

# 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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- Key selection criteria is the role of beliefs, images and operational code of leaders

# 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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)



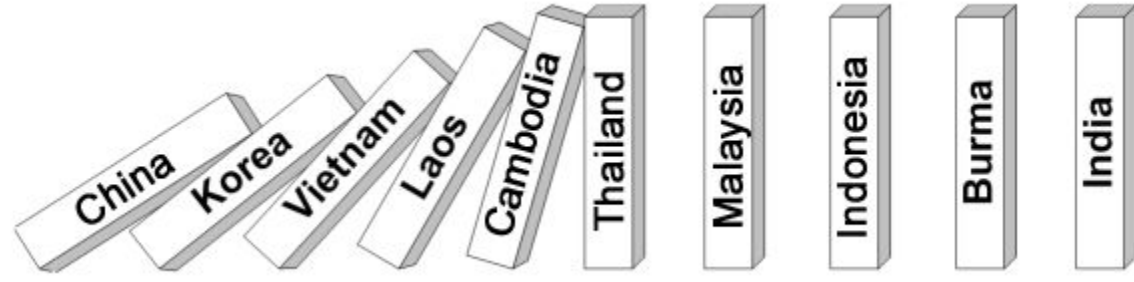


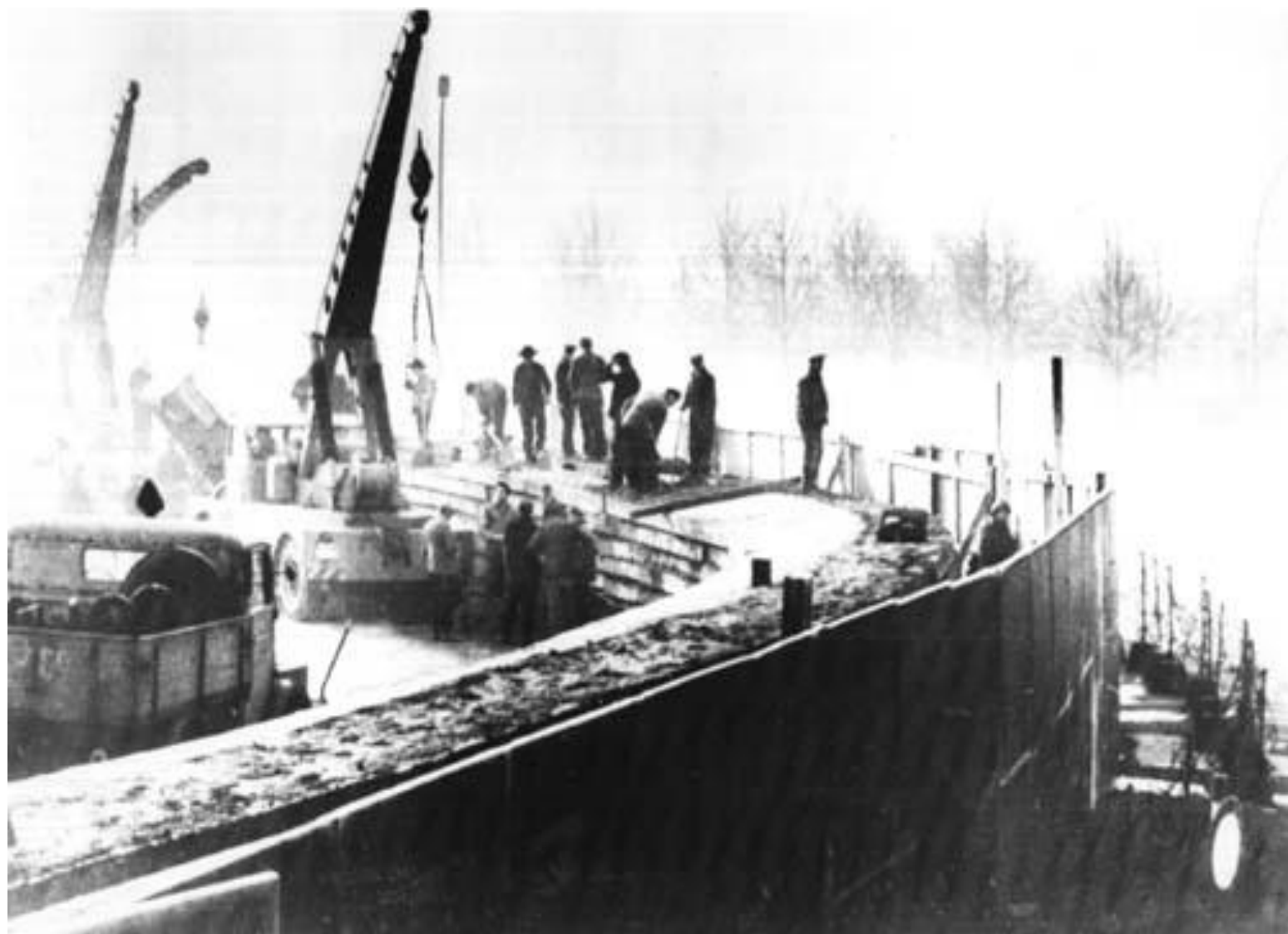




# ASIA FROM IRKUTSK





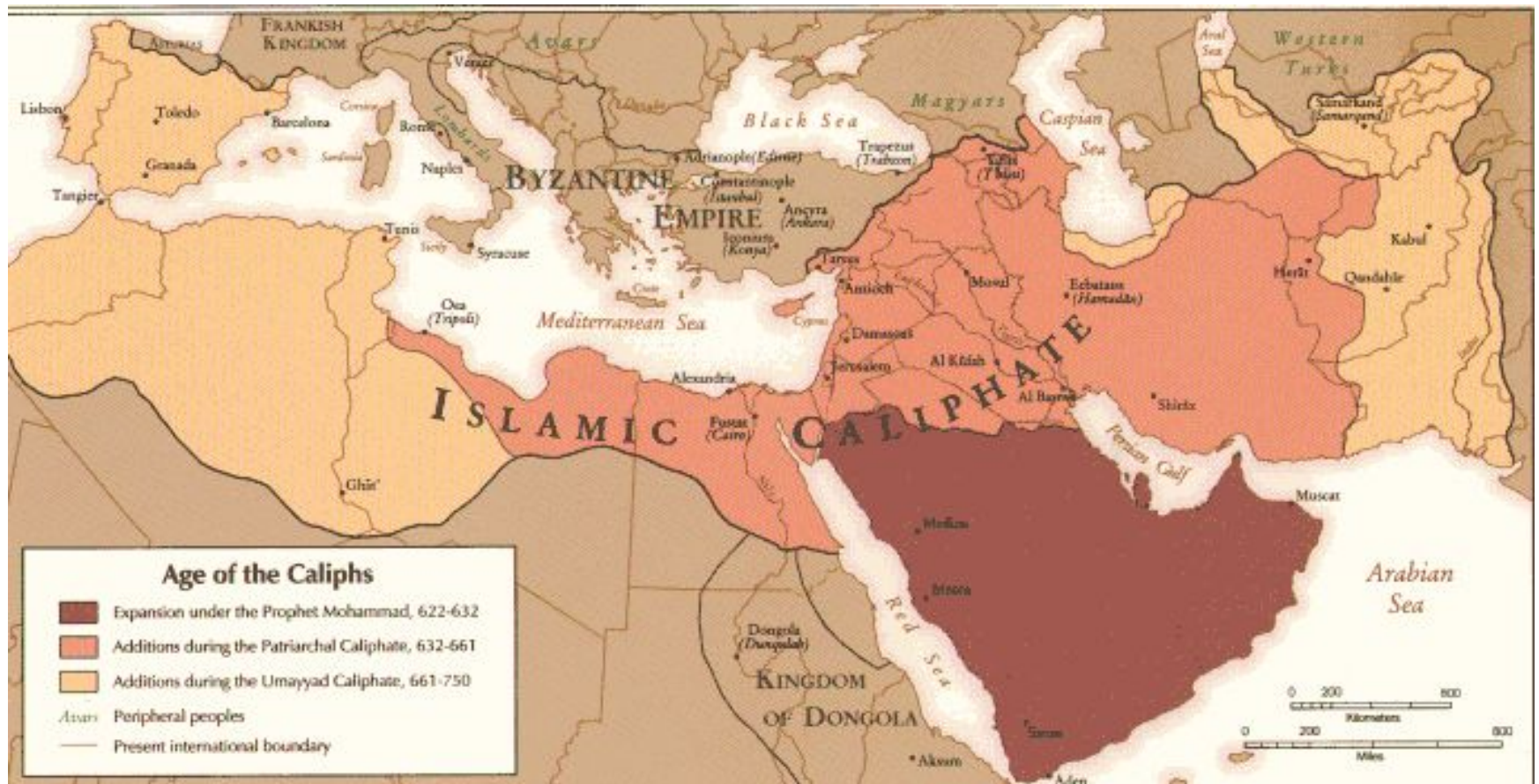
















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Welcome to Beijing Summit  
Bienvenue au Sommet de Beijing







# Conclusion