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Societal Interests, Policy Networks and Foreign Policy:

An Outline of Utilitarian-Liberal Foreign Policy Theory

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1. Summary

Utilitarian Liberalism is the main competitor of neorealist and constructivist theories of foreign policy. Whereas neorealism explains foreign policy behavior by looking at the structure of the international system, utilitarian liberalism assumes that the configuration of domestic interests determines foreign policy. In contrast to constructivism, utilitarian liberalism denies that norms have an independent influence on foreign policy. Instead, utilitarian liberalism subscribes to the assumption that foreign policy is made and shaped by rational, utility-maximizing actors. In sum, utilitarian liberalism defines domestic interests as the decisive determinant of foreign policy.

However, a utilitarian-liberal theory of foreign policy, which aims at generating predictions about the

foreign policy of a country over time and across issue-areas, still has to be elaborated. Utilitarian-liberal theorizing so far has either focused on the cross-national comparison of foreign policies or on the explanation of foreign policy in specific issue areas. This working paper seeks to fill a theoretical gap.

In order to arrive at predictions about, and explanations of, the foreign policies of a country over time, utilitarian-liberal theory has to determine who are the dominant domestic actors and what are their interests. First, the preferences of domestic actors have to be established. Five types of domestic actors (political and administrative actors, companies, business and labor interest groups as well as political and social interest groups) are distinguished. The preferences of these actors with regard to specific foreign policy issues can be derived from their assumed fundamental goals. As all actors are defined as rational utility maximizers, they all strive for gains. Depending on the actor, however, these gains may be material or immaterial gains.

Second, each domestic actor's capability to assert its preferences in the process of foreign policy formulation has to be determined. Policy network analysis offers a commonly accepted method to do so. Its basic assumption is that, depending on the structure of a policy network in a given issue area, some domestic actors will be able to assert their preferences better than others. We will differentiate between different types of hierarchical, societal and corporatist networks.

Utilitarian Liberalism expects that the foreign policy of a country in a given issue area will aim at achieving the material or immaterial goals which are pursued by the most influential domestic actors. It predicts that foreign policy behavior will change in case of modifications of domestic actors' preferences and/or of the policy network structure.

"There is, in fact, only one general theory of human behaviour, and that is the utility-maximizing theory" (Stigler 1975: 137)

2. Introduction

[*\(footnote 1\)*](#)

In contrast to neorealism, liberalism does not regard states as unitary actors with a national interest that can be derived from systemic conditions. Instead, liberalism explains states' foreign policy behavior by means of a "'bottom-up' view of politics" (Moravcsik 1997: 517) as the result of influencing factors acting on the sub-system level. Utilitarian liberalism combines this basic liberal tenet with the premise of rational actors attempting to maximize their utility, which liberalism regards as exogenous.

Unlike constructivism (cf. Boekle/Rittberger/Wagner 1999), utilitarian liberalism does not base its explanation of foreign policy behavior on norms, but on interests. Unlike in neorealism (cf. Baumann/Rittberger/Wagner 1998), however, the interests determining foreign policy are not formed by the international system but root in domestic society. The core hypothesis of utilitarian liberalism, therefore, is that the interests of domestic actors determine the foreign policy behavior of a country.

Our aim is to develop a utilitarian-liberal analytical approach for investigating German foreign policy which will allow theoretically guided case studies of individual areas of German foreign policy to be carried out. To this end, the basic assumptions of utilitarian liberalism will first be described ([section 3](#)) and different currents of utilitarian-liberal foreign policy theory discussed ([section 4](#)). Here, a distinction

will be made between structural ([section 4.1.](#)) and actor-oriented ([section 4.2.](#)) explanations of foreign policy. After having shown that actor-oriented explanations are more suitable for a longitudinal study of German foreign policy, the policy network approach will be elaborated as the conceptual basis for a utilitarian-liberal analysis of German foreign policy ([section 5](#)). The article then focuses on describing the way in which network analysis identifies the domestic interests that have the decisive influence on German foreign policy ([section 6](#)). This is done in three steps: following a definition of the domestic actors to be considered in a certain area of foreign policy ([section 6.1.](#)), their foreign policy preferences must be derived from their fundamental interests ([section 6.2.](#)). Then, in the third and final step, the question to be asked is which of the network actors are most successful in asserting their foreign policy preferences in the foreign policy decision-making process ([sections 6.3.](#) and [6.4.](#)). Once domestic interests have been determined, it will then be possible to formulate predictions about German foreign policy since unification ([section 6](#)).

3. Basic Assumptions of Utilitarian Liberalism

A central concern with individual actors is the common denominator uniting all utilitarian-liberal analytical approaches (cf., for example, Buchanan/Tullock 1962: 1ff; Buchanan 1989). Utilitarian liberalism is therefore indebted to the tradition of methodological individualism. It is always individuals, not collectives, that act. While individuals may join to form collective actors, every observed action is attributable to the actions of individuals. This perspective forms the basis for an attempt to understand domestic interests at a low level of aggregation by analyzing competing individual or group interests. In doing so, utilitarian liberalism assumes that the way in which conflicting interests are fought out is largely determined by the structures of interest intermediation given in a society. Thus, the interests of those domestic actors who are able to dominate the process of interest intermediation become the crucial determining factor of foreign policy behavior.

In addition to this fundamental methodological decision, utilitarian liberalism makes an assumption about the behavioral disposition of actors which harks back to the classical utilitarians of the early 19th century such as Jeremy Bentham and J. S. Mill. According to the concept of *homo oeconomicus* (Downs 1967: 3-20; Buchanan/Tullock 1962: 17-39), all actors share two basic characteristics: concerning their aims, actors always seek to maximize their utility. Further, actors gear their actions to achieving their aims with the minimum of effort or cost, i.e. they act rationally.

The *homo oeconomicus* model of actors has been the subject of long and vehement debate. ([footnote 2](#)) In part at least, this debate is also due to uncertainty about the meaning of the terms "rationality" and "maximization of utility". A utilitarian-liberal theory of foreign policy cannot therefore avoid explicating the concepts of rationality and utility on which it is based.

In general terms, the rationality assumption states that actors are able to take suitable steps serving the purpose of achieving a given aim (cf. Buchanan/Tullock 1962: 30). However, this assumption is too general to enable us to derive an actor's (e.g. foreign policy) preferences from its fundamental aims, even if those aims are known. For it is important here whether only the actor who always chooses what is objectively the utility-maximizing alternative is regarded as acting rationally, or whether this also applies to an actor who, within the limits of the information available to it, chooses the best alternative from its

subjective point of view. In the former case, the actor is behaving according to the principle of *substantive rationality*; from all the objectively available alternatives for action, it chooses the one which maximizes its utility.

"If the characteristics of the choosing organism are ignored, and we consider only those constraints that arise from the external situation, then we may speak of substantive or objective rationality, that is, behavior that can be adjudged objectively to be optimally adapted to the situation" (Simon 1985: 294).

This does not take account of the uncertainty, or restrictions on available information, which an actor has to face. If an actor's fundamental aims are known, then its foreign policy preferences can be deduced relatively easily. All that has to be known is the level of utility arising from the behavioral alternatives objectively available to the actor. The actor will place all the objectively possible alternatives for action in an order of preference according to the level of utility which they open up to it, and strive to realize the alternative which maximizes its utility.

By contrast, rational behavior according to the principle of *procedural rationality* or "bounded rationality" is characterized by a situation where an actor chooses the utility-maximizing alternative from the behavioral alternatives known to it subjectively, and does so in the face of other constraints, such as uncertainty, etc. For deducing foreign policy preferences from an actor's fundamental aims, then, the objective environment in which a decision is made is not the sole criterion. The restrictions on an actor's information and its information processing have to be known, as do the number of alternatives for action which are available from the actor's point of view. When determining actor's foreign policy preferences in case studies, therefore, the concept of procedural rationality presents problems that are extremely difficult to resolve.

The assumption of utility maximization also needs to be specified in more detail. If it is not defined more closely, any aim of an actor can be interpreted as 'utility' - and the concept of utility would be void of any content. In economics, utility is usually modeled as directly dependent on income: the higher an individual's income or prosperity, the higher his level of utility will be.

It has often been suggested that the monetary concept of utility should be transferred from economic theory to the political sphere. Brennan and Buchanan, for example, have argued that the postulate of utility maximization should be limited solely to the maximization of material wealth, as the *homo oeconomicus* model could otherwise become untestable. If 'utility' could encompass everything, the concept would be analytically worthless (Brennan/Buchanan 1984: 383). But while earlier "public choice" approaches still explicitly rejected the inclusion of power in actor's utility function (cf. Buchanan/Tullock 1962: 23f), restriction of the utility concept to material gains has proved to be too narrow in political science, and the utility concept has thus been extended to include factors such as power or appointment to political office (cf. Blair/Maser 1978: 12; Buchanan 1989: 41f). It is now common in political science to distinguish two variants of utility: "power" and "plenty". ([footnote 3](#)) Here, actors strive both for income (i.e. material gains) and power (i.e. intangible gains).

The assumption of utility maximization also leads directly to the already mentioned concepts of *interests* and *preferences*. An actor's presumed orientation to maximizing its utility is its interest. Ensuring survival must be regarded as the fundamental aim of any actor, as only then can other utility-increasing aims be pursued. In the following, all those interests whose pursuit directly serves to secure an actor's survival will be regarded as fundamental interests. According to the individual utility function in certain

structural circumstances and contexts of action (in a certain foreign policy area, for example) preferences can be derived from these fundamental interests. While actors' fundamental interests tend to be constant over time, preferences can change if the context of action changes. This is especially the case if incentives for, or restrictions on, action appear or disappear.

4. Variants of Utilitarian-Liberal Explanations of Foreign Policy

Within the utilitarian liberal school one can distinguish between many theories and analytical approaches attempting to explain a country's foreign policy with sub-systemic factors. One important classification of utilitarian-liberal approaches to foreign policy hinges on whether foreign policy behavior is to be explained primarily by means of a society's structural characteristics or by means of domestic actors' interests. ([footnote 4](#))

4.1. Structural Explanations of Foreign Policy

There is a series of analytical approaches in the literature which explain foreign policy behavior by looking at certain structures to be found in a society. For the most part, these analytical approaches do not explicitly specify domestic interests. Instead, basic characteristics of society are identified, and at the same time connections are made between these and assumptions about the structures of interest intermediation, decision-making processes, the strength of individual actors, etc. These analytical approaches allow predictions about foreign policy behavior to be deduced directly from structural characteristics of society.

Examples of important characteristics of a society named in the literature are its level of modernity and the relationship between the private and the political-administrative sub-system of society. When societies are categorized according to their *level of modernity*, the internal differentiation of their socio-economic structures forms the point of departure. According to this view, traditional societies have a less strongly pronounced internal differentiation than modern societies. In addition, they have a larger agricultural sector, a more hierarchical social structure and less social mobility than modern societies.

General predictions about foreign policy interests and the foreign policy behavior of traditional and modern societies can be deduced from their internal socio-economic structure. In general, for example, it is argued that modern societies pursue a more peaceful and cooperative foreign policy than traditional societies because, unlike the latter, they do not depend on territorial gains for increases in welfare (Wachtler 1983).

When societies are classified according to the relationship between the private and the political-administrative sub-system, a very general distinction is made between democratic and authoritarian societies. It is assumed - particularly in the literature on the peacefulness of democracies - that the former will pursue a more cooperative foreign policy than the latter. This consideration is based on the idea that a liberal-democratic domestic order will encourage the peaceful settlement of conflicts, whereas in an authoritarian society conflicts tend to be settled by the threat or use of violence. From a utilitarian-liberal point of view, it can be assumed that these internal strategies used by societies for coping with conflict will also be applied to an international context. It is typical of dictatorships, for

example, that the decision to wage war only requires the approval of a small societal group, while the ponderousness and complexity of decision-making processes in democratic societies creates obstacles even for a government which is bent on using military force. In addition, democratic societies are characterized by a greater orientation towards economic gain than authoritarian societies, where private actors' welfare-oriented interests are subordinate to the political-administrative elite's interest in the preservation of power. As an aggressive foreign policy involves great economic cost, democracies are usually only willing to use force internationally when there is a clear need for defense, while the costs of foreign policy aggression can be passed on by dictatorships to their citizens. ([footnote 5](#))

A further way of characterizing societies on the basis of the relationship between the political-administrative and the private sub-system is to consider how well private interests can assert themselves in dealings with the political-administrative sub-system. The relative "strength" or "weakness" of the political-administrative sub-system compared to the private sub-system is seen as the decisive determinant (Katzenstein 1976; Krasner 1978). Although this consideration focuses on conflicts of interest between the political-administrative and the private sub-system, the actual process of interest intermediation is not explicitly investigated. Predictions about states' foreign policy behavior are derived directly from the strength or weakness of the political-administrative sub-system, i.e. from a structural characteristic. ([footnote 6](#))

One problem of explanations of foreign policy behavior based on societal characteristics is that they do not explicate any clear causal nexus between societal characteristics and foreign policy behavior. It is not clear *in what way* sub-systemic factors determine foreign policy behavior. From the point of view of the analytical approaches based on societal characteristics, foreign policy behavior can be informed by societal norms, by societal interests and by the structures of interest intermediation. The purported peacefulness of democracies can be regarded not only as the result of complicated and long-winded institutional decision-making processes, but also as the externalization of peaceful patterns of resolving conflict within society (cf. Russett 1993; Risse-Kappen 1994; Ray 1995). Analytical approaches based on societal characteristics therefore do not distinguish *eo ipso* between utilitarian-liberal and societal-constructivist explanations.

The high level of aggregation of explanations based on societal characteristics is a further reason for at least not using them for a longitudinal analysis of a state's foreign policy behavior. Reference is primarily made to societal characteristics when differences between the foreign policies of different societies are to be explained. For this purpose, a high level of aggregation is justified, for the intention is not to explain the foreign policy of a society in concrete situations, but a society's foreign policy *style*, e.g. how far it tends towards international cooperation. When studying the foreign policy of *one* society in various foreign policy areas over time, however, the aggregation level of the explanatory approaches based on societal characteristics is too high.

Finally, the choice of a high level of aggregation would appear hardly adequate for utilitarian liberalism, which takes the individual as its starting point and suggests rivalry between different groups and factions. If foreign policy behavior in concrete situations is to be explained, then a study of individual societal actors and their interests cannot be foregone. In the rest of this working paper, therefore, only those utilitarian-liberal approaches will be considered which allow an explicit study of the interests of different societal actors and the processes of interest intermediation.

4.2. Actor-Oriented Explanations of Foreign Policy

An explicit consideration of the various societal actors and their interests is to be found in those analytical approaches which are rooted in liberal *state theory*, in particular comparative politics. [\(footnote 7\)](#) This method is analogous to the classical liberal approach, which assumes the primacy of societal factors:

"[T]he fundamental actors in politics are members of domestic society, understood as individuals and privately-constituted groups seeking to promote their independent interests. [...] Society is analytically prior to the state" (Moravcsik 1992: 6f).

Actor-based analytical approaches attribute pre-eminence to the interests of societal actors (imparted via their foreign policy preferences) for explaining societies' foreign policy behavior. Structures of interest intermediation are conceived of as opportunities for and barriers to individual or group action. Predictions can therefore not be deduced directly from structures: "domestic structures [...] do not determine the specific content or the directions of policies" (Müller/Risse-Kappen 1993: 35), but they influence foreign policy behavior by allowing certain societal actors to assert their political preferences more successfully than others (cf. Moravcsik 1997: 518).

Institutions, structures and processes of interest intermediation influence the degree to which actors are able to dominate the political decision-making process (Moravcsik 1992; 1997). All analytical approaches which examine actors' opportunities for dominating the political decision-making process distinguish between three main fields of interaction: the relationships between the various political-administrative actors, between various private actors and between the political-administrative and the private sub-system. Each of these sets of relationships is influenced differently by the societal structure of interest intermediation and can therefore be analyzed separately.

The reason for analyzing interest intermediation is to establish how political-administrative and private actors interact in policy formulation and implementation. However, opinions differ with respect to the role played by the various societal actors. The literature distinguishes between what are known as 'society-centered' and 'state-centered' analytical approaches (cf. Ikenberry/Lake/Mastanduno 1988). While the former assigns the political-administrative system the role of an executive organ of private interests, in the latter private interests play only a subordinate role in the determination of foreign policy. In state-centered approaches, foreign policy is conceived of either as the result of conflicts of interest among political-administrative actors if the political-administrative system is fragmented [\(footnote 8\)](#) - or the political-administrative system, as a unitary actor, pursues a 'national interest' with its foreign policy, independent of private interests (cf. Krasner 1978).

Once it had been recognized that the structure of interest intermediation is a decisive factor determining to what extent certain societal actors can dominate the political decision-making process, it became necessary to conceptualize the structure of interest intermediation in terms of a the network of relationships between political-administrative and private actors. The concept of the policy network represents an attempt to achieve this end.

One important difference between the "utilitarian liberalism" presented here and other, related approaches, such as "rational choice" or "commercial liberalism" (Moravcsik 1997: 528ff), is that the latter as well as the 'society' and 'state-centered' analytical approaches make a decision, derived from assumptions, as to which actors determine political events. In the case of "commercial liberalism",

economic pressure groups are decisive for a society's foreign policy, while in the "rational choice" models governments' interest in being re-elected (cf. Downs 1968) decisively influences policy. Unlike these and other analytical approaches, the heuristic model developed in the following sections is initially non-committal concerning which societal actors dominate the political decision-making process. This only becomes clear when the structure of interest intermediation is investigated with the help of the policy network concept.

5. The Policy Network Concept

In the literature, the emergence of the policy network concept at the end of the 1970s is primarily attributed to changes in political reality, which called for a new conceptualization of the political decision-making process (cf., for example, Kenis/ Schneider 1991; Bell 1995).

Political reality had changed to the extent that, as a result of processes of societal modernization and an increase in welfare-political measures, functional differentiation processes had progressively emerged, thus giving rise to relatively independent sub-systems of the political-administrative system in modern societies (Luhmann 1981; Willke 1987). These differentiation processes had two decisive consequences for political theory: first, the concept of the state as a functional entity could no longer be upheld. Instead, political science began to regard the state as a "political-administrative system", i.e. as a multi-centered decision-making and implementing system. Second, it could no longer be assumed that the state was hierarchically superior to private actors. Instead, it was recognized that at least some of the state's coercive power had to be trimmed in order to be able to use the problem-solving abilities of functionally specialized private sub-systems. As the political-administrative system came increasingly to depend on the voluntary contributions of private actors, those also came to have a greater say in the political process. In many areas of politics, ever more bargaining relationships emerged between the political-administrative system and private actors (Offe 1987; Kenis/Schneider 1991: 34ff; Grimm 1993).

The pluralist and liberal neo-corporatist analytical approaches which had dominated up to the end of the 1970s proved to be inadequate models for the new complexity of the political decision-making process. For both pluralism and liberal neo-corporatism assumed that the relationship between political-administrative actors, on the one hand, and private actors, on the other, could be characterized across issue areas. Pluralist analytical approaches assumed that the political-administrative system played a fairly weak role in the process of interest intermediation. Its role was not one as an actor in its own right, but solely as an "arena" or "broker" for competing private interests (Krasner 1984: 229f; Skocpol 1985: 4; Mitchell 1991: 79ff; W. R. Smith 1993: 356). ([footnote 9](#)) Conversely, liberal neo-corporatist analytical approaches were based on the assumption that the formulation and implementation of policy resulted primarily from "cooperation between the interests of society and the interests of the state", with the political-administrative system being attributed the decisive role in structuring this cooperation (Staeck 1997: 62f; cf. also Jordan/Schubert 1992: 7). ([footnote 10](#)) Pluralism and liberal neo-corporatism thus ignored the fact that, in modern societies, processes of interest intermediation can vary depending on the issue area (Jordan/Schubert 1992: 10; cf. also Kenis/Schneider 1991: 36; Bell 1995: 35; Gamble 1995: 525).

In this context, the concept of the policy network was developed. It was intended to provide an analytical tool which, "in conjunction with both different models of the distribution of power and different theories

of the state", would be sufficiently flexible to allow a typology and, on the basis of that, an explanation of the various forms of cooperation between political-administrative and private actors in policy development processes (Rhodes/March 1992: 2; cf. also Lehbruch 1991: 122; Dowding 1995).

5.1. Definition

In its widest sense, a social network is a "system of social entities bound together by social relationships" (Pappi 1993: 89; our transl.). In the context of political processes of interest intermediation, the network notion refers to an interdependent relationship between political- administrative and private actors: "policy making includes a large number of public and private actors from different levels and functional areas of government and society" (Jordan/Schubert 1992: 11 referring to Hanf 1978). Initially, no comment is made on the way in which various societal actors participate in the political decision-making process (Kenis/Schneider 1991: 22ff; Jordan/Schubert 1992: 10; van Waarden 1992: 31; Mayntz 1993: 16; Schubert 1995: 232).

Taking into account the research in the field of the new institutionalism that has been flourishing since the 1980s, it is also emphasized that policy networks are primarily formed by *organized* societal actors:

"Policy networks do not refer any longer to 'networking' of individual personalities, to group collusions, to the interlocking of cliques, elites, party or class factions, as in older traditions, but to the collective action of organized, corporate actors, and consequently to interorganizational relations in public policy making [...] the joint participation of public and private (corporate) actors [...] is the hallmark of policy networks" (Marin/Mayntz 1991: 14, 17; cf. also Knoke et al. 1996: 3f; Mayntz 1992; Wellman 1988: 31; Lehbruch 1987).

This means that individual as well as collective unorganized actors are ignored. A societal actor is regarded as organized if decisions are taken at a collective level both via the formation of its political preferences and via the deployment of resources for action (cf. Scharpf 1997: 54ff).

To sum up, policy networks can be defined as the *inter-organizational relationships arising in the policy development process as a result of the interaction of network participants in the form of "coordination, cooperation and communication"* (Staeck 1997: 57; our transl.; cf. also Kenis/Schneider 1991: 41f).

Communication happens in the form of hearings, consultations and the exchange of information. The division of labor, negotiating processes and exchange relationships are regarded as *coordination and cooperation*. *Division of labor* refers to the delegation of at least parts of public tasks to private actors. *Exchange arrangements* take place when "one side [is given] influence on policy formulation and implementation in the network, while the other side gains information, political support and, possibly, a relative control over those affected" (Staeck 1997: 58f; our transl.). In most cases, *bargaining processes* include exchange arrangements, but as there are also negotiations in which this is not the case (Mayntz 1993: 45f), bargaining processes are to be dealt with here as an analytical category of their own.

5.2. Aims of Network Analyses

When studying policy networks, various dependent variables (and thus also different points of departure)

can be chosen for analysis. For example, the network structure can be considered from a network participant's perspective. In this case, interest is focused primarily on how the integration of this actor in the inter-organizational environment affects its behavior. At the same time, however, the network structure in its entirety can be chosen as the unit of analysis. The aim of analysis is then to gain insights into what political outcomes such a network produces or indeed prevents (Hanf/O'Toole 1992: 169f). In doing so, the policy network can either be regarded as a specific form of political control, to be evaluated for example from the point of view of its efficiency or of the distributive justice it generates, or as a model of interest representation, which presents politics as the result of interest-driven decision-making "influenced by socially organized interests" (Staeck 1997: 64f, our transl.; cf. also Börzel 1997: 3ff).

The latter approach in particular presents itself as a way of explaining foreign policy behavior with the help of network analysis. The unit of analysis, therefore, is the policy network *in its entirety*.

Network analyses can also be differentiated according to how narrowly they define policy networks. For example, policy networks can be distinguished from policy *field* networks. Policy field networks emerge in relation to a policy field as a whole (e.g. development aid policy, security policy). These policy field networks do not relate narrowly to one particular policy. By contrast, policy networks arise in interactions "related to a certain policy" (Pappi 1993: 92).

For the analysis of foreign policy behavior, policy field networks and policy networks can equally form the point of departure depending on the qualities of the policy field under actual consideration. In the interest of analytical clarity, case studies will first examine whether foreign policy behavior can be explained by the policy field network that has been found; if this is not possible, then the policy network will have to be determined and used as a basis for foreign policy analysis.

5.3. Summary

It should be emphasized that network analysis is a heuristic tool, not an actual theory of state behavior (Dowding 1995). Certain authors attribute genuine explanatory power to network analysis (M. J. Smith 1993: 8). "However, no hypotheses have been put forward which systematically link the nature of a policy network with the character and outcome of the policy process" (Börzel 1997: 3). In this respect, there is broad consensus that "network analysis is no theory in stricto sensu, but rather a tool box for describing and measuring relational configurations and their structural characteristics" (Kenis/Schneider 1991: 44; cf. also Marsh/Rhodes 1992).

However, if it is supplemented by theoretical assumptions (as it is done in the following sections) network analysis allows a theoretically informed empirical determination of politically powerful actors and their preferences (cf. Héritier 1993a, 1993b; Dowding/King 1995: 1; Staeck 1997).

6. Defining Societal Interests Using Network Analysis

In the utilitarian liberal view, foreign policy is determined by the interests of those societal groups who are able to dominate the foreign policy decision-making process. The term societal groups includes all the organized societal actors involved in the foreign policy decision-making process; i.e. not only societal

actors in the narrower sense - who will be described in the following as private actors - but also societal actors in the wider sense, referred to in the following as political-administrative actors. As a result of their interaction in the process of interest intermediation, the private and political-administrative actors create policy networks with a certain structure. The aim of network analysis is to start from the structure of these policy networks and, with the help of fundamental assumptions of utilitarian liberal foreign policy theory, to state which actors are able to dominate foreign policy decision-making in a certain field of foreign policy.

The analysis of a foreign policy network proceeds in three steps. First, the organized private and political administrative actors involved in the policy network must be identified ([section 6.1.](#)). Then, their foreign policy preferences will be ascertained ([section 6.2.](#)). Finally, those actors who are capable of dominating foreign policy decision-making must be identified on the basis of the network structure ([sections 6.3.](#) and [6.4.](#)).

6.1. Defining the Network Actors

"The question of which system is to be studied and the question of how its structure is described are two different questions which should not be confused. In each study, therefore, it must first be decided which system is to be studied, before starting on any description of the structure of that system" (Pappi 1993: 90; our transl.). Before concentrating too much on the actors who are able to dominate foreign policy decision-making in a specific policy network, it has to be established which actors can be considered as participants in the network to be studied. The general network definition set out above (see [section 5.1.](#)) provides a basis for defining network actors. In this case

- *all organized actors,*
- *between whom, in a policy field or in relation to a certain policy,*
- *there is evidence of interaction in the form of communication (hearings, consultations, exchange of information) and/or coordination or cooperation (division of labor, exchange arrangements, bargaining processes) can then be regarded as actors in a policy network or a policy field network.*

6.2. Defining Actors' Foreign Policy Preferences

As already mentioned, utilitarian liberalism is based on the fundamental assumption that actors are rational and utility-maximizing. It also assumes that actors have certain fundamental interests - first and foremost securing their own survival -, and that in concrete decision-making situations, on the basis of individual utility maximization, they give concrete shape to these interests in policy preferences or, more specifically, foreign policy preferences. In the following, two methods for establishing actors' policy preferences will first be discussed ([section 6.2.1.](#)). Having done that, we will then consider how the fundamental interests of societal actors in Germany can be determined, and how they can be defined in order to allow foreign policy preferences to be deduced for specific foreign policy decisions ([section 6.2.2.](#)).

6.2.1. Ascertaining Preferences: The Empirical-Inductive and the Theoretical-Deductive Approach

Preferences can be ascertained either empirically-inductively or theoretically-deductively. In the former method, preferences are observed directly. At least three forms of empirical investigation are conceivable here. First, it is possible to draw conclusions about actors' preferences from their behavior as observed. Second, actors' statements can be investigated for the preferences they reveal, for example by analyzing documents. Finally, experts can be asked for their views of actors' policy preferences. ([footnote 11](#))

An empirical-inductive definition of actors' foreign policy preferences has various disadvantages. For example, there is a great danger of circular reasoning if an actor's behavior is used as the basis for conclusions about its fundamental preferences (Snidal 1985: 40f). If, instead, preferences are ascertained on the basis of actors' statements, there is a danger that an actor will not always reveal its true preferences. ([footnote 12](#)) An inductive investigation of preferences does not offer any way of checking whether true preferences are being revealed.

The greatest disadvantage of inductive preference investigation, however, is that it does not offer any possibility of distinguishing between preferences guided by self-interest and by values, and therefore allows no distinction between utilitarian liberalism and societal constructivism. To be able to decide whether a certain policy preference increases an actor's utility, its utility function, and at least its fundamental interests, must be known. However, an inductive investigation of preferences is of no help here.

In the theoretical-deductive method, unlike the empirical-inductive method, actors' policy preferences in certain contexts of action and decision-making are deduced logically from the actors' theoretically assumed fundamental interests. The starting point for a theoretical-deductive definition of actors' preferences is utilitarian liberalism's fundamental assumption of rationality, combined with the assumption that individuals wish to maximize their individual utility. If an actor's utility function is known, or at least what its fundamental motive is, actors' preferences in concrete situations can be deduced: "actors' preferences can be derived in every situation from a fundamental motivation that is prescribed by structural constraints" (Zürn 1997: 298f).

As actors' utility functions or fundamental motives are not known for certain, and can differ from individual to individual, the theoretical definition of preferences starts from assumptions about actors' fundamental motives - "usually either 'power' or 'plenty'" (Zürn 1997: 299). Then the preferences a rational actor will have in concrete situations can be derived from these. This method of logically deducing preferences is aimed at creating a profile of actors' interests. For given situations, on the basis of the assumed fundamental and long-term interests, it defines the preferences open to an actor under a limited supply of information and options for action.

Due to the above-mentioned disadvantages in the empirical-inductive method of investigating preferences, the theoretical-deductive approach based on the concept of substantial rationality should be preferred. It should, however, be noted that it can be difficult in certain policy areas to infer preferences deductively: problems occur especially frequently in those policy areas which have only very little to do with economic policy (Zürn 1997: 300). Of course, it is also possible in certain decision-making situations that various alternatives provide an equally high level of utility. For example, it cannot logically be deduced for every situation whether companies are developing a preference for the abolition

or creation of tariff barriers. While, on the sales side, tariff barriers protect them against international competitors, on the purchasing side the dismantling of tariffs means that they profit from lower prices (Verdier 1994: 10f). In a situation such as this, an actor is indifferent; and no preferences can be deduced from its fundamental interest in making profit. The status of the matter actually being decided for the various actors is also important for the emergence of preferences (Goldmann 1988: 52ff). It can be assumed that matters for decision that only allow an actor to make small gains in utility will not lead to the emergence of strong preferences.

If it is not possible, or only possible to a limited extent, to determine actors' preferences deductively, help can be sought in the empirical- inductive method, in particular the method of questioning experts (see Zürn 1997: 300ff).

6.2.2. Fundamental Interests and Preferences of Societal Actors

The following considerations start from the assumption that safeguarding survival is societal actors' fundamental aim. A definition of the contents of the German societal actors' fundamental interests and preferences will then be based on assumptions about how societal actors can best safeguard their survival (on this topic, cf. also Scott 1986: 228-245).

All societal actors require certain resources to safeguard their survival. These resources can be material or intangible. By material resources we above all mean an actor's financial means, while the (decision-making) power it has at its disposal constitutes its intangible resources. As societal actors generally endeavor to receive as much of the resources they need as possible, *societal actors' fundamental interest is aimed at maximizing their material resources (their financial means) and their intangible resources (their power)*. In each decision-making situation, therefore, they prefer that option which allows them to make the highest material and intangible gains.

However, societal actors differ on whether power or financial resources are primarily decisive for safeguarding their survival. While the ability of political and administrative actors depends in the first instance on the allocation of power, private actors primarily seek to safeguard their survival by accumulating or tapping into their financial resources.

In other words, the fundamental interest, shared by all societal actors, in maximizing power and financial resources must be defined differently for different groups of actors. In particular, attention should focus on societal actors' dependence on that part of their societal environment which controls essential resources and can therefore make them available.

(a) Political and administrative actors The survival of political and administrative actors depends on whether they can retain or expand their position in the political-administrative system. The position of both political and administrative actors depends on the powers vested in them and, in addition, on the financial resources at their disposal. Of course, safeguarding or gaining power has priority over a gain in financial resources. Political and administrative actors therefore strive especially for gains in intangible benefits.

Political and administrative actors are different, however. In particular, they are dependent on other actors in the social environment, who transfer power and financial resources to them or withhold them,

and who in this way can allow them to retain or expand their position, or prevent them from doing so. For this reason, the fundamental interests of political and administrative actors have to be defined differently.

(i) *Political actors*: In Germany, political actors are those actors whose positions in the political-administrative system are legitimized by elections. They include the *Chancellor*, who is elected and can be dismissed by a majority of the Bundestag, as well as the *Bundestag* (lower chamber), and the state governments represented in the *Bundesrat* (upper chamber). By contrast, federal ministers are not included among the political actors, as there is only a very indirect connection between elections and the position to which they are assigned. The fact that cabinet reshuffles are also a normal occurrence within a legislative period supports the contention that federal ministers owe their office in the first instance not to elections, but to appointment by a political actor, the Federal Chancellor (and the parliamentary majority supporting him). ([footnote 13](#))

One major feature of political actors' fundamental interest in safeguarding or extending their power is their interest in being re-elected:

"Political leaders are utility-maximizers, who desire to remain in power most of all. Their utility comes from remaining in office, not from pursuing a particular [...] policy" (Milner 1997: 86; cf. also Stigler 1975: 125; Gwartney/Wagner 1988: 7f; Hall 1997: 178-180).

The more successful political actors are in satisfying the policy expectations of their core constituencies, the greater their electoral chances will be. By core constituency we mean those groups of voters who were responsible for the government's success in the previous elections (cf. Knoke et al. 1996: 8). It is therefore assumed that political actors generally choose those policy options that can best realize the core constituency's preferences. Usually, a direct link is seen to exist between a country's economic development and a government's prospects for re-election, with a positive economic development increasing the prospects for re-election and vice versa there is "economic voting". According to the assumptions of utilitarian liberalism, every voter is a rational utility maximizer (cf. Downs 1968) and therefore votes for the candidate from whom it expects the highest gain in individual utility. ([footnote 14](#)) The country's economic development can serve as a *proxy* for individual material gain: if the economy is flourishing, then most individuals will probably be well off.

If we accept the assumption that "economic voting" takes place ([footnote 15](#)), then it is crucial for our analysis to know how far foreign policy behavior contributes to the Federal Republic's economic prosperity, and thus affects political actors' prospects for re-election. It is immediately obvious that only few areas of foreign policy, including especially foreign trade policy, have a direct and tangible impact on Germany's economic situation. In many other areas of German foreign policy, by contrast, political actors' interest in re-election is only marginally affected, unless individual policies prove to be extremely costly and are linked with an additional tax burden on the electorate. Whether and to what extent specific foreign policy preferences can be derived from political actors' interest in re-election will therefore depend on the individual policy's material cost structure.

Apart from their interest in re-election, however, political actors have another fundamental interest. It should be remembered that, especially in the foreign policy context, political actors' wish to retain or extend their position will also depend on their decision-making powers not being curtailed by international organizations. In decision-making situations in which political actors' powers are affected, a political actor will always prefer the option which prevents its decision-making powers being

transferred to international institutions.

Conflicts may well emerge between foreign policy preferences derived from an interest in re-election and those preferences resulting from an interest in preventing a transfer of power to the international level. This is above all to be expected when the strengthening of an international or supranational organization is accompanied by a palpable increase in a society's welfare, and so exerts a positive influence on political actors' prospects for re-election. In this case, political actors will see an advantage in surrendering power, especially if they are able to attribute the successes of policies to themselves and failures to the higher bodies. Political actors' interest in re-election takes precedence over their interest in retaining power, for unlike the transfer of power to international organizations, re-election is an "all or nothing" game for a political actor - if an election is lost, it will no longer be able to exercise any power at all.

(ii) Administrative actors: Administrative actors are those actors whose occupation of a position in the political-administrative system is not directly the result of an electoral mandate but of the formal-legal assignment of responsibility by political actors. These include both state executive bodies (for example the armed forces or the central bank) and so-called *quango* ([footnote 16](#)) which, while they assume government tasks, do not have any public law status (in the areas of development policy, for example, these would include the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau or the Deutsche Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit). Finally, the federal ministries, including the federal ministers, are included among the administrative actors because, as already mentioned, they owe their position to the Federal Chancellor and the majority in the *Bundestag*.

In formal-legal respect, the retention or extension of administrative actors' positions depends on the political actors. Administrative actors' fundamental interest consists in preserving or increasing their significance as executive organs for political actors' programmatic decisions (cf. Downs 1967: 7). As with political actors, the position and, finally, the survival of administrative actors depends first and foremost on their having the powers they need to fulfil the tasks allocated to them. While material resources are equally necessary to safeguard survival, the granting of those resources is generally determined by the type and scope of an administrative actor's powers. The increase in the financial resources at an administrative actor's disposal is therefore secondary to the increase in its power. ([footnote 17](#)) In a concrete foreign policy decision-making situation, therefore, an administrative actor will favor the option which most clearly extends or least reduces its power or resources. In the case of a conflict between changes in resources or power, an administrative actor will prefer the option which has the most favorable impact on its powers.

The distribution of decision-making powers between national and international institutions has an immediate impact on administrative actors' powers. Administrative actors are thus primarily at pains to prevent their decision-making powers being taken over by international organizations.

An indirect - and therefore secondary - influence on power is exerted by political actors' estimation of how successful administrative actors are in fulfilling the tasks assigned to them: it can be assumed that the greater the administrative actor's "perceived output" is, the more powers and financial resources political actors will allocate (Mueller 1989: 252; cf. also Niskanen 1971: 42). An administrative actor will therefore always choose the option which best contributes to fulfilling the organizational purpose stipulated, or at least supported, by political actors.

(b) Private actors

Private actors' survival primarily depends on their having sufficient financial resources. The fundamental interest of *all* private actors is therefore directed to achieving as high an income as possible. They can either earn this income themselves, or organized private actors can motivate their members or other societal actors to make financial contributions. However, rational societal actors will only be willing to make payments if the net benefit of these payments is positive for them. This will be the case if the organized private actor is successful in the pursuit of its organizational purpose. When ascertaining foreign policy preferences, private actors' organizational purpose is taken as given. It can easily be determined from the constituent documents.

As private actors differ both in terms of the way they secure their income and in terms of their organizational purpose (and thus in relation to their societal environment), the following section will investigate the fundamental interests of companies, economic pressure groups as well as political and social advocacy groups separately.

(i) Companies: Companies safeguard their survival by earning their income themselves. Their fundamental interest in achieving as high an income as possible is manifested in the maximization of company profits.

German companies' profit opportunities are affected by German foreign policy to the extent that it can influence both their export opportunities abroad and the extent to which they have to face import competition. This is not only true of foreign trade policy, but also of other areas of foreign policy, from security policy to environmental foreign policy. In every foreign policy decision-making situation, companies will advocate the option offering the best prospects for economic profit from the point of view of their competitiveness.

(ii) Economic pressure groups: Economic pressure groups are industry associations and trade unions. Both actors are mainly financed by their members' contributions. As already mentioned, members will only continue with these contributions, or indeed increase them, if the organizations are as successful as possible in fulfilling their organizational purpose.

The organizational purpose of economic pressure groups basically consists in achieving material gains for their members, or at least in improving their income generating opportunities. The aim of industry associations must be to increase these industries' profit opportunities. By contrast, economic gains for union members consist in an improvement of employees' working and pay conditions in the industries represented by the union.

Generally speaking, economic pressure groups support the foreign policy option which involves the highest income for the pressure group's members.

Economic interest groups are nonetheless also interested in extending their power, for the more power they have, the more easily they will be able to fulfil their organizational purpose, and, correspondingly, their chances of achieving higher fees (i.e. organizational income) will also be greater. As their interest in more power is instrumental, it is secondary to their fundamental interest in gaining financial resources. In a foreign policy decision-making situation which affects the amount of power at its disposal, therefore, an economic pressure group will choose the option which changes its power most positively, provided that this does not have an adverse effect on the fulfilment of its organizational purpose.

(iii) Social and political advocacy groups: Social and political advocacy groups are non-profit-oriented private organizations. Their survival, like that of economic pressure groups, depends directly on their

having the financial resources (i.e. income) they need to survive. Unlike economic pressure groups, however, their financial resources come from a variety of sources: the most important are membership dues, donations by other private actors and grants from political and administrative actors. Generally, however, social and political advocacy groups will also only receive financial payments if they are successful in fulfilling their respective organizational purpose. Therefore, the fundamental interest of social and political advocacy groups will also be directed towards being able to present success in achieving their organizational purpose.

Typically, the organizational purpose of social and political advocacy groups will consist of the achievement of intangible aims such as a reduction in pollution, an improvement in other people's living conditions, etc. Unlike the economic pressure groups, their aim is not to achieve material gains for their members. [\(footnote 18\)](#) In foreign policy decision-making situations, therefore, social and political advocacy groups will advocate the option which is linked with the greatest intangible gains as defined by their organizational purpose.

When defining social and political advocacy groups' interest in increasing their power an analogous method can be used to that for economic pressure groups. From their interest in extending their power, it also follows that social and political advocacy groups will prefer that foreign policy option which changes their power most positively. Apart from achieving intangible gains in line with their organizational purpose, therefore, social and political advocacy groups also strive for intangible gains in the form of power, although their interest in fulfilling their organizational purpose always takes precedence.

6.2.3. Summary

Table 1 provides an overall view of the actors to be considered in network analysis, of the role that the fundamental interests (derived from their interest in survival) in maximization of power and of financial resources play for these actors, and how these can be defined so that foreign policy preferences can be derived from them in concrete decision-making situations.

Table 1: Fundamental interests and foreign-policy preferences of societal actors

	Fundamental interest(s)	Actor - specific operationalization	Foreign policy preference(s)
Political actors	Extend power Increase financial resources	Ensure prospects for re-election Strengthen decision-making powers vis-à-vis international organizations	Satisfy expectations of "core constituencies" No transfer of decision-making powers to international organizations

Administrative actors	Extend power Increase financial resources	Strengthen decision-making powers vis-à-vis international organizations Retain or extend significance as executive organ for the programmatic decisions of political actors	No transfer of decision-making powers to international organizations Fulfil the organizational purpose
Companies	Increase financial resources	Maximize company profit	The action involving the best opportunities for material profit, taking competitiveness into account
Economic pressure groups	Increase financial resources	Maximize membership contributions	Maximize members' opportunities for material gain Extension of power
Social and political advocacy groups	Increase financial resources	Maximize financial donations from members and other societal actors	Maximize intangible gain (as defined by the purpose of the organization) Extension of power

All that now remains is the third step of determining societal interests. Once the network actors and their foreign policy preferences have been established, we then have to find out which actors are able to dominate the decision-making process within the network and are thus able to decisively shape Germany's foreign-policy behavior.

6.3. Determining Dominant Actors

In order to determine dominant actors we need a heuristic model which explains the structure of policy networks by looking at those interests that are able to dominate the process of interest intermediation.

Up to the end of the 1970s, attempts were made to represent the assertiveness of private interests in dealings with the political-administrative system by means of simple categories which described the relationship between the two social sub-systems, but ignored the internal structures of those sub-systems. [\(footnote 19\)](#) However, this categorization proved to be inadequate for an explanation of specific political events. A more complex description of the influence of private interests on the political-administrative system was needed in order to be able to represent coalition-forming processes between political-administrative and private actors (cf. Müller/Risse-Kappen 1993: 34f).

With his concept of the policy network, Peter Katzenstein (1978) tried to remedy these faults. As the

decisive defining criteria of policy networks, Katzenstein identified the extent of centralization or fragmentation in the respective state and society, and the level of differentiation between the two (Katzenstein 1978: 311).

Michael Atkinson and William Coleman (1989) returned to this network model, but felt it was necessary to concretize the variables Katzenstein had identified for sector-specific network research:

"In seeking to refine concepts appropriate to the sectoral level, the temptation is to borrow the language of strength and weakness employed so effectively at the level of whole states. Unfortunately [...] it is not quite so simple. At the meso level, the matter of state strength cannot be settled by an appeal to constitutional norms, the embeddedness of the party system, recruitment practices or the degree of state centralization. Much greater attention must be paid to specific bureaucratic arrangements and to the relationships that the officials involved maintain with key societal actors [...] we use the concepts [...] that have proven so successful at the macro level, but redefine them in order to encompass the wider variety of sectoral institutions" (Atkinson/Coleman 1989: 49f).

Accordingly, the authors concentrated on the level of private actors' mobilization and the degree of concentration of power in the political- administrative system in a policy field and on the independence of political- administrative from private actors as determining factors of societal actors' assertiveness in policy field networks.

6.3.1. Private Actors' Assertiveness

Atkinson and Coleman assume that the decisive factor for private actors' assertiveness is their level of mobilization. The level of mobilization has a structural and a situative component.

The *structural level* of a private actor's *mobilization* will be all the greater,

- the higher its level of representation is, i.e. the more members of a policy field are represented by it;
- the greater the representation of societal interests in a policy field is concentrated in that actor, i.e. the less that actor has to compete with other interest groups for the same members;
- the higher its hierarchical level is, i.e. the better it is in a position to make binding decisions for its members;
- the greater that actor's capacity for generating technical and political information is (Atkinson/Coleman 1989: 53).

It should be noted that these criteria for determining the level of private actors' structural mobilization are not undisputed in the literature. While this model suggests that large organizations have a head start in terms of mobilization (because they typically have a greater level of representation and a better capacity for generating technical and political information) and can therefore assert themselves over others, Olson (1991; 1992) argues that the level of mobilization of private groups is all the greater, the smaller the group is.

Olson's argument proceeds from the assumption "that large groups will not act in their group interest, at least not if they are made up of rational individuals" (Olson 1991: 22). In Olson's view, small

organizations represent private interests most effectively because they are more homogenous and are in a better position to control *free-rider* effects (cf. Olson 1991: 28ff). However, Olson's concept ignores the fact that "'narrow' interest groups, by competing for their shares of the social product, usually attenuate each other's associational power" (Czada 1991: 265). Moreover, large-scale organizations can take advantage of "scale-economies of associational action" and thus offer their members a great many selective incentives for a low contribution (Czada 1991: 277).

In addition, it should be considered that, especially in the context of the interest intermediation processes of foreign policy, larger associations are better able to assert themselves than smaller ones, as they are more likely to have the resources for political control - e.g. information or the procurement of legitimization - which political-administrative actors require (Czada 1991: 276ff).

Atkinson and Coleman's premises therefore provide a suitable point of departure for analyzing the level of private actors' mobilization. However, two modifications are needed to make their concept usable for our purposes:

First, it should be considered that the criteria mentioned above are merely factors which allow conclusions about private actors' structural level of mobilization. Atkinson and Coleman only take account of structural characteristics of interest intermediation in the industrial policy sector because they want to generate statements about the general style of the industrial policy being pursued. By contrast, we are concerned with analyzing foreign policy behavior in separate, highly specific circumstances.

If the focus of interest is not on the overall power relationship between private and political-administrative actors but on the question of which interests are able to dominate a concrete decision-making process, then not only the level of structural mobilization, but also the level of private actors' *situative mobilization* must be clarified. The major decisive factor here is how intense an actor's policy preferences are (cf. Goldmann 1988: 44, 52ff; Olson 1991: 43). We can assume that an actor's preferences will be all the more intense the more a policy affects its fundamental interests.

Second, it is problematic that Atkinson and Coleman develop their concept of private actors' level of mobilization not in order to describe the level of mobilization of individual pressure groups, but for the level of mobilization of the private sector as a whole: As they are concerned with identifying structures of interest intermediation in the area of industrial policy, they assume a largely homogenous private sector in which only companies and industry associations have to be considered as relevant private actors. This may be justifiable for the field of industrial policy, but the broader scope of our case studies across many issue areas of foreign policy means that we have to include a wider range of private actors. This means that we require a criterion which will allow us *to distinguish between different private actors in terms of their assertiveness*. However, we can use an analogous method to Atkinson and Coleman, who take the level of an industrial sector's mobilization as a basis for drawing a direct conclusion about that sector's assertiveness in the industrial policy decision-making process. Accordingly, we will assume that, *given a plurality of actors in a policy network, those actors who are most highly mobilized will also be the most assertive actors*.

In order to be able to identify the most assertive private actors, we first have to use private network participants' situative level of mobilization to single out those whose fundamental interests are affected at least indirectly by the policy in question. The higher an actor's situative level of mobilization, the greater its assertiveness will be. If several actors are mobilized to an equally high degree, then, of those actors, the one with the highest level of structural mobilization will be best able to assert itself.

6.3.2. Assertiveness of Political and Administrative Actors

Political and administrative actors' prospects for asserting themselves can be defined in similar fashion to private actors' prospects. Private actors' level of structural mobilization corresponds with political-administrative actors' *level of concentration of power*. The more strongly decision-making powers for a certain policy are concentrated in one individual political or administrative actor, the higher the level of structural mobilization of this actor must be seen to be (cf. Atkinson/Coleman 1989: 51).

Similarly to the procedure when assessing private actors' prospects for asserting themselves, in the case of the political and administrative actors the extent to which their fundamental interests are affected in the decision-making situation in question also has to be considered and, accordingly, how highly mobilized they are *in situative terms*. In the case of political and administrative actors, however, it cannot be assumed that their level of situative mobilization is the prime factor determining their assertiveness. Rather, the necessary precondition for a political or administrative actor's assertiveness is that it has decision-making power in the actual situation. If this is not the case, then an administrative or political actor will not be able to assert its preferences at all.

However, the level of situative mobilization does show the extent to which political or administrative actors actually make use of their decision-making power. It can be assumed that this will only happen if the fundamental interests of a political or administrative actor are affected. For example, the Chancellor's directive powers, "*Richtlinienkompetenz*", basically allow him to assert his preferences over federal ministers. However, it can be assumed that he will only make use of his directive powers if a matter to be decided on actually has an impact on his interest in re-election.

The procedure for defining political-administrative actors' prospects for asserting themselves is therefore somewhat more complex than in the case of private actors. To identify the most assertive political and administrative actors, we first have to determine all those network participants in the political-administrative system who are (co)responsible for the individual issue to be decided, and are therefore structurally mobilized. Following that, those actors have to be selected whose fundamental interests are most strongly affected, and who are therefore most mobilized in situative terms. If several political and administrative actors are situatively mobilized to an equally high degree, then, of those actors, the one with the greatest decision-making power will best be able to assert itself.

6.3.3. Autonomy of Political and Administrative Actors

The extent to which political-administrative actors are autonomous of private actors is an indicator of how capable political and administrative actors are of asserting their interests over private actors' interests. The greater political and administrative actors' autonomy is, the less capable the most assertive private actors will be of asserting their preferences over the most assertive political and administrative actors.

Political and administrative actors' autonomy will be all the greater,

- the less they depend on private actors for their resources (both material and intangible);

- the fewer links they have with private actors (for example, the less private actors' rights to be consulted and codetermination rights are institutionalized);
- the more clearly political and administrative actors' tasks are defined and the more strongly this allocation is based on rules that are not negotiable;
- the more strongly political and administrative actors' tasks are defined in functional terms, i.e. the less the fulfilment of tasks is measured in terms of the well-being of individual pressure groups (Atkinson/Coleman 1989: 52).

Atkinson and Coleman use these criteria to evaluate the autonomy of the political-administrative system as a whole. However, we can apply it just as well separately to the various political and administrative actors. Put in a nutshell, it can be said that *the autonomy of political and administrative actors will be all the greater, the less they depend on private actors' contributions in order to be able to fulfil their tasks.*

6.4. Typology of Structures of Interest Intermediation

The level of autonomy of the most assertive political and administrative actors is the decisive factor for constructing a simple typology of structures of interest intermediation (see Table 2).

Political and administrative actors are *highly autonomous* of private actors if the most assertive political and administrative actors do not depend on the most assertive private actors' contributions in order to fulfil their tasks. Then, political and administrative actors will largely ignore private actors' preferences. The political and administrative actors will dominate political decision-making; in such a case, we speak of a *hierarchical control mode*. If there is only one dominant actor in the political-administrative system, it will assert its preferences directly (hierarchical-monopolistic network). If, by contrast, several dominant political and administrative actors have to be considered within the political-administrative system, as is usual when policies involving more than one ministry are concerned, the policy pursued will reflect a compromise between several political and administrative actors (hierarchical-pluralist network).

The most assertive political and administrative actors will have a *low* level of autonomy if they depend on the most assertive private actors' contributions in order to fulfil their tasks. This control mode, in which the most assertive private actors dominate political decision-making, is known as the *societal control mode*. Here, too, one can distinguish two types of networks depending on whether there are several dominant private actors that have to reach a compromise between their preferences (societal-pluralist network), or whether one dominant private actor can be identified who can directly assert his preferences (societal-monopolistic network).

Table 2: Network typology for an analysis of German foreign policy

High autonomy of political - administrative actors		Low autonomy of political - administrative actors	
One dominant political - administrative actor	Several dominant political - administrative actors	One dominant political - administrative actor	Several dominant political - administrative actors

One dominant private actor	hierarchical - monopolistic	hierarchical - pluralist	societal - monopolistic
Several dominant private actors			societal - pluralist

The four network types shown in the above table are only some of the possible structures of interest intermediation. In reality, it can often be observed that *the most assertive private and the most assertive political and/or administrative actors jointly make up a policy network*. This is to be found, for example, when private actors can influence political and administrative actors and are involved in the decision-making process but cannot completely dominate the political and administrative actors involved. It is also conceivable that a private actor can dominate in dealings with one particular political or administrative actor and can therefore determine its behavior, but that other political or administrative actors participate in the policy development process who are not structurally dependent on this private actor. Here, too, one would have to assume a "mixed" network. This control mode, in which both private and political or administrative actors take part in the decision-making process, shall be designated "*corporatist*". ([footnote 20](#))

6.5. Manifestations of the Independent Variable "Societal Interests"

The product of the structures of interest intermediation ascertained and the foreign policy preferences of dominant actors for a matter pending decision is the "societal interest", which is informing Germany's foreign policy behavior. Societal interests can exist in varying degrees of strength:

- . *Strong societal interests* exist if
 - the dominant actor in a monopolistic network has highly pronounced preferences; or
 - the majority of dominant actors in a pluralist or corporatist network have highly pronounced preferences for the same option for foreign policy action.
- b. *Medium-strength societal interests* exist if
 - the dominant actor in a monopolistic network has low-intensity preferences; or
 - the majority of assertive actors in a pluralist or corporatist network have low-intensity preferences for the same option for foreign policy action.
- c. *Weak societal interests* exist if
 - the dominant actor in a monopolistic network is not mobilized situatively; or
 - there is no majority of actors with the same preferences of at least low intensity in a pluralist or corporatist network.

Only in the first two cases will utilitarian liberalism allow any statements about German foreign policy to be formulated. If there are only weak societal interests, this will not be possible, as society is then indifferent to the various options for foreign policy action.

7. General Utilitarian-Liberal Predictions for Foreign Policy

The salient characteristic of utilitarian liberalism is the assumption that utility-maximizing and rationally-acting societal actors determine a state's foreign-policy behavior. Each actor's aim is to achieve as great a gain as possible, which can either be material - in the form of an increase in the actor's income - or intangible - in the form of an increase in power. Societal actors' striving for gains, whether they be private or political-administrative actors, is also manifested in German foreign policy behavior. From the point of view of utilitarian liberalism, German foreign policy is always geared to achieving the greatest possible material or intangible gains for German society in whole or in part, and can accordingly be labelled '*gain-seeking policy*'.

Whether German gain-seeking policy is geared more to achieving material or intangible gains cannot be established for society as a whole. Rather, the type of gain-orientation will depend on which societal actors dominate in a concrete foreign policy field or in relation to a certain policy. The following connections can be seen between dominant actors and anticipated German foreign policy:

- a. The less political-administrative actors are autonomous of companies and economic pressure groups, the more German foreign policy behavior will be geared to achieving material gains.
- b. The less political-administrative actors are autonomous of political and social advocacy groups, the more German foreign policy behavior will be geared to achieving intangible gains.
- c. If political-administrative actors are highly autonomous of private actors, and if political actors are dominant, then German foreign policy behavior will primarily be geared to achieving material gains (in the form of gains for the economy as a whole, of improvements in income for those parts of the population that are decisive for the outcome of elections, or of tax benefits for the population as a whole).
- d. If political-administrative actors are highly autonomous of private actors, and administrative actors are dominant, then German foreign policy behavior will primarily be geared to achieving intangible gains (in the form of power for administrative actors).

From a utilitarian-liberal viewpoint, changes in German foreign policy can occur in two cases. They will either be the result of changed foreign policy preferences on the part of the dominant actor(s) or the result of a change to a new dominant actor or of a changed composition of the dominant actors in a policy network. As, in both cases, the value of the independent variable "societal interest" changes, changes in German foreign policy would also have to be expected. Conversely, utilitarian liberalism would expect continuity in German foreign policy if both the composition and the preferences of the dominant actors in a policy network remain constant. A general utilitarian-liberal prediction of continuity for German foreign policy can thus be formulated as follows:

If reunification has not changed the level of mobilization of private or political-administrative actors or the level of autonomy enjoyed by political-administrative actors in their dealings with private actors, and if the preferences of the dominant societal actors have remained constant after reunification, then a change in German foreign policy behavior is not to be expected, and Germany will therefore continue to pursue its gain-seeking policy in the same form and intensity as hitherto.

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Footnotes

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2 At one extreme, for example, *homo oeconomicus* is regarded as an absolute and universal disposition to act. Stigler is a typical example, who sums up his view as follows: "Man is eternally a utility maximizer - [...] everywhere" (George Stigler: Tann Lectures delivered at Harvard University, April 1980, quoted in Brennan/Buchanan 1984: 385). At the other end of the spectrum, proponents of constructivist theories emphatically dispute the analytical usefulness of this assumption. [Back to the text](#)

3 These two concepts are a reference to the title of Peter Katzenstein's book "Between Power and Plenty. Foreign Economic Policies of Advanced Industrial States" (1978); see Weede (1996: 7), Zürn (1997: 299).

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4 Of course, the concept of society used here and in the rest of this section differs from the concept which forms the basis of analytical approaches which refer to societal characteristics (see the following section) or of Moravcsik's approach (1992; 1997). While, in the above-mentioned literature, "society" and "state" are mutually exclusive entities, our concept of society includes the state together with private actors, who would be called 'society' in Moravcsik's terminology. Here, the entirety of the various political and administrative actors constitutes the state. In accordance with the individualist methodology of utilitarian liberalism, society is thus conceived of as the sum of the private and the political- administrative sub-systems.

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5 For a survey of the literature, see Risse-Kappen (1994a, 1994b) and Ray (1995).

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6 However, there is no consensus in the literature as to how a state's strength affects its foreign policy behavior. On this point, see the short review of the literature in Zürn (1993: 304).

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7 The attempt to utilize the results and methods of comparative politics for foreign-policy analysis has been very popular for some years now (cf. Jacobsen 1996: 95). Examples of such analyses include Milner (1988), Rogowski (1989), Simmons (1994) and Verdier (1994).

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8

For example, in the concept of "bureaucratic politics" (cf. Allison 1971:197; Halperin/Clapp 1974); for a more recent discussion of this school of foreign policy research, see Schneider (1997).

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9

For the basics of pluralism, cf. Truman (1951), Dahl (1961) and Easton (1965).

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10

For the basics of liberal neo-corporatism, cf. Lehmbruch (1981) and Schmitter (1981).

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11

Questioning experts is not necessarily an empirical-deductive way of ascertaining preferences, as the experts asked may themselves define actors' preferences theoretically-deductively. However, as different experts scarcely investigate in the the same way, and consequently a theoretical-deductive method of ascertaining preferences obeying well-defined criteria is not possible when questioning different experts, this method will here be included in the empirical-inductive methods.

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For further criticism of the inductive method of defining preferences, see Snidal (1985: 40ff).

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13

The fact that federal ministers themselves do not have to be members of the *Bundestag* is a further reason for not thinking of them as political actors.

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14

It has been discussed at length in the literature whether a rational actor weighing up the cost of voting against the benefits to be gained from it will bother to vote at all. Assuming that the voter is rational, critics state that as the probability that a certain voter will decide an election's outcome is practically zero, the expected benefit from casting his vote will be lower than his costs. He will not vote. However, other discussions have shown that this argument relies on certain assumptions about the voter's utility function. A more detailed discussion of this "paradox of voting" is to be found in Mueller (1989: 349ff).

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15

The existence of "economic voting" cannot be clearly proved empirically. A series of studies have been unable to prove any connection between a country's economic performance and a government's re-election (cf. Powell/Whitten 1993: 391f). Furthermore, the results depend very much on how 'economic performance' is defined (cf. Powell/Whitten 1993).

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Quago= quasi-governmental organization

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17

Early studies of administrative actors generally provided a comprehensive list of bureaucracy's aims. However, it is only possible to derive a clear order of preferences if the various aims form a hierarchical order (cf. Downs 1967: 79-87). Unlike us, Niskanen (1971: 36-42) assumes that budget maximization is the prime aim of administrative actors. By contrast, power does not show up in his model; however, as power is the condition for administrative actors' existence, we feel that it is justified to assume that administrative actors' interest in preserving or extending power is more fundamental than their interest in budget maximization. See also Jackson's critique of Niskanen's model (1983: 131-135).

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18

At first sight, of course, it seems questionable whether the assumption that the members of political and social advocacy groups do not attach any expectations of material gain to their membership is compatible with the more fundamental 'rational actor' assumption. This is indeed a problem. Individual donors to political and social advocacy groups make neither material nor intangible gains as a result of their subscriptions or donations. If we follow the definition of utility set out in [section 3](#) above, then their utility is not increased. If the notion of utility is widened, however, altruism can also be explained from a utilitarian point of view (cf. Downs 1968: 36; Kaltefleiter 1995: 14ff); indirectly, individuals profit from their support for political and social advocacy groups. The situation is simpler when corporations support political and social advocacy groups. By making donations to these organizations, for example, companies can strive for a positive popular image and thus an increase in their profits; they also profit indirectly from their membership or support. On the whole, therefore, it would appear justifiable to think of political and social advocacy groups as actors who, while not directly contributing to their members' profit, do so in a roundabout way.

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Important examples of these early analytical approaches are the above-mentioned explanations of foreign policy based on the relative "strength" or "weakness" of the political-administrative system in relation to private actors (see section 3.1. above).

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20

Of course, using "corporatism" to describe a policy network is not the same as characterizing society as a whole as such (as in section 4, for example):

The concept of corporatism applied to society as a whole - what is known as "macro-corporatism" - is concerned with cooperation between the political-administrative system and private actors in the control of society on the national level. The aim of macro-corporatism is the deliberate inclusion of antagonistic societal interests in the political decision-making process, because conflict-solving and consensus-forming on the national level are regarded as a precondition for effectively controlling society as a whole. Typical for macro-corporatism are tripartite institutions, which are formed by actors from the political-administrative system, unions and industry associations with reference to macro-economic problems (in Germany, for example, the former *Konzertierte Aktion*, or the *Bündnis für Arbeit* that has

now been called into existence by the Schröder government).

If, by contrast, a policy network is described as corporatist, this is based on the concept of 'meso-corporatism', which was developed to describe cooperation between the political-administrative system and private actors on the sectoral level. Unlike macro-corporatism, meso-corporatism is not concerned with problems in the society as a whole, but with problems limited to specific sectors. Nor is the reconciliation of antagonistic societal interests the main issue, but those private actors who are especially highly mobilized in a structural and situative sense are granted privileged access to the political decision-making process. (For the distinction between macro and meso-corporatism, cf. Czada 1994; Cawson 1985; Lehbruch 1984; for an explicit application of the meso-corporatism concept to policy networks, cf. van Waarden 1992:40; Jordan/Schubert 1992:22)

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