
Argument and Change in World Politics

Ethics, Decolonization, and
Humanitarian Intervention

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1 Argument, belief, and culture

Soldiers and their generals fight for many causes, worthy and unworthy, and when it comes to the battlefield the considerations are pretty much the same, whatever the cause. The generals study each other's tactics across the battle lines, often with admiration. They are the technicians of warfare. The soldiers of the contending armies display courage (and sometimes cowardice), and the people they fight for make heroic sacrifices (or exploit the war for gain) on both or all sides, although perhaps to different degrees and in different ways. To learn what the fighting and the courage and sacrifices meant one must look elsewhere, behind the physical contest to loyalties and emotions, thoughts and ideas, moral convictions and arguments. One must ask what moral and mental content shaped the decisions that brought these people to the battlefield.¹

To be of greatest interest to us, the act of demolishing another must be enshrined in justifications. The muscle movements must occur in a context of verbal legitimacy.²

Why do people, either alone or in groups, choose one action and not another? How do they even come to know that they must make a decision? Why choose blockade over invasion, or confrontation over appeasement? Indeed, how do people decide what is worth fighting for at all? Surely actors are often circumscribed by resources, or their options seem limited by the structure of choice (such as time pressure), but generally decisionmakers still have options even within constraint. Individuals and groups make decisions through a process of practical

¹ William Lee Miller, *Arguing About Slavery: The Great Battle in the United States Congress* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), p. 4.

² Harold Lasswell, *World Politics and Personal Insecurity* (New York: The Free Press (1935) 1965), pp. 23–24.

reason or argument, while the beliefs contained in those arguments help actors, both in groups and by themselves, decide what to do. Reason is the process individuals go through in deciding how the world works and how they will act in it.³ Political argument is public reason.

The necessity of making good arguments, ones that convince others, preoccupies domestic governments, social movements, and associations. Why? Because justification is necessary. What is not clear to scholars of world politics is how argument could have any importance outside the domestic realm. Focusing on argument thus runs against the grain of international relations theory.⁴ However, analysis of the process and content of arguments is crucial for understanding constancy and change in world politics. Argument is not “merely” rhetoric.⁵ Even those who use brute force make arguments about why it was “necessary” or “wise” to do so.

The tendency to downplay argument, belief, culture, and political discourse has deep roots. Political philosopher Thomas Hobbes proclaimed “covenants, without the sword, are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all.”⁶ Hans Morgenthau, in *Politics Among Nations*, urges scholars of international politics to assume rationality and a drive for

³ Rational actor theories describe one kind of reasoning but certainly do not encompass all forms of reasoning.

⁴ Exceptions include: Thomas Risse, “‘Let’s Argue!’ Communicative Action in World Politics,” *International Organization* 54 (Winter 2000), 1–39; Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink, eds., *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Hayward R. Alker, *Rediscoveries and Reformulations: Humanistic Methodologies for International Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Friedrich V. Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Thomas F. Homer-Dixon and Roger S. Karapin, “Graphical Argument Analysis: A New Approach to Understanding Arguments Applied to a Debate about the Window of Vulnerability,” *International Studies Quarterly* 33 (September 1989), 389–410; Anatol Rapoport, *Fights, Games, and Debates* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1960); Gavan Duffy, Brian K. Federking, and Seth A. Tucker, “Language Games: Dialogical Analysis of INF Negotiations,” *International Studies Quarterly* 42 (June 1998), 271–294; Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument With Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 1992); and Martti Koskeniemi, *From Apology to Utopia: The Structure of International Legal Argument* (Helsinki: Finnish Lawyers’ Publishing Company, 1989); Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998). Outside international relations see: Brian M. Barry, *Political Argument: A Reissue with a New Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1990); Deirdre N. McCloskey, *The Rhetoric of Economics, 2nd edn* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998) and Michael Billig, *Arguing and Thinking: A Rhetorical Approach to Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁵ And like casuistry, rhetoric is not bad, though in recent years both terms have the connotation of empty speech that is separate from and/or conceals real interest.

⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: Penguin (1651) 1986), p. 223.

power.⁷ Given an assumption of rationality, defined as the pursuit of one's interests, it matters little what actors think or how they use arguments to persuade others to act. Structural theories of international politics, which emphasize the anarchical character of the international system and suggest that most outcomes can be explained by reference to the distribution of capabilities (most importantly, power) among states, similarly assume and emphasize a narrowly defined rationality. Kenneth Waltz argues that systemic forces of international politics (the balance of power) push actors to be "'sensitive to costs' . . . which for convenience can be called an assumption of rationality."⁸ Further, even constructivists – who argue that rules regulate behavior and constitute actors' identities – appear to hold the view that there is a rational core to behavior in international politics.⁹ Post-structural and critical theory approaches to world politics, which emphasize discourse, come closest to articulating a role for argument.¹⁰

The *process* of foreign policy decisionmaking and international relations is characterized by political arguments that occur among elites, within organizations, between elites and masses, in the public sphere, within authoritarian states, and in the anarchical international system. There is a tight relationship between belief and argument: beliefs are translated into political action through reasoned argument. Even when beliefs appear, by themselves, to lead to actions such as the use of force by states, actors reason and give reasons to others about why force must be used. Reasoning involves both individual reflection and political, or public, argument. Arguments and beliefs gain their content and are

⁷ The tendency of Hobbes and Morgenthau to downplay the role of ideas and argument is ironic given the centrality of political argument in Thucydides.

⁸ Kenneth N. Waltz, "Reflections on Theory of International Politics: A Response to My Critics," in Robert O. Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 322–345: 331.

⁹ Constructivist primers include Peter Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Emanuel Adler, "Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics," *European Journal of International Relations* 3 (September 1997), 319–364; Audie Klotz, *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle Against Apartheid* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).

¹⁰ See David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992); Karen Litfin, *Ozone Discourses: Science and Politics in Global Environmental Cooperation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

intelligible through and within cultures. In other words, arguments depend on and refer to beliefs and those beliefs are embedded in a context of other beliefs which may or may not be explicit or structured. Argument in foreign policy decisionmaking and international politics is only one species of the processes of international politics.¹¹

Argument

The dominant view of how issues are decided was well articulated in 1862 by German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck: "The great questions of the age are not settled by speeches and majority votes . . . but by iron and blood."¹² Yet, as foreign policy decisionmakers come to believe it is time to act, and there is no obvious course of action dictated by preexisting beliefs and policies, they begin to argue over the correct action. Arguments are an effort to persuade others to see the world in a particular way and to act in accordance with the conclusion that follows from the argument. Practical arguments are about how to act in the social world; scientific arguments are about the natural world; ethical arguments are about what it is right to do in particular situations; and identity arguments are about how different understandings or actions in the world are implied on the basis of identity.

Argument as reasoning and persuasion

Political argument is a form of persuasion and intersubjective reasoning. While decisionmaking is characterized by reflection and often keen intelligence, it is not rational, at least not in the sense scholars usually think of as rational (dispassionate utility maximizing). Rather, foreign policy decisions are the product of preexisting beliefs and the process

¹¹ Processes are the regular practices that the agents of world politics engage in as they create, maintain, and transform themselves and the structure of world politics. Other processes are: constitutive, reproductive, communicative, discursive and oppositional. Arguments communicate beliefs and information about how others understand the world. Argumentation is also a discursive practice; arguments only make sense within discursive or knowledge structures and within the larger cultural/historical context within which they take place. Arguments can bolster, modify, or destroy knowledge structures. Arguments are also constitutive in that they define, make, and maintain corporate/collective agents and some aspects of social structure. Reproductive and oppositional processes are also dependent on arguments. We could oppose each other or reproduce ourselves in any number of ways. How groups choose to do so, or to change from one mode of production or opposition to another, is by a process of persuasive arguments and reasoning.

¹² Quoted in Hagan Schulze, *Germany: A New History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 140.

of argument within and among groups – they are reasoned. Such political reasoning takes the form of an argument that contains beliefs and a logic or logics of inference.¹³ The goal of political arguments may be to convince or persuade another (or some third party), or discourse ethical argument can be used by interlocutors to reason or to find “truth” together. In the former instance, the focus of most of this book, those who argue are convinced of their position and are trying to persuade the other or an important audience that they are right.¹⁴ In the latter case, actors are more open to challenges to their position and to changing their beliefs and conclusions.

Practical reasoning or inference is an internal act of deliberation that individuals can use to work through problems; it is “a route to *discovery*, not just to retrospective explanation or justification, or to self-encouragement.”¹⁵ Public or political arguments attempt to influence private reasoning and affect a group’s choice: political arguments provide reasons that actors think and hope others will find persuasive. Of course, coercion is possible and frequently used, but it is very expensive to coerce others over prolonged periods. To get other states to go along with yours, whether in a coalition, alliance, or large international organization (or at least not to oppose your state) those others must be convinced to act, or at least not to block your action. Thus, politics is thick with places where arguments can and must be persuasive. When practical reason is a public process of argument, advocates in effect take their audience through the steps of practical inference and/or associative reasoning.¹⁶ Thus, a strict division between internal and external reasoning breaks down in practice since individuals acquire and understand history and historical analogies as part of a social process.

Reason and persuasive argument have been discussed for millennia by philosophers and rhetoricians. Aristotle distinguished practical from theoretical reasoning (or wisdom) in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, where he says that “practical wisdom is concerned with action.”¹⁷ Theoretical reasoning or wisdom concerns answering the question of what is or is not

¹³ I say more about logics of inference later.

¹⁴ Risse, “Let’s Argue,” calls this rhetorical action.

¹⁵ Robert Audi, *Practical Reasoning* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 184.

¹⁶ Aristotle links practical reasoning and politics in book 6 of *The Nichomachean Ethics*, translated with an Introduction by David Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

¹⁷ Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, p. 146 (book 6, ch. 7). Also see Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, translated with an Introduction by Hugh Lawson-Tancred (New York: Penguin, 1991). Habermas relates Aristotelian practical reason to discourse ethics in Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).

true, while practical reasoning is concerned with answering the question of how to act in response to practical problems.¹⁸ Practical reasoning “concludes with an answer to a practical question, such as, paradigmatically, ‘What am I to do?’, asked in the context of a felt problem.”¹⁹ Further, as Aristotle notes, deliberation over practical problems may consist of chains of practical reasoning, as people reason about how to achieve something they have defined as a good.

We deliberate not about ends but about means . . . Having set the end, they consider how and by what means it is to be attained; and if it seems to be produced by several means they consider by which it is most easily and best produced, while if it is achieved by one only they consider how it will be achieved by this and by what means *this* will be achieved, till they come to the first cause, which in the order of discovery is the last . . . and what is last in the order of analysis seems to be first in the order of becoming.²⁰

Forms of argument: top-down, rule-based and sideways, associative

There are different ways to deconstruct and represent practical reason and arguments.²¹ Political debates and arguments may often be described as Aristotelian practical reason where actors, who are goal – or norm – driven make arguments that move from general premises to specific conclusions. For example, “*si vis pacem para bellum*/ if you want peace prepare for war.” Though we seldom make arguments in a form where the architecture is so transparent, practical reasoning may be illustrated in the form of a syllogism or practical inference: the first,

¹⁸ Aristotle distinguished episteme or theoretical knowledge from phronesis, or practical wisdom, used for resolving particular problems. Theoretical statements or arguments are idealized, atemporal, and “necessary” in the sense that they depend on the initial axioms being correct and on the consistency of subsequent deductions. Practical statements or arguments are concrete (resting on experience), temporal, and “presumptive” in the sense of being revisable. Albert R. Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 26–28.

¹⁹ Audi, *Practical Reasoning*, pp. 18–19.

²⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, pp. 56–57. Toulmin calls larger arguments “macro-arguments,” and the arguments embedded in larger arguments “micro-arguments.” Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), p. 94.

²¹ I am for the most part omitting explicit discussion of formal theories of argument and discourse because I have chosen to emphasize the process of argument in world politics – specifically in understanding colonialism, decolonization, and humanitarian intervention – rather than theories of argument. Further, I am not developing a formal method for analyzing arguments but rather, in chapter 2, proposing an informal method.

or major, premise expresses a goal, the second, or minor, premise articulates a cause-effect belief, and the conclusion regards a practical necessity, the statement of an action to bring about the desired goal realizing, of course, that there may be more than one way to achieve the goal.²²

Form of practical syllogism/Inference

Premise: desired goal or norm/good
Premise: cause-effect argument or representation of the situation
Conclusion: description of action implied by the argument

Practical inferences are the “single step from a set of premises to a conclusion” and practical reasoning is “a sequence of practical inferences linked by more than one step of inference.”²³ Practical reasoning may then be represented as a syllogism with prior syllogisms, linked in inferential or purposive chains, and such arguments may be analyzed in terms of their deductive logic. Good arguments of this sort ought to have conclusions that follow logically from their premises, and whether something follows “logically” depends on the content of beliefs embedded in the argument and the wider background of culture.

All practical arguments are vulnerable to being questioned. First, antagonists may debate the *desirability* of the proposed goal and whether the goal is worth the actions required to achieve it (meta-argument). Second, they may focus on the second premise, specifically on whether the particular *means-end relationship* given as part of the argument is correct – whether the beliefs given about how the world actually works in the ways presumed by the argument are correct. Third, interlocutors may question the *validity* of a practical inference; in other words, whether the correct conclusion was drawn from the argument. Fourth, actors may agree on the goal, the ends-means premise, and the inferences drawn from the argument, but argue over whether the actions required to reach the goal are *feasible*. Or finally, using a powerful rhetorical move, opponents to a dominant argument may raise a competing syllogism or suggest different relevant comparisons.

In contrast to top-down reasoning, when actors perceive similarities between situations they may reason horizontally, by association, that it is wise to act in ways that worked in the first instance, assuming that what applies in one situation ought to apply in a similar case. Arguments

²² Douglas N. Walton, *Practical Reasoning: Goal-Driven, Knowledge-Based, Action-Guiding Argumentation* (Savage, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1990), pp. 16-21 discusses alternative formulations of premises and conclusions of a practical inference.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

which take this form “depend for their power on how closely the *present* circumstances resemble those of the earlier *precedent* cases for which this particular type of argument was originally devised . . . the truths and certitudes established in the precedent cases *pass sideways*, so as to provide ‘resolutions’ of later problems.”²⁴ Inferences in horizontal/associative reasoning are based on simplifying, or in some cases caricaturing complex situations through the use of metaphor, metonym (recalling a part or aspect of something to refer to characteristics of the whole), or analogy, and comparing them with other situations.

Metaphor, metonym, and analogy are thus a crucial part of the internal reasoning of individuals – how they come to understand, learn, and decide by themselves – and public argument. Intended analogies may often be conveyed in one word or phrase that is synonymous with “lessons” learned: “Munich” recalls appeasement and ultimately the failure to prevent aggression; “Pearl Harbor” recalls a surprise attack with devastating consequences. Yuen Foong Khong argues that as a form of reasoning, “analogies are cognitive devices that ‘help’ policymakers perform six diagnostic tasks central to political decision-making. Analogies (1) help define the nature of the situation confronting the policymaker (2) help assess the stakes, and (3) provide prescriptions. They help evaluate options by (4) predicting their chances of success, (5) evaluating their moral rightness, and (6) warning about dangers associated with the options.”²⁵ In sum, actors are asserting that the present situation is like the one recalled, attempting to frame a situation and simultaneously implying that one ought to act according to the “lessons” of the analogy. “Metaphor is one, if not the major, cognitive means that communicating minds have for simplifying and ‘making sense’ of highly complex phenomena.”²⁶

In sum, reasoning can be used by an individual actor as a “route to discovery” to help them determine the right course of action to solve a particular problem and also as a form of public reason or political argument.²⁷ In making arguments, individuals give reasons, and evidence to support those reasons, to persuade others of the rightness of a course of action or opinion that they advocate. Although psychologists

²⁴ Jonsen and Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry*, p. 35.

²⁵ Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 10.

²⁶ Paul Chilton, *Security Metaphors: Cold War Discourse from Containment to Common House* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), p. 28.

²⁷ Audi, *Practical Reasoning*, p. 184.

may debate whether human reasoning is top-down, rule-following, or associative, research on foreign policy decisionmaking suggests that arguments and inferences are made both ways.²⁸ Major political arguments, especially those involving ways of life and fundamental social concerns, usually occur over long periods of time and sometimes feature discrete debates over supporting issues and points of evidence. Meta-arguments are also part of the process.

Meta-arguments: the real, the good, the frame

Coherent arguments are unlikely to take place unless and until actors, on at least some level, agree on what they are arguing about. The at least temporary resolution of meta-arguments – regarding the nature of the good (the content of prescriptive norms); what is out there, the way we know the world, how we decide between competing beliefs (ontology and epistemology); and the nature of the situation at hand (the proper frame or representation) – must occur before specific arguments that could lead to decision and action may take place.

Meta-arguments over epistemology and ontology, relatively rare, occur in instances where there is a fundamental clash between belief systems and not simply a debate within a belief system. Such arguments over the nature of the world and how we come to know it are particularly rare in politics though they are more frequent in religion and science. Meta-arguments over the “good” are contests over what it is good and right to do, and even how we know the good and the right. They are about the nature of the good, specifically, defining the qualities of “good” so that we know good when we see it and do it. Ethical arguments are about how to do good in a particular situation.

More common are meta-arguments over representations or frames – about how we ought to understand a particular situation. Sometimes actors agree on how they see a situation. More often there are different possible interpretations. Thomas Homer-Dixon and Roger Karapin suggest, “Argument and debate occur when people try to gain acceptance for their interpretation of the world.”²⁹ For example, “is the war defensive or aggressive?” Defining and controlling representations and images, or the frame, affects whether one thinks there is an issue at

²⁸ On the debate in psychology, see Steven A. Sloman, “The Empirical Case for Two Systems of Reasoning,” *Psychological Bulletin* 19 (January 1996), 1–22; Gerd Gigerenzer and Terry Regier, “How Do We Tell an Association from a Rule? Comment on Sloman,” *Psychological Bulletin* 19 (January 1996), 23–26.

²⁹ Homer-Dixon and Karapin, “Graphical Argument Analysis,” p. 390.

stake and whether a particular argument applies to the case. An actor fighting a defensive war is within international law; an aggressor may legitimately be subject to sanctions.

Framing and reframing involve mimesis or putting forward representations of what is going on. In mimetic meta-arguments, actors who are struggling to characterize or frame the situation accomplish their ends by drawing vivid pictures of the “reality” through exaggeration, analogy, or differentiation. Representations of a situation do not re-produce accurately so much as they creatively re-present situations in a way that makes sense. “Mimesis is a metaphoric or ‘iconic augmentation of the real,’ imitating not the effectivity of events, but their logical structure and meaning.”³⁰ Certain features are emphasized and others de-emphasized or completely ignored as the situation is recharacterized or reframed. Representation thus becomes a “constraint on reasoning in that it limits understanding to a specific organization of conceptual knowledge.”³¹ The dominant representation delimits which arguments will be considered legitimate, framing how actors see possibilities. As Roxanne Doty argues, “the possibility of practices presupposes the ability of an agent to imagine certain courses of action. Certain background meanings, kinds of social actors and relationships, must already be in place.”³²

If, as Donald Sylvan and Stuart Thorson argue, “Politics involves the selective privileging of representations,” it may not matter whether one representation or another is true or not.³³ Emphasizing whether frames articulate accurate or inaccurate perceptions misses the rhetorical import of representation – how frames affect what is seen, or not seen, and subsequent choices.³⁴ Meta-arguments over representation are thus

³⁰ Alker, *Rediscoveries and Reformulations*, p. 298.

³¹ Donald A. Sylvan and Deborah M. Haddad, “Reasoning and Problem Representation in Foreign Policy: Groups, Individuals and Stories,” in Donald A. Sylvan and James F. Voss, eds., *Problem Representation in Foreign Policy Decision Making* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 187–212: 189.

³² Roxanne Lynn Doty, “Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines,” *International Studies Quarterly* 37 (September 1993), 297–320: 298.

³³ Donald A. Sylvan and Stuart J. Thorson, “Ontologies, Problem Representation, and the Cuban Missile Crisis,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36 (December 1992), 709–732: 731.

³⁴ Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis* (New York: Harper, 1974); Paul Slovic, Baruch Fischhoff, and Sara Lichtenstein, “Response Mode, Framing, and Information-Processing Effects in Risk Assessment,” in David E. Bell, Howard Raiffa, and Amos Tversky, eds., *Decision Making: Descriptive, Normative, and Prescriptive Interactions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 152–166; Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, “Rational Choice and the Framing of Decisions,” in Bell, Raiffa, and Tversky, eds., *Decision Making*, pp. 167–192.

crucial elements of political argument because an actor's arguments about what to do will be more persuasive if their characterization or framing of the situation holds sway. But, as Rodger Payne suggests, "No frame is an omnipotent persuasive tool that can be decisively wielded by norm entrepreneurs without serious political wrangling."³⁵ Hence framing is a meta-argument.

Associative reasoning, especially analogies, are particularly useful in meta-arguments about the frame. Thus, Dwain Mefford argues, "the process of reasoning by analogy probably exerts greatest impact in the initial steps of the overall process. It helps shape the decision makers' initial orientation and posture. It is here that candidate interpretations are first marshaled, later to be scrutinized and reworked or rejected."³⁶ Historical analogy is *both* a frame and a mechanism for internal discovery and reason. "The ambiguous and incomplete information that a new situation typically presents is often pieced together and completed on the basis of parallels drawn to past incidents. The parallels, once recognized, guide actors' expectations as to what may ensue from the present situations if the parallel holds."³⁷ In some cases, analogies that in retrospect seem misplaced or poorly remembered helped policymakers settle on what are regarded as mistaken policies.³⁸

Some scholars are wary of analogy because it seems to do too many things in argument. For example, Jack Levy distinguishes between analogies that help us reason and those that are "rhetorical." "Some fail to differentiate between genuine learning and the rhetorical or strategic use of historical lessons to advance current preferences or fail to construct research designs that expedite the empirical distinction between these causal processes."³⁹ Levy discounts the rhetorical. "Instead of genuinely learning from historical experience, individuals might use

³⁵ Rodger Payne, "Persuasion, Frames, and Norm Construction," unpublished manuscript (University of Louisville, 2000).

³⁶ Dwain Mefford, "Analogical Reasoning and the Definition of the Situation: Back to Snyder for Concepts and Forward to Artificial Intelligence for Method," in Charles F. Hermann, Charles W. Kegley, Jr., and James N. Rosenau, eds., *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy* (London: HarperCollins Academic, 1987), pp. 221–244: 222.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

³⁸ See Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 275–279; Yaacov Y. I. Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds: Information Processing, Cognition, and Perception in Foreign Policy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 296–341. Also see Khong, *Analogies at War*; Ernest May, "Lessons of the Past" (New York: Oxford, 1973); Richard Neustadt and Ernest May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989).

³⁹ Jack S. Levy, "Learning and Foreign Policy: Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield," *International Organization* 48 (Spring 1994), 279–312: 282.

history instrumentally. They often select from historical experience those cases that provide the greatest support for their preexisting policy preferences, or they reinterpret a given case in a way that reinforces their views, so as to rally support for their preferred policies, whether they be driven by views of the national interest or partisan political interests."⁴⁰ Discounting instrumental uses of analogy misses the purpose and effects of historical/analogical statements as meta-arguments. The intention is precisely to persuade and the framing effect is often quite powerful.⁴¹ As Khong says, "that policymakers use the same analogies to *justify* their choices does not vitiate the diagnostic role of the analogies in helping policymakers *arrive* at those choices."⁴²

Why do actors find one framing analogy or metaphor more persuasive than another? The answer probably lies in the personal histories and cultural contexts of decisionmakers. Further, as Vertzberger argues, the "logic of analogical reasoning dictates that the greater the perceived correspondence between the past and the present or future, the greater the credibility of the analogy and the appropriateness of analogical reasoning are perceived to be."⁴³ This "perceived correspondence" is crucial. "Consequently the weight given to inferences and definitions of the situation based on lessons from history is higher than the weight given to competing inferences and definitions of the situation based on other knowledge structures, such as deductive logic. In the same vein, the greater the perceived correspondence, the more likely is high credibility and trust in the validity of the analogy. . . ." ⁴⁴ But "correspondence" is not merely recognized or "perceived." Rather, policymakers often *argue* that the case corresponds with their preferred analogy, *making* the situation correspond with the past that they want to emphasize. Further, framing is shaped and constrained by dominant cultures.

To understand which arguments are persuasive, and how one argument is chosen over another, it is important to know which representation or characterization of the situation was believed and why one representation was chosen over competing frames. Winners of the framing contest, or more importantly, the content of the representation they employ, have powerfully set the terms of subsequent argument. The content of the accepted representation focuses debates simply because

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 306.

⁴¹ For a psychological approach, see Keith Holyoak and Paul Thagard, *Mental Leaps: Analogy in Creative Thought* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

⁴² Khong, *Analogies at War*, p. 16.

⁴³ Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds*, p. 319. ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

when the same issues are framed one way versus another, some arguments will seem more persuasive than others. Further, the at least temporary settling of meta-arguments over the good, ontology, epistemology, and representations, is the *topoi* or starting point of other arguments.⁴⁵ Among like-minded individuals, and in cases where the issue was less what the starting point was than what to do about a particular question, decisionmaking will likely feature much less meta-argument than debate on the content of arguments on the table, a search for consensus, and a focus on the best means of implementing decisions. The settling of arguments can lead to a new round of meta-argument, however, as the practices implied and entailed by the conclusion of arguments change the way the world works and is understood.

Content of argument

Political arguments can be classified into four ideal-type categories that vary in terms of their content: practical/instrumental, ethical, scientific, and identity. In complex situations that demand complex arguments, more than one, in some cases all these types of arguments may be deployed. Although the bulk of the empirical part of this book concerns the role of ethical argument the other types are also common in world politics.

Practical or *instrumental* arguments involve beliefs about cause and effect relations among individuals; they are about how to do things in the social world. For example, prior to World War I, strategists in the French, German, and Russian militaries argued that offensive military doctrines were the best defense, and convinced the civilian leaders of those states to adopt offensive strategies.⁴⁶ Practical arguments work by giving good accounts of the social world, and thus they rely on hearers being convinced by the practical beliefs that support those arguments. Practical arguments may also show that a previous or alternative process for accomplishing a certain task in the social world was inadequate or ineffective. Words like “counter-productive,” “futile,” or “ineffective” will convey this sense. Those employing practical arguments may also then make the claim that an alternative process is better (e.g. more efficient, more effective, or less costly) than the dominant practice. Such a claim may or may not rest on the belief that advocates of the new practical alternative have a better understanding of how the social world works.

⁴⁵ Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms and Decisions*, pp. 38–39, 41, 218–219.

⁴⁶ See Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

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Scientific arguments are about the constraints and possibilities of the physical and natural world, using the “laws” of science, technology, or nature, as they are understood at the time. Scientific arguments are often made by members of scientific epistemic communities and by others who invoke “natural” laws.⁴⁷ For example, the interlocutors in international policy debates about global warming rely on scientific (and economic) arguments. Old-fashioned realist theories and a good deal of contemporary foreign policy rely on what are thought to be scientific views of human nature as at root concerned with the acquisition of power. Scientific arguments work, or are persuasive, to the extent that they make powerful ontological claims about the natural world that are coupled with epistemological, procedural, claims about how to make new knowledge. These procedures for producing new knowledge become the only valid grounds for judging whether or not information and arguments should be heard and how they should be judged. Scientific arguments work by defeating other claims to understanding the natural world and by posing plausible accounts of the processes of the natural world that cohere with other scientific accounts.

Ethical arguments concern how to act in a particular situation so as to be doing good, assuming that the good has been defined through cultural consensus or meta-argument. Ethical arguments may assert that an existing normative belief or moral conviction ought to be applied in a particular situation, and they are used to promote new normative beliefs. To simplify in a way that parallels the model of practical inference, ethical arguments may take the form of positing the existence of an ethical or prescriptive normative belief (premise 1), then specifying that the particular context is an instance covered by the prescriptive norm (premise 2), which implies (conclusion) that to do good, one ought to act in ways consistent with the prescription. Ethical arguments may also be characterized by sideways reasoning, where similarities and differences between cases suggest what is right to do in a new situation.⁴⁸ Chapter 2 describes in detail how ethical arguments work.

Identity arguments posit that people of a certain kind act or don't act in certain ways and the audience of the argument either positively or negatively identifies with the people in question. Identity arguments

⁴⁷ See Peter Haas, “Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination,” *International Organization* 46 (Winter 1992), 1–36.

⁴⁸ See Jonson and Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry*.

may apply to groups or to individuals, but they are specifically about the characteristics of those individuals and what those characteristics imply in terms of actions or reactions. A simple example is the following: “civilized nations do not permit genocide” (premise 1); “we are civilized” (premise 2); “those who permit or conduct genocides are barbarians and we, the civilized should not allow this practice” (conclusion).

Identity arguments work by producing or calling upon previously existing identities and differences among groups and claiming that specific behaviors are associated with certain identities. Identity arguments therefore depend heavily on the depth and taken-for-grantedness of identities or identity beliefs. To be most persuasive, identity and difference must be seen as deeply embedded and natural. Identity arguments work to the extent that hearers are not immediately conscious of the ways that identity and difference are produced and naturalized by the individual performance of actions, the discourses of insiders and outsiders which articulate the characteristics and reproduce the histories of groups, and the institutions that produce identities such as schools, religious societies, or states. Further, identity arguments are often linked with practical or scientific arguments, as for example in this statement by a member of the French parliament in 1930:

France has not yet become sufficiently conscious of the extent to which its colonies offer possibilities of prestige, elements of power and prosperity for its material recovery and opportunities to diffuse and display the splendor of its spirit. None of our national preoccupations is as important as that one. They all, whether they concern our security, our financial recovery, problems of population or of the reinforcement of our influence in the universal concord of people, they all have their full significance and precise implications only if viewed from this aspect. In fact on reflection one may rightly say: France will be a great colonizing power, or it will cease to be France.⁴⁹

Identity and ethical arguments are often tightly linked. To be a good person, or in the above case, a great and splendid nation, implies or perhaps even requires, certain “good” behaviors. “France will be a great colonizing power, or it will cease to be France.” Identity arguments, perhaps more obviously than other arguments, also make use of and are bolstered by emotions or feelings of belonging and love, or alternatively

⁴⁹ Léon Archimbaud quoted in Rudolf von Albertini, *Decolonization: The Administration and Future of the Colonies, 1919–1960* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1971), p. 265.

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of hatred and contempt. Nationalist discourses, for example, depend on ethnocentric and national identity, which entails love and we-feeling for the ingroup and imply a political program of state-building. Thus, arguments do not depend solely on “cold” cognitive processes for their persuasiveness, but also on emotions.⁵⁰

Emotion and argument

Arguments are more or less well received depending on the emotional status of the hearer and the emotional content of the argument. When individuals are angry or hostile toward an interlocutor, they are less open to persuasion than if they are neutral or feeling empathetic. More subtly, some arguments may trigger feelings as well as thoughts. Historical analogies are cognitively persuasive in arguments if they convince us that there are similarities between one situation and another; the lesson learned in the previous situation, therefore, ought to be applied to the new situation. If the events “match” (are similar in respects deemed significant) it is more likely that individuals who belong to generations with direct experience of an event used in the analogy, or who have had some direct contact with those who experienced the event, will likely have a greater emotional reaction.

Analogies may also be emotionally persuasive. Emotions are often purposefully evoked by political actors to increase our receptivity to their arguments. Nationalist leaders may promote fear of outsiders and love of country. International and non-governmental organizations use guilt and empathy to prompt disaster relief and foreign aid. Emotional appeals may be particularly effective when conflicts are represented in ethnic or racial terms, and when there is a reservoir of pre-existing negative beliefs and feelings toward outgroups, or where those beliefs and feelings can be easily stimulated and stoked. Both ethical and identity arguments are emotional and derive much of their persuasiveness from how well they elicit appropriate emotions, such as love or shame.

Both cognition and emotion influence persuasiveness, but the effects are not straightforward or easily disentangled. Persuasiveness that depends on careful cognition may be impaired by positive moods. Conversely, attempts to evoke emotions such as fear may backfire since “the kind of arguments used in fear appeals appear to disrupt careful

⁵⁰ See Neta C. Crawford, “The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on Emotion and Emotional Relationships,” *International Security* 24 (Spring 2000), 116–156.

evaluation of message content.”⁵¹ But arguments that evoke fear may have positive consequences when interlocutors want fearful subjects to pay less attention to logic.

Process and meaning

If the process of political argument is ubiquitous, why do one thing and not another? And why are particular arguments understood to be persuasive enough to change the prevailing practice? In other words, the entire causal story is not captured by the process of argument. To answer questions about the particular constitution of the world at one moment, and how world political practices change, one must turn to content.⁵² Meaning-content is found in the individual words used by those who are making arguments, and in the context that is readily apparent to participants because of their cultural background and immediate historical experience.

Words are a part of human behaviour. They are mental categories which both represent, and are part of, the world and which impose intentionality and coherence on that world. Language is not just an intellectual activity distinct from the material world. Concepts and contexts are inseparable. Language is part of the social and political structure; it reveals the politics of a society. Hence analysis of political discourse will indicate how the political world is perceived, and a diachronic analysis of concepts can be helpful in uncovering long-term structural changes by showing how words acquire new meanings in the contexts of such changes.⁵³

Further, as Aristotle noted, arguments are nested: more difficult social and political issues will often be tied to other complex and contested arguments and belief systems, linked to chains of prior argument. Consider the following syllogism about achieving peace. The first premise articulates the goal of actors, the second premise makes a claim about a causal relationship, and the conclusion states a “logical” action that

⁵¹ Francine Rosselli, John J. Skelly, and Diane M. Mackie, “Processing Rational and Emotional Messages: The Cognitive and Affective Mediation of Persuasion,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 31 (March 1995), 163–190: 167.

⁵² Meaning is the manifest understanding of beliefs and arguments and the related web of associations including the background beliefs held by interlocutors and observers by which they are able to understand the arguments and beliefs. Linguists call this “deep structure.” Associative arguments are particularly rich with meanings that may not be obvious to interlocutors and which may vary among interlocutors.

⁵³ K.H.F. Dyson, *The State Tradition in Western Europe: A Study of an Idea and Institution* (Oxford: Martin Robinson, 1980), pp. 1–2 quoted in Chilton, *Security Metaphors*, p. 25.

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follows from the premises. The context is a question about how to use one's military to promote peace.

Example of Practical Inference in Foreign Policy Arguments

- Premise: We desire international peace. (goal of actor)
Premise: The best way to achieve peace is through a strong military.
(causal argument)
Conclusion: We ought to make a strong military. (An action is required
or desired; follows from premises)

There are nearly always competing practical arguments on the table or in the background. An alternative position to the argument presented above is the confidence-building perspective where the goal or major premise is the same – the expression of a desire for peace – but the premise concerned with end-means relations makes an alternative claim based on different beliefs. The causal argument might be phrased, “The best way to achieve peace is through assuring the other side that you have peaceful intentions” where the conclusion might be “communicate” or “disarm.”

Both examples illustrate that there are multiple supporting beliefs and arguments that underpin complex arguments.⁵⁴ Instrumental beliefs frequently come into play in arguments about practical questions such as how shall the state defend itself. For example, military doctrines include a mix of strategic, operational, and tactical beliefs about the most efficient and effective ways to deter and fight wars. Those beliefs affect decisions about the acquisition of equipment, the structure and content of training, and the conduct of military campaigns. But those beliefs are also used in arguments by those within and outside militaries to legitimize or delegitimize other arguments about which weapons to acquire in what number, how forces ought to be trained, and how wars ought to be fought. Thus, reasoning is contextual, including particular knowledge or larger belief contexts (culture).

Actors, persuasive context, and non-ideal speech

Political argument is institutionalized in world politics, albeit under different rules of procedure and standards of evidence, in several venues. Indeed, diplomacy is not only the mediation of estrangement and alienation, as James Der Derian suggests, it is the formal and institutionalized process of argumentation among states carried on by official or unofficial

⁵⁴ On using artificial intelligence to model practical reasoning see Alker, *Rediscoveries and Reformulations* and Walton, *Practical Reasoning*.

representatives of governments.⁵⁵ Besides bilateral diplomacy, venues for argument in world politics include international courts, commissions, and the resolution-making bodies of international organizations as well as transnational movements. In domestic settings, argumentation is institutionalized in the peer review process of disciplinary journals, in the op-ed and letter pages of newspapers, and in public institutions such as courts, legislatures, and political campaigns. Many kinds of actors in world politics are involved in making arguments, from individuals in governmental bureaucracies to diplomats who wish to make treaties to avoid or end wars, to members of the press and intellectuals who write opinion pieces about foreign policy, to staff members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who desire a change in a state's foreign policies or the policies of inter-governmental organizations such as the United Nations or the World Bank.⁵⁶

If argument-making is institutionalized and ubiquitous, it is not unaffected by the purpose, context, and the identities of speakers and hearers. Some scholars of argument, notably Jürgen Habermas, talk about the conditions for "ideal speech" where only the force of the better argument convinces.⁵⁷ No institutional power, physical threats, or lies get in the way of the logic of argument and inference. In an ideal speech situation, all actors are competent and able to challenge the premises of their interlocutor, and the interlocutor must be prepared to justify their claims to validity.

Thus, those who presume that argumentation is primarily "a procedure whereby two or more individuals try to arrive at an agreement" or truth potentially miss an important context of argumentation.⁵⁸ A search for agreement may characterize some interpersonal arguments, but political arguments are different in significant respects.⁵⁹ First, participants

⁵⁵ See James Der Derian, *On Diplomacy: A Genealogy of Estrangement* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

⁵⁶ Much of what transnational advocacy networks do involves making meta-arguments and arguments. See Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

⁵⁷ See Jürgen Habermas, *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993) and Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*.

⁵⁸ Frans H. van Eemeren, Rob Grootendorst, Sally Jackson, and Scott Jacobs, *Reconstructing Argumentative Discourse* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), p. 12. Also see H.P. Grice, "Logic of Conversation," in P. Cole and J.L. Morgan, eds., *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), pp. 41–58; Denis J. Hilton, "The Social Context of Reasoning: Conversational Inference and Rational Judgement," *Psychological Bulletin* 118 (September 1995), 248–271.

⁵⁹ While I share the desire of political theorists who seek to create non-coercive ideal speech communities I am here describing world politics, not at this point trying to remake it. The last chapter is prescriptive.

in political argument, while they may sincerely want to persuade the other and come to agreement, sometimes have no thought of trying to persuade their immediate interlocutor; rather they are playing to a larger audience, hoping to persuade non-participants and thus shift the political balance of power. Moreover, while persuasion of one's counterpart is often the point of making arguments, there are also other reasons to argue. Specifically, advocates of a particular position may be attempting, by stating their case, to rally their own supporters as a way of mobilizing their preexisting political power. Or advocates may be attempting to lay the rhetorical grounds (change the frame) as the background for a future argument. Or someone may give an argument in order to proclaim and establish their identity as a "standard bearer" or person who holds particular beliefs.

Second, in major political arguments that occupy domestic and international societies over long periods of time, larger issues and relations of power – in addition to the ostensible issue being debated – are usually at stake. The occurrence of a major political argument means the dissatisfaction that is characteristic of all political arrangements is occurring in a context of shifting ideas and power relations: there would be no argument if all were settled. Rather, justifications in the form of arguments would perhaps be used to maintain the taken for grantedness of the existing relationship. The occurrence of political argument indicates that there is either a normative belief that the issues at stake *should not* be decided by force alone or a *practical judgment* that a conflict *cannot* be decided by force. This is the case in all domestic societies, regardless of the level of authoritarianism.

Third, the scope for argument varies within and across institutional settings. For example, there is potentially greater scope for argument in democracies if only and simply because the dominant institutions have regular occasions, times, and venues for hearing arguments. A normative belief in public deliberation underlies the institutionalization of argument. In a democracy, when no side has the power to simply impose their view (and they often get that power by having won prior arguments and institutionalizing their victory), a decision often comes about as a result of the process of argument. The scope for argument is decreased in authoritarian settings. Specifically, one cannot neglect the important role of both simple allegiance (unreasoned faith) or unquestioned belief in the normality and legitimacy of certain institutions and practices, and fear, which can be quite effective in holding authoritarian states together. For fear to work, it requires that people believe adverse