

Foreign Policy Analysis: What to Study and Why?

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Gonçalves, F N and Pinheiro, L. 2020. *Análise de Política Externa: O Que Estudar e Por quê?* [Foreign Policy Analysis: What to Study and Why?]. Curitiba: Intersaberes.

The Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) subfield increasingly gained attention in Brazil as it ‘opened the black box’ of the state, highlighting the participation of other actors, the perception of its distributive gains, and the divergences within the Brazilian Foreign Ministry about the conduct of a policy, hitherto seen as state policy.

‘*Análise de Política Externa: o que estudar e por quê?*’ [Foreign Policy Analysis: what to study and why?], launched at the end of 2020, was written by Fernanda Nanci Gonçalves, coordinator and professor of the International Relations undergraduate course at UniLaSalle-RJ, and Letícia Pinheiro, professor at the Institute of Political and Social Studies of the State University of Rio de Janeiro (IESP/UERJ). It is part of a set of texts that seek to disseminate the premises of FPA from the perspective of foreign policy as public policy. The book is divided into five chapters, guided by two central questions: What to study in Foreign Policy Analysis? And why? The work synthesizes and introduces the subfield, bringing a review of the literature from the United States and Europe without neglecting the literature from the Global South and examples from Latin America and Brazil.

In the first chapter, *Fundamentos da Análise de Política Externa* [Foundations of Foreign Policy Analysis], the central premises of FPA, the definition of foreign policy, and the development of the subfield are presented. There are three main points here: foreign policy as a policy dimension, foreign policy as a result of international and domestic dynamics, and all political action as a potential part of a country’s foreign policy. FPA embraces multicausal and multilevel explanations, considering numerous dimensions and perspectives. To the authors, based on Alden and Aran (2017:25), its core is in

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'research concerning the decision-making process, its decision-makers and the processes and conditions that affect foreign policy'.

Gonçalves and Pinheiro state that foreign policy definitions have become more complex due to the growing relevance of other actors. In short, it can be defined as '(...) a set of decisions taken by decision-makers concerning (or having consequences for) entities external to the Nation-State' (2020:31). Thus, the decision-makers' agency is recognised, making it possible to assign responsibilities for this process. The development of the subfield took place from the 1950s onwards and advanced along with the understanding of its object. In Brazil, the development of FPA is confused with the development of International Relations (IR) as a subject within the general development of Social Sciences and the university system in the country, during the 1970s, which gained strength in the 1990s with re-democratization and globalization.

FPA differs from the traditional view of IR and has foreign policy as its scope, not international politics. However, it does not fail to dialogue with the theories of the area. The second chapter, *Vínculos entre a Análise de Política Externa e as Teorias das Relações Internacionais* [Ties between Foreign Policy Analysis and International Relations Theories], addresses these links. The central ideas and ontological premises of the main theoretical approaches are presented, such as the question of levels of analysis and the agent-structure debate, and the authors discuss approximations and distances between FPA and IR theories.

The greatest distance is found between FPA and Realist theories, since the structure assumes ontological primacy in the latter, although classical and neoclassical strands of realism recognize the agency of individuals. In contrast, FPA proximity to Liberalism is the greatest among IR theories, as both emphasize agency, multicausal and multilevel analyses. Likewise, Constructivism adopts a multilevel approach, emphasizing the role of ideas similarly to several FPA works. Finally, in the dialogue with the post-positivists/reflexivists, the approximation lies in approaches which raise questions regarding the nature of foreign policy, both with regards to the dichotomy established between "I" and the "other" and in the domestic-international separation.

In chapter three, *Política Externa como Política Pública* [Foreign Policy as Public Policy], Gonçalves and Pinheiro develop the argument that foreign policy, seen as a public policy, implies recognizing that it is the result of a political agreement, which does not prevent the recognition of its specificities or the fact that some guidelines become, in fact, State policies. In order to explore a path to the methodological challenges of this perspective, the public policy cycle is presented. By investigating the decision-making process, the affinities between FPA and Public Policy Analysis become clear.

In the final chapters, FPA's analytical tools and methodological discussions are presented. In order to summarize those tools and methodologies, Gonçalves and Pinheiro present some key authors of each approach and use tables to sum up the frameworks. The fourth chapter, *Processo decisório: perspectivas analíticas* [Decision-making process: analytical perspectives], presents to the reader seven FPA approaches to understand foreign policy decision-making, divided in two groups. In the first group, they present Allison's (1971) conceptual models, the Two-Level Games, and the analytical approach

of decision units. In the second are perspectives based on the impact of certain domestic structures on foreign policy: interdependence between actors' preferences; transnational political networks; institutions, interests, and information distribution; beliefs, images, and information processing.

Finally, in chapter five, *Política Externa Comparada* [Comparative Foreign Policy], the authors connect the origin of the comparative method in FPA to Rosenau's concern with creating a general theory. Rosenau's concern provided numerous conceptual and methodological advances and the creation of databases between the 1960s and 1980s. However, the creation of a general theory was frustrated, and the emphasis turned to middle-range theories. Concerning tools, the chapter presents three works useful for defining levels and dimensions of analysis (Andriole, Wilkenfeld and Hopple, 1975), aspects for comparison (Beasley, Karbo, Lantis and Snaar, 2012) and a framework for foreign policy changes (Hermann, 1990).

Gonçalves and Pinheiro conclude with the argument that individual agency is fundamental to understand foreign policy, and being aware of that is important for citizens to act. The work is relevant for disseminating FPA since the subfield is still being incorporated into IR training in Brazil. In this sense, the didactic language and the summary tables make the fundamental FPA ideas clear to undergraduate students.

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