

Trustees of Princeton University

Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications

Author(s): Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin

Source: *World Politics*, Vol. 24, Supplement: Theory and Policy in International Relations (Spring, 1972), pp. 40-79

Published by: Cambridge University Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2010559>

Accessed: 27-09-2016 07:36 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://about.jstor.org/terms>



Cambridge University Press, Trustees of Princeton University are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *World Politics*

BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS:

A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications

By GRAHAM T. ALLISON and MORTON H. HALPERIN*

DURING the Tet holiday of 1968, North Vietnamese troops launched massive attacks on a large number of South Vietnamese cities. *Why?*

In December, 1950, the Chinese Communists intervened in the Korean War. Today some Senators raise the specter of Chinese Communist intervention in the Vietnamese War. Will Communist China intervene in Vietnam? Specifically, if the U.S. were to renew the bombing of North Vietnam with a vengeance, destroying the dikes and closing Haiphong, and South Vietnamese troops were to invade North Vietnam—both unlikely contingencies—would large units of Communist Chinese troops enter the war?

In the mid-1960's, the U.S. put a lid on American strategic weapons: 1000 Minutemen, 54 Titans, and 640 Polaris, and a limited number of bombers. Administration officials announced these limits, recognizing that the Soviets would build up to a position of parity but hoping that Moscow would not go for superiority. If in the mid-1960's a Secretary of Defense had wanted to persuade the Soviet Union not to deploy an ICBM fleet that would seriously threaten U.S. forces, how might he have proceeded?

The first question asks for an explanation; the second for a prediction; the third for a plan. These are three central activities in which both analysts of international politics and makers of foreign policy engage. In response to the first question, most analysts begin by considering various objectives that the North Vietnamese might have had in mind: for example, to shock the American public and thereby affect the presidential election; to collapse the government of South Vietnam; to cause a massive uprising of military and civilians in South Vietnam, thus bringing total victory; or to take the cities and keep them. By ex-

* This presentation of a bureaucratic politics approach to foreign policy builds upon previous works of both authors. Specifically, it takes as a point of departure Allison's "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis," *American Political Science Review*, LXIII (September 1970) and *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston 1971); and Halperin's *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, forthcoming. Here we focus on the further development of "Model III," recognizing that organizations can be included as players in the game of bureaucratic politics, treating the factors emphasized by an organizational process approach as constraints, developing the notion of shared attitudes, and introducing a distinction between "decision games" and "action games."

amining the problems that Hanoi faced and the character of the action they chose, analysts eliminate some of these aims as implausible. Explanation then consists in constructing a calculation that permits us to understand why, in the particular situation, with certain objections, one would have chosen to launch the Tet offensive. In attempting to predict whether the Communist Chinese will intervene in the Vietnamese War, and if so, in what fashion, most analysts would consider (1) Chinese national security interests in Vietnam, (2) the likelihood of the collapse of the North Vietnamese in the absence of Chinese Communist intervention, (3) the contribution of Chinese Communist troops to the North Vietnamese efforts, and (4) indications of Chinese Communist intentions, for example, warnings to the U.S., pledges to the North Vietnamese, statements about Chinese interests, etc. These considerations would then be combined in some intuitive fashion to yield a prediction. In recommending U.S. actions to persuade the Soviets to stop with rough parity, and not to push for "superiority," many analysts would have focused on Soviet national security interests. They would then consider American actions that would affect those interests in such a way that deploying larger strategic forces would be counter-productive.

Characteristic of each of these three answers is a basic approach: a fundamental set of assumptions and categories for thinking about foreign affairs.¹ This approach depends primarily on the assumption that events in international politics consist of the more or less purposive acts of unified national governments and that governmental behavior can be understood by analogy with the intelligent, coordinated acts of individual human beings. Following this approach, analysts focus on the interests and goals of a nation, the alternative courses of actions available, and the costs and benefits of each alternative. An event has been explained when the analyst has shown, for example, how the Tet offensive was a reasonable choice, given Hanoi's strategic objectives. Predictions are generated by calculating the rational thing to do in a certain situation, given specified objectives. Recommended plans concentrate on analyzing other nations' strategic interests and ways of affecting their calculations about the consequences of actions.

Let the reader consider, for example, how he would explain the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, or North Vietnamese activity in Laos and Cambodia. One typically puts himself in the place of the nation or the national government confronted with a problem of foreign affairs and tries to figure out how he might have chosen the action in question. If I had been the Soviet Union faced with the threat of

¹ For an elaboration of the argument of this introductory section, see Allison, *op. cit.*

Czech liberalization, or the Czech threat to the economy of the Bloc, what would I have done? Moreover, this is not simply the way we react to current events. It is the way most analysts, most of the time, structure their most careful explanations and predictions of important occurrences in foreign affairs.

Few readers will find the simple assertion of this point persuasive. Obviously there are several variants of this basic approach. Obviously the approach does not capture the entire analysis of those who employ it. Obviously not all analysts rely on this approach all of the time. But as one of us has argued at much greater length elsewhere, this framework, which has been labelled Model I, has been the dominant approach to the study of foreign policy and international politics.² (Even analysts primarily concerned with discovering causal relations between variables—for example, between environmental or intra-national factors—and specific outcomes, when called upon to explain or predict, display a tendency to rely on the assumption of purposive unitary nations coping within the constraints established by these causal relations.)

This traditional approach to international politics has much to recommend it. As a “lens” it reduces the organizational and political complications of government to the simplification of a single actor. The array of details about a happening can be seen to cluster around the major features of an action. Through this lens, the confused and even contradictory factors that influence an occurrence become a single dynamic: the *choice* of the alternative that achieved a certain goal. This approach permits a quick, imaginative sorting out of the problem of explanation or prediction. It serves as a productive shorthand, requiring a minimum of information. It can yield an informative summary of tendencies, for example, by identifying the weight of strategic costs and benefits.

But this simplification—like all simplifications—obscures as well as reveals. In particular, it obscures the persistently neglected fact of bureaucracy: the “maker” of government policy is not one calculating decision-maker, but rather a conglomerate of large organizations and political actors who differ substantially about what their government should do on any particular issue and who compete in attempting to affect both governmental decisions and the actions of their government.

The purpose of this paper is to present an alternative approach that focuses on intra-national factors, in particular Bureaucratic Politics, in explaining national behavior in international relations. The argument is that these factors are very important, underemphasized in the current literature, yet critical when one is concerned with planning policy. Sec-

² For an elaboration of this point, see Allison, *op. cit.*

tion I of this paper presents the alternative approach: a Bureaucratic Politics Model.³ Our hope is that the framework is sufficiently general to apply to the behavior of most modern governments in industrialized nations, though it will be obvious that our primary base is the U.S. government. Section II suggests how this approach can be applied to understand how one nation influences the behavior of another. Section III states a number of policy implications of this alternative approach.

Section I

A BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS MODEL

Our purpose here is to outline a rough-cut framework for focusing primarily on the individuals within a government, and the interaction among them, as determinants of the actions of a government in international politics. What a government does in any particular instance can be understood largely as a result of bargaining among players positioned hierarchically in the government. The bargaining follows regularized circuits. Both the bargaining and the results are importantly affected by a number of constraints, in particular, organizational processes and shared values.⁴

In contrast with Model I, this Bureaucratic Politics Model sees no unitary actor but rather many actors as players—players who focus not on a single strategic issue but on many diverse intra-national problems as well. Players choose in terms of no consistent set of strategic objectives, but rather according to various conceptions of national security, organizational, domestic, and personal interests. Players make governmental decisions not by a single rational choice, but by pulling and hauling. (This by no means implies that individual players are not acting rationally, given their interests.)⁵

The conception of national security policy as “political” result contradicts both public imagery and academic orthodoxy. Issues vital to national security are considered too important to be settled by political games. They must be “above” politics: to accuse someone of “playing

³ In arguing that explanations proceed in terms of implicit conceptual models, this essay makes no claim that foreign policy analysts have developed any satisfactory empirically tested theory. In this essay, the use of the term “model” with qualifiers should be read “conceptual scheme or framework.”

⁴ For a review of earlier proponents of the bureaucratic politics approach, see Allison, *op. cit.*

⁵ In order to highlight the distinctive characteristics of the Bureaucratic Politics Model (BPM), we contrast it with the traditional approach. Our argument is not, however, that the approaches are exclusive alternatives. The relationships between these approaches is discussed in Allison, *op. cit.*

politics with national security” is a most serious charge. Thus, memoirs typically handle the details of such bargaining with a velvet glove. For example, both Sorensen and Schlesinger present the efforts of the Executive Committee in the Cuban missile crisis essentially as rational deliberation among a unified group of equals.⁶ What public expectation demands, the academic penchant for intellectual elegance reinforces. Internal politics is messy; moreover, according to prevailing doctrine, politicking lacks intellectual substance. It constitutes gossip for journalists, rather than a subject for serious investigation. Occasional memoirs, anecdotes in historical accounts, and several detailed case studies to the contrary, most of the foreign policy literature avoids bureaucratic politics.

The gap between academic literature and the experience of participants in government is nowhere wider than at this point. For those who participate in government, the terms of daily employment cannot be ignored: government leaders have competitive, not homogeneous interests; priorities and perceptions are shaped by positions; problems are much more varied than straightforward, strategic issues; the management of piecemeal streams of decisions is more important than steady state choices; making sure that the government does what is decided—and does not do what has not been directed—is more difficult than selecting the preferred solution.

This general orientation can be stated more sharply by formulation of the Bureaucratic Politics Model as an “analytic paradigm” in the technical sense developed by Robert K. Merton for sociological analysis.⁷ Systematic statement of basic assumptions, concepts, and suggestive propositions will highlight the distinctive thrust of this style of analysis. In formulating the paradigm, wherever possible, we use words the way they are used in ordinary language. But the terms that constitute this paradigm are often given a more specific definition for purposes of clarity.

BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS PARADIGM

I. BASIC UNIT OF ANALYSIS

In thinking about problems of foreign affairs, what most participants and analysts are really interested in are *outcomes*—that is, selectively delimited states of the real world importantly affected by the actions of

⁶ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days* (Boston 1965); see Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York 1965).

⁷ Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structures* (rev. and enl. ed., New York 1957).

governments. Thus, for example, the problem of proliferation for most participants or analysts is: how many nations will have what nuclear capabilities at some point in the future.* Similarly, an explanation of the Cuban missile crisis must allow one to understand why at some point, Soviet missiles were no longer in Cuba. The U.S. was publicly committed not to invade Cuba, and all this had been accomplished without nuclear war. The selection of variables is made by the analyst or participant with reference to his perception of some problem or issue. When explaining, predicting, or planning, an analyst, at least implicitly, specifies some characteristics of the real world—an outcome—that focus his attention.

The basic unit of analysis of the approach developed here is *actions* of a government which we define as the various acts of officials of a government in exercises of governmental authority that can be perceived outside the government. According to this definition, a presidential announcement of a decision to bomb North Vietnam, the subsequent movement of an aircraft carrier into a position near North Vietnam, and the actual dropping of bombs are actions of a government. Whereas a secret paper sent from the Secretary of Defense to the President recommending bombing of North Vietnam or a private presidential decision to bomb North Vietnam are not actions of a government. It is an assumption of the approach developed here that in order to explain, predict, or plan outcomes it is necessary to identify the actions of particular governments that affect the outcome, to treat these actions separately (including how one nation's actions affect another) and in this way to treat the event in its entirety.

In explaining, predicting, or planning actions of a government, one must identify the *action channels*—that is, regularized sets of procedures for producing particular classes of actions. For example, one action channel for producing U.S. military intervention in another country includes a recommendation by the ambassador to that country, an assessment by the regional military commander, a recommendation by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, an assessment by the intelligence community of the consequences of intervention, recommendations by the Secretaries of State and Defense, a presidential decision to intervene, the transmittal of an order from the President through the Secretary of Defense and

* More specifically, the outcome might be defined in terms of a set of variables: (a) the number of states that have formally renounced nuclear weapons, (b) the number of states that have announced intentions to acquire nuclear weapons, (c) the nuclear technology of various nations, (d) the number of states with a stand-by capability, (e) the number of states that have tested nuclear weapons, (f) the number of states that have nuclear stockpiles and the size of these stockpiles.

Joint Chiefs of Staff to the regional military commander, his determination of what troops to employ, the order from him to the commander of those troops, and the orders from that commander to the individuals who actually move into the country. The path from initiation to action frequently includes a number of *decisions*, that is authoritative designations, internal to a government, of specific actions to be taken by specific officials. Thus, a secret decision by the President to intervene, and the determination by the regional commander are both decisions, but a public announcement of either is an action of the government.

The action channel for major foreign policy decisions can be usefully divided into that portion which leads to decisions by senior players and that part which follows from those decisions. The latter is frequently referred to as "implementation" but we resist that terminology as too restrictive. Many elements of implementation stem from sources other than decisions by senior players. Thus, for example, the presence of U.S. troops in the Dominican Republic in 1965 stemmed from a decision by the President to send the Marines to that country, but the actions of the 18,000 Marines in the Dominican Republic (e.g., the precise positions that they occupied) followed from much lower-level decisions as well as from other factors. Moreover, many actions of governments occur in the absence of any high level decision. For example, in the earlier Dominican crisis that led to the overthrow of Juan Bosch, Ambassador John B. Martin's offer to Bosch to send in the U.S. Marines was not preceded by any high-level decision to make that offer.⁸ Actions may also be affected by decisions on other issues and by *policy*, that is, authoritative aspirations, internal to a government, about outcomes. For example, Martin's behavior was influenced by the U.S. *policy* of supporting democratic governments in Latin America. The actions of the Marines, when they did intervene, were affected by prior budget decisions. For purposes of analysis we will identify the activity of players leading to decisions by senior players as *decision games*, activities leading to policy as *policy games*, and activities that follow from, or proceed in the absence of, decisions by senior players as *action games*.

Thus we have defined the following terms: outcomes, actions, action channels, decisions, policy, and decision games, policy games, and action games.

II. ORGANIZING CONCEPTS

The organizing concepts of this paradigm can be arranged as elements in the answers to three central questions: (1) Who plays? (2)

⁸ John B. Martin, *Overtaken by Events* (New York 1966).

What determines each player's stand? (3) How are players' stands aggregated to yield governmental decisions and actions?

A. Who plays? That is, whose interests and behavior have an important effect on the government's decisions and actions?

In any government, there exists a circle of *senior players* in the national security policy game.⁹ This circle includes the major political figures, the heads of the major national security organizations, including intelligence, the military and, for some purposes, the organization that manages budgetary allocations and the economy. Generally one of these players is the chief executive of the government. He may have a disproportionate share of influence on major decisions. The President of the U.S., for example, has a range of both interests and formal powers that set him apart from other players. Other individuals can enter this central circle, either on a more regular or a strictly *ad hoc* basis, because of their relation with the head of the government. Organizations and groups can for some purposes be treated as players, for example, when (1) the official papers that emerge from an organization can be summarized as coherent calculated moves of a unitary actor; (2) the actions of the head of an organization, whose goals are determined largely by that organization, can be treated as actions of the organization; and (3) the various behaviors of different individual members of an organization can be regarded as coherent strategies and tactics in a single plan.

Around the central circle of *senior players*, there are various circles of *junior players*. In the United States actors in the wider governmental game ("Congressional influentials," members of the press, spokesmen for important interest groups, especially the "bipartisan foreign policy establishment" in and out of Congress, and surrogates for each of these groups) can enter the game in a more or less regularized fashion. Other members of the Congress, the press, interest groups, and public form concentric circles around the central arena—circles that demarcate limits within which the game is played.

The mix of players will vary depending on the issue and the type of game. Action channels determine, in large part, which players enter what games, with what advantages and handicaps. Senior players will dominate in decision games. But in action games on the same issue quite junior players in the organization who are charged with carrying out the decision may play a major role.

⁹ In the statement of this paradigm we focus primarily on issues of foreign policy that arise as matters of national security. Extension of the argument to other issue areas, e.g., foreign trade, is straightforward.

B. *What determines each player's stand? What determines his perceptions and interests which lead to a stand?*

Answers to the questions "What is the issue?" or "What must be done?" are colored by the position from which the question is considered.

A player is an individual in a *position*. His perceptions and preferences stem both from his individual characteristics (for example, attitudes shared with other members of the society and government and attitudes special to himself) and from his position.

The *interests* that affect players' desired results can be characterized under four headings: national security interests, organizational interests, domestic interests, and personal interests. Some elements of national security interests are widely accepted, such as the interest in the United States' avoiding foreign domination, and the belief that if the U.S. were to disarm unilaterally, other nations would use military force against it and its allies with very serious adverse consequences. But in most cases, reasonable men can disagree on how national security interests will be affected by a specific issue. Other interests can affect an individual's perception of the national security interest. Members of an organization, particularly career officials, come to believe that the health of their organization is vital to the national interest.¹⁰ The health of the organization, in turn, is seen to depend on maintaining influence, fulfilling its mission, and securing the necessary capabilities. The latter two interests lead to concern for maintaining autonomy and organizational morale, protecting the organization's essence, maintaining or expanding roles and missions, and maintaining or increasing budgets. While many bureaucrats are unconcerned with domestic affairs and politics and do not ask themselves how a proposed change in policy or behavior would affect domestic political issues, some senior players will almost always be concerned about domestic implications. Finally, a player's stand depends on his personal interests and his conception of his role.

When an ostensible issue arises, e.g., when a new weapons system is proposed, players will come to see quite different *faces of the issue*. For example, a proposal to withdraw American troops from Europe is to the Army a threat to its budget and size; to the Budget Bureau a way to save money; to Treasury a balance of payments gain; to the State Department Bureau of European Affairs a threat to good relations with NATO; to the President's Congressional adviser an opportunity to remove a major irritant in the President's relations with the Hill. (Senior

¹⁰ For an elaboration of the discussion of organizational interests see Halperin "Why Bureaucrats Play Games," *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1971).

players, especially, tend to see several faces of the issue simultaneously.) Given the face of the issue that he sees, each player must calculate how the resolution of this issue may affect his interests. This defines his *stakes* in the issue at hand. In the light of these stakes he then determines his *stand* on the issue.

Suggestive propositions

1. There are important differences between (a) governmental systems in which many players in the central game hold their positions because of political influence and aspire to the position of chief executive of the government and (b) governmental systems in which most central players have no thought of becoming the chief executive. In the former, most players' personal interest in remaining in the game and advancing toward the top frequently dominates their stand on most issues.

2. Beyond the circle of senior players, certain individuals (*viz.*, non-career officials and those in organizations without organizationally-defined missions) are often motivated by the desire to participate *per se*. These individuals are likely to take stands that permit them to get into the game.

3. There are important differences between (a) governmental systems that are relatively closed to expressions of interest and pressures from outside the governmental game and (b) governmental systems that are relatively open as a result of elections. In the latter, such factors as dependency upon the approval or acquiescence of a wider circle of individuals, and vulnerability to pressures from this wider circle, force players to a larger conception of their interests.

4. Organizational interests weigh more heavily in the full set of interests of some senior players than in others. In the U.S. government there seems to be a rough spectrum of such weights from greater to lesser, for example, the Chief of Naval Operations, to the Secretary of Defense, to the Secretary of State, to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs.

5. Organizational interests are often dominated by the desire to maintain the autonomy of the organization in pursuing what its members view as the essence of the organization's activity, *e.g.*, flying for the Air Force.

6. Even, and perhaps particularly in crises, organizations compete for roles and missions.

7. Organizations rarely take stands that require elaborate coordination with other organizations.

8. Most players, especially senior players, have a very high discount rate: that is, a short time horizon on any issue. Players whose stands are heavily influenced by organizational interests, especially careerists, often have a much longer time horizon regarding the interests of the organization.

C. How are the players' stands aggregated to yield decisions and actions of a government?

We consider first how players' stands aggregate to produce policies and decisions by senior players; second, we consider how policies, decisions, and other factors produce governmental actions.

1. *Policy and decision games.* Sometimes an issue arises because a player sees something that he wants to change, and moves. Most often, however, the game is begun by the necessity that something be done, either in response to a *deadline* (e.g., the annual budget) or an event (external or domestic). When he becomes aware that a game has begun, each player must determine his stand and then decide whether to play (if he has a choice) and if so, how hard. These decisions require a calculation (often implicit) about both resources and reputation. Resources are finite and fungible, e.g., time and senior players' reputation with the President. Reputation depends on one's track record, thus players consider the probability of success as part of their stake.

Decision games do not proceed randomly, but rather according to fixed rules. Typically, issues are recognized and determined within an established channel for producing policies or decisions. Where a deadline or event initiates the game, that trigger influences the selection of the action channel. In most cases, however, there are several possible channels through which an issue could be resolved. Because action channels structure the game by pre-selecting the major players, determining the usual points of entrance into the game, and by distributing particular advantages for each game, players maneuver to get the issue into the channel that they believe is most likely to yield the desired result.

Each player's probability of success depends upon at least three elements: bargaining advantages, skill and will in using bargaining advantages, and other players' perceptions of the first two ingredients. Bargaining advantages stem from control of implementation, control over information that enables one to define the problem and identify the available options, persuasiveness with other players (including players outside the bureaucracy) and the ability to affect other players' objectives in other games, including domestic political games.

What emerges from the game is also importantly affected by constraints, in particular by the routines of organizations in supplying information and options, and by the shared values within the society and the bureaucracy.

The game consists of each player engaging in various maneuvers to achieve his desired results. Some players develop sophisticated plans, though most players seem to plan very little. All players can try to change other players' stands by arguments.

The resolution of an issue can be a policy, a decision, or the avoidance of a decision. Decisions may be very general or quite specific. In some cases, senior players will have no choice about who will carry out the action. But in other cases, the rules permit a choice of implementers. For example, negotiations with foreign governments are usually the domain of the foreign office; but they can be assigned to a special envoy of the head of government, or to the intelligence services. Bombing missions must be assigned to the military, but there may be a choice between Services or within a Service, e.g., between the Navy, SAC, or TAC. Monitoring functions may be assigned to an organization with an interest in the action, but with no capability to carry it out.

2. *Action games.* The actions of a government that affect an outcome typically include a large number of distinct elements. For example, recent U.S. government actions which affect the spread of nuclear weapons include: the State Department's efforts to gain adherence to the Non-Proliferation Treaty; Presidential offers of guarantees to non-nuclear nations against nuclear blackmail; Atomic Energy Commission tests of nuclear explosives for peaceful purposes (which provide a convenient shield for non-nuclear powers' development of nuclear devices); withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Far East (which may increase the concern of some Japanese or Indians about their national security); statements by the AEC about the great prospects for peaceful nuclear weapons (which are designed to influence AEC budgets); an AEC commissioner's argument, in the absence of any higher level decision, to a Brazilian scientist about the great virtues of peaceful nuclear explosives; and the U.S. government's refusal to confirm or deny the reported presence of nuclear weapons aboard ships calling in foreign ports. As this list suggests, actions that affect outcomes may be importantly affected by policies about that outcome, by decision games about that outcome, and by decision games about other outcomes. Actions that affect outcomes may also be actions in the absence of higher level decisions designed to affect an outcome, maneuvers in decision games, or routine behavior of organizations.

To treat the actions of a government that affect an outcome, the analyst needs to separate out these various strands of action and provide explanations for each. Obviously most actions are an amalgam of several strands.

If the action is in fact a result of routine behavior of organizations, one needs to explain the organizational standard operating procedures (SOP's) that produced that behavior.¹¹ If the action is a maneuver in a decision or policy game, one needs to identify the game and explain why the maneuver was used. If the action was taken without a high-level decision, one must identify the circumstances that permitted the player that leeway and explain what led the player to take that step. If the action resulted from a policy or a decision game unrelated to the outcome being analyzed, one must identify the relevant decision or policy game and provide an explanation for the decision and the action that followed. Finally, if the action flows from a relevant decision game, one needs an explanation of that action game.

Action games, which follow from decision games, do not proceed at random. The decision that triggers the game and the rules of the game assign the action to a player and pick the action channel. However, there are likely to be several sub-channels. Players will maneuver to get the issue into the channel they believe offers the best prospects for getting the desired result.

As in decision games, players' probabilities of success depend upon their power. In this case, bargaining advantages stem from: formal authority, control over the resources necessary to carry out the action, responsibility for carrying out the action, control over information that enables one to determine the feasibility of the action and its consequences, control over information that enables senior players to determine whether the decision is being implemented, and persuasiveness with other players, particularly those responsible for implementation. Action is also affected by the constraints imposed by the standard operating procedures of large organizations.

In some cases, players responsible for implementing decisions will feel obligated to implement the spirit as well as the letter of the decision. Even in such cases, the action may differ from the action that the senior players thought would result from their decision. This is in part because actions are carried out by large organizations according to existing routines, in part because decisions do not usually include an explanation of what the action is intended to accomplish, and in part

¹¹ For an elaboration of the discussion of organizational routines, programs and SOP's, see Allison, *op. cit.*

because when specifying details junior players may distort the action.

In most cases, players will feel that the decision leaves them considerable leeway in implementation. Players who supported the decision will maneuver to see it implemented. They may go beyond the spirit if not the letter of the decision. Those who opposed the decision, or who oppose the action, will maneuver to delay implementation, to limit implementation to the letter but not the spirit, or even to have the decision disobeyed.

The characterization of decision and action games captures the thrust of the bureaucratic politics approach. If problems of foreign policy arose as discrete issues, and decisions and actions were determined one game at a time, this account would suffice. But most "issues," e.g., Vietnam or the proliferation of nuclear weapons, emerge piecemeal over time, one lump in one contest, a second in another. Hundreds of issues compete for players' attention every day. Each player is forced to fix upon his issues for that day, deal with them on their own terms, and rush on to the next. Thus the character of the emerging issue, and the pace at which the game is played, converge to yield a collage of government decisions and actions. Choices by one player (e.g., to authorize action by his department, to make a speech, or to refrain from acquiring certain information), decisions and "foul-ups" (e.g., points that are not decided because they are not recognized, raised too late, or misunderstood) are pieces which, when stuck to the same canvas, constitute actions relevant to an outcome.

Suggestive Propositions

About Decisions

1. Decisions of a government seldom reflect a single coherent, consistent set of calculations about national security interests.
2. Decisions by definition assign specific actions to specific players, but they typically leave considerable leeway both about which subordinates should be involved and what specific actions should be taken.
3. Decisions typically reflect considerable compromise. Compromise results from a need to gain adherence, a need to avoid harming strongly felt interests (including organizational interests), and the need to hedge against the dire predictions of other participants.
4. Decisions are rarely tailored to facilitate monitoring. As a result, senior players have great difficulty in checking on the faithful implementation of a decision.
5. Decisions that direct substantial changes in action typically reflect a coincidence of (a) a deadline for a President or senior players that

focuses them on a problem and fuels the search for a solution and (b) the interests of junior players committed to a specific solution and in search of a problem.¹²

About Actions

1. Presidential decisions will be faithfully implemented when: a President's involvement is unambiguous, his words are unambiguous, his order is widely publicized, the men who receive it have control of everything needed to carry it out, and those men have no apparent doubt of his authority to issue the decision.¹³

2. Major new departures in foreign policy typically stem from some decision by central players. But the specific details of the action taken are determined in large part by standard operating procedure and programs existing in the organizations at the time.

3. Ambassadors and field commanders feel less obliged to faithfully implement decisions because they typically have not been involved in the decision game. They feel they know better what actions one should want from another government and how to get those actions.

4. The larger the number of players who can act independently on an issue, the less the government's action will reflect decisions of the government on that issue.

5. Where a decision leaves leeway for the organization that is implementing it, that organization will act so as to maximize its organizational interest within constraints.

III. CONSTRAINTS

The factors highlighted in this model assume a *ceteris paribus* clause. Other features, treated here as constraints, bias the outcome of the bureaucratic politics game. For some classes of governmental behavior (e.g., the detail characteristics of the behavior of large organizations), these other factors may be more important than those emphasized by the Bureaucratic Politics Model. Indeed, what is described here as an "organizational constraint" has been elaborated elsewhere by one of us as an alternative model.¹⁴ The issue of typology, that is, what factors weigh most heavily for what classes of outcomes, is a central issue for further research.

¹² For this proposition we are indebted to Ernest R. May.

¹³ This proposition is drawn from Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power* (New York 1960).

¹⁴ See Allison's "Model II," *op. cit.* The discussion of organizational constraints draws heavily on that account.

A. *Organizational Constraints*

The game among players (and organizations considered as players) proceeds within a context. A large part of that context is the existing configuration of large organizations, their established programs and standard operating procedures for performing various functions. These organizational routines are especially important in determining (1) the information available to the central players, (2) the options that the senior players consider, and (3) the actual details of whatever is done by the government.

How does *information* about most national problems become available to members of a government? For example, how did the U.S. government become aware of the Soviet construction of missiles in Cuba in 1962? For the most part, information is collected and processed by large organizations. In the Cuban missile crisis, the existence of the CIA and Air Force, with existing capabilities and processes, yielded a U-2 flight over Cuba according to a pattern that discovered the missiles in the second week of October.

The menu of *alternatives* defined by organizations in sufficient detail to be live options is severely limited in both number and character. The character of the alternatives available to a leader (i.e., the location of the set of alternatives in the universe of possible alternatives relevant to his objectives) differs significantly from the character of alternatives presented by a team of five disinterested experts. The difference is a function of the configuration of established organizations and their existing goals and procedures. Those alternatives that are built into existing organizational goals (e.g., incremental improvements in each military service's primary weapons system) will be adequate (i.e., compare favorably with the experts' list, though with less sensitivity to cost). However, alternatives that require coordination of several organizations (e.g., multi-service military operations or weapons systems) and alternatives in areas between organizations (e.g., weapons that are not represented by a major service component) are likely to be inadequate.

Action according to standard operating procedures and programs does not constitute far-sighted, flexible adaptation to "the issue" (as it is conceived by an analyst). Detail and nuance of actions by organizations are determined chiefly by organizational routines. Standard operating procedures constitute routines for dealing with standard situations. Routines allow large numbers of individuals on low organizational levels to deal with numerous situations day after day, without

much thought. But this regularized capacity for adequate performance is purchased at the price of standardization. Specific instances, particularly critical instances that typically do not have "standard" characteristics, are often handled sluggishly or inappropriately. A program, that is, a complex cluster of standard operating procedures, is rarely tailored to the specific situation in which it is executed. Rather, the program is (at best) the most appropriate of programs in the existing repertoire. Since repertoires are developed by parochial organizations for standard scenarios that the organization has defined, the programs available for dealing with a particular situation are often ill-suited to it.

B. *Shared Attitudes*

Perceptions of issues or arguments about the national interest do not begin *ab initio*. Beneath the differences that fuel bureaucratic politics is a foundation of shared assumptions about basic values and facts. These underlying assumptions are reflected in various attitudes and images which are taken for granted by most players.

Shared attitudes and images provide common answers to such questions as: Who are the actual or potential enemies of the United States? What are their intentions and capabilities? Who are our friends? What are their capabilities and intentions? What influences the behavior of other nations? Among the attitudes and the images that have recently prevailed in the U.S. bureaucracy are:

- The United States should act to halt the spread of Communism.
- Only force will deter the Chinese from aggression.
- The loss of American gold to foreign central banks is a threat to U.S. prosperity and should be avoided.
- The capability for assured destruction is necessary to deter the Soviet Union.
- European unification is desirable.
- Good relations with Japan are important to U.S. security interests.

Most participants accept these images. Their idea of the national interest is shaped by these attitudes, and their arguments are based on them. Most participants tend to interpret the actions of other nations to make them consistent with held images, rather than reexamining basic views. Even those in the bureaucracy who do not share some or all of these values and images are inclined to act and to argue as if they believed them. They do this because to do otherwise would make them suspect by other members of the bureaucracy.

Section II

INTERACTION BETWEEN NATIONS

How does the behavior of one nation affect that of another?

Most analysts of international politics approach this question by applying a version of Model I to the behavior of each nation. This approach leads them to treat the interaction between nations as if it resulted from a competition between two purposive individuals. Each nation's actions are seen to be an attempt to influence the actions of the other by affecting its strategic calculus. The behavior of each nation is explained as a reaction to the behavior of the other.

Consider how analysts who take this approach explain arms races. Nation *A* builds military forces for the purpose of influencing nation *B*. If it fears that nation *B* is stronger and hence may be tempted to attack or to exploit its military superiority, nation *A* will increase the size of its own forces. Nation *B*, observing this buildup, and fearful of the increased strength of nation *A*, in turn increases its own forces.

The Bureaucratic Politics Model suggests an alternative answer to the question of how one nation's behavior affects the behavior of another. Explanation focuses primarily on processes internal to each nation. The actions of a nation result not from an agreed upon calculus of strategic interests, but rather from pulling and hauling among individuals with differing perceptions and stakes. These arise not only from differing conceptions of national security interest but also from differing domestic, organizational and personal interests. The influence of one nation's actions on another result from the actions' impact on the stands, or on the power of players in decision or action games in the other nation.

From this alternative perspective, the explanation of an "arms race" is to be found primarily within each nation—in particular in the process by which each one procures and deploys military forces. At any given time some players in nation *A* will take stands in favor of increasing defense expenditures and procuring particular weapons systems. The interests that lead them to these stands will be diverse. Career officers in the armed services, for example, will seek additional funds for forces controlled by their services. Other players' stands will be affected by their perceptions of how particular decisions will affect the influence of particular players. Actions by another nation will be interpreted by those seeking additional weapons to enhance their arguments and influence. These actions will affect decisions to increase defense spending

if they affect senior players' perceptions of what is necessary for national security or of what is necessary to promote their other interests.

Model I analysis can be relied on to predict the fact that a large increase in nation *A*'s defense budget will produce an increase in nation *B*'s defense spending. But the size of that increase and, even more importantly, the specific characteristics of weapons purchased with the increase are better explained or predicted by the Bureaucratic Politics Model. In general, Model I is more useful for explaining actions where national security interests dominate, where shared values lead to a consensus on what the national security requires, and where actions flow rather directly from decisions. The bureaucratic politics model is more useful where there is data on the interests of players and the rules of the game, where organizational and domestic interests predominate, or where one wishes to treat the details of action.

The Bureaucratic Politics Model suggests a number of propositions about the way actions of one nation affect the actions of another. We shall attempt to formulate these propositions explicitly. But before presenting propositions, it should be useful to consider in a more general manner the process of national interaction as it looks through the lens of bureaucratic politics.

The Bureaucratic Politics Model's emphasis on intra-national processes stems not only from the fact that individuals within nations do the acting, but also from the observation that the satisfaction of players' interests are to be found overwhelmingly at home. Political leaders of a nation rise and fall depending on whether they satisfy domestic needs. Individuals advance in the bureaucracy when they meet the standards set by political leaders or by career ladders. Organizations prosper or decline depending on domestic support in that bureaucracy and beyond it—but within the nation. These struggles are what pre-occupy players in foreign-policy bureaucracies. Threats to interests from rival organizations, or competing political groups, are far more real than threats from abroad.

This is not to say that players do not have national security interests. No leader wants to see his nation attacked, and few desire to send their soldiers off to fight in distant wars. Some leaders are committed to a conception of world order. Some players have a wide range of interests beyond the borders of the nation. Even when players are concerned about national security interests, however, they are likely to see the battles as being won or lost mainly at home. This has become a truism of the Vietnam war, but it is true for other policies as well. For President Harry S. Truman the problem of the Marshall Plan was how to

get Congress to establish the program and vote the funds, not how to get European governments to take the money or use it wisely. For President Dwight D. Eisenhower the problem of arms control was how to get imaginative proposals from his associates. For planners in the Pentagon, the drive to get the forces necessary to defend the nation is stymied, not by foreign governments, but by rival services, the Secretary of Defense, and the President.

It is not that actions of other nations do not matter, but rather they matter if and when they influence domestic struggles. A player's efforts to accomplish his objectives—whether to advance domestic political interests, organizational interests, personal interests, or national security interests—are sometimes affected by what he and other players come to believe about the actions of other nations. A German chancellor whose domestic position depends upon his reputation for being able to get what the Federal Republic needs from the United States will be concerned about American actions that lead his colleagues and opponents to conclude Washington no longer listens to him. An American Secretary of Defense or President who wishes to cut defense spending will see that his position requires Soviet actions that permit him to argue that the nation's security can be protected with reduced forces. A State Department official who believes his government's security requires European unification will fear that his efforts to get the United States to promote this cause could be undercut by Common Market trade policies, since these offer an opportunity for others to point to the adverse economic consequences of European unification. Since actions by other nations can affect the stands players take, and thereby affect decisions and actions, we must consider how actions of other nations enter into the process of decision bargaining and how they affect actions.

Many nations are doing many things at any given time. Not all of these foreign activities become relevant to decision or action games within a nation. Those that do are the actions reported by the nation's foreign office or intelligence organizations, or by senior players directly. Intelligence organizations are not perfect and neutral transmission belts. They notice what their images of the world lead them to think will be important to senior players. They report events and opinions according to established procedures and in ways designed to protect their own organizational interests. Senior players notice what may help them or their opponents and relate mainly to the former. If a new interpretation of another nation's actions comes to be accepted among senior players, some players will see new opportunities

to seek decisions or actions. Others will see threats to ongoing actions or desired new ones; still others will be unconcerned.

Reports of the actions of other nations will never be more than one of many influences on decisions and actions. However, when players are evenly divided, or new action suggests to many a substantial change in anticipated future actions, these reports of another nation's actions can be decisive. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, to take an extreme example, affected the perceptions of many Americans about whether the national security required American forces to engage in war against Japan. The Soviet ABM deployment may well have tipped the balance in the hard-fought American controversy over whether to deploy an ABM. President Lyndon Johnson's estimate of the effect of not deploying an American ABM system on his reelection prospects may have been substantially changed by the possibility that he could be charged with permitting an "ABM gap."¹⁵

When the actions of one nation are effective in changing the behavior of a second, the new action is rarely what was intended by any player in the first nation. Changes in stands will lead to desired changes in action, which in turn will produce desired changes in the action of another nation only: when a clear signal is sent, when someone in the other nation already wants to take the desired action and the action increases that player's influence. More often, the effects are marginal or unintended.

Propositions About National Interaction

1. The actions of nation *A* that appear to an outside observer to be designed to influence the actions of nation *B* will in fact be a combination of: (a) routine patterns of behavior; (b) maneuvers in decision games that are incidentally visible to other nations or deliberately visible, since to be effective they must appear to be a "signal"; (c) actions by players in the absence of decisions; (d) actions following a decision game not related to influence nation *B*; as well as (e) actions following a decision game related to influencing nation *B*.

2. Reports and interpretations of these actions provided to senior players by participants in nation *B* (in the Foreign Office and Intelligence) charged with observing, reporting, explaining and predicting actions of other nations, will be affected by (a) the perceptual tendencies of all individuals; (b) the use of Model I analysis or (c) even if not, the lack of required data and understanding; and (d) the

¹⁵ On the ABM discussion see Morton Halperin, "The Decision to Deploy the ABM," *World Politics*, xxv (October 1972).

standard operating procedures and interests of these organizations.

A. These players share the perceptual tendencies of all individuals. This means, for example, that

(1) New information will be fitted into their existing attitudes and images;

(2) Reports that should lead to a change in plans will be distorted so as to "save their theory";

(3) Clues that signal a significant change in the probabilities of events will be lost in the surrounding noise.¹⁶

Examples: Evidence of a Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was explained away.¹⁷ One senior military officer urged that the United States proceed to invade Cuba even after the Soviets agreed to remove their missiles.¹⁸

B. Because these players use Model I they tend to assume that the actions were: (1) designed and executed, in effect, by a single individual; (2) designed carefully to influence their nation; (3) designed with a world view like their own; and (4) designed without regard to the domestic and bureaucratic politics of nation *A*.

Examples: Khrushchev warned Kennedy of the difficulty he had during the Cuban missile crisis of convincing his associates that an American U-2 which crossed into Soviet territory was not an indication that the United States was about to attack.¹⁹ The American intelligence community persists in predicting Soviet force structure on the basis of Model I analysis.²⁰

C. Even if they employ a bureaucratic politics model they will lack data and understanding of nuances of what determines the actions of nation *B*.

Examples: Both in the Suez crisis of 1956 and the Skybolt crisis of 1961, senior players in the British and American governments frequently misread the meaning of actions because they lacked an understanding of the nuances of how the other system worked.²¹

D. Standard operating procedures and interests will affect what is reported.

(1) Standard operating procedures will lead to delays and to selections different from what senior players would choose.

For example: the procedures of the intelligence community led to

¹⁶ See Roberta Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor* (Stanford 1962).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Robert Kennedy, *Thirteen Days* (New York 1969), 119.

¹⁹ For examples from the Cuban missile crisis, see Allison, *op. cit.*

²⁰ This point has often been made by A. W. Marshall.

²¹ On Suez and Skybolt see Richard E. Neustadt, *Alliance Politics* (New York 1970).

a considerable delay between the time evidence of Soviet missiles in Cuba entered the system and the time this evidence reached senior players.

(2) Standard operating procedures and interests may lead to disguising internal bureaucratic disagreements and the withholding of bad news.

(3) Information will be presented so as to imply an action recommendation.

For example: President Eisenhower was told during the Chinese attack on the offshore island of Quemoy in 1958 that the fall of Quemoy would have consequences more "far-reaching and catastrophic than those which followed" the fall of China. This report clearly signaled the action favored.²²

(4) Information-gathering and reporting procedures will be designed to protect the interests of intelligence agencies, such as to protect the roles and missions of the CIA in relation to other organizations.

(5) Procedures will also be designed to protect the organizational interests of a parent operating organization.

For example: according to a former Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) analyst, DIA estimates concerning Vietnam were written so as not to undercut the action recommendations of the U.S. Military Commander in Vietnam and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.²³

3. The ability of senior players in nation *B* to pursue their interests will be affected by the actions of nation *A* only to the extent that the actions of nation *A*, as reported by the Foreign Office, Intelligence and other senior players, affect (a) who is in power in nation *B*, (b) the power of *participants* in nation *A*, or (c) these latter participants' perception of their national security interests.

Examples: President Lyndon Johnson may have believed that Soviet deployment of an ABM would hurt his chances of reelection in 1968. Kennedy's failure to get Soviet missiles removed from Cuba would have reduced his influence on the American government. President Johnson is reported to have believed that getting his Great Society legislation through Congress required that he not permit South Vietnam to fall to communism. The North Korean invasion of South Korea changed President Harry S. Truman's view of whether it was important to American security to keep South Korea non-communist.

4. If actions by nation *A* do affect a player in *B*'s ability to pursue his interests he will at a minimum report on the action and interpret

²² Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace* (New York 1965), 692.

²³ Patrick J. McGarvey, "DIA: Intelligence to Please," *Washington Monthly*, 11 (July 1970).

it so as to advance stands previously taken. If the interpretation of the action accepted by most senior players affects the calculation of what stand would advance his interests, the player will change his stand and seek to advance his interest without affecting the actions of nation A (if this can be done) or by affecting nation A 's actions if necessary.

Examples: When the North Koreans invaded South Korea in 1950 State and Defense were split on the desirability of an early peace settlement with Japan. Defense favored a delay because bases in Japan were required. Defense argued that the Korean War demonstrated the need for bases and hence strengthened the case for delaying signing the peace treaty. State argued that because of the attack, Japanese concern would make it possible to negotiate base rights after a Peace Treaty. Hence the United States should move quickly to sign a Peace Treaty.²⁴

President Johnson did change his stand and decide to deploy an ABM in response to the Soviet ABM deployment in order to cancel the possible effect of the Soviet ABM on the 1968 election. By preventing an "ABM gap" issue this change accomplished its purpose without need to cause a particular Soviet reaction. On the other hand, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's proposal for SALT talks to prevent the American ABM deployment depended on a Soviet willingness to participate in negotiations.

5. Changes in the stands of one or more participants in nation A may affect the actions of nation B . But the change in behavior of B is unlikely to be well designed to secure the action by nation A which is desired by any single participant. This is because: (a) the generator of a proposal will not put forward an optimum signal; (b) the decision will deviate from the proposal of any single player; and (c) the actions will deviate from the decisions.

5.1 The generator of a proposal for action designed to affect the behavior of nation A will not put forward an optimum signal.

5.1.1 Even if a player's only interest is to design a signal to affect the actions of nation A he is likely to do a poor job because (a) he uses Model I or (b) he uses a Bureaucratic Politics Model but lacks the required data and understanding.

A. He is likely to employ a particular Model I framework which assumes that nation A :

- (1) Will be heavily influenced by the behavior of his nation;
- (2) Is listening closely and with sophistication and will understand the meaning of complex signals;

²⁴ On Korea, see Glenn Paige, *The Korean Decision* (New York 1968), and Joseph de Rivera, *Psychological Dimensions in Foreign Policy* (Columbus 1968).

(3) Is unaffected by domestic political constraints (embassy officials will generally not hold to this point, nor will senior players for nations whose leaders they know well);

(4) Shares the images of the world which his nation accepts.

For example: a dying Secretary of State John F. Dulles, giving his last advice to then Vice President Richard Nixon on how to communicate with Soviet leaders, assured him that "Khrushchev does not need to be convinced of our good intentions. He knows we are not aggressors and do not threaten the security of the Soviet Union. He understands us."²⁵

B. Even if a participant uses a Bureaucratic Politics Model he is likely to lack data and an understanding of nuances about how processes work in nation *A*.

For example: British and American leaders during the Suez and Skybolt crises failed to design optimum signals because they did not understand the nuances of each other's system. A rare counter-example is presented in a memorandum prepared by Richard Neustadt on how to sell the MLF to a new Labour British government.²⁶

5.1.2 Even if a participant is focused only on national security interests, he will be concerned about other audiences at home and abroad.

For example: during the 1958 Quemoy crisis Dulles wanted to make absolutely clear to the Chinese that we would defend Quemoy. But he was inhibited from sending a clear signal by his fear that others would also hear the warning. Domestic critics of U.S. policy might use it to effectively challenge his policy. And the Chinese Nationalists might use the warning as a handle to provoke a clash between the U.S. and the Chinese Communists.²⁷

5.1.3 A participant who desires to send a signal will have other interests which will influence his proposal. He will know that other audiences will hear his signal. Their reaction will always be taken into account and may, depending on his interests, be of greater concern.

For example: Secretary of State John F. Dulles, in a private conversation where he sought to convey to British Prime Minister Anthony Eden what the American position on Suez was, recognized that the British leader, out of concern or appreciation, might telephone his old friend President Eisenhower to report the conversation. This report, Dulles feared, could set back his efforts to establish a relationship of

²⁵ Richard Nixon, *Six Crises* (New York 1962), 241.

²⁶ Richard Neustadt, "Memorandum on the British Labour Party and the MLF," *New Left Review*, LI (September 1968).

²⁷ On the 1958 Quemoy crisis, see Morton Halperin and Tang Tsou, "United States Policy Toward the Offshore Islands," *Public Policy*, xv (Cambridge 1966).

trust with the President. Thus he was not very explicit about American policy.

5.2 The decision of a government in a game designed to influence the behavior of nation *A* will deviate from the proposal of any single participant. Some of the disagreements among participants that affect decisions will relate to influencing the behavior of nation *A*. (a) Participants may defer on what actions by nation *A* are desirable; and (b) participants may differ on how to induce the desired behavior.

For example: at one point in the Suez crisis Dulles apparently proposed that the United States assure the British government that the U.S. would assume the financial cost of bypassing the Suez Canal if this became necessary. Neustadt suggests that Dulles had concluded (correctly, Neustadt argues) that this promise would reduce substantially the chance of the British resorting to force without any real probability that the United States would have to make good on its commitment. He was unable to convince Secretary of the Treasury George Humphrey. This was not because Humphrey did not want to stop the British, but because (Neustadt implies) Humphrey did not quite accept Dulles' complicated explanation of how the British cabinet functioned, and he did not want to yield his control of the funds involved.

5.3 Actions which follow from a decision related to affecting the actions of nation *A* will deviate from the decision. In part the deviation will be directly related to disagreements about influencing the actions of nation *A*, in that (a) participants may differ on what actions by nation *A* are desirable, and (b) participants may differ on how to induce the desired behavior.

Examples: When General Douglas MacArthur learned that Truman, hoping to end the war on compromise terms, was about to announce publicly the American desire for an armistice in Korea, MacArthur, who opposed a compromise, broadcast a surrender demand to the enemy. Former U.S. Ambassador to India Kenneth Galbraith reports in his *Journal* many occasions when his actions deviated from his instructions because he believed his actions were more likely to bring about the desired Indian action.²⁸

6. Changes in actions of one nation will succeed in changing the actions of a second nation in a desired direction only to the extent that (a) the actions of the first nation send a clear, consistent, simple signal and (b) some participants in the other nation want, in pursuit of their own interests, to change behavior in the desired way, and (c) this signal serves to increase the influence of these participants.

²⁸ John K. Galbraith, *Ambassador's Journal* (Boston 1969).

For example: the American effort to get the Japanese government to surrender without invasion of Japan succeeded only because (1) the United States sent Japan some of the clearest signals in history, including dropping two atomic bombs, destroying Tokyo with fire bombing, destroying the Japanese fleet, and assembling an invasion force; (2) there was a strong group within the Japanese government, including the Emperor, his principal adviser, and the Foreign Minister who had opposed the war from the start and wanted to surrender; and (3) the American signals increased this group's sense of determination and willingness to run risks while discrediting and demoralizing their opponents. No major figure in Japanese ruling circles changed his mind about the desirability of war with the United States from the beginning of the war to the end. Those who wanted to begin the war remained opposed to surrender.²⁹

7. More often changes in actions by one nation will have unintended and unanticipated effects on actions.

Pearl Harbor and Skybolt

In the months leading up to Pearl Harbor, competing groups in Japan and the United States needed different actions from each other's government in order to accomplish their objectives.³⁰ In Tokyo those who opposed war with the United States needed to be able to show that the United States would not interfere with Japanese expansion by cutting off sources of scrap iron, oil, and other materials. They also needed the United States to avoid actions which would have enabled their opponents to argue that war with the United States was inevitable. Those who favored war had quite different needs.

In the American government, proponents of war with Japan looked for Japanese actions which would demonstrate that Japan's objectives were unlimited and threatened American and British possessions. Roosevelt, who sought to avoid war with Japan, had quite different needs. He had to resist pressures within the government from those who wanted to go to war with Japan. At the same time he did not want to so demoralize them that they would resign or reduce their efforts to prepare for the war with Germany which he believed was necessary.

²⁹ See Robert Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (Stanford 1954), and Herbert Feis, *Japan Subdued* (Princeton 1961).

³⁰ On Pearl Harbor, see Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York 1969); Robert Butow, *Tojo and the Coming of the War* (Princeton 1961); Herbert Feis, *The Road to Pearl Harbor* (New York 1962); Joseph Grew, *My Years in Japan* (New York 1944); William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *The Undeclared War* (New York 1953); and Wohlstetter (fn. 16). On Skybolt, see Neustadt (fn. 21).

Thus Roosevelt's purposes required that Japan avoid: (1) flagrant violations of international law, (2) linking up with Germany in ways that made it impossible to resist arguments that war with Japan was a part of the war against the Fascist alliance, and (3) threats to the British or Dutch colonies which could be seen as a threat to the Allies in Europe.

Actions of both governments were designed with a variety of purposes. Japanese military moves followed decisions to expand the area under direct Japanese control without any direct interest in signals to the United States. On the other hand, the negotiating positions proposed (and in some cases implemented) by the State Department were designed, in part, to demonstrate to the President that a negotiated solution was impossible. The stand of the Japanese military on negotiations probably had a similar purpose. Roosevelt and Japanese Foreign Minister Togo proposed positions designed to keep open the possibility of negotiations with the hope of reaching a settlement.

In this context Japan moved to occupy all of French Indochina. This Japanese move was not intended to signal anything to the United States or to influence American actions. Nevertheless, it was incompatible with what Roosevelt needed from the Japanese government. He no longer felt able to resist the pressures to take some sort of action against Japan. Resisting pleas for a total embargo, he compromised by requiring licensing of all exports to Japan. Those who favored war, including then Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Dean Acheson, were able to control implementation of this decision. They did so by imposing a total embargo on oil shipments to Japan.

At this point the Japanese leaders opposed to war did not have what they needed from the United States to pursue their objective. A period of high-level and intensive negotiations began. Those opposed to war on both sides sought to persuade the other side to rescind the behavior that made it impossible to resist pressures to go to war. Roosevelt, recognizing that the State Department's interests differed from his, used his Postmaster General as a negotiating agent. He also intervened directly by dealing personally with the Japanese envoy. The peace party in Tokyo, with considerable difficulty, got through the Japanese government two watered-down offers. Plan "A" promised an ultimate Japanese withdrawal from China. Plan "B" offered an immediate Japanese withdrawal from southern Indochina in return for lifting the trade embargo. However, those in both capitals who saw war as necessary or inevitable were able to resist the proposed compromises. And the two governments found themselves at war.

Richard E. Neustadt's account of the Skybolt crisis tells a quite dif-

ferent tale of relations between allies with a relatively successful resolution. Nevertheless, the basic points are the same.

What British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan needed from the United States were indications that American leaders held him in high regard. He was particularly good at getting from the United States what was in Britain's interest. He also needed the Skybolt missile, since he had made that a symbol of his independent nuclear deterrent. He needed the deterrent to pursue his domestic interests. If he failed to get these things from the United States, Macmillan was threatened both by potential alternative leaders in the Conservative Party and by the next election.

Kennedy's needs from Macmillan were more modest. He needed to avoid a demonstration of beastliness to the British, or non-support for the needs of a Conservative government. Kennedy's needs stemmed from his desire to maintain the active and enthusiastic support of the eastern foreign policy establishment which was sympathetic to Britain in general and to particular Conservative Party leaders, especially Macmillan. He also needed to avoid evidence of extreme discrimination in favor of Britain in order to pursue his objective of improving relations with France. He also needed to maintain a semblance of consistency with his non-proliferation policy.

Kennedy's acceptance of the recommendation of Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara to cancel Skybolt was in no way intended as a signal to the United Kingdom. It was not intended to suggest a lack of friendship or respect for the British government, or its leaders, or any desire to remove Britain from its role as an independent nuclear power. Nevertheless, the cancellation of Skybolt was incompatible with Macmillan's pursuit of his interests. Thus, Macmillan's first hope was that the decision could be rescinded. If this failed, he would need some substitute for Skybolt to continue with what he could describe at home as an independent nuclear capability. He also needed a demonstration of American support of him and a demonstration of the willingness of the American government to respond to his needs. However, Macmillan could not, before the Nassau Conference, request Polaris. The British Navy was opposed, as was the Air Force. The British Navy was opposed because it feared a diversion of funds from the navy's basic program (aircraft carriers), and the Air Force wished to keep the strategic deterrent role for itself. Both services had important supporters on the back benches. More important, Macmillan was reluctant to go to his cabinet where opponents of the independent deterrent might join with those concerned about the added cost of Polaris and defeat him.

The needs of American officials were different. The Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, who might have favored continuing Skybolt, was unwilling to meddle in the affairs of his colleague, the Secretary of Defense. Robert McNamara was determined to cancel Skybolt; but he was prepared to give the British Polaris as a substitute. He was unwilling, however, to do battle with the Europeanists in the State Department—which he would have had to have done to offer the British Polaris before they demanded it.

As a crisis ensued Kennedy became directly involved. He saw that if the U.S. government persisted in its current course of action, what he, Kennedy, needed from Macmillan would be threatened. Macmillan was prepared to have a break over the issue. He demonstrated to Kennedy that Kennedy had to choose between getting what he needed from the U.K. and other costs to his interests at home. The compromise which ensued gave Macmillan virtually everything that he needed, while only marginally affecting Kennedy's domestic position. Britain got Polaris, which could be used independently in moments of supreme national concern. Kennedy could point to the British agreement to use Polaris as part of an integrated NATO force. The needs of both leaders were met. Other players were unhappy. The crisis receded.

The two cases, in their similarities and differences, illustrate the utility of the propositions for analyzing how the behavior of one nation affects the behavior of another.

In both cases the key event that triggered the serious crisis was not meant as a signal to the other. The Japanese occupation of Indochina and the cancellation of Skybolt both resulted from decision games designed to affect other outcomes. Analysts in Washington, Tokyo, and London did a poor job of explaining the meaning of these and other actions and of predicting future actions. Senior players attempted to interpret actions to support stands they had previously taken. For example, those in the United States who believed war with Japan was inevitable pointed with alarm to Japanese actions.

In the Skybolt case the stakes for leaders on both sides were largely domestic. Macmillan and Kennedy saw dangers to their power in the possible changes in actions of the other nation. For other players, particularly the armed forces, the face of the issue was roles and missions. Others saw national security interests related to proliferation and European unification. In the case of Pearl Harbor the stakes were national security interests of the highest order—preventing war. Actions of the other nation threatened the ability of leaders to veto actions of other players, which they feared would lead to war.

Changes in the behavior of each nation in each crisis, at least at first, led to unintended changes in the behavior of the other. This increased the threat to interests of senior players on both sides. The Japanese move made it impossible for Roosevelt to prevent an embargo. The embargo, in turn, so weakened the peace group in Japan that war could not be prevented. In the Skybolt case the first move—cancellation of Skybolt—threatened Macmillan's interests and almost led him to attack Kennedy publicly. This would have required further American action. The two leaders, meeting in Bermuda, were able to find a solution. They were then able to force their reluctant colleagues to accept that solution. In this case the price of failure would have been a more intense crisis and troubles for both leaders at home. In the Pearl Harbor case, the stakes were much greater. One wonders whether a direct meeting between FDR and the Japanese Prime Minister might not have produced a mutually compatible solution which each could have imposed at home.

Section III

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

We present here some illustrative policy implications of the Bureaucratic Politics Model in the form of policy advice to players in the U.S. government, in particular to senior players. The presentation takes the form of precepts without evidence or elaboration. In some cases we present examples to illustrate a point, or to show that some people believe the contrary. These precepts are divided into two parts: (1) advice about the behavior of other governments and the effect of U.S. behavior on other government actions, and (2) advice about the behavior of the U.S. government.

BEHAVIOR OF OTHER GOVERNMENTS

EXPLANATION OF THE BEHAVIOR OF OTHER GOVERNMENTS

1. Be suspicious of explanations that depend on the assumption that one can reason back from detailed characteristics of specific behavior to central government intentions or doctrine. For example, on the Soviet SS-9 deployment Secretary Laird has testified, that "they are going for a first-strike capability and there's no doubt about it."³¹

2. Recognize that in most cases the full range of behavior exhibited by a government was not intended by any single participant. In most

³¹ *New York Times*, March 22, 1969, p. 16.

cases, the policy and action decisions were compromises. Actual behavior reflects programs, standard operating procedures, and interests of implementors, as well as the relevant decisions. For example, a Soviet analyst who neglected these factors would have come to erroneous conclusions about why the United States was deploying an ABM system. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara's speech in October 1967 laid out the arguments against a large Soviet-oriented ABM system while announcing a limited deployment of ABM's.

3. Press those charged with providing explanations for detailed explanations based on a Bureaucratic Politics Model.

4. Recognize that leaders of other governments may have quite different images of the world, information, etc., that lead them to see events in a dramatically different light. For example, Chinese bombardment of the offshore islands in 1954 may have reflected fear on the part of some Chinese leaders of American encirclement due to the security treaties the United States was currently signing. This explanation was not even considered by U.S. leaders because they knew that the treaties were defensive.³²

PREDICTION

1. Be suspicious of predictions based primarily on calculations about the national security interests and doctrines of another nation. Calculations of this sort may provide an appropriate surrogate in the case of some problems, for example, deterrence of nuclear war by a stable balance of terror. In most cases such predictions will not be satisfactory. For example, estimates of Soviet force postures have frequently gone astray for this reason.

2. Ask for a bureaucratic-political map of the factors that can affect an outcome, including in particular a list of the participants and their interests.

Andrew W. Marshall has provided a set of specific propositions related to predicting Soviet force posture: (1) Force posture for a nation is especially influenced by the organizational interests and behavior of sub-parts of the military establishment. (2) Internal Soviet security controls over the flow of information and the general privacy of the decision-making process leads to an even more bureaucratically influenced force posture than is usual in Western countries. (3) Parts of the Soviet military bureaucracy strive to keep their budgetary shares and are fairly successful in doing so. (4) The mechanics of the operation

³² See Halperin and Tsou (fn. 27), and Leon Sigal, "The Rational Policy Model and the Formosa Straits Crisis," *International Studies Quarterly*, xiv (June 1970).

of the budgetary process have a substantial impact on the formation of force posture.³³

PLANNING

1. Ask who in another government wants to do what you want for his own reasons. If you locate him, strengthen him. If you do not, despair.

2. Limit claims on other governments to outcomes reachable by them within a wide range of internal politics, under a variety of personalities and circumstances.

3. Recognize the low probability of success.

PLANNING WITHIN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT

GENERAL PLANNING PRECEPTS

1. Focus on changing governmental action.

2. Decide whether a change in governmental actions requires that some policy or decision be changed.

3. Be aware that if it does appear necessary (desirable) to change policy in order to change action, the change in policy in the great majority of cases is only a way-station to the desired outcome and not the outcome itself—often the policy change is only an early way-station.

4. Realize that others, who may desire different outcomes, may also be planning, and take their planning into account.

5. Be prepared to modify your choice of outcome, or your declared prediction of the consequences of that outcome, in order to induce others to cooperate. Take into account, however, that these modifications may (or may not) affect the nature of your game with third parties.

6. Be aware that such modifications (compromises) may give rise to outcomes which are less desirable than the existing state of affairs. If the probability of such outcomes is sufficiently high, the game should not be started, or, once started, ended. With this consideration in mind, review the state of play frequently.

7. In choosing the desired outcome, consider how many changes in individual or organizational behavior are required for its achievement.

8. Assess whether desired changes in behavior will be easily observed or monitored. Design outcomes so as to produce natural monitors (but don't count on them).

9. Try to design outcomes so as not to affect major organizational interests, particularly the autonomy of an organization or its ability to

³³ Andrew Marshall, unpublished paper.

pursue what it sees to be the essence of its function, promotions, roles and missions, and budgets.

10. Design proposals so that people can agree for different reasons. (Use arguments that appeal to one side and offend others only in private.)

11. Plan systematically. Either internalize or consult an explicit planning guide. See Appendix.

INTERESTS

1. Recognize multiple interest and faces ("where they stand depends on where they sit").

2. Recognize that stands on issues are determined by calculations of multiple interests of which national security interests are only one. Therefore, only in cases where national security arguments are clearly dominant are they likely to change a player's stance on a particular issue.

3. Recognize that where a participant is strongly motivated by organizational interests, he will resist actions that seem to threaten the autonomy of his organization to pursue what is conceived to be the essence of its activity. For example, foreign service officers have consistently opposed proposals giving the State Department operational control of foreign operations beyond representation, negotiation, and reporting, e.g., of foreign aid, military assistance programs, and foreign information service.

4. Recognize that players with strong organizational interests will also be importantly affected by the impact of an action of promotion patterns, roles and missions, and budgets.

5. These interests, particularly the interest in roles and missions, will affect these players' behavior in situations that are regarded by the senior players as major national crises in which all are obviously pulling together.

For example: the competition between the Air Force and Navy in reporting on the effectiveness of the bombing in North Vietnam.

INFORMATION

1. Assume that others will give you information that they think will lead you to do what they want, rather than information that you would prefer to have.

For example: prior to the Bay of Pigs, President Kennedy indicated that he might cancel the planned invasion from fear that it might be a total failure. He was assured by leaders of the intelligence community

that this was impossible. If the effort to establish a beachhead failed, the landing forces, which had received guerrilla training, would move to the nearby mountains. Kennedy was not told that there was a swamp between the landing site and the mountains, that less than one-third of the force had any guerrilla training; and no one in the invasion party was told that they should move to the mountains if the effort was failing.³⁴

Another example is provided by a former DIA analyst:

From 1964–65, when U.S. involvement in Vietnam began to be considerable, until late 1966 or early 1967, the generals in Saigon worked to build up U.S. troop strength. Therefore, they wanted every bit of evidence brought to the fore that could show that infiltration was increasing. DIA obliged and also emphasized in all reports the enemy's capability to recruit forces from the South Vietnamese population. In 1967 a second period began. The high priests of Saigon decided that we were "winning." Then the paramount interest became to show the enemy's reduced capability to recruit and a slowdown in infiltration due to our bombing. The tune and emphasis of reports from the field changed radically, and so did those put out by DIA.

It should not be concluded that anyone suppressed evidence. No one did. The military in Saigon sent all the facts back to Washington eventually. During the buildup period, infiltration data and recruitment data came in via General Westmoreland's daily cablegram. Data from field contact with enemy units came amid the more mundane cables or by courier up to five weeks later. Cables from Westmoreland, of course, were given higher priority in Washington. When we started "winning," detailed reports highlighting "body counts" and statistics on how many villages were pacified were cabled with Westmoreland's signature; recruitment studies were pouched or cabled with the reports on the fluctuating price of rice. It was all a matter of emphasis.³⁵

2. Do not assume that there are not critical differences in these evaluations of information simply because a piece of paper reports unanimous conclusions of the group. For example, DIA differences with

³⁴ See Haynes Johnson, *Bay of Pigs* (New York 1964); Schlesinger (fn. 6), and Sorensen (fn. 6).

³⁵ Patrick J. McGarvey (fn. 23), 71–72.

General Westmoreland's evaluation of the Tet offensive as total defeat for the enemy were not reported.³⁶

3. Recognize that technical evaluations and conclusions are frequently based on simple rules of thumb, rather than on complex technical calculations. The rules of thumb are often wrong. For example, the optimum characteristics for the first generation of American missiles, specified by the von Neumann committee as destructive power of one megaton, range of 5500 miles, and accuracy measured as a CEP of 5 miles, were based respectively on a round number, a quarter of the earth's circumference, and compromise between those who were optimistic and those who were pessimistic about accuracy.³⁷

4. Don't assume that information that you pass on to other players is passed on by them to their subordinates or superiors.

OPTIONS

1. Recognize that the options presented will be based on the programs and standard operating procedures of the organizations that generate the options.

2. Recognize that options which require cooperation between two independent organizations are unlikely to be advanced by either of these organizations.

3. Recognize that organizations tend to assert that an option is feasible only if it permits the organization considerable freedom of action. Options designed by organizations will be designed to maximize their freedom of action. For example, in 1962 the Joint Chiefs of Staff were prepared to recommend the introduction of American troops into Laos only if the President issued them an assurance that nuclear weapons would be used if necessary.³⁸

4. Recognize that options tend to be biased by simplistic and unstated hunches about domestic politics and bureaucratic politics.

5. Recognize that options will be designed on the basis of the assumption that other governments act as single individuals motivated primarily by national security interests. In some cases this assumption will be complicated by some feel for Foreign Office or domestic politics.

6. Don't assume that participants are in fact motivated by the arguments they put forward in favor of their stand.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Herbert York, *Race to Oblivion* (New York 1970), 89.

³⁸ See Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation* (New York 1967), Schlesinger, *op. cit.* and Sorensen, *op. cit.*

7. Recognize that the intensity of a participant's argument for a position may not reflect the intensity of his commitment to that stand.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Recognize that people do not feel obliged to implement faithfully a chosen action.

2. Note that they have available a number of alternatives, including: implementing the letter and not the spirit, delay, outright disobedience, as well as overzealous implementation.

3. Examine with great care the instructions given by an organization to its members for the implementation of some decision.

4. Locate yourself, prospective helpers, and presumed opponents in relation to all action channels readily or possibly available for implementing the results you want, and block those you fear.

5. Recognize that in the short run, the behavior implemented will reflect existing organizational programs and standard operating procedures.

6. Recognize that if an organization is forced to change its behavior it will tend to change to another program or standard operating procedure in its repertoire, rather than devise a new and perhaps more appropriate operating procedure.

7. Note that changing personnel is more likely to lead to changing behavior than changing orders to existing personnel: one new ambassador (of the right persuasion) is worth a thousand cables.

8. Recognize that members of foreign missions will employ various devices to increase their independence of home authority:

(a) They will often attempt to present their governments with a *fait accompli*.

(b) They will exploit visits by high officials of their governments by getting these officials on record as supporting mission positions. They will then use the record as evidence of a national commitment.

(c) They will reinterpret or evade unwelcome directives from home, hoping that the issuing authority will be forgetful or inattentive. Ordinarily, these hopes will be fulfilled.

(d) If authorities at home insist on compliance with unwelcome directives, the mission will warn of "dire consequences," etc.³⁹

³⁹ Ernest May, unpublished paper.

APPENDIX

Planning Guide

I. *What precisely do I want to accomplish?*

- A. First attempt to predict what will occur.
- B. Plan and implement only if
 - 1. Disaster appears likely (possible);
 - 2. Substantial improvement is likely.
- C. Identify precisely the outcome I seek.
- D. Why do I seek it?
 - 1. Good in itself given my values. (If so, do I wish to reconsider my values?)
 - 2. I believe it will lead to a further outcome which I value. (If so, can I state the causal chain so I can retest?)
 - 3. I believe it will lead to behavior by other governments. (If so, consider that the other government is not a unitary actor and that its bureaucracy will do only what is in their interest in their own terms. Influence is most likely to take the form of altering incentives and power. Consider also how reliable my information is about the other government.)
- E. How likely am I to get the outcome as I desire it?
 - 1. Withhold judgment until working out paths to action and strategy.
 - 2. Consider relevant programs and standard operating procedures.
 - 3. Consider internal and external biases.
- F. How important is this outcome to me as compared to others?

II. *Alternative paths to action*

- A. Map out alternative routes to the desired outcome.
- B. Recognize that a change in policy may be neither necessary nor sufficient.
- C. Seek to change policy only if
 - 1. Necessary to remove an absolute barrier to changing action;
 - 2. Useful as a hunting license;
 - 3. Necessary given my access to those who must perform the action;
 - 4. Likely to lead easily to a change in action.
- D. Consider how high I need to go. (Do not involve the President unless necessary or he is likely to be sympathetic, i.e., unless he has a problem this may solve.)
- E. If seeking a change in policy, plot the action path from there to changes in actions.
- F. Consider for each path who will have the action. (Is there any path in which I will have the action?)
- G. Specify the formal actions which are necessary.

- H. What resources do I have to move action along each path with success? (Re-judge after considering tactics.) Relative advantages of each path.
- I. How will resources expended to get to one way-station outcome affect ability to get to further stations?
- J. What additional information will help? Can I get it? At what cost?

III. *Framing tactics—maneuvers and arguments—to move along a path*

- A. Identification of the participants and their interests, including those beyond the executive branch.
 - 1. Who will inevitably be involved according to the rules of the game?
 - 2. Who might seek to play but could be excluded?
 - 3. Who might not seek to play but could be brought in?
 - 4. What are the likely interests of the various participants, what face of the issue will they see, how will they define the stakes? Consider organization, personal, political, and national interests.
 - 5. Who are natural allies, unappeasable opponents, neutrals who might be converted to support, or opponents who might be converted to neutrality?
- B. How can I lead a participant to see that the outcomes I desire are in his interest as he sees it?
- C. How can I change the situation to have an outcome conflicting less (or not at all) with participants' interests as they see them?
- D. Do I have the resources for this purpose? If not, can I get others to use theirs?
- E. What specific maneuvers should I use at what stages?
- F. What arguments should I use:
 - 1. In general?
 - 2. On a discriminatory basis?
- G. If I must get a large organization to change its behavior, I must consider the interests, standard operating procedures, and programs of that organization.
- H. Should I try to bring in players outside the executive branch? If so, how?
- I. How can I tell how well I am doing?

IV. *Gauging costs and benefits*

- A. Reconsider all phases from time to time. Specifically:
 - 1. How high up should one seek a decision?
 - 2. How should the decision sought relate to the change desired, i.e., should it be a decision to change policy, to change patterns of action, or to take a single particular new step (or to stop an on-going action)?
 - 3. By what means will the initial decision which is sought be converted into the desired action?

- B. Plan of action.
 - 1. How to move the action to the way-station and final outcome desired.
 - 2. What maneuvers and arguments to use on or with the other participants.
 - 3. A time sequence.
- C. To what extent is this process consciously duplicated by participants seeking a change? Are some participants more likely to plan than others? To plan effectively?
- D. How is the choice of way-station outcomes and route action made?