whether to accept or reject the Egyptian deal. In actuality, Netanyahu decided to accept the proposal, while Hamas eventually rejected it.

In constructing a grand strategy, also, a government must look ahead to the possible outcomes and reason back to the most advantageous initial decision in the present. But before making these initial decisions, a country's strategic policy usually begins with an assessment of the international and domestic strategic environment: the key actors in the environment, the prevailing norms, the level of cooperation among states, and the balance of power in the international system (Deibel, 2007). Countries also have to decide on their strategic approach—they have to decide whether or not they want to take the lead in the situation; whether to make the first move, or wait and see what other states decide to do; whether to take the risk of cooperating with other states or, due to a lack of trust and/or information, not to cooperate, even where interests concur. All these are questions that policymakers might raise when they draw up a foreign policy paradigm.

The task of identifying the main actors and their possible influence on outcomes and then making the right decision is rarely easy in real-life situations. Moreover, there are cognitive and behavioral biases that might affect the decisions of policymakers and the way they perceive their international and domestic environment. Nonetheless, this strategic process is an important tool in creating a general framework for a more efficient and targeted foreign policy.

C. What are a foreign policy paradigm and a grand strategy?

A foreign policy paradigm is the way states perceive their international goals. The set of practices that aim in achieving these goals is a state's grand strategy. "Grand strategy" is an often-used term in the foreign policy lexicon, but it is not always clearly defined. A grand strategy addresses the relations between a state's means and its goals (its foreign policy paradigm), taking into account the country's interests, the threats it might face, its resources, and its desired policies (Martel, 2013).

What, then, is the difference between a foreign policy paradigm or grand strategy and foreign policy *per se*? Foreign policy is the sum of a state's activities and interaction in relation to foreign states and non-state actors. This interaction comprises instruments such as economic and trade policy, foreign aid, diplomacy, military action, and participation in international organizations. A grand strategy is

a set of guidelines that shapes a country's foreign policy and utilizes these various instruments in a way that seeks to maximize the country's interests. It defines a broader goal for a government's foreign policy, and thus creates a policy instrument that goes beyond the day-to-day positions states take when reacting to single crises. The strategy a country adopts in order to achieve its foreign policy goals is not always officially declared, and neither are its goals. One can most easily perceive such strategy by observing the totality of the actions a government pursues as part of its foreign policy (Benziman & Romm, 2014).

Because a given state's resources are always limited, governments are often compelled to prioritize their preferences and decide which national interests or opportunities are more essential than others, and which threats are more dangerous than others. Indeed, this points to another way of defining grand strategy, as the definition of a country's foreign policy priorities. Thus, grand strategy is an instrument for maximizing a country's longer-term interests by integrating the government's foreign policy instruments under one guideline—a guideline by which the government prioritizes its policy preferences.

Such an arrangement of preferences should start with an overall assessment of the international and domestic strategic environment. Leaders and government officials first define domestic and international actors, such as domestic competitors, public opinion, international allies, international foes, multinational institutions and non-governmental groups. The leaders can then assess these various actors' preferences while taking into account international norms and degrees of interdependence. Next, leaders can analyze possible threats and opportunities, the potential future actions of each actor, and their respective interests. In this way, a state can assess its potential influence on other actors, given particular international and domestic environments. Finally, in considering their specific policy options, leaders will estimate a given policy's risks, costs, and probability of success. This process must be continuously renewed, and the prioritization reevaluated, in the light of new information (Deibel, 2007).

Grand strategy is also a function of a country's power. The grand strategies of great powers are more influential in world politics than those of small states: Russia's foreign policy paradigm will probably keep more leaders up at night than Malta's. Moreover, smaller states' strategies will be shaped based on the strategies being pursued by more powerful states. But this does not mean that a small state does not have to develop its own strategy. The small state still has to decide on the best way to maximize its interests, given the great powers' strategies.

Grand strategies are not static; they are constantly evolving based on world events and countries' changing needs in a dynamic world. Thus, states also keep changing their grand strategy. They must periodically revise and reevaluate their strategy based on changing circumstances while still focusing on their long-term

goals. These goals constitute a leader's vision, and the grand strategy is the tool employed to realize that vision.
A classic example of a grand strategy is the strategy of the Truman administration during the early stages of the Cold War. The Truman years are often described by pundits and policymakers as a time of grand-strategic foresight and frequently serve as a point of reference in the foreign policy discourse (Brands (2), 2014). In the aftermath of the World War II, the United States had to deal with the Soviets' increasing influence in Europe and East Asia. After hopes for cooperation with the Kremlin proved deceptive, the American government was confronted with a polarized international system with only two remaining great powers. American leaders quickly came to the conclusion that within this bipolar international system, if the U.S. protected countries that were at risk from Soviet aggression, it was in fact also protecting its own national security.

The diplomat George Kennan, America's preeminent Cold War strategist, saw the conflict between the U.S. and the USSR as ultimately due to Stalin's perception of the capitalist Western states—a perception that the West did not have the power to change (Kennan G. F., 1947). The notion that the differences between Washington and Moscow could not be bridged led to the central component of American policy toward Russia during the Cold War: the containment of Soviet expansionism (Kennan G. F., 1947). The American containment policy was designed to contain the Soviet Union in all aspects: ideologically, politically, militarily, and economically. A successful policy toward Russia, in Kennan's view, would give the appearance of a controlled and composed posture while not making demands on the Kremlin that would be overly detrimental to Russian prestige, thus making Russian compliance more likely (Ibid.). This approach led the American government to advance a set of priorities and guided the country's allocation of finite resources to policies that advanced the goals of the country's grand strategy.

D. Pros and cons of the foreign policy paradigm and grand strategy approach

Adopting a broader foreign policy paradigm and grand strategy can be judged as either a useful or a limiting approach to foreign policy. In regards to grand strategy, one criticism of this approach is that such strategies too often do not meet the goals for which they are created. Since foreign policy and grand strategy calls for a broad and holistic perspective, it requires a general analysis of world politics, and such analyses can be overly simplistic. A grand and broader foreign policy plan might impel leaders to apply a rigid organizing framework to dissimilar and complicated foreign-affairs issues. Adopting an inflexible view of political events can distort a country's understanding of complex situations and lead to counterproductive responses to international events.

Moreover, foreign policy decisions are made by certain policymakers, under certain conditions, under the pressure of specific political situations. These decisions are influenced by these policymakers' ideologies and values. Decisions made under such circumstances are necessarily subjective and cannot be a product of purely rational decision-making guided by a broader foreign policy plan.

Even in cases where leaders have managed to come up with a comprehensive, objective, and rational grand strategy, the process of transmission between senior officials who determine a policy, the lower-level individuals who carry out the policy, and the general public can distort the originally planned strategy. Specific policies are implemented through bureaucratic mechanisms which are designed to supply expertise and ensure the proper execution of policies but which can also be slow and inflexible. The leaders at the top issue policy directives but do not have full control over each and every step of their implementation, which may lead to undesired results (Brands (1), 2012). Thus, even if a grand strategy is good in theory, its theoretical success does not always translate into success in reality.

Moreover, the original goal of a foreign policy paradigm and a grand strategy is not always realistic in the setting of a democratic regime. Any democratic system comprises partisan disagreements, various interest groups, different legislative and executive institutions, and multiple elected officials who try to gain the support of the public. That is, government officials often have a greater interest in meeting the short-term goals of their constituencies than in promoting longer-term policies. These factors might make it difficult for the regime to coalesce around a single national interest and a coherent set of longer-term foreign policy goals (Brands (1), 2012).

But even when the bureaucratic mechanism of a government has been successfully mobilized around a common goal, it still has to be flexible enough to continue to act in service of this goal as conditions change over time. A foreign policy paradigm and a grand strategy require constant adjustment to the new threats and opportunities that are always arising in world politics, a constant adaptation of policies such that current decisions advance the state's overall progress toward the broader objective of the grand strategy. The structure of a government's bureaucracy cannot always make this important link between case-by-case foreign policy decisions and a more abstract strategic idea.

All these factors can constrain a grand strategy from being translated into pragmatic, applicable policies. Even if leaders are able to get such policies adopted, the implementation will necessarily be broad and general, and thus will only take the leaders so far. Critics often advance this argument in questioning the utility of grand strategy as a approach to foreign policy.

While often valid, this line of criticism sometimes stems from an inaccurate conception of a foreign policy and a grand strategy. They are not a daily

instruction guide for policymakers, and are not supposed to be a practical plan for the near-term or the foreseeable future. Rather, a foreign policy paradigm and a grand strategy is simply a general—and yes, abstract—policy direction set by the leadership. A grand strategy is not intended to be precise; it is intended to provide an overall sense of direction. But the fact that a grand strategy cannot be applied by every individual in a government bureaucracy does not mean that it is not essential for an effective foreign policy.

Government officials and leaders often face uncertainties and unpredictable events for which they have not been adequately prepared. They must have the flexibility to respond to these events appropriately. But having a broader view and plan of action does not always impede this flexibility—quite the contrary. Properly instituted, a grand strategy gives statesmen a conceptual foundation on which to base their decisions. Moreover, grand strategy provides leaders with a tool which with to build a more consistent policy, rather than just reacting to foreign policy events as they arise. When a state bases its foreign policy on a reactive approach, its agenda is ultimately determined by external factors and not by its national interests (Benziman & Romm, 2014). The instituting of a foreign policy paradigm and a grand strategy compels policymakers to set their policy priorities and carefully allocate their country's always limited resources. Having established such priorities can help government officials make decisions when they have to respond to new threats or opportunities in foreign policy.

A foreign policy paradigm and a grand strategy also articulates a leader's intentions to her domestic audience and to foreign countries, whether they be rivals or allies. When publicly declared by a leader, a foreign policy paradigm and a grand strategy can improve the leader's accountability by serving as an interpretive tool for assessing the leader's performance. A grand strategy functions as a benchmark against which a leader's success or failure can be measured.

Thus, a foreign policy paradigm and s grand strategy, which are not general and not easily adapted to the practicality of foreign policy management is not always a disadvantage—it is, in fact, the very advantage that the grand strategy is developed to provide. Precisely because the day-to-day conduct of foreign policy requires leaders and bureaucracies to take a separate and specific look at each issue, a grand policy provides leaders with the tool of a more holistic expression of the state's priorities and can help leaders connect the dots between domestic and foreign policy. Foreign policy is often about power and leadership, and not only about day-to-day problem-solving.

E. When do foreign policy paradigms and grand strategies change?

In establishing a new foreign policy paradigm, a government sets its guiding principles and goals and chooses the strategy that it thinks provides the best means to meet those goals. Then the government designs policies which are aligned with this strategy. But what influences a government's initial choice of a foreign policy paradigm? When do countries decide to diverge from their current paradigm and change to a different one? Following this paradigm change, what do leaders look at when they decide on new strategies and/or alter old ones?

Changes in a country's grand strategy can stem from a number of factors. Let us examine a few of these here.

1. When the old paradigm and strategy do not work anymore

Paradigms and grand strategies, like all strategies, often fail. When a strategy has clearly failed it has to be changed.

A good example of such a change is the shift in U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union during the Reagan administration. Reagan came into office with an offensive strategy. This strategy was aimed at creating a longer-term negotiating advantage over the Kremlin by taking an assertive stance that would increase the cost of Russian foreign policy and enable the U.S. to wind down the Cold War on American terms. To this end, Reagan described the conflict with Russia as a zero-sum game that would have a winner and a loser, rather than a conflict to be waged through endurance or patient diplomacy (Kissinger, 2007, p. 745). In reality, however, this assertive strategy eventually increased the Soviets' aggressiveness, escalated the tension between U.S. and Russia, and reduced the apparent likelihood of diplomatic negotiations (Feaver, What Good is Grand Strategy and Why Do We Need It?, 2009).

Seeing that his strategy had brought about results opposite to those he had intended, Reagan changed his strategy—though not his goal. In late 1983 and early 1984, Reagan began softening his rhetoric, voicing support for efforts to limit the spread and types of nuclear weapons, promoting expanded East-West dialogue, and implementing policies that reciprocated Soviet moderation. This American response to the weakening Soviet Union allowed Mikhail Gorbachev to reduce the USSR's defense costs, to alleviate his domestic economic pressure, and to productively engage with the West (Brands (2), 2014).

The failure of a grand strategy, whether due to unsatisfying results or unexpected costs, gives leaders a strong motivation to change direction. However, a failure of a policy cannot always explain the timing of a change and the choice of the new policy that is to follow. In order to change policies, policymakers need to have

political support for the change and a defined alternative policy to pursue. The differences between the old and new policies can be used by leaders to illustrate the failure of the previous approach.

2. When leaders and regime types change

New leaders often come to office bearing new policies. In democratic states, new leaders are frequently elected based on policy platforms that are different from those of the leaders they are replacing.

When Hassan Rouhani was elected president of Iran, for example, he promoted a series of civil rights reforms, which included bolstering women's rights and personal freedoms (although he has since been criticized for his failure to substantially improve Iran's human rights record). Rouhani also effected a vast change in Iran's foreign policy, by encouraging conciliatory diplomatic relations with the West and signing the Geneva interim agreement, in which Iran acceded to a short-term freeze of portions its nuclear program in exchange for reduced economic sanctions by the West.

Another example is the 2008 presidential elections in the United States. Barack Obama ran for the presidency using the slogan "Change We Need". During his campaign, he talked about the need to withdraw American forces from Iraq, to close the detention center in Guantanamo Bay, and to improve global perceptions of the United States, which was then widely viewed as a bellicose, heavy-handed superpower.

It is interesting to note that such shifts in policy following a leadership change do not always entail a complete obviation of the previous policy; the new policies can (and often should) incorporate some elements of former policies. Many critics argue, for example, that Obama's foreign policy lacks a long-term vision and a consistent philosophy. These critics assert that Obama's approach to foreign policy has been more reactive, aimed at dealing with the external situation that he inherited from George W. Bush, than proactive (Drezner, 2011).

An alternative way of explaining Obama's foreign policy in his first term in office is by interpreting it as enacting a grand strategy of "turning lemons into lemonade" (Feaver, 8 myths about American grand strategy, 2011). That is, Obama is still acting to preserve global order, but he does so by calling on other countries to join forces with the United States. While Obama is clearly also trying to restore American strength at home, he uses the threat of rising foreign powers as a motivational tool to increase this domestic strength, and he continues to develop and employ national security strategies that have been employed before his presidency. Thus, a change in a grand strategy does not always mean the total abandonment of old policies. In some cases, even small changes in a grand strategy can have significant effects and can entail consequential and risky bets

(Ibid.).

The literature on policy change focuses also on the differences between different types of regimes. Non-democratic regimes tend to change their policies in order to distinguish themselves from previous regimes. Thus, the influence of leadership changes on policy changes is different in different types of regimes. Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman's "selectorate theory" defines regime types by the size of their "selectorate"[1] (those with a say in choosing the leaders) and their winning coalitions (a group within the selectorate whose support is essential to keeping a leader in office). Leaders build a coalition of supporters among the selectorate. Winning coalitions in democracies tend to be much bigger than winning coalitions in autocratic regimes, where leaders are more dependent on a smaller group of people—this is the case for China's Communist Party, for example. Democratic leaders are therefore more dependent on larger constituencies (Bueno de Mesquita & Lalman, 1992).

In political systems with larger coalitions, supporting a challenger instead of an incumbent is less risky than in systems with smaller coalitions, since the likelihood of being left outside the new winning coalition is lower. In other words, it is easier to change leaders in democracies because the winning coalition is larger. The threat of removal from office might then induce leaders to pursue policies that increase the welfare of the general public, such as policies that encourage international political and economic cooperation (McGillivray & Smith, 2008).

On the other hand, in political systems with smaller winning coalitions, such as authoritarian regimes, leaders have more freedom to carry out drastic changes in their foreign policy. This also leads to potentially greater policy volatility from one leader to the next (Ibid.).

3. When public opinion and political coalition influence policies

When a new leader comes into office, she might implement new domestic and foreign policies. But the motivation for, or constraints on, such policy changes may reflect not only the change of leadership, but also a change of the leader's political party or coalition. Robert Putnam's *Two-Level Game* shows how the planning and execution of policy is influenced by a leader's coalition. A leader's capacity to pursue her foreign policy is influenced by her ability to gain support for this policy at home, and her bargaining position in the international arena is dependent on the acceptance of this policy by the leader's coalition (Putnam, 1998).

[1] The term *selectorate* refers to the most influential group of people in a state's political system, those who most directly choose the state's leaders. In a democracy, the electorate and the selectorate are largely coterminous: those people who vote for the leaders. In non-democratic regimes, an electorate does not always exist, while there is often a selectorate that has the power to choose the leader.

What drives political coalitions to support or reject their leader's policy? What might drive them to press for a change of policy? A well-established assumption in political science maintains that elected representatives' dominant goal is reelection. That is, even if policymakers have other goals, they will not pursue these goals if they threaten their chances of being reelected (Mayhew, 2004; Arnold, 1990). In choosing which issues to take on, how to shape their policy proposals, and which strategies to pursue, coalition leaders know that their actions are constrained by their need to obtain the support of a majority of legislators. Legislators' decisions, in turn, are understood to be dependent on how the legislators expect their constituencies to react to these decisions. Thus, leaders will try to anticipate the public's position in order to gauge how much support legislators will offer for their policies (Arnold, 1990).

This logic might lead one to conclude that leaders and legislators will always make their decisions based on the public's preference. However, scholars have found very little evidence of a link between public support for certain policies and policymakers' decisions on these policies. Research shows that representatives are not completely responsive to their constituencies' preferences (Converse, 1964; Clinton, 2006; Page, 2006; Bernstein, 1989; Miller & Stokes, 1963). Studies do indicate, however, that there is a significant link between legislators' decisions and the way they anticipate those decisions might be used *against* them. In other words, legislators appear to adjust their decisions based on the degree to which these decisions could cause electoral problems (Kingdon, 1989; Arnold, 1990).

Thus, if policymakers anticipate that their support for an existing foreign policy might lead to a negative reaction in upcoming elections, they might act to change that policy. By contrast, if the leaders see that their constituencies do not have strong opinions about foreign policy and expect this situation to persist into the election period, they will not push for changes in policy (Arnold, 1990).

4. When external changes come into play

External changes can be a significant, or even the main, component in a government's foreign policy paradigm and its decision on a grand strategy. A change in the composition and perception of international actors can lead to a change of strategy. This external change might be the emergence of an external threat or the opening of a great opportunity that did not previously exist. A good example of an external change triggering a shift in grand strategy is the Arab Spring. While some perceived the geopolitical changes in the Middle East as a threat to Israel's national security, others saw in these events as an opportunity for a change in Israel's foreign policy. In the latter interpretation, Israel could have take advantage of the situation to engage with the Arab Street, engage with political Islam, and promote the peace process (Goren & Podeh, 2013).

One can see how external changes affect foreign policy by looking at the variation in the nature of the external threats that have faced the state of Israel since its establishment in 1948, and how this variation has affected Israel's foreign policy. Israel's foreign policy strategy has been dominated by security concerns and the imperative of building up its international alliances. However, the security threats Israel faces have changed over the years. Israel must still deal with significant security threats, but its military power and regional influence now give it significant advantages over its adversaries. Reflecting this change in the nature of the external threat, many observers, both inside and outside of Israel, have called for a change in Israel's foreign policy (Etzion, 2013; Mitvim, 2014). According to this argument, Israel should develop a more diplomatic approach and not rely only on a military one (Mitvim, 2014).

Another important external factor that influences the way countries set their foreign policy and grand strategies is the structure of the international system. States tailor their grand strategies to their national interests, which themselves are shaped by the influence of their allies and the influence of other states with more power in the international system. Governments will adopt different strategies based on the number of great powers and the structure of alliances in a given international system. States might choose a different strategy in a world where there are two great powers than in a world where there is only one superpower, and yet another in a world where there are several major powers. During the Cold War, many states had to choose which superpower to ally with, setting their strategy based on their support for either the United States or the Soviet Union. In a bipolar system such as this, the alternatives are unambiguous—a state chooses one superpower or the other. Each alliance in such a system faces a single, defined threat (Taras & Zeringue, 1992). In a multipolar system, by contrast, states have different types of alliances to choose from and more major powers with which they can choose to ally. Moreover, in a multipolar system the cost of exiting one alliance and entering another is often harder to estimate in advance.

Small states in a bipolar system also enjoy better bargaining positions with respect to the two big powers, as the latter have an interest in keeping small states on their side. In a unipolar world, the small state's bargaining position is not as advantaged. Israel's relations with the United States are a good example of the latter situation. In spite of the current close relationship between the two countries, the interests that drive the alliance are changing. In the past, during the Cold War, the U.S.-Israel relationship was more based on America's interest in keeping an ally in the Middle East and less based on domestic political pressure within the United States. Today, this relationship relies more on domestic pressure and less on the perception of Israel as the only American ally in the region—and some argue that the domestic political pressure for a strong relationship with Israel is decreasing as well (Malka, 2011; Beinart, 2010), This change in relationship affects Israel's bargaining position in its dealings with the United States, and it

might also affect America's interests in its cooperation with Israel. This change in America's interests could have an effect on future Israeli grand strategy.

5. When a "black swan" event occurs

The term "black swan", popularized by Nassim Taleb in his book of the same name, refers to a "logic that makes *what you don't know* far more relevant than what you do know" (Taleb, 2007). It refers to the epistemic limitations of individuals and groups. As confident as we may be in our knowledge, there is always a possibility for a completely unexpected event to take place.

No grand strategy can account for all possible future situations and events. Thus, grand strategies should be broad and flexible enough to account for the uncertainties leaders and government officials deal with in making foreign policy decisions. However, from time to time leaders face an outlier event that has an extreme impact and falls outside the realm of conventional expectations. Events like this—the First World War, the 9/11 terror attacks, the 2008 economic crisis, the Arab Spring—are always exhaustively analyzed after the fact, making it seem as though we could have foreseen them had we only paid more attention. But the truth is that people, or states, will never be able to predict all single 'game-changing' events in world politics. Indeed, in many cases, if states could have predicted a certain event, that event would likely never have happened—as in the case of the 9/11 attacks (Ibid.).

Such infrequent, significant, and unpredictable events can drive changes in a state's grand strategy. After having shifted to a new strategy, states may well view these unpredictable events retrospectively and take measures that could have helped to predict or even avoid them. After 9/11, for example, countries changed their national security policies, increased their cooperation with allies on counterterrorism, or started wars to go after terrorist leaders. However, these new measures cannot be guaranteed to help the country avoid the *next* black swan event, which by definition will come from an unexpected direction.

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How do leaders change their country's foreign policy paradigms? How to they come to set their new grand strategy? The question of how exactly policymakers make decisions, set and implement policies, or change their policies is at the center of the field of international relations.

Some studies have focused on the role of leaders, analyzing their rational interests—domestic, international, and personal—or the cognitive biases that might affect their decision-making (Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, & Morrow, James, 2003; Chiozza & Goemans, 2011; Fearon, 1994; Goemans,

2000; Rosen, 2005). Other theories of international relations focus on the state as the decision-maker. These theories assume that policymakers are rational decision-makers for whom their state's survival in the international system is the first and only priority. Other studies have focused on state institutions and bureaucracies and the way these institutions shape policy (Gelpi & Griesdorf, 2001; Howell & Pevehouse, 2005; Mansfield & Snyder, 2005; Simmons, 2009; Smith, 1996; Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Hermann, 1990). This literature lays out a range of domestic factors which presumably shape states' policy. Among these factors are institutions such as local and federal government agencies, legal institutions, military organizations, the media, public opinion, and interest and lobbying groups.

One of the domestic factors that have gotten less attention is the influence of think-tanks on domestic and foreign policy. Policymakers often do not have the time, expertise, or willingness to collect and analyze the amount of information necessary for a thorough decision-making process, so they turn to think-tanks for concise analyses of key issues in domestic and foreign policy. These institutions have the capacity to examine foreign policy in a broader perspective and to assess in greater detail how particular policies might be implemented. Think-tanks raise and promote their ideas in ways that can stimulate public discourse, and they promote these ideas in both formal and informal government settings. All these factors likely affect not only the incentives for leaders to change their foreign-policy paradigms, but also the way in which the leaders act to change these paradigms (Abelson, 2006).

F. Conclusion

In international relations one often sees a tension between government declarations and the events that are actually taking place. When a leader threatens a war or an attack, there is the question of whether or not the leader really means it. When a government signs an international agreement, there is the uncertainty about whether the government will actually comply with the agreement. However, such declarations are crucial signaling tools in foreign policy. Statements, agreements, and declarations are important actions in their own right because they set goals for leaders to aim at, establish benchmarks by which leaders' behavior can be assessed, and send messages to leaders' allies and foes.

Thus, even if foreign policy paradigms do not address each and every event in international politics, and even if it is difficult to translate grand strategies into practical actions, they are still essential for the planning of foreign policy. A country can manage its foreign policy without such planning, simply reacting to events in world politics on case-by-case basis. However, if a government wants to achieve a certain goal, such as maximizing its power, grand strategy provides an

opportunity to prioritize policies that are likely to be more effective means of reaching that goal.

Foreign policy paradigms serve as a link between many discrete components of policymaking. It aligns foreign and domestic policy; it advances the country's interests in interaction with the policies of other countries in the international system; and it helps with the allocation of resources between short-term needs and long-term goals.

The integration of these different mechanisms creates a set of guidelines that can serve as an extremely useful reference point for dealing with the complexities of day-to-day decisions and aligning them with a country's long-term national interests. In the end, foreign policy paradigms and the strategies that aim at implementing them are never a guarantee of effective and successful policy-making—but it can be an excellent starting point.

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