

making, one might emphasize changes in the domestic environment of Canada, including leadership. Students of organizations would concentrate on intra-government bargaining. Psychologists might point to changes in perception. Students of power and influence might prefer to explain it as a response to external pressures.

None of these approaches is necessarily wrong. What is striking about them is the lack of coherence. The historian, after considering the possibilities, will explain an action by a process of evaluation and judgment. The political scientist is likely to suggest that the explanation of particular cases is unsatisfactory if it does not apply to other, similar cases. He searches for more data and he invokes, if he can, a hypothesis to explain these data. But his problem is to define the class or category of action he is trying to explain. Is it, in this case, the recognition policy of Canadian Governments? Is it Canada-China relations? Is it "innovation" in the making of foreign policy? Moreover the data available will be inadequate to "prove" anything. At the most he can speculate about probabilities. The difficulty of the enterprise thus leads to partial explanation, to models of behaviour that may enlighten or may darken understanding. But scholars in the field are the first to admit that the road to explanatory theory will be long and difficult.

Paucity of findings

In addition to lack of coherence, the discipline of international relations suffers from a paucity of significant findings. For example, there has been much analysis of the decisions taken in the summer of 1914 by the major European powers. Most of the written evidence for these decisions is available. Scholars are mainly interested in showing that the decision-makers stumbled into war because they misunderstood the situation. This misunderstanding is illustrated by analysis of the messages they exchanged. But granted this be the case, what are we to learn from it? The idealists of 1918 said: "Abolish the states system". The scientists of today come close to saying: "Abolish the Kaiser". For they point out that decision-makers ought to slow down in times of crisis, beware of certain kinds of advice, and avoid commitment to small allies. Similar studies have been made of the Cuban missile crisis and, though the lessons drawn are worth attention, the circumstances were so extraordinary that most officials in most capitals are unlikely to be affected.

On the other hand, there has been

some excellent analysis of the way bureaucracies operate in times of crisis or tension and, though few specific lessons can be drawn, there are useful reminders that organizational processes may shape decisions as much as the wishes of leaders or peoples. Scholars studying perception (and sometimes it seems as though the psychologists have taken over the study of conflict) have salutary things to say about stereotypes, expectations, misleading historical analogies, and how to guard against them. To all of this one can say: "Fine, one does hope to act sensibly in crises and to organize the government in ways which promote 'multiple advocacy'; but the Kaiser did exist and may do so again."

Role of alliances

Again, attempts to link various attributes of the external or internal environment to a propensity to conflict have largely failed. Do alliances promote wars? Analysis suggests that sometimes they do and sometimes they don't. Is a five-power balance more stable than a two-power balance? It will depend on other things — e.g., the spread of nuclear weapons. Do statesmen consistently attempt to cover up internal conflict by picking fights with their neighbours? The evidence suggests the case is not proved. This kind of ambiguity of result does serve a negative purpose; folk wisdom about international relations is suspect. The researchers will add that the very activity of gathering information in precise, classified form is a pre-condition of success. They point to the indispensability of economic indicators to economic planning. If this is true for domestic policy, they say, is not international co-operation dependent on knowledge of how nations behave?

Granting the relevance of the question, the problem is first to collect and then to "operationalize" data, i.e. to organize them into a form that can be used to test hypotheses or assumptions. The methods of organization vary from comparison of common indicators such as GNP to simulating experience and observing the results. While there are obvious complexities in comparing data between countries and in getting at sources of data which governments won't reveal, and while the gaps are enormous (the Kaiser can't be interviewed), there seems no reason to assume that methods of political and social analysis which yield results in national terms won't also do so across nations.

The major danger, it seems to me, is that facility of measurement tends to dictate the research done and thus the results achieved. Research may not be

The historian explains an action by a process of evaluation and judgment