

POLS 318: Theories of IR

Lecture 3 (08.27.2020): Issues in IR Theories

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Fall 2020

Overview

- 1 Quick review
- 2 Levels of Analysis
- 3 Theory vs. Reality
- 4 Useful Theories
- 5 Extra Material

Review

WHAT WE COVERED LAST MEETING?

- Theory vs. History.
- Components: Assumptions.
- Variables and theory construction.
- Evaluation with evidence.
- Logical consistency and falsifiability.
- Competing explanations - *wing walking*

Questions?? Email me!

Levels of Analysis

Analytical Model - Requirements

- Accurate, correlate with reality.
- Valid and simple explanation.
- Offer prediction.

Multiple ways to explore issues

- Multiple 'angles' to study events.
- Macro: system (economics).
- Micro: components (sociology, psychology).

Levels of Analysis

INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM



System level of Analysis

BENEFITS

- 1 Comprehensive view of all interactions.
- 2 General explanation: coalitions, power shifts.
- 3 Study correlations within the system.
- 4 Parsimony.

System level of Analysis

COSTS/LIMITATIONS

- ① Underplay system components (nation-states).
- ② Deterministic outcome (system-based).
- ③ Uniformity in states behavior (Realism → power).

"By eschewing any empirical concern with the domestic and internal variation...the system-oriented approach tends to produce sort of "black box" or "billiard ball" concept of the international actors" (Singer, 1960)

Levels of Analysis

NATION STATES



Nation-state level of Analysis

BENEFITS

- ① Variation between actors.
- ② In-depth study of states and general explanations.
- ③ Multiple factors lead to outcomes.

Nation-state level of Analysis

COSTS/LIMITATIONS

- 1 Limit comparisons of actors.
- 2 Over-reliance on differences.
- 3 Goal-oriented behavior? (or compromise internal conflicts).

Why Nation-state level?

- More attention to *process* and goals.
- Internal effects: institutions, elections, etc.
- Richer, satisfactory explanations.
- Requires complex methodologies.

Levels of Analysis

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS???



Compare & Contrast

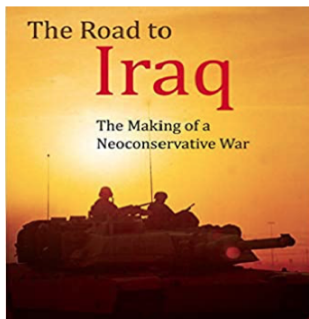
THEORY CONSTRUCTION:

- Description: comprehensive vs. depth and details.
- Explanation: state > system.
- Prediction: Scholars vs. policymakers

How war shapes different levels of analysis?

- Two great powers collide → Bipolar system.
- Equal nation-states collide → Alliance dynamics.

Apply Theories



Practical IR Theories

IR theories and foreign policy?

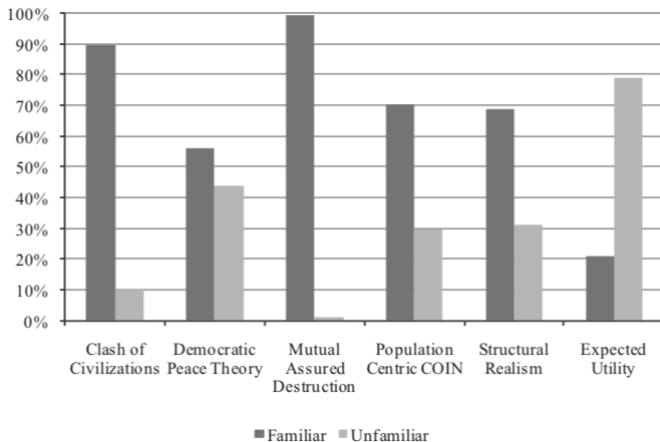
- Survey policymakers.
- General view - academic research as important
- Less useful when over-complicated.

Avey & Desch (2014)

- Survey policymakers' views of IR theory.
- 234 senior members of national security teams (Bush; Clinton, Bush).

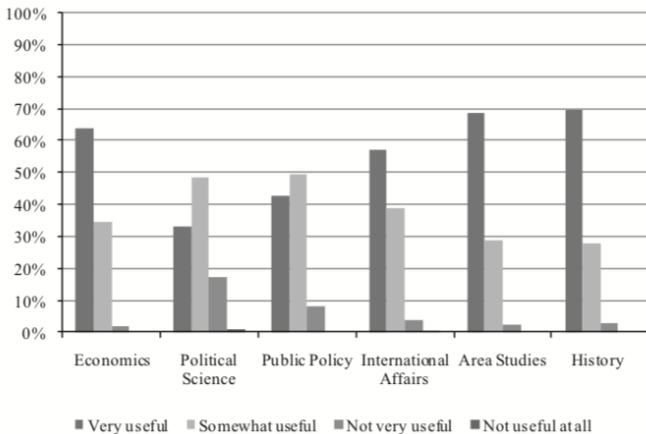
Policymakers & Social Science Theories

Knowledge



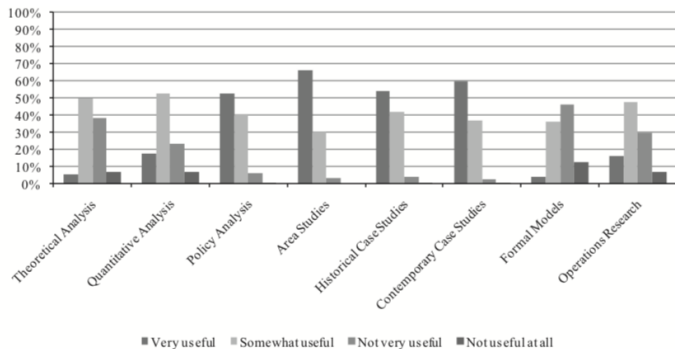
Policymakers & Social Science Theories

Useful - Disciplines



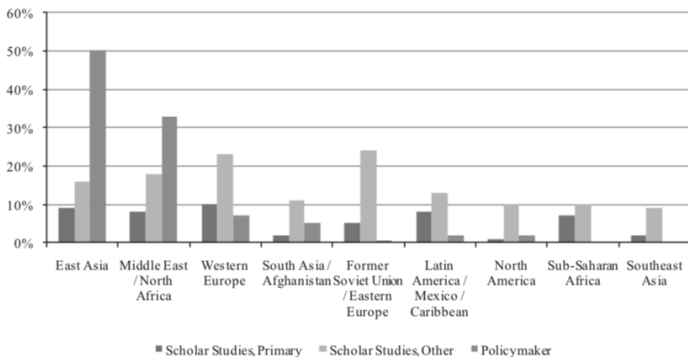
Polymakers & Social Science Theories

Useful - Methodologies



Policymakers & Social Science Theories

What is valued vs. what is studied



Policymakers & Social Science Theories

When & how social science is used?

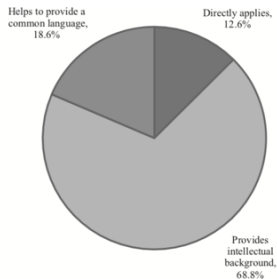


FIG 14. How Policymakers Relate Social Science Arguments to Their Work in the U.S. Government

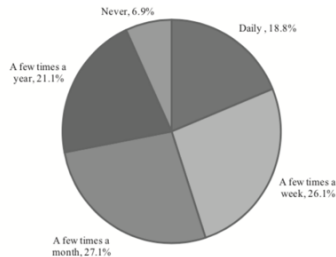
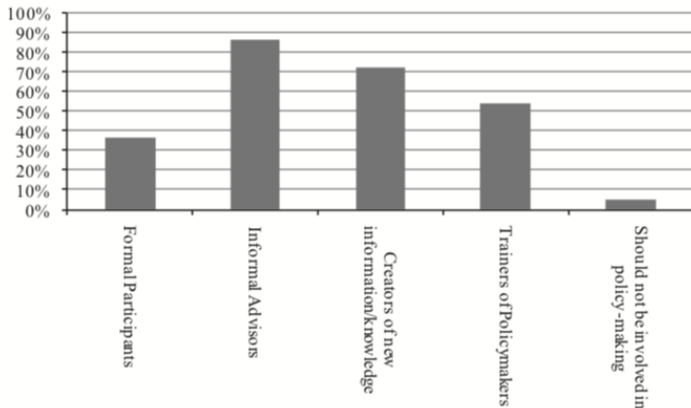


FIG 18. How Frequently Policymakers Relate Social Science Arguments to Their U.S. Government Work

Policymakers & Social Science Theories

Where scholars 'fit' in policy?



What can we do?

Byman & Kroenig (2016)

Suggestions for relevant IR research:

- 1 Practical and useful recommendations.
- 2 Focus - clarify certain situations.
- 3 Time relevant research.

Steps to 'bridge the gap':

- Networking and personal connections.
- 'Inject' research into bureaucracy.
- Concise and clear reports in nonacademic outlets.

Making IR theory useful

There are few situations in which academic input will be most relevant and accepted by policymakers:

- Shocks and Discontinuous events (Arab Spring, Soviet collapse).
- Policy failures (Iraq insurgency).
- Unexpected decisions - background knowledge (Somalia).

Making IR theory useful

Tamper expectations

- What is being relevant?
- Policy set by senior officials.
- Low likelihood to substantially shape policy.
- Influence the *deliberation process*.

Value for policymakers

- Offer contrarian arguments to accepted view.
- Example: democratic peace.

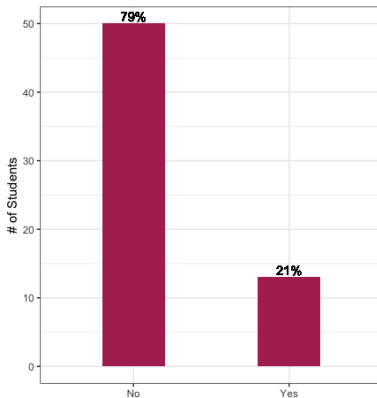
Recommended readings

More studies on IR theory and policymaking:

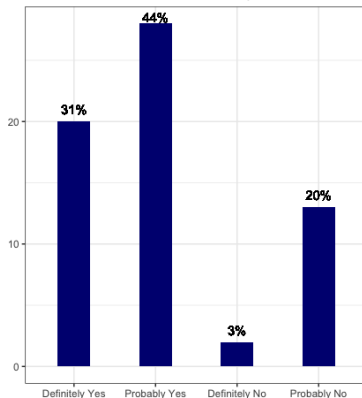
- ① Hendrix, Cullen. (2020). "Do Policy Recommendations = Policy Relevance." *Duck of Minerva blog*, [Link to post](#)
- ② Byman, D., & Kroenig, M. (2016). "Reaching beyond the ivory tower: a how to manual." *Security Studies*, 25(2), 289-319.
- ③ Jentleson, B. W., & Ratner, E. (2011). "Bridging the beltway – ivory tower gap". *International Studies Review*, 13(1), 6-11.

Survey 1: Online Format

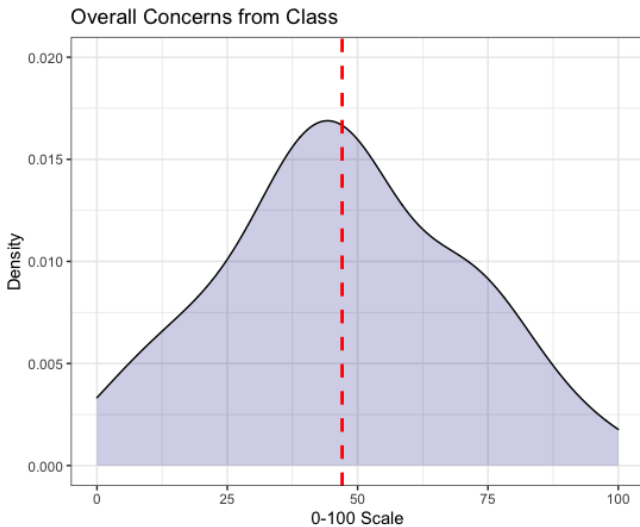
Took Online Class?



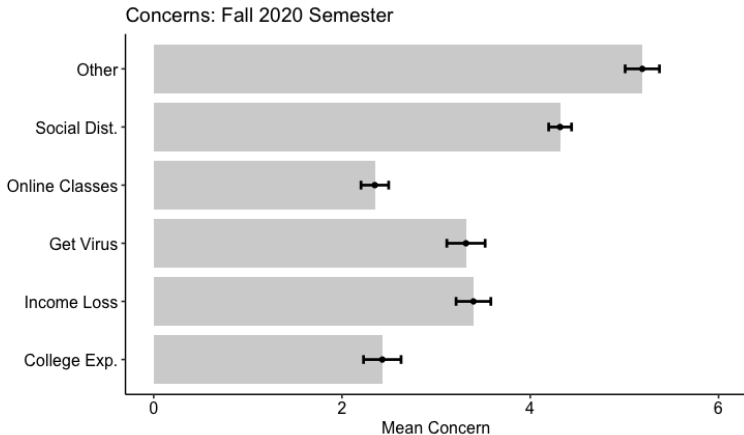
Online Classes - Better? Your Opinions



Survey 1: Your Concerns



Survey 1: Your Concerns



Survey 1: Your Concerns

LOOK - I READ!!!

- Feedback.
- Less engaging.
- Personal connections.
- Organization of class material.
- Personal issues - talk to me!
- Extra Credit.
- Canvas - Blackboard.