

Preface

An extended methodological dialogue is bringing the comparative advantages of case study methods for theory development into sharper focus. Our own personal dialogue began with intermittent conversations in the 1990s on our independent work on case study methods. We both felt that the time was ripe to draw on the lessons learned from the widespread use of sophisticated case study methods developed in recent decades. These include Alexander George's method of "structured, focused comparison of cases," which outlines process-tracing and other within-case modes of analysis as key complements or alternatives to controlled comparison of cases, Arend Lijphart and Harry Eckstein's extremely useful elaborations of different theory-building kinds of case studies, and Charles Ragin's analysis of interactions effects and comparative methods of studying them.

This book draws on the work of many scholars over the past thirty years to raise the standards and explicate the procedures of theory-oriented case study methods. Further experience with theory-oriented case study research will no doubt lead to further refinements. This book seeks to advance earlier discussions of case study methods in three particular areas. First, in contrast to earlier discussions that focus on case comparisons, we emphasize that qualitative research usually involves a combination of cross-case comparisons and within-case analysis using the methods of congruence testing and process-tracing. Within-case methods of analysis can greatly reduce the well-known risks of inferential errors that can arise from using comparative methods alone. Second, we elaborate on the methods of congruence testing and process-tracing, discussing them in detail and providing examples from recent research. Third, we develop the concept of typological theorizing, which resembles

both Robert K. Merton's discussion of "middle-range theory" and Paul Lazarsfeld's notion of a "property space." We argue that typological theories involving several variables can better capture the complexity of social life than the two-variable typological theories that are common in the social sciences, and we offer methods for building typological theories in ways that keep this complexity manageable and clarify the task of selecting which cases to study.

In the process of writing this book, we have attempted through conferences, workshops, a web site, and other organized efforts to stimulate interest in improving and disseminating case study methods. In particular, together with Colin Elman of Arizona State University and David Collier of the University of California at Berkeley, we have established the Consortium on Qualitative Research Methods (CQRM), which sponsors an annual training institute in these methods for advanced graduate students and junior faculty. The institute convenes each January at Arizona State University, which generously funds the consortium with member departments and research institutes. In addition, we have assisted David Collier in the creation of a new Qualitative Methods section of the American Political Science Association. Information on both the Qualitative Methods Section and CQRM can be found on their shared web site (www.asu.edu/clas/polisci/cqrm/).

A note is in order regarding the development of our own interests in this subject and the division of labor in this book. Alexander George's interest in case study methodology developed in the 1960s while he was a researcher at the RAND Corporation working on generic problems of avoiding and managing interstate conflict during the Cold War. The first of these problems concerned extended deterrence on behalf of weaker U.S. allies; soon thereafter the research program extended to problems of using coercive diplomacy to reverse an adversary's action against an ally or friendly neutrals, and then to managing conflicts to avoid unwanted escalation.

George was interested in finding ways of studying historical instances of these generic problems that would permit valid, usable "lessons" to be drawn from case findings. These lessons should be formulated in ways that would help policy specialists diagnose accurately new cases of each of these phenomena so that informed judgments could be made in deciding whether and how to use one of these strategies in each new situation. George and his RAND colleagues found little in the academic literature that provided methods for studying historical experience from this perspective. Accordingly, it was necessary to devise a case study methodology to analyze past instances of each of these generic problems to identify conditions and procedures that were associated with successful or failed outcomes. The challenge was to find ways of doing

comparative analysis of a number of instances of each generic problem in ways that would draw analytical explanations of each case into a broader, more complex theory, one that would discourage reliance on a single historical analogy.¹

The aim was to identify more specific, differentiated causal patterns of successful and ineffective ways of employing each strategy. These patterns would initially consist of generalizations of quite limited scope. Such middle-range theories on deterrence, coercive diplomacy, and crisis management would consist of a variety of conditional, contingent generalizations (for a discussion of our use of middle-range theory, see Chapters 11 and 12).

For this purpose, George adapted methods of historical explanation to convert descriptive explanations of case outcomes into analytic explanations comprised of variables.² This procedure made use of an inductive approach for theory-building, but it was *analytic* induction, not raw empiricism. The black boxes of decision-making and strategic interaction were opened up and efforts were made to study actual processes of decision-making and of strategic interaction insofar as available data permitted.

In this research, George and his colleagues were not interested in—and indeed their methods did not permit—using the findings of a few cases that were not necessarily representative to project a probability distribution of different patterns discovered for the entire universe of instances of, for example, deterrence. Rather, contingent generalizations were intended to help policy specialists first to diagnose and then to prescribe for new situations, much as medical doctors do in clinical settings. This theme runs through all of the publications of George’s research program over the years and finds its latest, most detailed statement in Chap-

1. The key objective of the important book by Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Making* (New York: Free Press, 1986), is to suggest various ways in which policymakers can avoid relying on a single historical analogy. However, these authors do not address the question of how the lessons of a number of cases of a given phenomenon can be cumulated to provide a differentiated theory. For a more recent statement on the need to derive “lessons” from historical experience, see William W. Jarosz with Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “The Shadow of the Past: Learning From History in National Security Decision Making,” in Philip Tetlock et. al., *Behavior, Society, and International Conflict*, Volume 3 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 162–189.

2. In Harry Eckstein’s terminology, an ideographic atheoretical explanation was converted into a “disciplined configurative” study. An early explicit example of this procedure was contained in Gabriel Almond, Scott Flanagan, and Robert Mundt, eds., *Crisis, Choice, and Change: Historical Studies in Political Development* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), pp. 22–28.

ter 12 of his 1993 book on *Bridging the Gap* between scholarly research and policymaking.

Another early step in George's development of what he later termed the method of "structured, focused comparison" was his codification of Nathan Leites' concept of "operational code beliefs." George converted Leites' analysis into a set of *general questions* that could be asked in studying the operational code beliefs of other elites and individual leaders. He called attention to the potential use of the set of philosophical and instrumental beliefs embraced by an operational code in comparative studies of leaders.³ A large number of these types of studies were done after the publication of George's codification of operational code beliefs.

George's comparative work on deterrence led to the further development of the structured, focused method.⁴ He published an early version of this method in 1979, greatly elaborating on the brief description of it in his 1974 book on deterrence.⁵ Also in 1979, George published a companion piece that addressed more detailed aspects of the method.⁶ This second article provided the first detailed statement about process-tracing in case studies and the congruence method, both of which receive detailed treatment in the present book.

George also introduced the structured, focused method into a course he team-taught with several historians. This collaboration resulted in a book co-authored with Gordon Craig, *Force and Statecraft*, which has been updated several times since first published by Oxford University Press in 1983. George also taught a Ph.D. level seminar on structured, focused

3. Alexander L. George, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (June 1969), pp. 190–222. Ole Holsti contributed to the refinement of operational code research, and Stephen Walker has developed a detailed research program and many publications on operational codes.

4. See Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), pp. 95–103. The earlier book, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, edited by Alexander L. George, David K. Hall, and William E. Simons (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), was a comparative study of three cases, but did not explicitly follow the rubrics of structured, focused comparison. However, this was the research design of *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation: Achievements, Failures, Lessons*, coedited with Philip T. Farley and Alexander Dallin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

5. Alexander L. George, "Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison," in Paul Gordon Lauren, ed., *Diplomatic History: New Approaches* (New York: Free Press, 1979).

6. Alexander L. George, "The Causal Nexus Between Cognitive Beliefs and Decision-Making Behavior: The 'Operational Code' Belief System," in Lawrence S. Falkowski, ed., *Psychological Models in International Politics* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1979), pp. 95–124.

comparison through the 1980s that became a required course at Stanford for graduate students in comparative politics. Many international relations students took it as well, and it led to the completion of many theses and to the publication of numerous books using the structured, focused method.

Andrew Bennett's interest and training in case study methods began when he was one of George's undergraduate students at Stanford University in the early 1980s. Bennett then used qualitative methods in books on Soviet and Russian military interventions and burden-sharing in the 1991 Persian Gulf War.⁷ Bennett has taught a graduate seminar in case study methods at Georgetown since 1997.

This book is very much a product of close co-authorship, and each of us has contributed to every chapter, but it is worth noting which author is primarily responsible for each chapter. Alex George is the primary author of Chapters 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, and the Appendix, while Andy Bennett is the primary author of Chapters 2, 6, and 11. Chapters 1, 7, and 10 were truly joint efforts with equal contributions by both authors.

Organization of the Book

It may be helpful to steer readers toward the chapters that are likely to meet their interests.

Chapter 1 surveys the developments over a period of years that have improved the direction and quality of case study research and its contributions to theory development. Readers will note that our objective in this book, as in our previous works, is to raise the standards for case studies and explicate procedures for improving their value.

Chapter 2 provides a concrete demonstration of how case studies combined with quantitative methods have contributed to the development of research on democratic peace theory. It illustrates one of the major themes of the book, namely the purposes best served by different research methods, and how knowledge cumulates within a research agenda.

These two chapters should satisfy general readers who want to understand the role and contribution of case studies for the development of theories but have no plans for doing such research themselves.

For readers who are undertaking Ph.D. dissertations and for instructors who offer course work and guidance on case study methods, we

7. Andrew Bennett, *Condemned to Repetition? The Rise, Fall, and Reprise of Soviet-Russian Military Interventionism, 1973–1996* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999); and Andrew Bennett, Joseph Lepgold, and Danny Unger, eds., *Friends in Need: Burden-Sharing in the Gulf War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

present a manual in Part II and Part III of the book. A detailed Note to Parts Two and Three provides additional information on the development of the manual for doing case study research. We have also included an Appendix, "Studies That Illustrate Research Design," which briefly reviews the research designs of numerous books. We expect these ingenious and varied research designs to be helpful to Ph.D. students contemplating such research and to professors in designing instruction on case methods.

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—Alexander L. George
Stanford, California

—Andrew Bennett
Washington, D.C.
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