

# What is to be done? Foreign policy as a site for political action

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The idea of foreign policy needs to be liberated—from the *cul de sac* down which it has been shunted in the academic study of International Relations (IR), and from the fatalistic assumption of too many citizens that it is an occult affair, doomed to be the preserve of disingenuous politicians and arrogant, unaccountable officials. Yet the reference in my title to Lenin's famous question of 1902 does not imply a call to arms, seeing foreign policy as needing the spark of righteous conviction, let alone the driving force of a vanguardist elite.<sup>1</sup> Rather, it is an open-ended query about one of the key dilemmas of the last hundred years, still unresolved: how to pursue responsible international policy while doing justice to the processes of mass democracy. The premise is that foreign policy is not outside normal politics; that some kinds of political action may be pursued effectively through it, and others less so; and that, far from being irrelevant in modern conditions, as some argue—or, more often, simply assume—foreign policy is one of the most critical activities in which a polity, particularly a democratic polity, engages.

## The context

Foreign policy has been the subject of reflection for as long as diplomacy—that is, for more than 2,000 years, from Thucydides through Machiavelli to Grotius. The term 'foreign policy' came into increasing use from the eighteenth century onwards, with the first ministries of 'foreign affairs'. For the 250 years from about 1700 to 1950 it was the subject of increasing commentary: some technical, about the qualities of skilled diplomacy, and some political, about the ends which foreign policy should serve. The former was evident in the writings of François de Callières and Harold Nicolson, the latter in those of Richard Cobden and

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<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *What is to be done?*, ed. S. V. Utechin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963; first publ. 1902). Lenin's title was itself a form of homage to Nikolai Chernyshevsky's 1862 novel of the same name, whose ascetic, superhuman hero inspired much subsequent opposition to the tsars.

Jean Jaurès. To both strains of thought it was, at least, evident that foreign policy was of considerable importance for the survival and prosperity of a country. Mistakes were perhaps more likely to lead to disaster than success was to nirvana, but few doubted that foreign policy was a serious business—too serious, in most views, to risk its falling into inexperienced hands.

This was also the prevalent view—indeed, it could hardly have been otherwise, given the events of 1933–45—in the early postwar and Cold War years. With nuclear weapons and the emergence of superpowers, foreign policy seemed both a liberal restraint on military competition and the expression of that rivalry, according to your point of view. It certainly did not seem irrelevant. This was why the burgeoning industry of American social science soon came to turn its attention to foreign policy, in the hope of subjecting it to scientific analysis and therefore heightening the chances of policy being rational and based on well-grounded knowledge. From 1954, when Richard Snyder and his colleagues produced the first formal study of ‘decision-making’ in foreign policy, through to the late 1970s and the rise of ‘international political economy’ (IPE) perspectives, the subject of Foreign Policy Analysis was one of the most groundbreaking and productive areas of academic International Relations. Key books like Joseph Frankel’s *The making of foreign policy*, Irving Janis’s *Victims of groupthink*, Robert Jervis’s *Perception and misperception in international politics* and, especially, Graham Allison’s 1971 classic *Essence of decision*, laid bare the role of bureaucratic and psychological factors in the formation of foreign policies, and also the importance of the domestic political environment to decisions which previously had been discussed largely in terms of the logic of the international system.<sup>2</sup>

All waves in intellectual activity pass and are superseded. It is perfectly natural that the sense of intellectual excitement over FPA should have dissipated and that other areas should have come to the fore—as has happened in IR over the past 25 years variously with IPE, epistemology, political theory, constructivism, postmodernism and globalization. All of these waves have made their own contributions. What is not acceptable, however, is the throwing out of the baby with the bathwater, which has happened not just with FPA but with the very notion of foreign policy. This is not mere happenstance. Three serious forms of reasoning, two about the changing nature of the world, and one about the internal problems of FPA, led to a decline in interest in problems of foreign policy in the academic study of international relations, which has only recently shown signs of being reversed. The consequence has been the removal of courses on foreign policy from university syllabuses, or their downgrading to mere ‘options’, and the shunting off of interested research students into country

<sup>2</sup> Richard C. Snyder, H. W. Bruck and Burton Sapin, *Foreign policy decision making* (New York: Free Press, 1962); Joseph Frankel, *The making of foreign policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963); Irving Janis, *Victims of groupthink: a psychological study of foreign policy decisions and fiascoes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972; 2nd rev. edn *Groupthink: psychological studies of policy decisions and fiascoes*, 1982); Robert Jervis, *Perception and misperception in international politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); Graham Allison, *Essence of decision: explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971). A considerably revised edition of the last work was published in 1999 by Addison-Wesley of New York, in which Allison was joined as co-author by Philip Zelikow.

and area studies, themselves also disparaged and marginalized in the tide of self-regarding concern with epistemology, theory and a self-congratulatory 'critical' (in fact, all too often the reverse) agenda.

Of the genuinely reasoned critiques which led to a turn away from the study of foreign policy, the first was the growth of scepticism about the state, the second was the argument that 'foreign' is no longer a meaningful category, and the third the view that decision-making theories are inherently limited in their scope. I shall deal briefly with each of these positions, both to clarify them and to show why they do not justify a neglect of the critically important issues involved in the notion of foreign policy.<sup>3</sup>

Scepticism about the utility and durability of the state has grown steadily in proportion to the rise of interdependence, transnationalism, globalization et al.—that is, with the huge growth in the world economy and the triumph of capitalism over state socialism in the last decades of the twentieth century. States—by which is often meant governments—seem to be losing the capacity to exert control over their own economies, and are less often associated with a distinctive civil society or culture, while many decolonized units have never even reached the desired condition of real statehood in the first place. What is more, the 'Westphalian system' of sovereign states is deemed now to be of more historical than contemporary interest, given the apparently powerful alternative interpretations of hyperpower-cum-empire on the one hand and global governance on the other.

There is some truth in this account, although it tends to measure change against an idealized view of the past, and to make the common confusion between sovereignty and power. Even the most powerful states, at the height of the Westphalian system—whose demise has too often been prematurely invoked—have never enjoyed full autonomy internally, let alone a free hand in their foreign policy. This did not stop them being sovereign in the dual sense of having international recognition and the capacity to make their own internal laws. So unless we consider that states have now become empty shells, our judgements about their utility are bound to be relative and contingent—on geopolitical situation, internal stability and phase of development. In so far as generalization is possible, we can say that few of the UN's 190 members are just geographical expressions, whose internal political life lacks any distinctive meaning. What is more, although the group of around 40 micro- and mini-states cannot be said to have very significant foreign policies in terms of the system as a whole, their external strategies are still critical for their inhabitants, as Malta and East Timor have demonstrated vividly. What is more, they turn out to matter to their regions, as Grenada, Kuwait and Slovenia have variously demonstrated over the past 20 years.

The argument that the state is finished also has to deal with the corollary that either political agency has become so dispersed as not to be identified with accountable actors, or that it now resides elsewhere. Neither proposition is

<sup>3</sup> This discussion is amplified in Christopher Hill, *The changing politics of foreign policy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003).

convincing. We are far from the point where the international system can be accurately characterized by such terms as ‘global governance’ or ‘empire’, despite the recent vogue for overarching interpretations of this kind.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, leaving aside such factors as the revival of nationalism or the dependence of international organizations on their state members, other types of international actor—such as Amnesty International or Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation—have either very limited or indirect political roles. Pressure groups and companies in general neither seek nor are capable of exercising political or territorial responsibilities. Their aim is to influence *states* and their strategies, and indeed they require the continued health of the state in order to function well in their own realms. For their part, citizens still look to their governments to act for them on a wide range of issues, an increasing number of which have an international dimension.

This is already, then, to move on from the general issue of statehood and its continued importance to that of foreign policy. Yet what of the objection that the category of ‘foreign’ no longer contains anything very distinctive? This can be disposed of without much difficulty. First, only an innocent would ever suppose that the distinction between ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’ is, or ever was, hard and fast. There has always been an interpenetration of the two realms, from the sixteenth-century wars of religion through the spread of the industrial revolution to the age of communism and fascism. In the dramas of insurrection, as Fred Halliday has shown (and as Burke was only too well aware during the French Revolution), the internal and the international are inherently connected.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, in our own age, the two have not dissolved into each other. Every organization, indeed any functioning entity, has an inside and an outside—which are closely connected and help to constitute each other, of course, but are still distinguishable. If this is true of the London School of Economics and of Volkswagen, then it is even truer of the UK and of Brazil. Inside and outside, domestic and foreign, are therefore best conceptualized as the two ends of a continuum, allowing for a good deal of overlap, in a category sometimes called ‘intermestic’. In the special case of the European Union this is significantly large, but even here common sense finds that Portugal and Spain are separate, despite their closeness and overlapping histories; similarly, Canada and the United States are not identical, despite some common acculturation, and what some would see as the logic of merger.

The term ‘foreign’, after all, does not mean ‘barbaric’, ‘threatening’ or ‘remote’—all qualities which have been associated with it by xenophobes, and

<sup>4</sup> On global governance, see David Held and Anthony McGrew, eds, *Governing globalization: power, authority and global governance* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002). For debate on the notion of ‘empire’, seen as the emergence of a decentred but inevitably American or Western-dominated international order, see Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000) and the articles commenting on it by Alex Callinicos, Martin Shaw and R. B. J. Walker in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 31: 2, 2002. See also Robert Cooper, ‘The next empire’, *Prospect*, Oct. 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Fred Halliday, *Revolution and world politics: the rise and fall of the sixth great power* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

which tempt internationalists to want to dispense with it. It derives from the Latin *foris* meaning ‘outside’, and simply refers to people and things from another country, or to that which is unfamiliar. Naturally, in an age which stresses the importance of our common humanity many of us want to play down the idea of difference, especially where it is based on statehood or nationality. But even if we were to displace terms like ‘foreign policy’ and ‘foreigner’—and political correctness has moved in that direction—we should simply have to find new labels for the same reality, just as firms have ‘international departments’ or the EU has ‘external economic relations’. If we acknowledge that boundaries can be fuzzy, that interdependence is extensive and that ethics should be a single realm, there is still a break-point between those who are inside any given community and those who are outside, between those for whom you are legally responsible and those for whom you are not; between those resources you can exploit and those which belong to others—even, in principle, between those weapons factories you may justify attacking and those where you would be pushed to make a case. While most activity has an international dimension, there are still some things—the firefighters’ strike for instance—which are mainly ‘our’ business, and others, like the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which are mostly other people’s business. In short, the differences between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ usually count, in terms of the responsibilities we have, the resources we are able to deploy and the influence we may exert.

The third reason for the decline in interest in foreign policy is more internal to the academic subject of International Relations: that is, the turn away from decision-making (and indeed, most ‘micro’ theories) in favour of various forms of structuralism. The combination of neo-realism and the economic/sociological focus on globalization squeezed out politics from the discussion of international relations during much of the past two decades. Those theories which were at least agent-oriented, like rational choice, made formal assumptions about decision-making and were difficult to apply to real-world foreign policies. Even Robert Putnam’s notion of the two-level game, where decision-makers play simultaneously on the international and the domestic chessboards, allowed little actual scope for the complexities of multi-actor policy-making, unless relaxed and treated as a metaphor.<sup>6</sup>

It is difficult to believe that this retreat into generality and formalism serves the long-term interests of the subject, let alone those of the concerned citizen. There have been some welcome green shoots of regrowth over the past decade in the interest which the post-positivist school has taken in the language of foreign policy; but here too there is a tendency to take refuge in obfuscation and the analysis of ‘representational practices’ and discourse, which are difficult

<sup>6</sup> Robert D. Putnam, ‘Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games’, *International Organisation* 42, Summer 1988, repr. and developed on in Peter B. Evans, Harold K. Jacobson and Robert D. Putnam, eds, *Double-edged diplomacy: international bargaining and domestic politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

to subject to empirical investigation. Much more promising is the bridge which has emerged between international political theory and FPA through the former's debates over the ethics of foreign policy actions, and the latter's longstanding interest in underlying values and in the location of responsibility for foreign policy. This helps us to reposition foreign policy closer to the centre of the study of International Relations, without falling back on realist simplifications about the role of the state, without denying a role to other actors or to structural forces, and without placing a weight on the concept which it is incapable of bearing—such as exaggerated hopes of being 'a force for good', or of creating a 'new international order'. It may be desirable to reclaim foreign policy for liberalism in the sense of insisting on its inherent connections with domestic politics and values, but the forms of liberalism which suppose that the world can or should be remade by particular actors, however powerful or *soi-disant* moral, rest on a dangerous delusion.

Having sketched in the context of current thinking about foreign policy, in what remains of this article I wish to do three things: first, analyse the extent to which contemporary foreign policy is a 'political space' in which meaningful action can be pursued, and by whom; second, discuss the various kinds of strategies which states may pursue through foreign policy, and with what effects, taking into account the range of states and problems which exists in the world; and third, illustrate the dilemmas of foreign policy choice in practice by means of a brief analysis of three case studies of major current interest, namely policy towards 'rogue states', the UK's 'ethical dimension' of foreign policy, and EU enlargement.

### **Foreign policy as a political space**

The events of 11 September 2001 rendered some of the anti-politics of the 1990s instantly foolish, and threw us back into a world of obsession with security and power. But there is no need to make a 180-degree turn. Too often political anxiety or intellectual fashion, together with the powerful and understandable human urge to simplify, dictate our understanding of what is a highly complex, multidimensional world system; thinking in soundbites like 'the end of history' or 'the war against terrorism' drives out more nuanced or contextualized analysis. Ultimately we need to combine an understanding of structures, whether economic, sociocultural or political, with a focus on actors, both transnational operators like al-Qaida or Shell and the states which variously host or contest them. Single-factor approaches and sudden voltes-face are self-fulfilling and often disastrous in their effects.

The 'politics of foreign policy' is therefore not just a matter, in Lasswellian terms, of 'who gets what, when and how out of foreign policy actions', but also a more subtle business, involving our understanding of how to live in a world which is at once foreign and familiar, and of how to conduct democratic politics in that hybrid world. Foreign policy is far from the only way in which a given

community copes with the outside world, but it is the principal way in which *collective coping* takes place. Collective coping with the international environment is, indeed, a useful shorthand definition of foreign policy, and one which enables us to include the broad sweep of official activity, not just that conducted by diplomats and foreign ministries.

A government is expected to act on behalf of its citizens to protect them against obvious threats arising from beyond its borders, but more routinely to mediate some of the more important ways in which the outside world impinges on society, in so far as a collective interest is perceived. The modern international environment renders isolation almost technically impossible, and multilateralism pervasive. But there still have to be focal points of decision, responsibility and democratic accountability within any multilateral process, and—as we saw at the Rio and Johannesburg environment summits—governments are the only feasible candidates for this role. Globalization has not yet dissolved the ties of citizenship or democratic community, just as the parallel concept of ‘cosmopolitan democracy’ provides few alternative anchor points for action and responsibility. In the last instance citizens know that only the state exists to provide for their safety and their distinctive concerns *qua* members of a particular community—which recognition, far more than nationalism or a desire for hegemony, explains the rallying around George Bush by American opinion since September 11.

Citizens invariably, therefore, look first to their government for political satisfaction, while a government’s primary responsibility is to its own citizens. Nonetheless, few thinking people in any country these days see that as the end of the matter. There must be moral and political discussion on the extent to which responsibility should also extend to foreigners, whether in their interests or our own. The foreign policies of all states must consider how far to attempt influencing the wider framework in which they operate—as opposed to their particular, parochial concerns. Small states, and the more clear-sighted among the powerful, acknowledge that their prosperity and indeed their very survival depend not just on their own efforts, or on their collective activity with friends and allies, but also on the nature of the international system as a whole, with its evolving patchwork of rules, norms and institutions. This is Arnold Wolfers’s crucial but neglected distinction between possessional goals—those which relate to your own stakes—and milieu goals, or those which depend on changes in the system beyond the will of any one actor, even a superpower.<sup>7</sup> And the central challenge of a modern foreign policy can be said to be the need to create an international system which *both* makes it possible for an actor to pursue its own purposes, *and* represents a reasonable way of brokering diversity. This conception is naturally resisted by those who can only conceive of one desirable way of organizing the world, or indeed the societies which constitute it, but since these crusaders are themselves divided into competing schools, we should continue to think of foreign policy in these terms. That is, foreign policy represents

<sup>7</sup> Arnold Wolfers, ‘The goals of foreign policy’, in *Discord and collaboration: essays on international politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), pp. 67–80.

an indispensable site of *action* and of *choice* in a world bedevilled by both centrifugal and centripetal forces. The international political system is not a self-levelling device. Its main embodiment, the UN, is a vital but scarcely independent actor which provides a framework and an aspirational setting for bargains between states, plus some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the margin. The intense diplomacy in New York during the last year over resolutions on Iraq demonstrates, unfortunately, less the primacy of the UN than the way states seek to achieve an intelligent balance between unilateral and multilateral activity.

States vary in the extent to which they attempt to assume international responsibilities. This is a matter partly of capability, partly of philosophy and partly of tradition. Successive British governments have assumed that they have a mission of leadership in international affairs, whereas Spain, which also lost an empire, has a far more modest view of its role. This British attitude is ripe for scrutiny and debate, but most discussion inside the country centres on the kind of global strategy to pursue rather than on its desirability or extent. There needs to be much more extensive domestic argument over foreign policy if the issues at stake are to be thought through. At present we have a situation where interest in international affairs is increasing among the educated in mass democracies, but significant obstacles remain: the ever more extensive sources of information are difficult to use, even by specialists, while popular discourse is subject to the cheapening impact of consumerism, image-making and sheer disinformation. There is thus an uneasy coexistence between, on the one hand, the discussions of a cosmopolitan and transnational elite, made public through noticeboards like the *Financial Times*, the *International Herald Tribune*, *Le Monde*, *The Economist* and the *New York Review of Books*, and on the other the patchy involvement of the mass audience, through the supposed CNN or 'body-bag' effects, the clamour of tabloid campaigns and the perpetual fear of spin doctors that foreign policy might do collateral electoral damage.

In Germany in 2002 Chancellor Schröder and Foreign Minister Fischer managed for once to exploit foreign policy to gain a shrewd but risky electoral advantage. In early 2003 we are engaged in a transnational debate on whether to invade Iraq. Leaving aside the fact that this is rather an extraordinary thing for democracies to be considering, it is highly unusual for there to be widespread discussion over foreign policy options *in advance*. Most debate is *ex post facto* or at best confused and time-urgent—as over Suez, the creeping US commitments in Vietnam and the Falklands task force of 1982. The Kuwait crisis of 1990–1 also allowed time for prior debate and diplomacy (nearly six months, and decisions were arguably the better for it), while the US reactions to September 11 were remarkably calibrated in the circumstances. Whether the current general debate will actually affect decisions is another matter. The lingering suspicion remains that we are not being told the whole story about strategy or options, and ordinary citizens remain puzzled as to what is going on. But that is the nature of foreign policy in crisis, whether manufactured or imposed.

The extent and duration of the debate, however, are healthy developments. At last, through in-depth polling (itself rare on foreign policy) and regular, extended radio and TV treatment, some real connections are being made between the popular and the professional levels of debate. Although foreign policy rarely plays a major part in election campaigns, or determines government popularity, in extreme cases of perceived national danger like the present it is capable of bringing the whole house of cards down. If this heightened consciousness could be maintained on the more routine issues which determine the *grandes lignes* of foreign policy it might prevent some of the highly erratic, and sometimes dangerous, decision-making which occurs in these times of an uneasy mix between elite control and populist upheaval. In most countries the political space in which foreign policy is forged, between the overlapping pressures of the international system and of domestic society, is too obscure and unstable for anyone's good. Thus the whole crucial issue of EU enlargement, despite its very long lead times, has never been subjected to a proper public debate inside the member states, let alone transnationally in the EU.

Yet this is a space in which crucial, indispensable things happen, for a particular society, for the targets of foreign policy and for the system as a whole. This is why it is not enough to follow the view of Lord Salisbury that foreign policy was largely a matter of steering one's way down the rapids, avoiding disaster on the rocks at every turn. Given the extent of the interaction between societies, it is not enough to reply to the question 'What is to be done?' with a defeatist 'Very little, apart from damage-limitation.' One would expect, however, that the richer and the more self-sufficient the country, the more of a temptation it would be to allow others to sink or swim. All the developed states, even those with progressive governments, are essentially conservative 'haves' in international relations, with interests in the status quo. What is remarkable (except, of course, to radical critics of capitalism) is how many wider responsibilities some insist on assuming. This is particularly true of the United States, whose continental insularity makes it inherently much more resource-rich, and defensible, than any other state on the planet. The dynamics of capitalist economic growth, and the integration of a global political system over the past century, have led to the deep internalization of the idea—for various, competing reasons—that foreign policy must be proactive, that one's own concerns are synonymous with those of the planet as a whole, and that the wish to cultivate one's garden is trivial and myopic. There are few more damning condemnations, for example, than to call the EU 'a big Switzerland' or to refer to 'little Englanders'. Still, within the broad category of outward-lookingness there is a wide range of policies that can be and are pursued, and it is to this diversity that I now turn.

### **Foreign policy strategies**

States vary greatly, in type and in situation. Their circumstances and internal conformations evolve over time, and are sometimes subject to the dramatic

upheavals of revolution. Foreign policies themselves may change between administrations, and are particularly vulnerable to the personality of a decisive leader. On the other hand, this is an area of public policy which seems to display more continuity than most, whether because of the narrow rules of power politics, as the realists would say, or because of the constraints of interdependence, in the liberal view. Certainly the world is intractable, even for the powerful, and it is in no respect a blank sheet; every action takes place within a complex of existing commitments and competing versions of history. Other actors than states have major impacts on events, and perhaps even more on the structures which lie beneath events.

Constraints, nevertheless, do not always filter through into intentions, and may make themselves felt only in undermining the implementation of policy. Accordingly, the 'anarchical society' brings forth many different forms of response from states, ranging from confident attempts to restructure the system to bunkered isolationism. The chances of success or failure will vary, depending on when and by whom each is pursued, but none is inherently wrong or mistaken. Indeed, it is usually only with the help of hindsight that we are able to make judgements about whether a policy was 'running against the tide of history', or was an example of 'brave and far-sighted leadership'. Depending on which French citizens you talk to, for example, the foreign policy of General de Gaulle may still be interpreted from both these diametrically opposed points of view, more than 30 years after his death. And revisionist historians eventually get round to everything, from Churchill and fighting alone in 1940 to Woodrow Wilson and idealism.

The different foreign policy strategies I shall list here are not always pursued explicitly, they are not mutually exclusive and they certainly do not constitute an exhaustive list. They do, however, represent fairly well the contrasts on view, over place and over time, between the principal ways in which states handle the inside/outside trade-offs; and they illustrate clearly that foreign policy is a site for many different types of political action, most of it with significant consequences for 'ordinary people', whether in success or in failure.

### *Strategies with global reach*

The range of strategies deployed may be divided for ease of analysis into those which operate at the ambitious end of the continuum, adopted by those who see themselves as necessarily involved in the management of the whole system or 'milieu', and those pursuing a more limited set of 'possessional' goals, concerned with a state's particular and concrete interests. Most states pursue milieu and possessional goals simultaneously, but some are undoubtedly more systemic in their ambitions and reach than others. Such a choice, between what might be termed extrovert and introvert foreign policies, is sometimes necessitated by external circumstances, but it may also be the result of endogenous factors, leading to an existential determination to risk disaster rather than bend to apparently irresistible forces—a tendency Fidel Castro has displayed on many occasions.

The first kind of approach which has systemic consequences is what might be termed *autistic power politics*: that is, a self-regarding concern for the perceived needs of a state (often generated by internal problems) without concern for the impact on others. Really assertive power politics of the kind we associate with Bismarck or Brezhnev is less common these days. Still, the behaviour of Milošević's Serbia and Saddam Hussein's Iraq falls clearly into this category, while the attitudes of Ariel Sharon and Donald Rumsfeld seem closer to hard-boiled realism than to anything else. The permanent members of the Security Council, who posture about the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), clearly have no intention of giving up their own nuclear weapons or of pressurizing one another to do so. They see their nuclear power as a serious attribute of their statehood which usually makes others behave cautiously—as we saw in the US–Chinese two-steps over the spy plane and the Taiwan Straits. It can also lead to shameless bullying of the less powerful, as with French and American pressures on New Zealand in the 1980s.

*Active revisionism* is the second kind of approach with the potential for global impact. When it has a number of targets, it shades into the general power politics we have just discussed. If highly motivated and assertive, it may have general consequences even if the initial focus is on the righting of a specific wrong or vulnerability. Thus the German concern over the inequity of the Treaty of Versailles snowballed into general expansionism, while the determination not to repeat the shock of June 1941 led the Soviet Union to impose an iron rule on eastern and central Europe for over 40 years. Nor has territorial expansionism ceased. Western Sahara, Kashmir and Taiwan are all the potential victims of subjects of revisionist policies on the part of neighbours, and each could spark a conflict which would be difficult to limit.

The best example of a contemporary revisionism which has highly significant general consequences is that of Israel. Leaving aside the rights and wrongs of the tragic conflict over Israel/Palestine, there is no doubt that since 1967 Israel's policy has been to extend, at least *de facto*, its territory. Some of the 1967 gains were handed back, others again may yet be relinquished. But the policy of the settlements on the West Bank has looked like an attempt to change permanently the borders of the region, and this, together with the failure to resolve what has become a transnational refugee problem, has reverberated very seriously across the international politics of the whole Middle East region. This in turn has, notably in 1973 and during the past few years, even threatened the peace of the whole international system. A revisionist foreign policy conducted in a sensitive geopolitical zone always has the potential to spill over into other problems. This may, in 2003, seem a truism; but the preference for theoretical exegesis or for an analysis of the world in terms of globalization and global governance has too often led observers to overlook what was staring us, tragically, in the face.

More benign than the forms of *realpolitik* discussed so far is the attempt to provide leadership in the international political system. Leadership implies followership and therefore a relationship which is based on more than mere *force*

*majeure*. But leadership, by definition, can be attempted only by the confident, while the type of tactics employed, and the degree of success achieved in their execution, are a serious matter for the other states in the system. There are three main kinds of leadership pursued through foreign policy: hegemony, directive multilateralism and exemplarism.

*Hegemony* is rarely admitted to or sought explicitly; but a big power with an interventionist foreign policy is by its nature aiming to exert leadership in international relations, if not of the whole system then of a region or a group of like-minded states. Most of US foreign policy since 1941 has aspired to leadership, in both economic and military terms, and the Soviet Union provided the counterpoint until 1989. The extent to which Washington has provided that leadership, effectively or crassly, responsibly or irresponsibly, has been the subject which has launched a thousand books and conferences. The US has not, however, left a political space unoccupied in the way that Britain and France did during the 1930s, thereby abdicating the initiative to the revisionist powers. Since the Second World War the United States has almost always been confident that its foreign policy mattered to the world as well as to itself, and has pursued its goals robustly.

It is evident that in some respects the US is a unique factor in world politics. Yet it is not necessary to share its attributes to have an extrovert foreign policy, or even to exert leadership. Non-superpowers may achieve leadership by what may be termed 'directive multilateralism'. By this is meant actions to galvanize groups of states to pursue common goals. They may attempt this through ad hoc coalitions, as with Malaysia and the 'Asian values' campaign, or Australia and the Cairns Group of agricultural exporters. Equally, it may be done through formal institutions like the UN, as with the Group of 77 on development issues in the 1960s. Either way, foreign policy initiatives, diplomatic skills and political stamina are indispensable in order to set directions and get results.

At the regional level, the great historical project of the European Union is the best case in point of *directive multilateralism*. The initiatives of the statesmen of the 1950s, and the persistence of key individuals like Kohl and Mitterrand, always playing a very strong hand in the face of Thatcherite opposition, have had a powerful effect in keeping momentum going. Kohl again, with the British this time, added the dimension of major enlargement in the 1990s which has ensured that, despite its many weaknesses as a coherent *actor*, the EU is certainly a major *factor* in the modern international system. Other attempts to use regionalism have been less successful, but the examples of the Mercosur, ASEAN and the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum show that numbers can be mobilized through foreign policy either to provide counterweights to superpowers or to help construct a stronger multilateral matrix for the international system. This can be seen in various issue areas, from climate change through attempts to abolish land mines to cooperation against terrorism.

*Exemplary foreign policies*, or leadership through example, are rarer and more difficult to carry off. Nehru's India is an example of a country which managed to exert influence beyond anything to which its capabilities entitled it, through

standing for something which was widely admired. It provided a reference point for the many states, especially the newly decolonized, which were anxious not to be forced to enter one or other Cold War camp but lacked the leverage to determine particular outcomes. For a short time it seemed as if Nelson Mandela's personal authority would allow the newly democratic South Africa to play a similar role, at least within Africa, but circumstances have not been auspicious and President Mbeki has allowed the opportunity to slip away, despite his attempt to stimulate an 'African renaissance'. As Jack Spence has pointed out, 'reputation as an instrument of foreign policy is inevitably a declining asset'.<sup>8</sup> Undoubtedly the most prominent case in the contemporary world of a foreign policy being conducted on the basis of the values it espouses and claims to embody is that of the European Union. To some extent *faute de mieux*, the EU is still more a civilian power than the state-like entity some wish it to be, and in the kind of peaceable relations it has established among its own member states it acts as a model and a magnet. This means it has significant influence on the states of the EU's near abroad, which hope to join or depend on good relations with the fifteen, particularly economically. The EU is also, by virtue of its own successful cooperative structures, an effective rallying point for global multilateralism and currently the main hope for those looking to encourage the US back into a more communitarian stance.

The most extreme form of foreign policy extroversion is *crusading*, or what Martin Wight termed 'revolutionism': the desire to reshape the international system in one's own image. This is a relatively rare, but dangerous pathology. Despite Osama bin Laden's current accusations, Western foreign policy is not geared to an overthrow of the Westphalian system and the subjugation of Islamic culture—although both might be unintended consequences of the growth of free market capitalism in the long run. Still, that is a different matter from an aroused and enraged superpower deciding to operate henceforth on the basis of a doctrine of pre-emption, and deliberately to precipitate crises over particular rogue states. Although some commentators have seen US foreign policy as dedicated to the project of achieving a global empire, most people can readily see the difference between containment, even at its most bullish, and an assertive, military unilateralism founded on an unabashed claim of the right to reshape the international system. Arguably, the enormous potential of US power has so far been under-used in historical terms; if it is to be fully exercised, the international system will almost inevitably be thrown into disequilibrium.

The drives for hegemony evident in the behaviour of Napoleon and Hitler were exceptions that prove the general rule of relative caution even among the strong. Their allies were more orthodox and limited in their aims, and classic balance-of-power coalitions in the end brought them both down. The global ambitions of other world-historical figures, such as Stalin and Mao, it is now clear, were greatly exaggerated by contemporaries. This generally happens with tyrants, because of

<sup>8</sup> Jack Spence, 'Introduction' in Jim Broderick, Gary Burford and Gordon Freer, eds, *South Africa's foreign policy: dilemmas of a new democracy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2001) p. 7.

the fear and loathing they naturally inspire in civilized peoples, but if it is almost a law of social science that democracies do not fight each other, then the converse does not follow, namely that autocracies are always at war. Many are highly conservative in their international orientation. Indeed, in so far as crusading takes place through foreign policy, it is just as likely to be associated with liberal democracies, especially if one widens the frame of reference to include 'soft power' as well as the use of force.<sup>9</sup> The current belief in the historical inevitability of free elections, human rights and the virtue of private enterprise is a form of systemic revisionism which translates into various forms of interference with the domestic affairs of other states—as with the law of humanitarian intervention, political conditionality and the economic rules of the Washington institutions. What should at least be recognized is that all this represents a form of foreign policy and is therefore the exercise of power, rather than the natural unfolding of some historical *telos*.

There is thus considerable scope for the foreign policies of at least some states to attempt to shape the evolution of the international system, if only in a partial or regional framework. The United States has the unique capacity to project immense power to any place on the planet and to shape any aspect of global politics, but this does not mean that other states are hamstrung. Many actions will turn out to be foolish or counterproductive, and some thoroughly immoral, but that should only sharpen our sense of the importance of foreign policy. Some foreign policy actions, our own or those of others, have the capacity to trigger major change, even wreak havoc in our lives. If September 11 proved any one thing, for example, it was that despite the prosperous, bourgeois life to which so many of us have become accustomed, we cannot discount the politics of the outside world.

### *Defensive strategies*

States without the means to shape the international milieu may still find spaces in which to pursue certain types of international strategy, although they are inevitably more introverted and parochial in their styles than those with various forms of leadership aspiration. They may, nonetheless, share some of the same assumptions. For example, a predominantly realist foreign policy is by no means always a recipe for assertiveness, just as *realpolitik* is very different from *machtspolitik*. It is sometimes necessary to follow the rules of power politics simply in order to survive. A *survival-orientated foreign policy* requires the investment of just as high a proportion of political energy and resources as the more ambitious policies of the great powers. Indeed, the fear of being overrun can lead to an exaggeration of external threats, such that excessive attention is paid to foreign and defence policies, as arguably was the case in postwar Sweden and Switzerland. On the other hand, countries like Jordan, or Yugoslavia and

<sup>9</sup> We owe this notion to Joseph Nye. See his 'Soft power', *Foreign Policy* 80, Fall 1990, pp. 153–71.

Romania during the Cold War, genuinely could not afford to take foreign policy lightly, and the fates of their regimes, if not of the states themselves, hung on how well their hands were played. Singapore is also an excellent example of a weak state (a city-state, indeed) which has skilfully used its foreign policy to promote its wealth, and to project its image on the international scene, so as to lessen its extreme vulnerability. A carefully cultivated combination of assertiveness and cooperation in relation both to Western states and to its large neighbours has enabled Singapore to avoid being cast as anyone's client—or potential dinner.<sup>10</sup> Taiwan, in an even more precarious situation without the advantage of sovereign statehood, has striven for a similar position but with less success.

Another foreign policy strategy which represents a mirror-image of more extrovert approaches is to be found in those states which pursue *multilateralism as a form of shelter* in international affairs. At the regional level this has most obviously been the case for states like Germany and Italy which did not dare (or wish) to appear nationalist in any way after 1945, and yet which had highly distinctive concerns in the European theatre. The EU has enabled them to participate ever more widely in international politics under the cover of a collective foreign policy, to the point where they now, paradoxically, both strongly support further integration in foreign policy and are ever more capable, on occasion, of national self-assertion. Plenty of smaller EU member states are also skilled at using the multilateral umbrella to develop a more extensive involvement in international politics than they ever had before. This is notably true of Ireland, and of Greece, which until 2002 never had an Official Development Assistance programme of any significance but is now getting drawn into new responsibilities in that sphere. Greece, too, like those other refugees from military dictatorship, Spain and Portugal, has learned that the EU framework provides it with the means to pursue a more sophisticated foreign policy: they do not have to choose between inactivity and becoming camp followers of the bigger powers, but can instead exploit air pockets within the system to acquire leverage on matters which are important to them—as Portugal did eventually over East Timor, and Greece is now doing over Turkey and Cyprus.

This increased leverage comes at the cost of a certain moderating of maverick stances—what is often called the 'Europeanization' of these states' foreign policies—but, as Tony Blair is always arguing to his domestic audience, giving up some autonomy may well reap greater rewards in terms of wider influence in the world. This is a disingenuous argument to the extent that it pretends there are not difficult choices to be made, or losses of effective sovereignty, but not wholly so. The smaller member states in particular are convinced that sheltering within the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) strengthens rather than destroys their foreign policy capacity, which is why non-EU European states like Norway have also wished to be associated with it. Prominent among the motives of those actively wishing to join the EU, such as Turkey, is often a need

<sup>10</sup> Michael Leifer, *The foreign policy of Singapore: coping with vulnerability* (London: Routledge, 2000).

to reduce their sense of international exposure and vulnerability (tied to their historical and geographical positions), which renders them particularly keen on being part of the club. Turkey's recent anger over exclusion from the European Security and Defence Policy, after some years of happy inclusion in the WEU 'family', is a noteworthy case in point. Finally, those states which will never join the EU, like Japan and Australia, have been persistently keen to associate themselves with the positions taken by the EU under the umbrella of European Political Cooperation/CFSP, as a major alternative Western pole to the United States, and also rely heavily on other forms of multilateralism, in the UN, the Commonwealth or the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, to pursue national goals which are too important to put at risk by exposed unilateralism.

This paradox, of national foreign policy often requiring the frameworks of multilateralism, is well known to those who study international relations. It also applies to the smaller number of states that manage to pursue *niche foreign policies*, by carving out specific roles for themselves in the international system which generally rely on a degree of order and cooperation on the part of the majority. Even this is not an absolute rule, however, as proved by Switzerland's skilful retention of its neutralist tradition during the anarchy of 1939–45. Switzerland's approach has naturally been easier in peacetime, with the profits from the unique financial services it offers and the siting of many UN agencies and NGOs in the country—despite the country's long-time refusal to join even the UN.

Switzerland inhabits its unique niche because it is largely passive in its foreign policy. Anything more assertive would put at risk its earning power as the ultimate non-judgemental international actor. States like Algeria and Norway have had no such inhibitions. Before the tragic civil war of the 1990s Algeria frequently made available its good offices in conflicts between western and Islamic states—notably in helping to bring the hostage crisis between the US and Iran to an end in 1981. Since then, Norway has taken up the baton as principal mediator. In two of the most intractable of the world's conflicts, those between Israel and the Palestinians, and between the government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers, the Norwegian government not only has been active and visible, but has also managed to move events on—only temporarily, as it has sadly proved, in the case of the Oslo Accords, but with some real promise of a permanent peace in the case of Sri Lanka. No doubt if this office had not been performed by Norway it would have been by some other state; but the Norwegians have added much value, acting with skill, imagination and stamina. They are also active in southern Africa. It is interesting that they have been able to operate in these difficult areas when the EU, which has much more power—and pretensions to policies of conflict resolution—has been unable to do so. Whether or not the EU excludes itself through being ponderous and perceived as not always impartial, the cases illustrate how a small state with the human and financial resources, plus the will to be active, can conduct an important foreign policy in certain discrete areas. Yet if the attempt is overdone, through attempts

to embody a particular tendency in international relations rather than make a practical contribution, disaster may lie ahead. Michael Manley's leftist foreign policy in Jamaica suffered from this kind of delusion, as did the more successful (because oil-fuelled) hubris of Colonel Qadhafi in Libya.

The most introverted kind of foreign policy, and that marking the other end of the continuum from crusading or revolutionary foreign policy, is what may be termed *quietism*. This can take the form of opting in only to the most necessary forms of international intercourse, and in its extreme form, strict isolationism, as practised by Enver Hoxha's Albania or the current military SLORC in Burma. Such behaviour gets a bad press in a world whose leitmotiv is interdependence, so that it is often said, for example, that it would be unthinkable for France or Britain to have a foreign policy like Sweden's, while Germany is regularly criticized for its caution. Indeed, policies like those of Burma and North Korea are counterproductive, as they inevitably engender suspicion and end by provoking the very intervention which is so feared.

By contrast, a modest degree of quietism may have real advantages for states that lack any substantial resources or are reluctant to draw too much attention to themselves. Finland was perhaps the classic example during the Cold War: a state needing to achieve a delicate balance between East and West without becoming a *cause célèbre*. Needless to say, strenuous diplomatic effort rather than inactivity was the best means of pursuing this aim. At the present time, Iran and Syria, at least by comparison with the 1980s, are adopting a low profile in the dangerous circumstances of a possible war on their borders against a regime they would like to see overthrown, but not by the world's only superpower which is also hostile to them. In a very different context, Bosnia-Herzegovina has little choice but to reduce its foreign policy to virtual immobility for fear of disturbing the delicate balances of both internal politics and the post-Dayton Balkans by some minor false move. Here too, foreign policy quietism requires operational skill and constant attention.

This, then, is the spectrum of foreign policy actions. As a site for political action foreign policy is still a varied and pulsating arena, with possibilities for influence beyond mere survival even for small and/or weak states. Much can be done, and a great deal has to be done if the most basic requirements of statehood and the expectations of citizens are to be met. I now go on briefly to illustrate the difficulties of pursuing foreign policy goals in practice, by reference to three contemporary cases, all of which concern the UK at present. These are: the risk from 'rogue states'; the notion of an 'ethical' dimension to foreign policy; and EU enlargement. The first involves elements of revisionism, and the second verges on a crusade, albeit conducted through soft power. The third is a regional issue handled by directive multilateralism. All are systemic rather than defensive in character since the UK's whole foreign policy orientation is still that of a state which sees itself as having special international responsibilities.

### Three case studies

#### *Rogue states*

'Rogue states' are the preoccupation of the moment, although they are no different from the 'crazy' or 'pariah' states of yesteryear.<sup>10</sup> A definition would revolve around unpredictable, self-regarding and irresponsible behaviour. Much of this kind of political stereotyping is in the eye of the beholder, and even unanimous UN Security Council resolutions cannot be taken as a clear indication of the view of the 'international community'. Since September 11, 2001 it has become more common to think in these terms when conceptualizing the threats with which foreign policy needs to deal, and indeed one of them, Taliban Afghanistan, has been removed from the reckoning. Other candidates in President Bush's eyes are North Korea, Iran and of course Iraq, while Arab states undoubtedly regard Israel as a rogue state. Not a few members of the international community would also apply the tag (in private) to the United States, while there might be more general agreement on Burma and Zimbabwe also falling into the category.<sup>11</sup>

Yet these last two states raise the issue of the relationship between the character of a regime and its external behaviour. Is a rogue state simply one which does not conform to the dominant norms of the day in its internal conformation, even if its foreign policy is non-aggressive, perhaps quietist? Burma is undoubtedly governed by an unpleasant regime, but it seems to pose little threat to its neighbours, let alone to world peace. Even North Korea, which has admitted possessing nuclear weapons, is in that respect no more or less of a threat than India, Pakistan and Israel, to say nothing of the five permanent members of the Security Council. If it were willing to export nuclear weapons and missile technology to all and sundry, then that would be another matter. But to use slogans like 'rogue states' as the basis of foreign policy is to avoid engaging in the serious politics which must take place to decide which regimes, if any, do threaten international order through their very existence. It is also to make policy on vital issues, like that of the non-proliferation regime, on the basis of scapegoating and of single cases. Labels of this kind are easy to apply (especially if you are a superpower) but difficult to lose—or to forget. Libya is struggling to come in from the cold in this respect. Moreover, they do not help us make sense of such delicate problems as, say, relations with Iran, Nigeria or Yugoslavia, where the internal forces for and against a notion of international community, and therefore entry into multilateral cooperation, may be finely balanced, and easily upset by political abuse. For dominant states it is all too great a temptation to articulate and understand international relations in terms of identifiable, personified enemies, instead of getting to grips with the less headline-grabbing complexities.

<sup>11</sup> For a pre-September 11 critique of the idea of rogue states, which still presciently took Iraq, Iran and North Korea as case-studies, see Robert Litwak, *Rogue states and US foreign policy: containment after the Cold War* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, 2002).

It is alarming to consider the implicit assumption in the diagnosis of rogue states, namely that if we could eradicate them then the world would be an orderly, civilized place. In particular, the concept encourages the view that surgical interventions to achieve 'regime change' are both possible and desirable, discounting the enormous risks involved. Even leaving aside the probability that the attempts to change the regimes in rogue states might well cause even more instability, we should still be left with the major threats caused by non-state actors like al-Qaida, and the prospect of an endless sequence of new regimes emerging which would have to be dealt with. It would be like the endless chore of weeding a garden. Furthermore, the underlying causes of antagonism in the system—namely, huge asymmetries of power and wealth both between and within states, and tensions over resources, culture, history and autonomy—would still remain. Looked at from this viewpoint, to focus foreign policy on 'rogue states' is to focus on one rather minor symptom, rather than on any of the causes of international conflict, and to evade most of the big questions. It is astonishing that the United Kingdom, with its long tradition of pragmatism in foreign policy, based on accepting the existence of unpleasant regimes until they became a demonstrable threat to international order, and avoiding imprudent involvement in the conflicts of others, should now be following a more messianic path. What is more, this kind of bipolar simplification puts double standards at the heart of foreign policy, rather than acknowledging that they are merely an inevitable by-product of it. Iraq was no better in its behaviour—indeed, arguably, it was a lot worse—in the 1980s when it seemed a force for good in Anglo-American eyes, through balancing the apparent danger from Iran. These matters do not go unnoticed by the tens of millions of ordinary people across the world who, if they cannot make foreign policy, are still at times in a position to break it.

*An ethical foreign policy*

A very different kind of problem, but one increasingly present, is that of the attempts to pursue an 'ethical foreign policy', or at least to add an 'ethical dimension' to foreign policy. The notion is often attributed to Gareth Evans, Australia's dynamic foreign minister between 1988 and 1996, but Gladstone and Woodrow Wilson are the real founding fathers. EU foreign policy has also been, *de facto*, a form of ethical foreign policy since its beginnings in 1970, and various Indian, Scandinavian and Dutch governments also prefigured the Cook-Blair initiative of 1997. For the most part, however, past practitioners of foreign policy tended to regard power and ethics as polar opposites, which at least simplified the issues of policy analysis. Now, ever more states recognize the need for a more coherent relationship between the values of their domestic and their foreign politics.

Yet this is only the start of the problem. How is such coherence to be achieved without falling into the kind of moral sloganeering discussed above under the heading of 'rogue states'? Does it involve foreign policy basically reflecting a

community's values, or does it work the other way round, with a society adapting to an evolving set of universal precepts? Is it a question of balance between competing values and interests? These issues are familiar to international theorists, through the debate about pluralist or solidarist approaches to international society, but they are only beginning to be connected up with discussions about the practice of foreign policy. Clearly no state, not even one with considerable drive and capacity, can reasonably expect to be able to put the world to rights through its foreign policy. But that does not mean that nothing can or should be done. How, then, are priorities to be established, and by whom? The various criteria, of propinquity, kinship, historical association (and guilt), wealth and capability, popular preference, and consistency (the double standards problem), are difficult both to operationalize and to trade off. Not only are there hard choices to be made on ethical matters in every foreign policy, but the very formulation of the choices in the first place is problematical. What is more, every policy issue has ethical as well as practical aspects.

To some extent September 11 has set back the trend towards a more sophisticated understanding of foreign policy in this respect. Perhaps understandably, for many at the present time survival is the only criterion, and the idea of an 'ethical foreign policy' is either seen as self-evident ('we have right on our side') or as an oxymoron (by the realists). In effect, the United States and its allies are committed to a crusade (however tactless the term may seem) in favour of democracy and the rule of law, while they are opposed by groups which (whatever else they may be accused of) certainly cannot be deemed amoral pragmatists. The middle way in all this, between on the one hand denying the ethical content of foreign policy and on the other imposing a weight of expectations that cannot possibly be met, is to accept that diplomacy needs a sense of direction, beyond defensive concerns with the immediate and the possessional, and that this must come from a broad conception of what a desirable world would look like. But building that world inevitably involves the making of difficult choices, ethical and otherwise, not least between narrower or nearer conceptions of 'us' and our interests, and wider and more distant ones.<sup>12</sup> Either way, it is politics of a full-blooded kind, and requires a great deal of hard thinking.

### *EU enlargement*

The case of EU enlargement looks on the face of it like a classic foreign policy success story—even if it is rarely described in terms of foreign policy. Its goals seem clear: the creation of a large zone of stability in Europe, with a bigger home market, both of which would lead to the strengthening of the EU as a global player. Yet despite this, and the fact that it undoubtedly represents one of the major sets of decisions currently being implemented in the international system,

<sup>12</sup> This is close to the 'thin' and 'thick' conceptions of morality talked about by Michael Walzer. See Michael Walzer, *Thick and thin: moral argument at home and abroad* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

there has been very little explicit discussion of how likely it is that the actual enlargement embarked upon will meet these (very general) goals, either collectively or within the individual member states. Decision-making over the past decade has been erratic in the extreme, varying from the expectation of admitting only the Visegrad three to the current 'big bang' approach; but still, thirteen years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the EU has not actually admitted any ex-Warsaw Pact state—in contrast to NATO. Major decisions, like those on Cyprus, and on Turkey, have been made on a hand-to-mouth, hope-for-the-best basis, giving mixed messages but through confusion more than a subtle display of *realpolitik*. Key problems, like the reactions of the excluded, both the next in line and the permanent outsiders, have taken second place to the complexities of the *acquis communautaire* and of institution-building. In particular, the question of the final boundary of the EU has been left to history to determine.

This resembles, then, more a form of mass incrementalism than directive multilateralism. The major member states have not agreed on the extent of or the criteria for enlargement, with the result that policy-making has followed the familiar EU pattern of deal-making with tacit linkages, supplemented by bursts of urgent activity in an atmosphere of semi-crisis. The United Kingdom, for example, started out in favour of enlargement under a Conservative government as a way of inhibiting the more integrationist forces inside the European Community. Since then it has seen the process as a genuinely important means of stabilizing the former Warsaw Pact countries and furthering mutual prosperity; but it has still not come to a clear view on the appropriate relationship between 'widening' and 'deepening', let alone on the final shape of the Union. The French, likewise, have suppressed their real concerns about the effective functioning of an EU-25 in the interests of good relations with Germany. All four major states have also oscillated on the particular question of Turkey to the point where Ankara's feeling of having been seriously misled is difficult to rebut. For its part, the Commission has done as good a job as possible with its *Agenda 2000* document and negotiation of the technicalities of accession, but it has not had the competence or the strength to lead the member states into an integrating foreign policy vision of enlargement. For enlargement certainly is foreign policy—perhaps the single most important and influential foreign policy act upon which the EU has ever embarked—even if it has not been conducted as such. The key elements of the CFSP machinery, such as the Presidency and (since the Treaty of Amsterdam) the High Representative, have provided no greater capacity in this respect.

This piecemeal approach to strategy is not the most intelligent way to conduct foreign policy, even allowing for the evident fact that it is sometimes best not to declare one's hand publicly. In this case the perceived need for diplomatic ambiguity, particularly in relation to Turkey, Russia and Israel (Morocco has been bluntly told it will never be admitted), together with an unwillingness to stimulate domestic debates, has prevented even serious *thinking* on the matter. The consequences of this myopia are yet to be seen. As for democratic legitimacy, which

one might reasonably expect these days to be a condition of a successful foreign policy, the best that can be said is that the citizens of the EU barely know what is going on; but they might turn out, after the event, to care rather deeply, and if there is a further rise in xenophobia, the errors of current policy will be to blame.

## Conclusions

My conclusions are straightforward enough, although their implications are not. First, foreign policy is a continuing and serious site for political action. What states do in relation to one another, to transnational actors, and to (or in) international organizations involves politics in several important senses, namely: shaping the international political system and the balance of power within it; affecting the terms of operation of the international political economy; and articulating competing value-systems. There is also the politics of foreign policy-making, no longer a closed, technical process (if it ever was), involving the mediation of the two-way flow between domestic society and international relations. Foreign ministries and diplomats have no exclusive competence in the area, but neither are they becoming redundant.

Second, I hope to have established that a wide range of things can be done via foreign policy, depending on will and circumstances. There can be no question of one size fitting all, given that many states are intensely vulnerable and others have global reach, while levels of development vary considerably. Yet this simply means that foreign policy tasks are relative to the situation faced. Carrying them out skilfully may be even more crucial to survival and prosperity for a small and/or poor state than for those with huge diplomatic networks and military resources. The differing dilemmas and strategies to be found across the universe of foreign policy show both that the inside/outside dimension remains important and that a simple hierarchy of power is insufficient to explain state behaviour. Foreign policy is always the product of a society, a polity, *interpreting* its situation and choosing—who chooses is another matter—to act or react in a particular, unpredetermined way. The interaction of these multiple endogenous choices is what creates the unpredictable flow of international relations, with its dangers but also its achievements.

Third, now that foreign policy is no longer seen as a discrete area, sealed off from ‘normal’ politics, it should be understood as even more relevant to the life-choices of ordinary citizens than ever before, and thus subject to fierce disputes about how it should be conducted. It always was centred on the critical but intermittent problems of war and peace, autonomy and outside interference. To these have been added over the past century or so the defining modern concerns of welfare, prosperity and national identity, and increasingly also issues of culture, democratization, regionalism and the ‘new security agenda’—terrorism, crime, drugs, illegal immigration and so on. All of these subjects have to be dealt with on their own merits. They do not all need to be poured through a foreign policy funnel. But equally, they all have an inside/outside, domestic/

foreign dimension which is overlooked at its peril. This is as true of the euro or investment flows as it is of anti-terrorism or EU enlargement. We recognize, for example, the complex balancing acts involved in considering immigration policy, which involves both relations with other states and societies, and issues of welfare and human rights. It is far from being only a matter of foreign policy, as is suggested by some advocates of stopping illegal immigrants by pressurizing the states from which they come; but neither can it be divorced from foreign policy, as the Sangatte crisis has well illustrated.

The fourth conclusion is that, even though foreign policy now has a broad meaning and encompasses even more problems of political agency than before, we should not overload it with expectations. In terms of 'what was to be done', Lenin displayed exceptional resolve and political acumen, enabling the Bolsheviks to take power when the moment came in October 1917. But Russia was a state, with a visible apparatus to seize. The structures within which foreign policy operates are too diffuse, and the actors too diverse, for such clear action plans or 'road maps' to be generated—even allowing for the fact that, like the preparation of a revolution, it is inherently a long game. Even the most far-sighted planners in foreign affairs, like Jean Monnet, build compromise and adjustment to unforeseen events into their strategies, and only the innocent imagine that there can be permanent solutions to foreign policy problems—apart from unconditional surrender in total war. Those close companions of exaggerated expectations, overstretch and ethnocentrism, are all too common among states and statespersons with pretensions to international activism; but their adherents rarely emerge unscathed from these errors.

It would be wrong to end by giving an impression of realist pessimism or excessive caution. Foreign policy, in the broadest sense, offers us one of the few points of agency, accountability and responsibility in the often confusing and chaotic modern world. We—meaning all of us, not just the specialist elites—should make foreign policy into a more vibrant part of our political lives, seeing the opportunities for constructive initiatives and cooperation as well as for self-protection and the setting of priorities. The modern international system demands a perpetual awareness of the outside world and therefore an active diplomacy, for the most part conducted in a wide variety of multilateral fora and by most agencies of the state, not just foreign ministries. This requires coordination at home and abroad, and imposes heavy demands on politicians and bureaucrats at all levels. What is more, to be reliable and effective foreign policy must attract domestic legitimacy, which means involving the public in the same kind of continuous dialogue as takes place over tax or transport policy. If we can accept the centrality of foreign policy in our political life without seeing it as a way of merely exporting our own superiority, we shall stand a better chance of, first, coping collectively with outsiders; second, making a contribution to a more stable and civilized international system; and third, avoiding the kind of catastrophic mistakes which cost hundreds of millions of individuals their lives in the last century, the century of progress.