

Foreign Policy Analysis: history, identity and foreign policy

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Aims & Learning Objectives

- Identify the role of history in shaping foreign policy decisions
- Discuss the use of analogies and metaphors in FPA
- Discuss the competing interpretations of how history influences FP decision making
- Critically evaluate the relationship between history, identity and FP

History and Foreign Policy

History used by FP decision makers
because they face:

- high volume of information
- search for broader policy choices
- concern for the ambiguities of potential outcomes
- personal experience of decision maker

Analogy and Metaphor

Analogies & metaphors key means of relating history and foreign policy

- Analogy: comparisons drawn from same realm of experience (within domain)
 - Knowledge is ‘retrieved’
 - Assumes ‘Lessons of History’ are self-evident and knowable
 - Cold War and Munich analogy

Analogy and Metaphor

- Metaphor: understanding or experiencing one thing in terms of another category (outside domain)
 - Knowledge is ‘created’
 - Assumes similarities between the 2 cases allows for general comparison
 - Cold War and metaphor of ‘falling dominoes’
 - ‘Soft underbelly’ and metaphor as distortion

Historical Analogy as Tool

- This view holds that the place of history is to help decision makers process and interpret material
 - Livy on Rome: ‘We can endure neither our vices nor our remedies for them.’
 - Machiavelli followed Caligula’s advice: ‘Let them hate us as long as they fear us.’

Historical Analogy as Justification

- This view holds that the place of history is to provide justification for pre-determined action on the part of decision maker.
 - A mobilising tactic by leaders to win public support for a particular foreign policy aim

History and FP Decision Making

Problem Framing

(‘what sort of situation am I confronting?’):

- Define situation
- Analyse issues
- Suggest general approach

History and FP Decision Making

Problem Solving

(‘what exactly should I do now?’):

- Identify specific courses of action
- Evaluate their prospects for success or failure

Which Historical Analogy and Why?

- Preference is not neutral (Khong & Reiter) but is determined by the degree to which a given analogy conforms to the shared goals and values of the decision maker (Houghton & Peterson).
- Key selection criteria is the role of beliefs, images and operational code of leaders

The Politic of Analogy

- Accessibility of History- collective memory

Need to contextualize complex contemporary events within a historical framework of past events about which an individual has a more confident judgement of 'success' or 'failure'

The US government and its critics have favoured historical frameworks

Munich= danger of appeasement

Pearl Harbor= imminent threat (now 9/11)

Germany and Japan= Nation Building

Vietnam= Un-winnable War

Hollywood (and now video games) brought language and imagery of WW2 and Vietnam to generation who didn't experience it

Dangers

- Inappropriate analogies (e.g. lessons of Korea applied in Vietnam)
- More appropriate analogies ignored (e.g. British occupation of Iraq 1917)

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Historical Analogies and I



Used to convey...

- **We can easily beat Saddam because we have done it before in 1991**
- **We can then re-build Iraq as a stable pro-American democracy because we have done it before in post-war Germany and Japan**
- **We have to do this because Saddam could be another Hitler**
- **If we don't do this then Munich 1938 tells us that we will have to fight a worse war later on. (Appeasement Rhetoric)**

Examples

“As President Kennedy said in October of 1962: Neither the US nor the world community of nations can tolerate deliberate deception and offensive threats large or small” GWB 7th October 2002

“If we don’t stop the reds in South Vietnam, tomorrow they will be in Hawaii, and next week they will be in San Francisco.”

President Lyndon Johnson 1966

“Our military is confronting terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan and in other places so our people will not have to confront them in New York or St Louis or LA.”

President Bush, 26 August 2003.

Critique of History and FPA

- Bureaucratic dimension underplayed
 - ‘institutional memory’ (or its absence)
 - Do institutions ‘learn’ and how? (lessons learned units)
- Public opinion and history
 - Sets parameters of what constitutes ‘national memory’
 - ...but many interpretations of ‘history’ possible, reflecting divisions within state & society

Identity, History and Foreign Policy

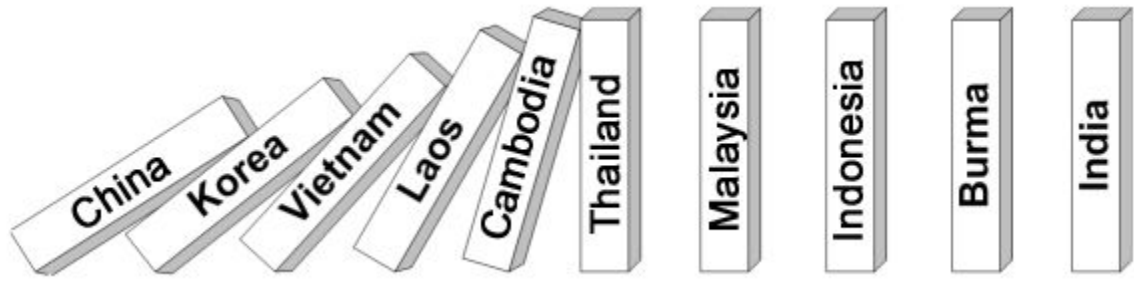
- Identity and history
 - National myths set parameters on what is deemed to be ‘objective history’ and who are its subjects (citizens)
 - ‘Necessity of forgetting’ to construct an inclusive national identity (Renan)
 - FP as a means of reifying national identity (‘us’ versus ‘them’) through constant reinvention of history (Campbell)

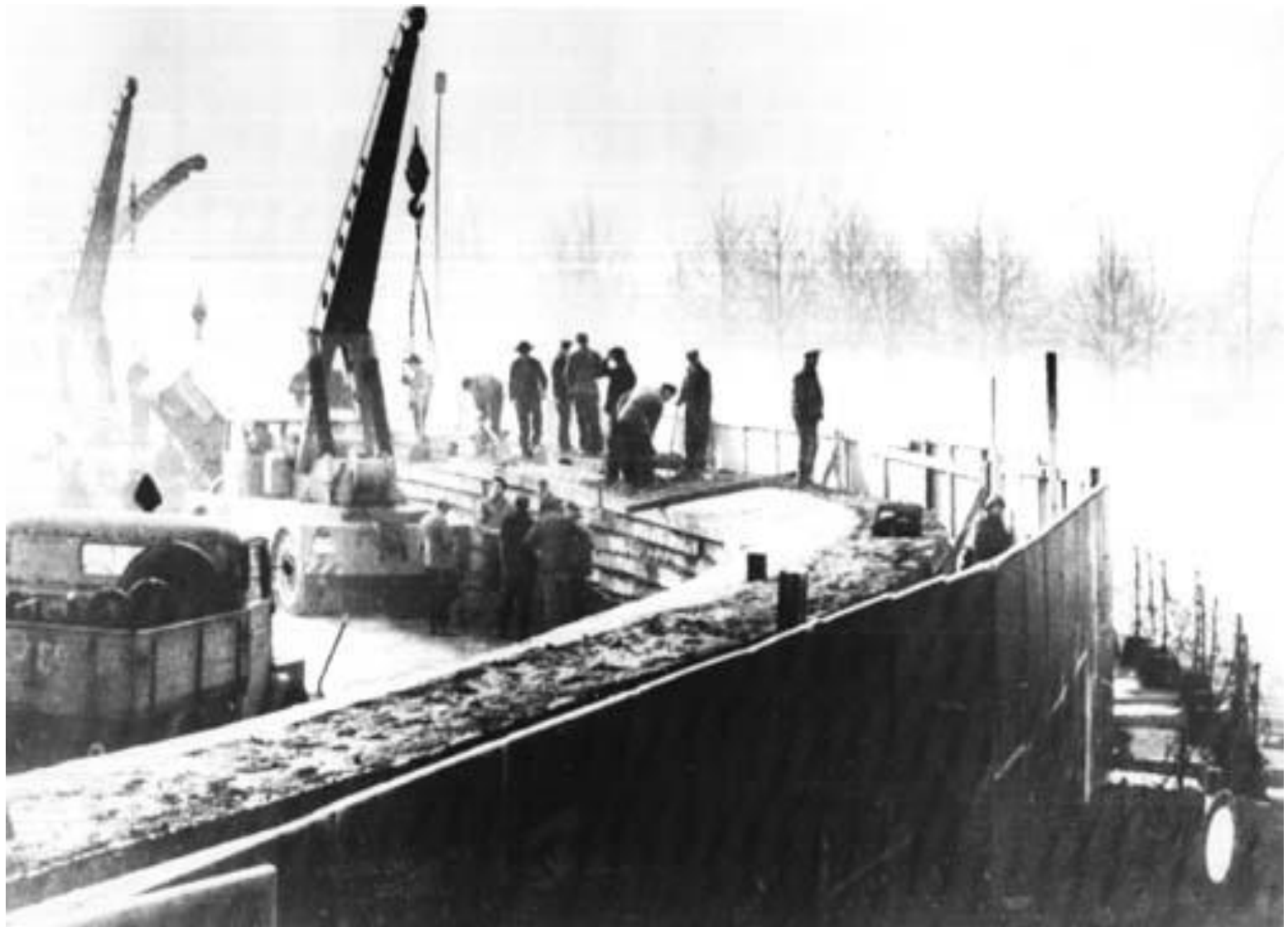




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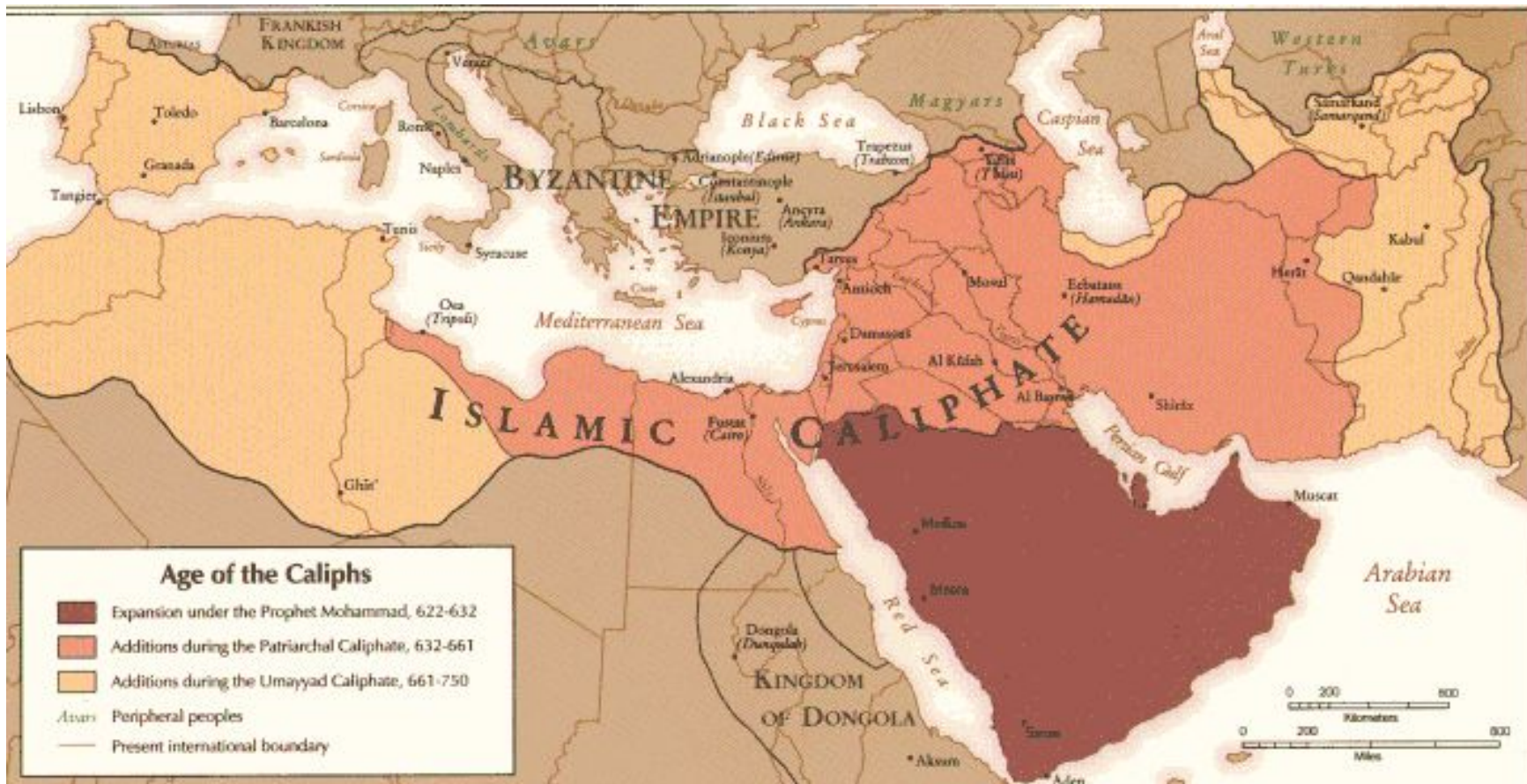














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Welcome to Beijing Summit
Bienvenue au Sommet de Beijing





Conclusion