

Snyder: pp. 235-280

Cognitive explanations of the Soviet politics of overexpansion, such as the Bolshevik operational code, and cognitive learning models face three problems.

First, they are nonfalsifiable: any such explanation could concurrently explain any Soviet's behavior and its opposite (Bolshevik "pushes to the limit" yet "knows when to stop", but "none of operational code theorists have explained how he knows when to stop").

Second, an emphasis on the offensive bias as the legacy of Bolshevik operational code fails to consider that Lenin and Bolshevism's political legacy was too ambivalent to leave a systematically "offensive bias" for future foreign policy choices: Lenin and the old Bolsheviks were not different from typical realists and thus not oblivious of balance of power as well as militant offensive propensity; (cultural explanations of Soviet politics -- based on the Leninist legacy -- are nonfalsifiable "if they admit the ambivalence of that legacy" or erroneous if they overestimate those aspect of Bolshevik cultural politics that utterly overlook "offensive strategies").

Third, these explanations offer but very poor "predictions of the timing of offensive overextension". Additionally, learning cognitive explanations do not offer evidence that is only explicable by cognitive theories and not by others.

Institutional explanations -- the preference and power of individual interest group -- are necessary, but not sufficient to explain the Soviet's overexpansion politics of almost three decades of 1950s-1970s; "dynamics of logrolling" and "strategic mythmaking" by coalition leaders were also at work. Soviet's expansionist behavior has had roots in intellectual legacy of Stalin's revolution. "Atavistic interests" together with military/industrial budget priorities and militant promotion of "progressive change" abroad have exploited the Stalinism ideology to justify their dominant social role. The Soviet Union's political character, as a late industrializer, provides the most comprehensive explanation for both periods of overextension and for years of moderation. International system, too, shaped the Soviet behavior by both providing competitive environment that in turn spurred Stalin's revolution from above, and through the system of balance of power throughout the periods of relatively unitary politics.

### **America's Cold War Consensus:**

Two competing schools in the late 1940s for America's national security and foreign policy, called "eastern internationalist school" and "middle western nationalist" school, projected different goals for American foreign policy. While the first school favoured America's wide participation in multilateral economic and military institutions designed to stabilize western Europe in the face of the Soviet threat, the second one resisted costly commitments of American money and troops to Europe and favoured instead extensive use of air power to contain the global expansion of communism. While they disagreed about the priorities, they both agreed about the necessity of setting priorities so as to have "a solvent grand strategy" and to avoid costly open-ended commitments and low-benefit endeavours. Despite this, America had two costly endeavours in Korea and Vietnam in this era.

Nonetheless, The U.S.'s limited overexpansion attitude (only two obvious cases) and learning from those experiences need to be explained. "One factor contributing to the Cold War consensus in favour of a globalist strategy of containment was the political competitions and coalition building between 'Europe-first internationalist' and 'Asia-first nationalist'". This was only a contributing factor far from being regarded as the sole determinative factor in American consensus in favour of a globalist strategy of containment. Neither realist nor cognitive explanations can provide full explanation for this consensus.