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Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations

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Foreign Policy Analysis, Volume 1, Issue 1, 1 March 2005, Pages 1–30,

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1743-8594.2005.00001.x>

Published: 04 February 2005

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Abstract

Examining the history, conceptual breadth, and recent trends in the study of foreign policy analysis, it is clear that this subfield provides what may be the best conceptual connection to the empirical ground upon which all international relations (IR) theory is based. Foreign policy analysis is

characterized by an actor-specific focus, based upon the argument that all that occurs between nations and across nations is grounded in human decision makers acting singly or in groups. FPA offers significant contributions to IR—theoretical, substantive, and methodological—and is situated at the intersection of all social science and policy fields as they relate to international affairs. A renewed emphasis on actor-specific theory will allow IR to more fully reclaim its ability to manifest human agency, with its attendant change, creativity, accountability, and meaning.

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