

China, evolved into a unique type of multifaceted autocracy (206–8, 219–20): what Linz called post-totalitarianism.

But one wonders whether with his disproportionate attention to legitimation (38–74) rather than repression (75–90), Gerschewski depicts autocracy as too consent-based. The frequent reference to (tacit) social contracts (e.g., 15, 73–75, 117, 194–97) may overestimate the role of common citizens in sustaining autocratic rule: Do they really accept dictatorship as much as Gerschewski assumes, or does pervasive soft and hard coercion effectively deprive them of choice and agency?

In the book's neat conceptual and theoretical setup, each function—legitimation, repression, and co-optation—is designed to cope with one, and only one, sector that autocracies must control. Accordingly, Gerschewski depicts legitimacy as targeted to eliciting support from the broad population. But could it be sufficient for stability if an autocracy finds firm support among its staff—and these dedicated agents then use coercion to keep the citizenry in check against its will? After all, nondemocracies are felled much less often by popular uprisings than by elite splits and internal coups.

A related question concerns the main goal of Gerschewski's systems-theory approach, which is to explain the stability of autocratic rule. But what is more striking is the frequent instability of these seemingly powerful regimes, especially the depoliticizing variant.

Consequently, the emphasis in Milan Svoblik's *Politics of Authoritarian Rule* (2012) on violence as the constitutive mechanism of dictatorships may be a better starting point for capturing the nature of these regimes and their pervasive precariousness than Gerschewski's focus on legitimacy.

Regarding the wide-ranging empirical analysis, the two main logics emerge less clearly from the great diversity of cases than the powerful conceptual and theoretical reasoning would suggest. The QCA yields two additional country-specific paths, including a regime resting on naked, unlegitimated repression (187–94); moreover, post-Maoist China remains an anomaly (206–8, 219–20). Even with these deviations, the QCA's "overall solution coverage" amounts only to 70% (185). Note that these mixed and incomplete results arise in East and Southeast Asia with its relatively high proportion of communist regimes; that is, overpoliticizing autocracies. In regions such as Africa, Latin America, or the Mideast where such regimes were uncommon, Gerschewski's main distinction may provide even less analytical leverage.

Yet although this ambitious study does not resolve all the difficult issues facing the analysis of autocracy, it offers an impressively comprehensive treatment that provides many perceptive insights, yields a range of new findings, and advances thought-provoking arguments. With its cogent synthesis of the theoretical literature, helpful typologies, and interesting heuristic angles, it is highly recommended.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**Professionalization of Foreign Policy: Transformation of Operational Code Analysis.** By Michael Haas. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2023. 276p. \$120.99 cloth.  
doi:10.1017/S1537592724001488

— James Strong , Queen Mary University of London  
j.strong@qmul.ac.uk

This book promises to show “scholars and practitioners that there is a way to avoid groupthink and other traps that lead to foreign policy blunders” (ix). That way is what Haas describes as “professionalization”: the creation of systematic procedures for reviewing the options available to foreign policy decision makers against the criteria established by their own “operational codes.”

In part one, Haas reviews the existing academic literature on foreign policy and foreign policy decision making, which he defines primarily in terms of the study of policy blunders and the (unnecessary) use of force. In a useful corrective to the sub-field of Foreign Policy Analysis, which tends to begin its own internal histories with James Rosenau's “pre-theories” (“Pre-Theories and Theories in Foreign Policy,” in R. Barry Farrell, ed., *Approaches to*

*Comparative and International Politics*, 1966), Haas adopts a much longer time horizon. His account begins with classical political philosophy, moves through the emergence of the modern industrialized international order, and only then deals with more recent scholarship.

Identifying a lack of cumulative progress in the field, Haas then conducts a meta-analysis of all prior foreign policy research, aiming “to determine which theory is best at explaining decision-making” (51). This involves identifying 68 conceptual variables derived from prior research, covering prestimulus, stimulus, information-processing and outcome stages of the decision making process, and affective, cognitive, evaluative, and structural framings of the situation, together with outcome variables and variables intended to adjust for variation in quality between empirical studies. Scores are assigned to these variables using an expanded version of a case study database created by Kent Roberts Greenfield (*Command Decisions*, 1959). The results are subject to a factor analysis which leads Haas to conclude that “more attention should be paid to cultural factors in the minds of decision-makers” (73). This conclusion leads naturally, he argues, to the focus on operational code analysis in the remainder of the book.

In part two, Haas develops an “explanation and critique” of operational code analysis, defined as the study of “a set of beliefs on which individuals and groups rely in making [foreign policy] decisions” (81) and as “beliefs derived from experience that serve as a filter through which a leader perceives, processes, and responds to whatever behavior or information appears to need attention.” Haas begins by arguing that prior research on operational codes in foreign policy has been erratic, characterized by fundamental distinctions in approaches taken by different scholars, and an excessive focus on small-n case-study methods. In particular, he notes variation in terms of whether operational codes are individual or collective, whether they consist purely of beliefs and opinions or extend to potential decision rules, and whether they are solely cognitive or also rational and psychological in nature.

In part three, Haas presents his solution to these problems; the “professionalization” of foreign policy through “options analysis.” Here Haas argues that a leader’s operational code consists of the relative weight they give to a series of considerations organized under the headings of security, wealth, prestige, and feasibility (137–142). This enables him to argue that both decision makers and analysts should adopt a three-stage approach; identifying the options available, specifying the operational code of key decision makers, and then assessing how well each option meets the needs defined by those operational codes (145). Using software (Haas recommends a program called Decision Pad), it should then be possible to identify the “best” policy option available, as well as to determine the option(s) most likely to be chosen by leaders of other states. Haas then demonstrates this approach through case studies of U.S. foreign policy toward Cambodia, North Korea, and Ukraine.

Haas’ book has a number of clear strengths.

First, Haas is right that both academic research on foreign policy and actual foreign policy decision making could be improved by a greater and broader focus on the full range of options available. He rightly notes that an options analysis approach would reduce the risk of group-think. In recommending an options analysis approach to scholars, he likewise offers them a route to reduce their own subjective biases, and to consider possibilities irrationally excluded by practitioners.

Second, Haas is also right that too much contemporary Foreign Policy Analysis research offers improved empirical tests of underdeveloped or poorly validated theories. This is most clearly true in terms of cognitive and psychological approaches to FPA. Both operational code analysis, as practiced by FPA scholars after the style of Alexander George (“The ‘Operational Code’: A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making,” *International Studies Quarterly* 13(4), 1969), and Leadership Trait Analysis, first introduced to FPA by Margaret

Hermann (“Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior Using the Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders,” *International Studies Quarterly* 24(1), 1980), rely on appeals to authority and deductive reasoning over experimental validation. It is notable that the field of academic psychology, which has been through a major validation crisis in recent years, has developed a reasonably solid consensus around the psychological drivers of human behavior—and that these drivers are not the ones employed by foreign policy analysts.

Third, Haas is right to try to speak to both analysts and practitioners, and to argue that the same concepts and tools may be of use to both. An approach that improves analysts’ understanding of foreign policy decision making *should* improve practitioners’ conduct too.

Notwithstanding these strengths, however, I was disappointed by this book.

To begin with, it is not exactly timely. The majority of the scholarship discussed properly dates from the 1950s and 1960s. More recent work is dismissed without serious engagement. The software recommended—Decision Pad—is *old*. It was favorably reviewed in the LA Times in 1990 (Lawrence Magid, “Software Helps Users Make Hard Decisions,” 8 February 1990). I was unable to confirm it is still available. This is not a book for anyone interested in cutting-edge research.

Second, the book suffers from a degree of conceptual confusion. Because the author does not seriously engage with contemporary research, the theoretical setup encompasses a hodgepodge of mid-twentieth century IR, security studies and emergent FPA ideas. There is no consistent distinction between foreign policy decision making—what practitioners do—and foreign policy analysis—the work of outside observers. It is unclear whether the author is primarily interested in decisions to use force—as the setup implies—or other forms of foreign policy—as the empirical case studies suggest. It is unclear whether they are studying blunders or regular decision making. The definition of operational codes used is not one that contemporary foreign policy analysts would recognize.

Third, the book makes sweeping statements about foreign policy without seriously considering that states other than the United States of America make foreign policy. Given the unique situation of the US as the largest power in the international system, this seems odd.

Finally, and most damningly, the book claims to be *scientific* but is actually *scientistic*. Ultimately the proposed method boils down to subjectively assigning quantitative values to a set of subjectively determined variables, and then pretending to be able to reach objective conclusions because you are using numbers. There is no getting away from the fact that Haas’s supposedly superior method relies heavily on concepts developed in (and exclusive to) the work of Haas, and includes steps in which the author conjures values out of thin air that then miraculously

become objectively valid through the magic wand of a software program from the early days of personal computing.

Foreign policy decision making is above all characterized by uncertainty. An approach predicated on the idea that certainty is possible if only we think more systematically is doomed to fail. That is doubly true when “thinking more systematically” actually means “assigning quantitative values to guesswork.”

**Discriminatory Clubs: The Geopolitics of International Organizations.** By Christina L. Davis. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2023. 472p. \$110.00 cloth

doi:10.1017/S1537592724001555

— Tamar Gutner, *American University*,  
tgutner@american.edu

Christina L. Davis’ book, *Discriminatory Clubs: The Geopolitics of International Organizations*, is both a broad and detailed examination of the question of how a core set of states in individual international organizations (IOs) choose their members. This question is an offshoot of a rich literature going back decades that asks why states join IOs, by delving into the specific issue of why a group of states might admit some member states and not others. As the title suggests, her central argument is that IOs are, in fact, discriminatory clubs of states containing a core of states that are geopolitically aligned with shared yet diffuse security interests. This alignment then “shapes who wants to join an organization, whether they are accepted into the club, and the price of entry” (p. 2).

She approaches this from a variety of angles. Chapter 2 develops and tests a theory of membership that examines provisions in IO charters. Davis uses descriptive statistics drawn from the Correlates of War (COW) International Organizations Dataset 3.0 to underscore the club-like nature of IOs in that IOs tend to have discretionary rules that give their member states flexibility on whom to admit. Club-style membership design allows powerful member states to use “bargaining leverage and informal influence” (p. 57) as a means to shape who can join.

Chapter 3, coauthored with Tyler Pratt, draws on the COW IO dataset to examine membership patterns in a set of over 200 international economic organizations between 1949 and 2014, finding evidence of geopolitical alignment in 44% of membership decisions and showing that security ties are also prevalent in economic organizations. Chapter 4, coauthored with Meredith Wilf, turns to a history of how accession has worked in the case of the GATT/WTO, observing that the formal rules of accession for both GATT and WTO are discretionary, which makes geopolitical discrimination easier. This chapter also creates a new dataset based on GATT/WTO applications and membership negotiations to measure geopolitical alignment among members using United Nations voting

patterns. The analysis shows the impact of geopolitics on the choice of members, why and which rivals are excluded, and the speed of the accession process. Chapter 5 offers a case study of the OECD as a discriminatory club, showing a correlation between UN General Assembly voting and OECD membership. Yet, this chapter makes an argument that goes beyond shared security interests, as it brings in the importance of membership as a proxy for status and an association with “the most exclusive club of ‘the West’” (p. 125).

Chapter 6 presents a case study of Japan’s experience in approaching IO membership. Japan, as Davis argues, often prioritized political relationships and status-seeking in making decisions about joining IOs. She also found that in some cases economic interests on both sides (either of major member states or of Japan) can outweigh geopolitical alignment. With this, the chapter recognizes that the book’s central argument cannot predict every outcome. The remaining chapters explore club politics in regional organizations, which Davis argues is a hard test of her theory because the main criterion for membership is geography. However, she observes that regional organizations do not make their geographic boundaries clear. She finds geography was not determinative and the correlation between security interests and membership remained strong.

Chapter 8 takes on the case of universal organizations, such as the United Nations, which are supposed to allow any state to join. Here, the argument implicitly shifts the criteria for what makes an IO discriminatory compared with the rest of the book, as the objects of discrimination in this chapter are applicants that are not universally recognized as sovereign states, such as Taiwan and Palestine. The politics of discrimination are important in these cases, as there is a “wide range of entities that may or may not be deemed to be states, depending on who makes the decision” (p. 314). She points out that “statehood” is not always objective, and sovereignty can be ambiguous (p. 319). The chapter also examines the rare occasion in which states can be kicked out of an IO. The book’s final chapter explores the implications of IOs as discriminatory clubs that favor allies. Here, she concludes that geopolitical alignment may be “one prominent criterion, but it is not at the exclusion of other factors” (p. 388). This recognition of nuance makes sense given the richness of the findings of the individual book chapters, but it is not well aligned with the narrower arguments presented at the beginning of the book.

Although Davis’ argument looks broadly and carefully across many IOs, it is still worth considering that the theory cannot explain the membership of an important new IO, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), created by China as its first major foray into leading an IO with global membership. Explaining this would be important as it is a case where shared security interests did not