

THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE
WASHINGTON, DC 20319-5078



National Security and Foreign Policy
Decision Making

Course 6030
Academic Year 2020-2021 (Fall)

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Course Schedule

09/14/2020 – 12/08/2020

Mondays, 13:30 – 15:30

Lesson	Date/Time	Title
1	14 September 13:30-15:30	Why Focus on Decision Making? Introduction to the Course and Critical Assessment of Rational Actor Model (RAM)
2	21 September 13:30-15:30	Homo Psychologicus: Focus on Misperceptions and Analogical Reasoning
3	28 September 13:30-15:30	Homo Psychologicus: Adding Leaders' Personalities and Belief Systems to the Mix
4	5 October 13:30-15:30	Homo Psychologicus: Leaders' Backgrounds and Decisions about War
	12 October	No Class. Columbus Day
5	19 October 13:30-15:30	Homo Psychologicus: "Hot" Cognition (Emotions and Motivations) and Illness
6	26 October 13:30-15:30	Assessing Risk, Communicating Uncertainty
7	2 November 13:30-15:30	Homo Sociologicus: Small Groups Dynamics in Foreign Policy Decision Making
8	9 November 13:30-15:30	Homo Bureaucraticus: Governments as Bureaucracies and Organizations
9	16 November 13:30-15:30	The Role of Special Interests in National Security and Foreign Policy Decision Making
10	30 November 13:30-15:30	Decision Making in Authoritarian Regimes
11	7 December 13:30-15:30	Women, Gender, and National Security and Foreign Policy
12	10 December 13:30-15:30	Student Presentations

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Course Overview: National Security and Foreign Policy Decision Making

Why did China deploy missiles on contested South China Sea islands? What explains Russia's decision to "return" to Africa preceded by a decade of near absence on the continent? Why did the U.S. withdraw from the nuclear deal with Iran (also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA)? Searching for explanations to these and other complex national security questions, professional analysts and policymakers typically attempt to understand happenings in foreign affairs as purposive acts of unified national governments in pursuit of clearly defined national interests. China's missile deployment is an element of Beijing's strategy to increase its control over the South China Sea. Russia's return to Africa is the function of its geo-economic interests (securing access to rare natural resources and expanding Moscow's export capabilities) and geo-political calculations (such as the votes in the UN). Announcing its withdrawal from the JCPOA, the U.S. administration declared that Iran was in violation of the spirit of the deal and working against U.S. interests in the Middle East.

These simple and straightforward explanations – like any synopsis of a strategic situation – obscure as well as reveal. In particular, they obscure the fact that decisions in national security strategy and foreign policy are made by a range of political actors enmeshed in the complex webs of bureaucracies, political interests, and organizations. These individuals and groups do not perceive the world in accurate ways. Decision-makers' views are shaped by pre-existing beliefs, biases, and, at times, harmful group dynamics. These departures from the "rational logic" can be explained and anticipated, and this knowledge can be used not only to explain specific decisions but also to improve our general understanding and practice of national security and foreign policy decision making.

The goal of this seminar is to offer a more in-depth examination of the processes by which important strategic decisions are made. It opens up the "black box" of the decision making process to illuminate the messiness underlying all decisions in the realms of national security and foreign policy. If strategy and policy focus on devising the "best" approach to achieving national interests, decision making analysis probes how and why stakeholders arrive at their decisions. It underscores the complexity surrounding all choices, including how decisions are affected by individual biases, political agendas, personalities, and bureaucratic procedures.

With its focus on decision-making, the seminar's readings place heavy emphasis on the role of psychology in foreign policy decision making. They also underscore the impact of sociological (small-group dynamics and special interests) and structural factors (such as gender). The topics range from analogical reasoning, important heuristics and cognitive biases that are common to all decision-making, group-think, the limits to information processing, and how these can affect leaders' choices.

We will begin with the overview and constructive critique of the Rational Actor Model (RAM) emphasizing the idea that decisions result from a deliberative process involving the consideration of all available alternatives and selection of policy that attains national goals with minimal risks and costs (Topic 1). Next, we will discuss misperceptions, biases, and cognitive shortcuts that are common to diverse kinds of people and important differences in perceptions affecting individual decision making (Topic 2). Next, we will move onto the role of leaders' personalities and

backgrounds on decision making, in general, and with regards to war, in particular (Topics 3 and 4), followed by the discussion of “hot cognition”, a.k.a emotions, as well as illness, on strategic decisions (Topic 5). Topics 7 - 9 will contextualize individual decision-making by examining the impact of small groups (Topic 7), bureaucratic and organizational patterns and procedures (Topic 8), and special interests (Topic 9). Whether or not the knowledge derived from the study of decision-making in democratic setting can be applied to decision-making in authoritarian states is the subject of Topic 10. We will conclude with the discussion of the impact of gender on foreign policy and strategy. All topics will be discussed using historical and contemporary examples from the US foreign policy and broader cross-national perspective.

An important caveat is that a 12-week overview of this broad area of study cannot be designed to be complete. This syllabus aims to provide a reasonable introduction to the decision making literature as a starting point for students to read and think more broadly on the various topics pertaining to national security and foreign policy decision making.

Instructional Methodology

The course consists of twelve two-hour sessions that will analyze issues covered in the readings through online group discussion. The focus of each class meeting will be in-depth discussion and practical application of the reading material. We will engage in a variety of individual- and breakout group exercises that will allow students to “experience” the concepts introduced in the readings and/or translate the insights on decision-making into practical guides for examining and making strategies and policies. Spending two hours online may be a challenge for some. Whenever practical, we will supplement synchronous online learning with short chunks of asynchronous learning.

Course Learning Outcomes:

The course has three main objectives:

1. Comprehend the role and impact of misperceptions, leaders’ personalities and backgrounds, small group dynamics, bureaucracies, gender, and special interests on national security and foreign policy decision making
2. Apply the knowledge of decision making processes for enhancing the Strategists’ Toolkit of ideas and concepts for developing strategies
3. Evaluate a strategic decision from a decision-making perspective

These course learning objectives contribute to the accomplishment of several NWC Program Learning Objectives (PLOs) and NDU Joint Learning Areas (JLAs):

- PLO 2: Evaluate threats and opportunities to/for national interests arising from international and domestic trends, drivers, and dynamics
- PLO 5: Assess the strengths and weaknesses of strategic leaders in select cases
- PLO 7: Conceptualize, develop, and revise viable national strategies to address security challenges
- JLA 1: Strategic Thinking & Communications
- JLA 4: The Security Environment

Course Books

The core texts are:

- David Patrick Houghton, *The Decision Point: Six Cases in U.S. Foreign Policy Decision Making*. Oxford University Press, 2012 (1st edition).
- Jessica L.P. Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014.
- Michael C. Horowitz, Allan Stam, and Cali M. Ellis. *Why Leaders Fight*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Valerie Hudson, Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill, Mary Caprioli, and Chad Emmett, *Sex and World Peace*. Columbia University Press, 2014.

Each topic will also have supplementary readings that can be found in PDF or link format on the course blackboard page.

Course Assignments

While this course involves numerous ungraded in-class discussions and exercises, your performance will be assessed using the following three instruments.

1. Participation (40% of the final grade)

The success of this class depends on your commitment to learning – from the readings, each other, and your instructors. Students learn best when they are actively involved in the process of acquiring, reading, writing about, examining, discussing, and evaluating information.

Preparing for each class is imperative for student participation. Students are required to do all reading assignments in a thoughtful manner prior to class meetings and come to class prepared to discuss what they have learned. There will be a series of short and reasonable in-class assignments designed to check on students' preparedness for classes that will be counted toward participation in the course.

A short segment of the class (about 30 minutes) can be administered asynchronously for some topics.

2. Weekly Entries into the “Strategist’s Toolkit” (25% of the final grade)

Strategy is about choices and decisions. The quality of the thinking that goes into such choices and decisions determines the quality and success of a strategy. Most of the time, strategists are so immersed in the specifics of strategy – the nature of threats, creative ideas about addressing it, and risks involved – that they don't step back and examine how they think about strategic choices.

Strategists, however, can gain a great deal from understanding their own reasoning process by “training the mind” to continuously reflect on their own and other’s thinking.

This assignment is designed with two goals in mind. The first is to offer students an opportunity to reflect on their strategic choices and decisions by applying the concepts they have learned in this course. The second goal is to enrich the “Strategist’s Toolkit” of practical ideas with new advice on “how to think as a strategist.”

Each week, students are required to submit an entry to the “Strategist’s Toolkit” (about 200-250 words (1-2 paragraphs)). These submissions are due by the end of the day on Sunday in advance of a Monday seminar (can be emailed to m.omelicheva.civ@ndu.edu). Think about and reflect on what new you have learned from the readings assigned for Monday’s class. Focus on one or two related ideas. Explain how a new idea or concept applies to what you’ve done or written as a strategist (or to your daily life). Now that you know what you know about individual decision-making processes, how your decision or choice would have been different (or not)? How can you and future strategists deploy the discussed idea or concept for making better strategic decisions in the future?

I will launch a shared document on our MS Teams channel where I’ll feature some ideas from your weekly submissions on the shared “Strategist’s Toolkit” that you can take with you after the course is over.

3. Critical Analysis of a Strategic Decision (35% of the final grade, including 25% for the paper and 10% for the presentation)

For this assignment, students will be asked to critically assess a strategic decision of their choice (your instructor will provide examples/recommendations based on students’ interests, areas of expertise, and academic assignments). A *strategic decision* is one that determines the grand direction for an entity making the decision (a state, organization, etc.). Once a strategic decision is made, it is unlikely to be altered in the short term. Strategic decisions may not have immediate effect but set the course or policy for further action. Their influence can extend over years or even decades, but well beyond the lifetime of a specific policy or project.

Strategic decisions can be found in a variety of documents – national security strategies, strategic approaches published by different governmental agencies, and even declaration and speeches by the leaders.

Once students identify the topic/issue of interest and select a document containing a strategic decision (or a series of decisions), they will be asked to assess this strategic decision using the lens of the Rational Actor Model: does the decision and the logic used to arrive at it conform to the rational or strategic logic? Think about individual- and group-level processes that can help you explain any deviations from the RAM logic. Complete your analysis by offering recommendations on how to improve a strategic decision, i.e., to make an approach that is based on the strategic decision more viable.

For this assignment, students will be required to not only draw on the knowledge of decision-making processes learned in this course, but also conduct independent research and draw on the material from other core courses (e.g., NWC 6400 Domestic Context, NWC 6500 The Global Context, etc.).

Students are encouraged to work in small groups to facilitate independent research.

The findings of the analysis will be presented to the rest of the class on the final day of the seminar (10 December 2020). Presentations should be about 10 minutes long followed by Q&A. Although, it can be a group project, students are required to submit individual papers assessing strategic decisions. The paper should be between 1200 and 1500 words and is due COB 11 December 2020.

Further guidelines will be provided to students. In addition, David Patrick Houghton's text, *The Decision Point: Six Cases in U.S. Foreign Policy Decision Making* contains multiple examples of both strategic decisions and their analyses from which students can draw their inspiration for this assignment.

Student Assessment, Grade Appeals, Assignments' Submission and Format, Originality of Student Work, and Attendance Policy

This course follows NWC/NDU guidelines and requirements on student assessment, grading scale, grade appeals, format of written assignments, attendance, and plagiarism. Please, consult your student catalogue on the specific policies and requirements or email your questions to the FSL or academic adviser.

Topic 1: Why Focus on Decision Making? Overview of the Course and Rational Actor Model (RAM)

14 September, 13:30-15:30

In this introductory class, we will discuss the rationale for learning about behind-the-scenes, complex, and messy processes by which national security and foreign policy decisions are made. Strategic analysis is often premised on the assumptions that decisions result from a deliberate and multi-step process of choosing among alternatives that follows an orderly path from the diagnosis of the situation, a problem identification through solution. This logic is commonly applied for assessing international events and decisions of foreign leaders as well. Decision-making, however, often does not measure up to the benchmarks set by the strategic logic. From the theoretical standpoint, individuals' decision making frequently departs from the rational paradigm (RAM) assuming a "deep, conscious, thoughtful thinker." The reality is that much of the mental operations of the mind are relatively automatic and much more subconscious. Not only is this a necessary cognitive trait, it is also a very robust way of efficiently processing information and making decisions.

This introductory lesson introduces students to some of the most common and predictable errors (a.k.a biases) in the ways that humans judge situations and evaluate risk. It offers examples of how human reasoning errors can influence decision-making in national security and foreign policy. It also illuminates ways in which better understanding of decision-making contributes to the making of better strategy and strategists.

Learning Objectives:

- To appreciate the complexity of human reasoning and decision-making
- To evaluate benefits and limitations of RAM as a guide to decision-making
- To discuss the most common reasoning errors and their implications for strategic logic

Questions to Consider:

1. What is decision-making? What role does it play in national security strategy and foreign policy?
2. Do strategists need to bother with understanding decision-making? Why?
3. What are some of the common human biases? How can they affect decision-making in national security and foreign policy?

Required Readings: (30-42 pages)

- A. Gvosdev, Nikolas K., "Should Military Officers Study Policy Analysis?", *Joint Force Quarterly* 76 (1st Quarter, January 2015), available at: <http://ndupress.ndu.edu/JFQ/Joint-Force-Quarterly-76/Article/577585/should-military-officers-study-policy-analysis/> (5 pages)

- B. Daniel Kahneman and Jonathan Rensho, “Why Hawks Win” *Foreign Policy*, No. 158 (Jan. – Feb., 2007), pp. 34-38, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/13/why-hawks-win/> (4 pages)
- C. Horowitz, et al., *Why Leaders Fight?* Ch.1, pp. 1-14 (14 pages)
- D. Houghton, *The Decision Point*, pp. 7-8 (2 pages)

In addition, choose ONE case study from Houghton’s book that you’ll be reading about throughout the course (you can certainly read about more than one, but only one is required). For this class, please, read the description of the case (the decision-making setting, a strategic decision, and its outcome) and think about the RAM’s deficiencies in accounting for the decision.

- Ch.5 “The Bay of Pigs,” pp. 85-96 (11 pages)
- Ch.6 “To the Brink: The Cuban Missile Crisis,” pp. 117-123 (7 pages)
- Ch.7 “An Agonizing Decision: Escalating the Vietnam War,” pp. 145-149 (5 pages)
- Ch.8 “Disaster in the Desert: The Iran Hostage Crisis,” pp. 166-177 (12 pages)
- Ch.9 “NATO Intervenes: Seventy-Eight Days Over Kosovo,” pp. 195-199 (5 pages)
- Ch.10 “Into Iraq: A War Choice,” pp. 218-222 (5 pages)

Topic 2: Homo Psychologicus: Focus on Misperceptions and Analogical Reasoning

21 September, 13:30-15:30

All individuals, including state leaders, make sense of the world through the process of perception. Perception refers to the way information from the environment is organized, interpreted, and consciously experienced. It is built from the sensory input (hearing, seeing, etc.), but it is how we interpret these sensations that becomes our knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes that ultimately shape decisions. How individuals interpret information from the environment is influenced by available knowledge, experiences, and preexisting beliefs.

Many psychologists agree that the human mind is rather limited in time, knowledge, attention, and cognitive resources to process all available information systematically and in unbiased ways (as the RAM model would expect). Although, thoughtful analysis is possible and can be cued by influencing motivation, most of the individuals most of the time tend to problem solve in the most simple and straight-forward ways relying on a variety of heuristics, i.e., mental shortcuts that allow them to make decisions, pass judgments to solve a problems quickly and with minimal mental effort. In the first part of the class, we will take a look at the most common heuristics and their impact on the state decision makers' misperception of, for example, a threat posed by another state and that country's capabilities and intentions.

In the second part of the class, we will discuss the role of historical analogies in strategy and policy-making (learning from history is a kind of perception). Echoing Mark Twain's supposed quip that "History doesn't repeat itself, but it rhymes," the authors of the materials we will read for this lesson tend towards agreement that history and historical context are important elements of statecraft despite challenges and potential pitfalls in the use of historical analogies. The study of history develops essential skills and habits of mind important to forming a basis for reasoned judgment. Yet, as Kissinger said, "History is not, of course, a cookbook offering pretested recipes. It teaches by analogy, not by maxims. It can illuminate the consequences of actions in comparable situations, yet each generation must discover for itself what situations are in fact comparable. No academic discipline can take from our shoulders the burden of difficult choices."

Learning Objectives:

- To appreciate how leaders' perceptions of strategic situations, specifically their perceptions of other states, can inform decision making.
- To understand how our personal theories of how the world works can simultaneously help us organize complex information, while blocking our ability to assimilate new information
- To appreciate how analogical reasoning aids and hinders human reasoning and decision-making.
- To discuss benefits and errors in leveraging analogies and their implications for strategic logic

Questions to Consider

1. What are some of the sources of misperception? How can they affect decision-making in national security and foreign policy?
2. Why is cognitive consistency important in forming judgments and making decisions?
3. How does analogical reasoning aid in decision-making? What role does it play in national security strategy and foreign policy decision making?
4. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages to using analogies to reason through complex problems? How can they affect decision-making in national security and foreign policy?

Required Readings: (59-65 pages)

- A. Jonathan Renshon, "Psychological Dimensions of Foreign Policy" in Daniel J. Christie and Cristina Montiel (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Peace Psychology* (NJ: Wiley-Blackwell Press, 2012), 308-312.
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a71eff78dd0418fa3dcb980/t/5a739c08085229f83cfa536d/1517526025019/Psychological+Dimensions.pdf> (5 pages)
- B. Charles A. Duelfer and Stephen Benedict Dyson, "Chronic Misperception and International Conflict: The U.S.-Iraq Experience," *International Security* 36,1 (2011: 73-100, https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/ISEC_a_00045 (27 pages)
- C. Hal Brands and Jeremi Suri, "History and Foreign Policy: Making the Relationship Work," National Security Program e-notes, 1 April 2016.
<https://www.fpri.org/article/2016/04/history-foreign-policy-making-relationship-work/> (8 pages)
- D. AND ONE OF THE FOLLOWING (Eisenhower students are recommended Gavetti and Rivkin's article)

 Giovannie Gavetti and Jan W. Rivkin, "How Strategists Think: Tapping the Power of Analogy," *Harvard Business Review* (April 2005). <https://hbr.org/2005/04/how-strategists-really-think-tapping-the-power-of-analogy> (25 pages)

 Andrew Mumford, "Parallels Prescience and the Past: Analogical Reasoning and Contemporary International Politics," *International Politics* 52 (2015): 1-19, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/ip.2014.40> (19 pages)

Topic 3: Homo Psychologicus: Adding Leaders' Personalities and Belief Systems

28 September, 13:30-15:30

Leaders' beliefs and personality are often-ignored or under-appreciated constraints on national security and foreign policy decision making, but they affect a rational actor's optimization process. A decision makers' personality, dispositions, and beliefs can influence their perceptions of the world, assessment of the strategic situation, and ways in which they define risks in a given situation. Because strategic leaders' decisions bear significant consequences for individuals' lives, researchers and analysts have spent considerable time developing frameworks and honing methodologies for studying leaders' personalities and belief systems and how they affect their preferences and decision-making.

This class considers individual differences in leaders – their personalities and beliefs systems – and their effects on foreign policy decision-making. It introduces the Big Five – one of the dominant frameworks of personality traits – and Operational Code Analysis (OCA) – an influential framework for studying leaders' belief systems. The utility of these frameworks is demonstrated on the analyses of decision-making by presidents Putin and George W. Bush Jr.

In the second part of the course, we will look into the decision making case studies examined in *The Decision Point* to assess the role of psychology in critical decisions.

Learning Objectives:

- To examine the impact of leaders' personalities and beliefs on their decisions
- To discuss approaches to studying leaders' personalities and belief systems
- To consider practical application of the knowledge on leaders' personalities, beliefs, analogical reasoning, and perceptions to the world of policy making

Questions for Considerations:

1. What is the value added (if any) of the knowledge on leaders' personalities and belief systems to strategy?
2. What is "personality"? Can it be "diagnosed" with confidence? How?
3. What are beliefs? Why are they important in the context of decision making? Can they be "diagnosed" with confidence? How?
4. What do we know about how, when, and why leaders' beliefs change?
5. Under which circumstances do individual characteristics of leaders can be expected to have an impact on policy making?

Required Readings: (46-56 pages)

The first three readings are assigned to provide you with the "micro-foundations" (scientific basis) for why beliefs and personalities of leaders matter and how analysts can tap into decision makers' beliefs and personality traits. You don't need to remember every detail about "The Operational Code" or personality assessment frameworks. Rather, focus your mental energy on grasping the

concepts and getting the general idea of what belief systems are, why they matter, and how one can “measure” them.

A. Gallagher and Allen (2014) “Presidential Personality: Not Just a Nuisance,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* (January). Only read pp. 1-9 (skip research design) & p. 17 (10 pages)

B. Jonathan Renshon, 2008. “Stability and Change in Belief Systems: The Operational Code of Georg W. Bush,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 52(6): 820-849. Only read pp. 820-827 (8 pages)

The remaining readings integrate the various psychological perspectives and apply them to select decision-making cases.

C. Houghton, *The Decision Point*, pp. 62-84 (22 pages)

D. In addition, continue reading ONE of the selected case studies from Houghton’s monograph discussing the role of psychological determinants on decision making and their critique.

Ch.5 “The Bay of Pigs,” pp. 108-113 & 115 (7 pages)

Ch.6 “To the Brink: The Cuban Missile Crisis,” pp. 134-142 & 144 (10 pages)

Ch.7 “An Agonizing Decision: Escalating the Vietnam War,” pp. 156-163 & 164 (8 pages)

Ch.8 “Disaster in the Desert: The Iran Hostage Crisis,” pp. 185-190 & 193 (7 pages)

Ch.9 “NATO Intervenes: Seventy-Eight Days Over Kosovo,” pp. 210-215 (6 pages)

Ch.10 “Into Iraq: A War Choice,” pp. 232-247 (16 pages)

Topic 4: Homo Psychologicus: Leaders' Backgrounds and Decisions about War

5 October, 13:30-14:30

Last week, we discussed leaders' belief systems and personalities. What are the sources of leaders' beliefs about the world and what experiences shape their personalities? This class offers a partial answer to these questions. It focuses on the leaders' background experiences and how those shape the choices they make about whether to lead their countries into wars or avoid conflict. Most of the analyses of leaders look at one leader and/or one dimension of leader at a time. Thus, questions about when and how leaders matter remain. In particular, until recently, it has been unclear how the multifaceted nature of a leader's experiences shape his or her views and behavior in office.

The book that we will read for this lesson by Horowitz, Stam, and Ellis is a rare attempt to provide a systematic answer to this question. A primary means by which they do so is by assembling the Leader Experience and Attribute Descriptions (LEAD) dataset, which includes information on personal, family, occupational, educational, and military background characteristics of leaders across the globe for 1875 – 2004 period. *Why Leaders Fight* is about how leaders' beliefs, world views, and tolerance for risk and military conflict are shaped by their life experiences before they enter office.

Learning Objectives:

- To discuss how a leader's background influence how they view national security and conduct foreign policy
- To review explanations connecting leaders' various background experience to their foreign policy conduct with the focus on a leader's prior military service and how it propels or restrains risk taking
- To integrate leaders' background with institutions and consider ways in which institutional dynamics interact with leaders' background experience to influence foreign policy

Key Questions:

1. Which background experiences shape leaders' worldviews and behavior in the office, according to Horowitz, Stam, and Ellis? Why?
2. Are there any other background experiences that shape leaders' beliefs and behavior in the office that are not addressed by Horowitz, Stam, and Ellis?
3. How effective have Horowitz, Stam, and Ellis been in demonstrating the importance of leaders' backgrounds? Are you convinced by their argument?
4. What institutional characteristics (if any) mediate the impact of leaders' backgrounds?

Required Readings: (78 pages)

- A. Horowitz, Michael C., Allan Stam, and Cali M. Ellis. 2015. *Why Leaders Fight*. New York: Cambridge University Press, read Ch.1 (31 pages), Ch.4 (18 pages) & Ch.5 (29 pages)

Topic 5: Homo Psychologicus: "Hot" Cognition (Emotions and Motivations) and Illness

19 October, 13:30-15:30

This week we move away from personality-focused and cognitive explanations and look at the effects of emotions and illness on national security decision making. As we learned in the introductory lesson, the RAM model holds that decision makers employ analytic rationality, and the model implicitly assumes emotions are an obstacle in the decision making process. Challenging the assumption of RAM, research over the last century has brought us to the point where emotions are now widely recognized as a critical part of forming judgments and making decisions. Therefore, any complete account of national security decision making should address how and when emotions effect the decision making process, recognizing that their effects are fairly consistent and in many cases similar to the effects of some cognitive biases.

While we recognize emotions as a critical part of forming judgments and making decisions, the effects of illness on decision makers raises concerns because illness can lead to unpredictable choices. As McDermott writes, “Leaders who are impaired by physical or psychological illness or unduly affected by drugs and medication rarely remain as stable or predictable as those who are not.”

Learning Objectives:

- To appreciate the impact of emotions on decision making and national security decision making
- To appreciate the impact of illness and infirmity on national security decision making
- To identify ways to minimize or even leverage the effects of emotions on national security decision making.

Questions to Consider:

1. How do emotions affect the content of our thinking and our thinking processes? What are the implications for national security decision making?
2. How does illness affect our thinking and our thinking processes? What are the implications for national security decision making?
3. Having learned about some of the effects of emotions national security decision making, how might governments leverage what Hall calls emotional diplomacy to pursue their objectives? What are the advantages and risks of emotional diplomacy?

Required Readings: (63 pages)

- A. Jonathan Renshon & Jennifer Lerner, “The Role of Emotions in Foreign Policy Decision-Making,” in Daniel J. Christie and Cristina Montiel (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Peace Psychology* (NJ: Wiley-Blackwell Press, 2012), 313-317. (5 pages)

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a71eff78dd0418fa3dcb980/t/5a739b5024a6948977d85426/1517525840842/Role+of+Emotions.pdf>

- B. Rose McDermott. *Presidential leadership, illness, and decision making*. (2008) (New York: Cambridge University Press), 19-25, 30-33, 118-154 (47 pages)
- C. Todd H. Hall. *Emotional Diplomacy: Official Emotion on the International Stage* (2015) (NY: Cornell University Press), 23-33. (11 pages)

Topic 6: Assessing Risk, Communicating Uncertainty

26 October, 13:30-15:30

The government agencies charged with national security have diverse and complex missions that cover multiple priorities. Managing these priorities in preparing for, responding to, and mitigating threats to national security requires an understanding of not only the threats but also the diverse set of risks involved. In the end, managing uncertainty is an essential element of decision making.

The concepts of threat and risk are related (and conflated in national security circles): they both involve assumptions about the likelihood and potential consequences of various events and scenarios. However, threat and risk are not the same. According to NWC Primer, a situation is threatening if it endangers some aspect of a national interest. Therefore, threats are understood in relation to clearly defined national security interests. Risks, on the other hands, are exposures to the chance or possibility of challenge or loss. Both threats and risks must be assessed.

Threat assessment has become embedded in the fabric of agencies charged with national security to a degree that risk assessment is not. Even within the Department of Defense, there is no formally recognized lexicon and broadly accepted methodology for discussing and assessing risk to national security strategy. In contrast, the intelligence community has well-established threat assessment frameworks with analysts receiving regular training in the details of threat assessment and associated terminology. National security decision-makers receive products of these assessment processes and take action based on the intelligence analysis. There is, however, an ongoing debate about the feasibility and suitability of qualitative vs. quantitative risk assessment and ways to communicate uncertainty to stakeholders to prevent bold and risky strategic moves.

Learning Objectives:

- To comprehend the role of and processes developed for risk assessment in national security circles
- Discuss challenges to risk assessment
- Evaluate the various approaches to communicating uncertainty and their consequences for decision making at the strategic level

Questions to Consider:

1. What is “risk”? How is it different from “threat”?
2. In assessing risks to/from a national security strategy, what methodology or framework for risk assessment will you rely on? Why?
3. Which decision-making principles that you learned in this class do you plan to apply in assessing risks to/from a national security strategy?
4. How do different strategies of communicating uncertainty to decision makers affect their strategic decisions?

Required Readings: (58 pages)

- A. Russell Lundberg and Henry Willis, “Assessing Homeland Security Risks: A Comparative Risk Assessment of 10 Hazards,” *Homeland Security Affairs*, Vol. XVI (2015): 1-24. Skim over pp. 1-8; Read pp. 9-13 (15 pages)
- B. Jeffrey A. Friedman & Richard Zeckhauser, “Handling and Mishandling Estimative Probability: Likelihood, Confidence, and the Search for Bin Laden,” *Intelligence and National Security* 30.1 (2015): 77-99 (22 pages)
- C. Sherman Kent, “Words of Estimative Probability,” *Studies in Intelligence* (Fall 1964), pp. 49-65 (16 pages). This classic piece on the need for precision in intelligence judgments was originally classified Confidential. Although, Kent’s efforts to quantify what were essentially qualitative judgments did not prevail, the essay’s general theme remains important today. <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP93T01132R000100020036-3.pdf>
- D. Jeffrey A. Friedman, Jennifer S. Lerner and Richard Zeckhauser, “How Quantifying Probability Assessments Influences Analysis and Decision Making: Experimental Evidence from National Security Professionals,” HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series, HKW Working Paper No. RWP16-016, read pp. 1-5 (5 pages) <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/publications/how-quantifying-probability-assessments-influences-analysis-and-decision-making>

Topic 7: Homo Sociologicus: Small Group Dynamics in Foreign Policy Decision Making

November 2, 13:30-15:30

This week we shift from individual decision makers to small group dynamics and how those influence national security decision making. Regardless of the regime type, national security and foreign policy decisions are products of work of individuals as well as small groups. Clearly, national security decision making should consider the ways that small groups make decisions, and how small group decision making affects the outcomes of decisions. The most prominent early theorist exploring group decision making in foreign policy was Irving Janis, who in 1972 argued that “an excessive desire for group unanimity and cohesiveness would result in the marginalization of outgroup and even in-group dissenters, leading to a policymaking process that ignores alternate points of view and disconfirming information.” Janis called this model “groupthink.”

Over the last 40 years research in group psychology and decision making has built on Janis’ work, leading to propositions that some group decision making structures generated better results. The “Red Teaming” appendix in Joint Publication 5-0 leverages much of this contemporary work. We will read some of this contemporary work and evaluate whether improved group decision making processes lead to better decisions and presumably, better policy outcomes.

Learning Objectives:

- To appreciate how decision making in small groups may affect the outcomes of national security decisions.
- To understand how tools can increase the small group performance in decision making tasks.
- To evaluate whether improved decision making processes lead to better policy outcomes.

Questions to Consider:

- E. How do small group dynamics affect decision making, both positively and negatively?
- F. What are some of the ways that decision makers can ‘debias’ decision making processes to compensate potential shortcomings that are frequently observed with group decision making?
- G. Do improved decision making processes lead to better policy outcomes?

Required Readings: (47- 75 pages)

- A. David Patrick Houghton, “Homo Sociologicus” in *The Decision Point*, pp. 43-61 (19 pages).
- B. Continue reading ONE of the selected case studies from Houghton’s monograph discussing the role of small group dynamics on decision making and their critique.
 - Ch.5 “The Bay of Pigs,” pp. 102-108 & 114 (8 pages)
 - Ch.6 “To the Brink: The Cuban Missile Crisis,” pp. 130-133 & 143 (5 pages)
 - Ch.7 “An Agonizing Decision: Escalating the Vietnam War,” pp. 154-156 & 163 (4 pages)
 - Ch.8 “Disaster in the Desert: The Iran Hostage Crisis,” pp. 182-185 & 192-193 (6 pages)

Ch.9 “NATO Intervenes: Seventy-Eight Days Over Kosovo,” pp. 207-210 & 216 (5 pages)
Ch.10 “Into Iraq: A War Choice,” pp. 226-232 & 246-247 (9 pages)

C. Alex Mintz and Carly Wayne, “The Polythink Syndrome and Elite Group Decision-Making,” *Advances in Political Psychology* 37,1 (2016): 3-19, <https://www.idc.ac.il/en/schools/government/research/popdm/Documents/the-polythink-syndrome-and-elite-group-dcision-making.pdf>, (16 pages)

D. And, ONE of the following:

Kasey Barr and Alex Mintz, “Did Groupthink or Polythink Derail the 2016 Raqqa Offensive?: The Impact of Group Dynamics on Strategic and Tactical Decision-Making,” *The Oxford Handbook of Behavioral Political Science* (2016). <https://www.idc.ac.il/en/schools/government/research/popdm/PublishingImages/pages/popdm-members/Did-Groupthink-or-Polythink-derail-the-2016-Raqqa-Offensive.pdf> (35 pages)

Steven Kelman, Ronald Sanders, and Gayatri Pandit. “‘Tell It Like It Is’: Decision Making, Groupthink, and Decisiveness among U.S. Federal Subcabinet Executives,” *Governance* 30, 2 (2017): 245-261 (17 pages)

Topic 8: Homo Bureaucraticus: Governments as Bureaucracies and Organizations

9 November, 12:30-14:30

Historians have long talked about the role of “court politics” or “cabinet politics” in influencing the policies of kings and other rulers. Political scientists have for many years studied organizational behavior within the executive branch of the government, but they focused on the role of governmental politics in domestic policy, not in national security and foreign policy. The underlying assumption was that in national security, where the national interest was at stake, governmental politics was put aside in favor of national interest calculations.

Allison’s *Essence of Decision* (1971, revised by Allison and Zelikow 1999) was the first systematic challenge to this assumption. It initiated a wave of research on bureaucratic and organizational influences on foreign policy decision-making. Allison (1971) drew on the organizational theory literature and developed two different but overlapping models of foreign policy that focused on the executive branch of the government and, thus, challenging the assumption of state as a unitary actor used in RAM. Model II, the Organizational Process Model, placed particular emphasis on the role and influence of organizational mission and essence, as well as standard operating procedures, on foreign policymaking. Model III, known as the governmental or bureaucratic politics model, introduced the concepts of bureaucratic role, position, and organizational mission and essence into the calculus of decision-making. Allison applied Miles’ Law of “where you stand depends upon where you sit” to describe the relationship between bureaucratic role and policy preferences. David Patrick Houghton combines these two perspectives into the “Homo Bureaucraticus” model that he applies for examining the six critical decision in the U.S. foreign policy.

Learning Objectives:

- To differentiate between the “governments as bureaucracies” and “governments as organizations” approaches to decision making
- To discuss the key assumptions, propositions, and hypotheses informed by the Bureaucratic Politics Model (BPM)
- To assess the strengths and weakness of the BPM for understanding national security and foreign policy decision making

Questions for Consideration:

1. How is the organizational perspective on foreign policy decision making different from the bureaucratic approach? Explain using specific examples from the world of national security and foreign policy decision making
2. What is the bureaucratic politics approach to explaining foreign policy? What are the criticisms of this approach? Why has this approach enjoyed recent attention in foreign policy analysis?
3. How is the “bureaucratic politics” theory different from/similar to “groupthink”?

Required Readings (30-61 pages)

- A. David Patrick Houghton, “Homo Bureaucraticus” in *The Decision Point*, pp. 23-42 (19 pages).
- B. Continue reading ONE of the selected case studies from Houghton’s monograph discussing the role of bureaucracies on decision making and their critique.

Ch.5 “The Bay of Pigs,” pp. 96-101 & 113 (7 pages)

Ch.6 “To the Brink: The Cuban Missile Crisis,” pp. 123-130 & 142 (9 pages)

Ch.7 “An Agonizing Decision: Escalating the Vietnam War,” pp. 149-154 & 163 (7 pages)

Ch.8 “Disaster in the Desert: The Iran Hostage Crisis,” pp. 177-182 & 190-191 (8 pages)

Ch.9 “NATO Intervenes: Seventy-Eight Days Over Kosovo,” pp. 200-207 & 215 (9 pages)

Ch.10 “Into Iraq: A War Choice,” pp. 222-226 & 246-247 (7 pages)

- C. And ONE of the following articles discussing the role of bureaucracies in other national contexts:

Zhang Qingmin, “Bureaucratic Politics and Chinese Foreign Policy-making,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 9, 4 (2016): 435-358 (23 pages)

OR

Tatiana Stanovaya, “Russia’s Bureaucracy Means Tougher Times for Putin’s Friends,” Carnegie Moscow Center, 1 October 2017, <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/74580> (4 pages)

Topic 9: The Role of Special Interests in National Security and Foreign Policy Decision Making

16 November, 13:30-15:30

Political scientists and economists have long been interested in the role of special interests in the policymaking process. A wave of new studies has recently demonstrated that special interest groups have the potential to alter decision making process as well as policy outcomes by providing information, campaign contributions, or other valuable resources to politicians. Scholars have emphasized that interest groups can influence the decision making process and outcomes either by altering the positions of opponents or shoring up natural allies.

In addition to looking at the impact of interest groups on decision making processes and outcomes in national security and foreign policy, another area of knowledge concerns the specific preferences for foreign policy held by diasporas and ethnic and religious groups.

This class will highlight the role of special interests, predominantly those formed on the basis of ethnic and religious identification, in national security and foreign policy decision making.

Learning Objectives:

- To survey several areas of knowledge on the role of special interests in national security and foreign policy
- To differentiate between different types of interest groups
- To examine theoretical frameworks explaining how and why interest groups influence foreign policy (including public opinion on foreign policy) and what makes them successful
- To sample studies representative of the scholarship on religious influences on foreign policy

Questions for Consideration

1. What are the ways in which religion and ethnicity can enter national security and foreign policy decision making?
2. What are the factors accounting for the success of ethnic groups' influence on foreign policy?
3. How do Mearsheimer and Walt account for the special relationship between the US and Israel?
4. If lobbying by economic actors can influence domestic and international economic policies, is the same true for security policy? Why?

Required Readings: (63 pages)

- A. John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, "Is It Love or the Lobby? Explaining America's Special Relationship with Israel." *Security Studies* 18, 1 (2009): 58-78 (20 pages)

- B. Mark R. Amstutz, *Evangelicals and American Foreign Policy*. Oxford University Press (2013), pp. 1-29 (29 pages)
- C. Stefanie Weil, *Lobbying and Foreign Interests in Chinese Politics*. Palgrave (2017) pp. 1-14 (14 pages)

Topic 10: Decision Making in Authoritarian Regimes

30 November, 13:30-15:30

It has been common to highlight differences between democratic and non-democratic regimes and view authoritarian governments as indistinguishable from each other. This, in turn, concealed substantial variation in conflict initiation characterizing the various authoritarian regimes. This week, we will zero in on decision making about war in authoritarian contexts. Do domestic institutions affect autocratic leaders' decisions to initiate military conflicts? Do the personalities of dictators affect their choices about war? Why do some autocratic leaders pursue aggressive or expansionist foreign policies, while others are much more cautious in their use of military force?

To begin thinking about these questions, we will read passages from a recently published highly appraised monograph by Jessica Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace*. This book offers first systematic treatment of foreign policies of different types of authoritarian regimes, thus breaking new ground in our understanding of the international behavior of dictators. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, this monograph argues that institutions in some kinds of dictatorships allow regime insiders to hold leaders accountable for their foreign policy decisions. However, the preferences and perceptions of these autocratic domestic audiences vary, with domestic audiences in civilian regimes being more skeptical of using military force than the military officers who form the core constituency in military juntas. In personalist regimes in which there is no effective domestic audience, no predictable mechanism exists for restraining or removing overly belligerent leaders, and leaders tend to be selected for personal characteristics that make them more likely to use military force. Another utility in reading this book is that it offers a compelling synthesis of RAM with psychological perspectives on decision making.

Learning Objectives:

- To discuss differences in non-democratic regimes
- To evaluate the role of institutions and leaders' experiences and beliefs on foreign policy in authoritarian regimes

Questions for Consideration:

1. How do authoritarian regimes differ?
2. Do domestic audiences and institutions matter in the authoritarian contexts?
3. What factors influence authoritarian leaders' decisions to go to war?
4. Can we understand authoritarian regimes' decision making using analytical tools available for the study of decision making in democracies, or do we need to develop models unique to the authoritarian contexts?

Required Readings: (57 – 69 pages)

A. Jessica L.P. Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014. Everyone reads pp. 1-43 (43 pages)

B. The following chapters will be divided up among the student. Each student reads ONE of the following:

Ch. 4, pp. 82-105 (23 pages)

Ch. 5, pp. 106-134 (28 pages)

Ch. 6, pp. 135-170 (35 pages)

Topic 11: Women, Gender, and National Security and Foreign Policy

10 December, 13:30-15:30

The idea that women bring a greater focus on peace and social justice has been widely popularized among the public and in political circles. Indeed, contemporary research has found that women's increasing prominence in political life makes a difference regarding foreign policy, in general, and with regards to a states' generosity with foreign aid, in particular. This claim identifying women with peace sits rather uncomfortably with much feminist scholarship in international relations. The critics of the "peaceful women" thesis argue that it conflates sex with gender and, in doing so, disempowers women and keeps them out of politics. Instead, the critics argue, we should get rid of idealistic associations of women with peace and recognize that the roots of conflict lie in gender inequality.

This latter line of research shows that greater gender equality limits the state's choices and improves the odds that conflicts – both between and within countries – are resolved through non-violent or non-militarized means. Greater women representation may itself be a symptom of greater gender equality. And, if gender equality has this impact broadly, then we should also expect gender to matter in political decision-making regarding national security policy.

The shift from descriptive women representation to gender is very consequential. It implies that women are not innately different from men – and therefore not inherently more peaceful – but rather that greater gender equality results in changes in policy choices.

This lesson is dedicated to considering ongoing debates about the role of women representation and gender equality in states' national security and foreign policy.

Learning Objectives:

- To comprehend differences between the concepts of sex and gender
- To evaluate debates about women representation and gender equality in states' national security and foreign policy
- To analyze the role of gender equality in U.S. foreign policy

Questions for Consideration:

1. Why is there a separation of women and gender in our discussion of national security and foreign policy?
2. Do women's political gains in office translate into substantive differences in foreign policy outcomes?
3. Does gender (in)equality within states influence their security and foreign policy choices?
4. How and why gender-related considerations have entered U.S. foreign policy?

Required Readings (68 pages)

Hudson, Valerie M., et al. *Sex and World Peace*, read pp. 1-54 & 95-119 [