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How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy Behavior

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Who makes foreign policy decisions? What is the effect of the decision unit on the resulting foreign policy? An examination of how governments and ruling parties around the world make foreign policy decisions suggests that authority is exercised by an extensive array of different entities. Among the decision units are prime ministers, presidents, politburos, juntas, cabinets, interagency groups, coalitions and parliaments. Moreover, within any one government the pertinent decision units often change with time and issue. When cross-national comparisons of governmental decision-making bodies are contemplated as in the comparative study of foreign policy, the number of possible kinds of decision units becomes formidable.

The thesis of this essay is that there is a way of classifying decision units that can enhance our ability to account for governments' behavior in the foreign policy arena. Although we recognize that numerous domestic and international factors can and do influence foreign policy behavior, these influences must be channeled through the political apparatus of a government which identifies, decides and implements foreign policy. Within that apparatus is a set of authorities with the ability to commit the resources of the society and, with respect to a particular problem, with the authority to make a decision that cannot be readily reversed. We call this set of authorities the "ultimate decision unit," even though in reality the unit may consist of multiple separate bodies rather than a single entity. It is our contention that the structure and dynamics of such an ultimate decision unit help shape the substance of foreign policy behavior.

Participants experienced in the foreign policy-making process as well as those involved in decision making in large, complex organi-

zations often remind us of the elusive nature of decision. They point out that in contrast to many theories of decision the actual process of choice may not be a clear, clean occurrence. Instead it may be a gradual, incremental process that transpires over an extended period without anyone being able to say that "X" made the decision on a given date. They note that those who gather and analyze the information supplied to policy makers shape and narrow subsequent options by determining what is passed along and how it is interpreted. Moreover, the implementors of someone else's decision may totally modify the original intent.

It takes nothing away from these important caveats about decision making, however, to observe that in the life of every organization actual points of decision do occur, although not always in a fashion visible to all who have participated in the process. Certainly key decisions and those who make them are constrained by available inputs and the subsequent implementation may lead to distortion, but nonetheless choice points do occur with some regularity. Despite the need to recognize that decisions do not always get executed as intended, knowledge of how decisions are made remains a powerful source of insight into what complex entities, such as governments, do.

These same participants in the policy-making process also feel uncomfortable with the requirement of decision theories that all decisions result from a similar process. In the reality of governmental foreign policy making—as in any entity dealing with numerous different kinds of issues of considerable complexity—we know that a singular approach to all problems is extremely improbable. A contingency approach to decision making is needed that indicates under what conditions decision units will follow one process and under what other conditions alternative specifiable processes probably will be operative. This essay advances such a contingency approach, proposing how different kinds of decision units lead to varying types of decision-making processes.

In differentiating decision units, we build upon the growing research about foreign policy making that focuses on competing bureaucratic organizations, on small groups and on powerful individuals. Many analysts have employed notions from bureaucratic politics to explain foreign policy (e.g., Neustadt, 1970; Allison, 1971; Destler, 1972; Halperin and Kanter, 1973; Halperin, 1974; Steinbruner, 1974; Allison and Szanton, 1976; Brady, 1976). Interest has also focused on the role that small groups (e.g., Janis, 1972; C. Hermann, 1978a; Tetlock, 1979; George, 1980; Semmel, 1982; Anderson, Chapter 15) and single individuals (e.g., Holsti, 1976a; Walker, 1977; Etheredge, 1978; M. Hermann, 1978, 1980; Stuart and Starr, 1981-2; Jonsson, 1982a;

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Rosati, 1985) play in shaping foreign policy. Most of the work to date, however, has tended to consider each configuration—competing agencies, small groups or individuals—in isolation without asking when this unit rather than another comes into play and with what consequences for foreign policy behavior.

In this essay we will show that all three types of decision units are relevant to a cross-national study of foreign policy. We also will articulate how each kind of unit can affect a government's foreign policy behavior. The following are the conceptual underpinnings of the arguments in this essay.

Definition At the apex of foreign policy decision making in all governments or ruling parties is a group of actors—the ultimate decision unit—who, if they agree, have both the ability to commit the resources of the government in foreign affairs and the power or authority to prevent other entities within the government from overtly reversing their position. The unit having these two characteristics obviously varies with the nature of the problem. For issues of vital importance to a country, the highest political authorities will be part of this ultimate decision unit. With more routine problems, the ultimate decision unit may actually be at a much lower level. For technical issues in some governments, the ultimate decision unit will vary depending on the type of problem the government is facing (military, economic, scientific, and so on). In governments where policy normally involves multiple bureaucratic organizations, the problem may be passed among many different units—within one agency, across agencies, or between interagency groups. The basic point, however, remains that eventually for most foreign policy problems, some person or persons finally authorizes a decision and they constitute for that issue the ultimate decision unit.

Classification A comprehensive set of ultimate decision units can be developed such that one type is applicable in any given foreign policy case. If we postulate that it is always possible in principle to define the set of actors that comprise the ultimate decision unit with regard to a foreign policy issue, then the task becomes one of describing the relationship among the actors in that set. We believe that the research literature, previously noted, has isolated the major alternative types of ultimate decision units. They are:

(1) Predominant leader—a single individual has the power to make the choice and to stifle opposition.
(2) Single group—a set of interacting individuals, all of whom are

members of a single body, have the ability to select a course of action and obtain compliance.

(3) Multiple autonomous groups—the important actors are members of different groups or coalitions, no one of which by itself has the ability to decide and force compliance on the others; moreover, no overarching body exists in which all the necessary parties are members.

In cases of foreign policy decision making, the actors who can make authoritative decisions for the government should correspond to one of these three configurations. In some countries, the same ultimate decision unit may prevail in nearly all foreign policy matters; in other countries the unit may change depending on the issue under consideration or the point in time in the evolution of the regime.

Conceptualizing Control Variables Each kind of ultimate decision unit exists in one of several states or conditions that determines not only the unit's direct impact on the final policy outcome but also the extent to which factors outside the decision unit must be considered in understanding what will happen in the foreign policy-making process. For each type of ultimate decision unit there is a key piece of information that enables the analyst to know when to focus only on the decision unit itself to determine the nature of the foreign policy decision and when there is a need to look outside the unit for the factors that will influence the decision. We call these "key control variables" because the status of these variables determines how other elements enter into the decision calculus for that unit. The key control variables for each of the three types of decision units have two conditions as shown in Table 16.1.

Table 16.1 *Key Control Variables*

Unit	*Control variable*	*Alternative conditions*
Predominant leader	Contextual sensitivity	(A) Insensitive (B) Sensitive
Single group	Concurrence	(A) Agreement (B) Disagreement
Multiple autonomous groups	Relationship among groups	(A) Zero-sum (B) Non-zero-sum

The conditions for each control variable that are labeled "A" in the table are the conditions in which the primary source of explanation for foreign policy resides in the decision unit itself—the internal dynamics of the unit shape the decision. By contrast the conditions of the control

variables that are designated "B" create circumstances in which the unit is penetrable, that is, it is far more susceptible to outside sources of influence in determining its decision. Thus, we can identify self-contained or externally penetrable conditions for each of the three kinds of ultimate decision units depending on the state of the key control variables. As we shall see, these alternative conditions lead to different decision-making processes in affecting foreign policy. But before going further in elaborating the theoretical implications of the key control variables, a description of the three types of decision units and the key control variables will prove helpful.

Three Types of Ultimate Decision Units

Predominant Leader

When the ultimate decision unit is a predominant leader, a single individual has the power to make the choice for the government. After such a leader's preferences are known, those with differing points of view stop public expression of their own alternative proposals out of respect for the leader or fear of political reprisals. Even if others are allowed to continue discussing alternatives, their points of view are no longer relevant to the political outcome. The predominant-leader decision unit is illustrated by a statement attributed to Abraham Lincoln in a cabinet meeting: "Gentlemen, the vote is 11 to 1 and the 1 has it." Only Lincoln's vote mattered; in this case he was the predominant leader.

In this type of decision unit, the critical set of variables for explaining the decision becomes the personal characteristics of the predominant leader. The leader's personal characteristics shape his initial inclinations and determine whether and how the leader will regard advice from others, react to information from the external environment, and assess the political risks associated with various actions (M. Hermann, 1978, 1984). Of particular importance in trying to explain a predominant leader's reaction to a foreign policy problem is knowledge about the leader's orientation to foreign affairs. By orientation to foreign affairs is meant the leader's views about how governments should act in the foreign policy arena. An orientation defines the leader's view of his own nation's and other nations' positions and roles in the world, and it presupposes a specific political style in dealing with foreign policy problems (George, 1979b; M. Hermann, 1980; Walker, 1983a; Rosati, 1985). Orientations also indicate how sensitive the leader will be to advice and information from the environment when making a foreign policy decision.

If a leader's orientation indicates that he has a well-defined view of the world and uses his view as a lens through which to select and interpret incoming information, the leader is likely to be looking for cues that confirm his beliefs when making foreign policy decisions. As a result, he will be relatively insensitive to discrepant advice and data. Stoessinger (1979) has called such leaders "crusaders." In effect, the leader selectively uses incoming information to support his predispositions. Such leaders tend to choose advisers who define problems as they do and are generally enthusiastic about the leader's ideas. Libya's Qaddafi and Cuba's Castro are examples of predominant leaders whose orientations appear to predispose them to be relatively insensitive to the variety of information in their external environments. By knowing the foreign affairs orientations of these two leaders, we have clues about what their governments will do in their foreign policy activities—for example, whom they are likely to confront, what problems they are likely to attend to, how much of their resources they are likely to commit to dealing with a problem or an opportunity. In short, we only have to know what the leader is like to be able to explain his government's foreign policy behavior.

If, however, the leader's orientation leads him to be sensitive to others' opinions and incoming information, we will need to know something about the environment in which the predominant leader is operating to say what the government is likely to do. Because such leaders are more "pragmatic," our analysis must take into account the context in which the leader finds himself. The sensitive leader will want to ascertain where others stand with regard to the problem and to consider how other governments are likely to act before making a decision. China's Zhou En-lai and Zambia's Kaunda are examples of this type of leader. Knowing the orientations of leaders like these two will provide us with clues about what part of the environment will be most influential on the leader, but we must still learn about that part of the environment to understand what the leader will do.

In sum, when the ultimate decision unit is a predominant leader, the key question we must ask in ascertaining how important the leader's personality will be in determining his government's foreign policy behavior is whether or not the leader's orientation to foreign affairs leads him to be relatively sensitive or insensitive to information from the political environment. If the leader is relatively insensitive, knowledge about the leader's personality will provide us with cues about what his government's foreign policy behavior is likely to be. If the leader is more sensitive, we will have to find out information about other aspects of the political system in order to suggest what the government will do in response to a foreign policy problem—personality data will not be enough.[1]

Single Group

When no one individual alone has the ability to routinely determine the position of the government on a class of foreign policy issues—or if such an individual declines to exercise authority—then an alternative ultimate decision unit must operate. The single group represents one option. A single group acts as the decision unit if all the individuals necessary for allocation decisions participate in the group and the group makes decisions through an interactive process among its members.

Single-group decision units are frequent in contemporary governments. The Politburo of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, the Standing Committee of the Communist Party in China, the National Security Council in the United States, the cabinet or subcabinet groups in various parliamentary governments illustrate single-group decision units. To be the ultimate decision unit a single group does not have to be legally or formally established as an authoritative agent. Instead it must have, in practice, the *de facto* ability to commit or withhold resources without another unit engaging in the reversal of its decision at will. Moreover, it is not necessary for all group members to concur on every decision of the unit nor to have equal weight in the formation of group decisions. However, if some formal members of the group are never essential to establishing a group decision, then it would be more accurate to recognize the existence of a subgroup that excludes such persons.

When the ultimate decision unit for a particular foreign policy problem is a single group, the analyst must determine if the group can achieve a prompt consensus about the disposition of the problem under consideration (Janis, 1972; C. Hermann, 1978a, 1979; George, 1980). If substantial agreement is achieved quickly among the members (that is, typically in the course of one meeting), factors outside the group that can affect the decision are limited. With prompt consensus members of the group do not look elsewhere for either recommendations or support for their positions. As a result, elements outside the group remain excluded from the process. The members reinforce each others' predispositions and feel secure in their collective decision. Should disagreement persist, however, other aspects of the political system outside the group can become influential. Members of the group become attuned to outside political pressures as they seek supporting information for their positions, reinterpretation of the problem, or ways to resolve the conflict.

We hypothesize that prompt consensus is more likely if the group has certain structure and process characteristics (C. Hermann, 1979).

Consensus is more likely if the information the group receives is from a common source, is shared among group members, and is similarly interpreted by members. Consensus is also more likely if the group is small, if members have their primary loyalty to the group, and if power is unequally distributed among group members (that is, there is a strong, but not predominant, leader).

In sum, the key to understanding the foreign policy behavior that will be advocated when a single group is the ultimate decision unit is information on the promptness with which the group can achieve consensus. When consensus occurs quickly, we need to learn about the group's internal dynamics in order to say how the group is likely to deal with the foreign policy problem. If, on the other hand, group members have difficulty reaching consensus, we need to ascertain what other aspects of the political system are likely to be drawn into the consensus-building process or are likely to try to affect that process in order to determine what will happen in foreign policy making.

Multiple Autonomous Groups

It should be evident that another major alternative exists when the ultimate authority in foreign policy making is neither a single individual nor a single group. In this case we have multiple—two or more—separate groups, none of which can commit the resources of the regime without the support of all or some of the others. To be one of the groups in the set classified as the ultimate decision unit, a group must be capable of giving or withholding support that when combined with the support (or lack thereof) from other groups is sufficient to determine whether regime resources will be allocated. One group can block another group's initiatives by: (1) using a formal, sometimes constitutionally defined, veto power; (2) threatening to terminate the ruling coalition by withdrawing from it or overthrowing it with force; or (3) withholding part of the resources necessary for action or the approval needed for their use. For a set of multiple autonomous groups to be the ultimate decision unit, the decision cannot involve any superior group or individual that can independently resolve differences existing among the groups or that can reverse any decision the groups reach collectively. Representatives of the multiple autonomous groups can meet, so long as any decision the delegates reach must be approved by each constituent party.

The classic example of a decision unit composed of multiple autonomous groups is the coalition government in a parliamentary system (e.g., those in Fourth Republic France, in Italy during the past two decades, and in Israel under the Labour-Likud coalition). In these

governments, cabinets are composed of members from several parties, none of which has a majority of seats in the parliament. The members of the coalition depend on each other to retain control of the government. This situation gives each party the ability to block policies of the others with the threat of bringing down the government by withdrawing from the coalition.

Ultimate decision units composed of multiple autonomous groups are not limited to parliamentary regimes. In presidential democracies, even with their independent executive, decision making can involve multiple autonomous groups on those issues where the president must receive the approval of the legislature. Multiple autonomous groups as ultimate decision units can also exist in authoritarian regimes. Following Perlmutter (1981), we note that authoritarian regimes typically consist of three types of structures—the state or governmental apparatus; the single, official party; and a variety of "parallel" or "auxiliary" structures which support the regime (e.g., militant gangs, the secret police and the military). Generally, a stable authoritarian regime like that in the Soviet Union is characterized by the dominance of one structure—a cohesive, strong single party. During certain periods, however, relations among these structures, or groups, can become unstable with none of the competing groups having dominance—particularly if there are no accepted rules or procedures for allocating or transferring political power. The government takes on the form of an unstable coalition. Such unstable coalitions are commonplace among current Third World regimes, many of which are internally fragmented and continuously threatened by military intervention.

Clearly for a foreign policy behavior to occur when multiple autonomous groups form the ultimate decision unit, an agreement must be forged among the set of groups involved. And often multiple autonomous groups are unable to reach agreement on any substantively meaningful course of action; they deadlock. Deadlocks result because by definition no group has the capacity to act alone on behalf of the regime. One or more groups are always in a position to block the initiatives of the others. Groups may take action on their own (typically in the form of verbal pronouncements), but no coordinated regime foreign policy activity is possible and meaningful actions and commitments are usually postponed.

We do not mean to indicate, however, that deadlock is automatic. The relationship among the multiple autonomous groups determines when deadlock will or will not occur. Groups that have an underlying acceptance of the right of the other groups to exist in the power structure or some formal or informal "rules of the game" for reaching

agreement have a better chance of reaching accord than those that deny each other's legitimacy and seek every opportunity to keep the others from participating politically. In cases where the groups have granted each other political legitimacy, there is an incentive to interact with one another to resolve the problem. Such groups, in effect, have a non-zero-sum relationship. For those groups with formal or informal rules of the game, the invocation of the rules provides further reason for the groups to cooperate. The groups whom the rules will not favor in a given instance have added incentive to bargain with the others.

The alternative values of the key control variable when multiple autonomous groups are the ultimate decision unit are revealed by the question: Is the political relationship among the multiple autonomous groups zero-sum or non-zero-sum with respect to recognizing the legitimacy of each group to seek and share power? When the multiple autonomous groups have a zero-sum relationship, they try to destroy each other and see each group benefiting at the other's expense. Usually such groups can do nothing or almost nothing in the foreign policy arena. They tend to engage in verbal behavior that in no way commits the regime to a particular solution of the basic problem or they maintain the status quo. Deadlock is avoided only when an external source with the power to intervene does so and forces agreement on the groups. When multiple autonomous groups, however, have a non-zero-sum relationship, there is a basis for agreement. In order to ascertain the nature of the agreement and their foreign policy behavior, we have to examine the bargaining process among the groups and the nature of any formal or informal rules of the game governing such a process.

Effects of Decision Units on Foreign Policy Behavior

To be useful our classification of decision units and associated control variables must lead to insights about foreign policy behavior. In the discussion to follow we will use the distinction noted earlier between self-contained and externally penetrable units to forge some hypotheses about how decision units shape foreign policy behavior. Because it is easier to indicate what each type of decision unit will decide with regard to a foreign policy problem when the influences of other parts of the political process are muted—the linkages between the ultimate decision unit and foreign policy behavior are simpler and more straightforward—we will begin our discussion of how the units shape foreign policy behavior by examining the conditions where the

ultimate decision units are self-contained. In other words, we will examine first the units that involve a predominant leader who is relatively insensitive, a single group that can reach prompt consensus, and multiple autonomous groups that have a zero-sum relationship. We will use illustrative case studies to demonstrate the effects that each of these decision units can have on foreign policy behavior.[2]

Effects of Self-Contained Decision Units

Insensitive Predominant Leader Suppose a government has a predominant leader whose orientation to foreign affairs suggests little sensitivity to incoming information from the environment. The leader has strongly held beliefs about the world by which he interprets political events. Such a leader selectively perceives and retains information about any new problem so that it substantiates previously held opinions and beliefs. Incompatible information or analysis from advisers is ignored or reinterpreted. In this case foreign policy actions are shaped by the leader's view of the world which, in turn, is influenced by the leader's more basic personal characteristics. An example of this type of leader is Romulo Betancourt, President of Venezuela from 1959 to 1964 (M. Hermann, 1984).[3]

Betancourt perceived the world divided into "us" and "them"—the democratic governments in the Americas formed the "us" and the dictatorships the "them." He (1968, p. 252) believed that "only governments born of legitimate elections, respectful of the rights of man and guaranteeing public liberties could form part of the regional community. That against dictatorial governments which do not conform to those norms there be established not only the collective sanction of non-recognition but also that of isolation in the economic field." Betancourt's philosophy became known throughout Latin America as the Betancourt Doctrine. To Betancourt, actions in the international arena took on a black/white character—with us or against us.

And Betancourt's personal beliefs became a primary determinant of Venezuelan foreign policy during the early 1960s. Betancourt was interested in seeing other Latin American countries adopt democratic procedures and became quite confrontational when democratically elected leaders in the Western Hemisphere were overthrown by coups. He broke relations with the following countries during his tenure as a result of his position: Argentina, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Peru. Cuba with its seemingly left-leaning and well-entrenched dictatorship became a pre-eminent problem for Betancourt during the last part of his tenure in office. In particular, Betancourt perceived that Castro was exporting revolution to Venezuela through

alleged aid to communist guerrillas. Drawing on his orientation, not only did Betancourt break diplomatic relations with Cuba but he urged countries in the Organization of American States (OAS) to withdraw their embassies from Cuba and to institute an economic boycott against it. In addition, the Betancourt regime exercised leadership in the 1962 Punta del Este Conference of the OAS where Cuba was excluded from membership (Thomas and Thomas, 1963; Betancourt, 1968). Betancourt broke off relations with Cuba even though there was opposition within his party to the move (Alexander, 1982, p. 442).

In effect, when an insensitive predominant leader like Betancourt is the ultimate decision unit, we can learn about the nature of the government's foreign policy behavior by examining the leader's personal characteristics and orientation to foreign affairs. The leader's view of the world will shape the government's foreign policy activity.

Single Group with Prompt Consensus We suggested earlier some factors that we hypothesize promote prompt consensus when the ultimate decision unit is a single group—a common source of information, small size, members with their primary loyalty to the group, and unequally distributed power among group members (C. Hermann, 1978a, 1979). When factors such as these contribute to rapid consensus within a group, what kind of foreign policy might we expect to come from the interaction among the members of the group?

Exactly such a quick consensus occurred in the Israeli cabinet in December 1969 in response to a problem created for it by the United States (Brecher, 1975). The United States and the Soviet Union had been conferring on the accelerating war of attrition in the Middle East that followed the 1967 war. On October 28, 1969, the United States proposed a plan for a Middle East political settlement to the Soviet leadership which US Secretary of State William Rogers formally disclosed in an address in New York on December 9. When the report of Rogers' speech reached Jerusalem, an emergency session of the Israeli cabinet was convened. The cabinet, which represented virtually the entire political spectrum in Israel, quickly rebuffed Secretary Rogers' proposal. When the United States persisted by presenting an elaboration of the plan at the United Nations Four Power Talks on December 18, the Israeli government recalled its ambassador from the United States. On December 22, the cabinet met and made its position clear in a blunt statement: "The Cabinet rejects these American proposals, in that they prejudice the chances of establishing peace" (Brecher, 1975, p. 485). The Israeli cabinet as the ultimate decision unit reached agreement at its first meeting on the matter and did not hesitate to express its position in a most assertive way when the United States seemed slow to get the message.

When a group readily achieves consensus, as the Israeli cabinet did in this case, the deliberations leading to consensus reinforce the prior inclinations of members of the group. When members find their own interpretations and recommendations shared by others, it tends to confirm their conclusions. Members become more sure of themselves and the course of action or inaction they advocate. As discussion continues, participants express less qualification and more unequivocal declaration in support of the recommended means of treating the issue. The group deliberations make the results more certain—and possibly more extreme—than the members would have advocated individually before the group meeting. The theoretical underpinnings for such group dynamics is found in a broad range of research (e.g., George, 1972; Janis, 1972; Lamm and Myers, 1978; Semmel, 1982).

To declare that a decision will be more certain does not indicate the direction or content of the decision. A single group in consensus can be certain about the absolute necessity of doing nothing whatsoever about the issue they face. Conversely, they can be certain about the need for action and extreme in their choice of actions. Knowledge of individual members' preferences provides clues as to the probable content of the decision. Where such information on members of the group is not available, the direction of the group consensus can be estimated from other data on the group. For example, if the issue deals with a matter about which there is a shared set of beliefs among members of the group, then this regime orientation will dictate the direction in which the group dynamics will amplify the predisposition for decision (C. Hermann, 1983b; Walker and Simon, 1983). Thus, if the problem concerns a traditional adversary and there is a shared belief among members of the group that it is the enemy, action is likely to be assertive and negative in tone. If the problem involves an entity upon whom members of the group perceive their government is economically dependent, the action will probably be highly cautious and positive in tone. Such a widely shared set of political beliefs about the approach for dealing with the Arabs (or, perhaps more accurately, about unacceptable approaches) among members of the Israeli cabinet facilitated their quick rejection of the 1969 American peace proposal. The American proposal conflicted with the minimal terms for peace over which there was little dispute.[4]

If no prior shared beliefs provide the basis for decision, then the group may key on the orientation of a strong leader in the group. We have excluded by definition the existence of a predominant leader, but that does not mean there cannot be a person in the group with more power and influence than the others. When a prompt consensus occurs in a single-group ultimate decision unit with such a strong

individual among its members, that person's preferences will likely be shared by the group and affect the foreign policy behavior.

In summary, with knowledge that members of a single group as the ultimate decision unit reached a quick consensus, we can say that the consensus will amplify the initial inclinations of the members and that we will get a more certain and probably more extreme response than if the decision were made by one member alone. Moreover, we can suggest what the nature of the decision is likely to be, based on members' general preferences regarding the problem at hand, by determining if members of the group have a shared set of beliefs that are triggered by the problem the group is facing, or by seeking information on the orientations of any strong leaders in the group.

Multiple Autonomous Groups with Zero-Sum Relationship Deadlock is the frequent result of decision making when multiple autonomous groups with a zero-sum relationship form the ultimate decision unit. Without some recognition of the other groups' rights to exist and participate in decision making, multiple autonomous groups are generally unable to reach agreement on any substantively meaningful course of action. Since by definition no group has the capacity to act alone on behalf of the regime, one or more of the groups are always able to block the initiatives of the others. Decisions tend to be postponed, and groups can, at most, engage in varying degrees of verbal behavior together or on their own.

A dramatic instance of an ultimate decision unit composed of multiple autonomous groups with a zero-sum relationship occurred in Iran during the "hostage crisis" with the United States. Recall that on November 4, 1979, militant Islamic students seized the American embassy in Teheran and took about sixty Americans captive. They threatened to try the Americans on espionage charges if the United States did not return the deposed Shah and his wealth. When the Carter Administration refused to comply, the crisis persisted, ending fourteen months later with the release of the hostages.[5] For our purposes here, the striking feature about the hostage crisis is the Iranian government's inability to act. It failed to gain the early release of the captives, to bargain for an acceptable response from the United States, or to place the hostages on trial. At times at least some groups in power favored each of these options and yet they were impotent to realize them.

The immobility of the Iranian government was in large part the result of the multiple autonomous groups that were engaged in making decisions and their reluctance to acknowledge each other's authority. Although at first glance Ayatollah Khomeini might appear a

single predominant leader, closer examination suggests that his involvement (and even influence) in the crisis was limited. For the first year of the crisis, political authority within the Iranian regime was ambiguously defined and spread across different institutions. No one group could carry out its professed desires. Among the groups involved in decision making in addition to Khomeini were the relatively "moderate" members in the Prime Minister's office and the Foreign Ministry (e.g., Bazargan, Bani Sadr, Ghotbzadeh, Yazdi), the "radical" clergy led by Ayatollah Behesti, and the student militants. For much of the crisis these groups found themselves unable to arrive at a significant agreement over the fate of the American hostages.

When there are no institutionalized procedures or "rules of the game" governing how political authority is allocated and how policy differences are resolved among multiple autonomous groups, there is little incentive for agreement. Likelihood of deadlock is acute if there are real and unbridgeable differences on substantive policy matters among the groups or if the groups are in direct competition for control of the regime. Under these circumstances the wider membership of each political group retains careful oversight over its representatives in any intergroup discussions, instructing them on how to respond to important issues. Leaders that appear to be compromising face the difficult (and, perhaps, even politically suicidal) task of getting the approval of the wider membership of their groups. Leaders and members of the various groups, therefore, find it easier to discredit their opponents' initiatives than to try to work with the other groups to reach a decision.

All these effects were evident in the Iranians' inability to take effective action to resolve the hostage crisis. During the first six months moderates within the leadership took at least six major initiatives to break the impasse with the United States. In each case the initiatives were blocked by radical opposition in the Revolutionary Council, the intransigence of the student militants, and the subsequent withdrawal of Khomeini's earlier approval (or tolerance) of the initiative. Finally in March 1980, Khomeini ended further initiatives by postponing the entire issue until a parliament was elected and could decide what to do. The organization of the parliament was itself a drawn-out process, as once again the multiple autonomous groups vied for control. The hostages' release only came about after the radical clergy had consolidated their authority with the removal of the moderates.

Multiple autonomous groups in deadlock are not stagnant actors. Even the foreign policy behavior of certain deadlocked groups can be strikingly active as each group tries to assert its power and influence. The conflict among the groups can become quite public, including the

use of verbal foreign policy pronouncements by each of the groups in the ultimate decision unit. The behavior of the Iranian government in the hostage crisis fits this pattern. Foreign policy issues were central to the struggle for control of the new regime. The political infighting led to a continuous flow of bellicose rhetoric toward the United States—despite the basic reality that the Iranian leadership remained deadlocked and could do little to resolve the crisis.

Only three conditions seem likely to enable multiple autonomous groups with a zero-sum relationship to escape deadlock. If all the groups share beliefs or orientations about foreign policy issues (e.g., about what needs to be done to assure the country's immediate survival) and the situation invokes this shared belief, there is a basis for agreement among the groups. If any of the groups have exclusive or primary access to a coercive means of violence (e.g., the military, armed citizens, terrorists, an alliance with an outside country), the threatened use of such a weapon can induce concessions needed for agreement. A group or individual unaligned with any of the multiple autonomous groups forming the decision unit may also possess a means of coercive violence and respond to the deadlock by assuming control of the government and changing the nature of the ultimate decision unit. The military coup often plays this role in Third World countries.

In summary, when multiple autonomous groups form the ultimate decision unit, deadlock is the most likely outcome if the groups do not accept the rights of the others to share power or participate in decision making—that is, if the groups have a zero-sum relationship. Almost nothing beyond rhetoric will happen in response to the foreign policy problem. By almost nothing we mean largely caretaking operations that a head of state, foreign minister or senior civil servant may feel qualified to undertake to continue agreements previously established if these precedents are not challenged. Such actions might include continuation of the status quo, appeals for more time, requests to others to handle the problem temporarily, and very broad and vague policy declarations (or extreme threats as in the Iranian situation) that in no way resolve the issues in conflict. Any foreign policy behavior that does occur will involve minimal commitment of the government's resources.

Effects of Externally Penetrable Decision Units

In the previous section we suggested how the three types of ultimate decision units shape foreign policy behavior when each is configured in such a way as to preclude the influence of external factors outside

the decision unit itself. Now let us briefly explore the effects each type of ultimate decision unit has on foreign policy behavior when its configuration permits more influence from other aspects of the political system. In other words, what happens in the foreign policy arena when the ultimate decision unit is a predominant leader who is sensitive to the immediate political environment, a single group whose members disagree, or multiple autonomous groups who have a nonzero-sum relationship? In each of these cases the analyst will need to invoke explanations that involve the context in which the decision unit is operating in order to account adequately for foreign policy. Again we will use illustrative case studies to indicate the effects that each of the externally penetrable decision units can have on foreign policy behavior.

Sensitive Predominant Leader When faced with a foreign policy problem, the sensitive predominant leader looks to the situation to provide clues on what is happening and what needs to be done to deal with the problem. Such a leader monitors the environment to see what groups may perceive themselves affected by the problem and the nature of their reactions. The sensitive predominant leader seeks a consensus in dealing with the foreign policy problem that has a broad base of support. In effect, he protects his position by being constantly aware of the shifting opinions and coalitions among those he is leading within his regime, in the society at large, and (when necessary) in foreign constituencies as well. The positions of these various relevant constituents, their interpretation of the problem, and areas of disagreement among them have important implications for the foreign policy behavior the leader will advocate.

We assume that those sources of conflicting interpretations about the problem closest to the sensitive predominant leader will have the greatest impact on what he does. That is, the sensitive predominant leader will attend first to disagreement within his advisory group and those in a position to challenge his authority before paying attention to opposition in the government outside his advisory group or in the society at large. Opposition in the regime outside the advisory group or in the society at large will have more of an effect on a sensitive predominant leader's behavior the stronger and more generalized it is.

Leaders have a repertoire of possible ways of coping with opposition, including ignoring it, suppressing it, diverting attention from it, highlighting differences between their position and that of the opposition, compromising with it, and coopting the position of the opposition. Ignoring the opposition usually results in the opposition having little effect on foreign policy behavior; suppression diverts resources

away from the foreign policy arena during the time it takes to restrain the opposition and, thus, is likely to reduce foreign policy activity; diverting attention from the opposition often involves the use of foreign policy activity as the leaders try to find an external scapegoat on which to focus public attention; both compromise and cooptation suggest that the opposition's position on the foreign policy issue becomes part of the leader's solution to the problem. We hypothesize that sensitive predominant leaders will adjust their strategy for dealing with opposition to the nature of that opposition. Such leaders are more likely to use suppression against challenges to their authority, particularly when the challenges occur within their advisory group and have some chance for success; to try scapegoating tactics if the opposition resides in the society outside the government but has little representation inside the government; and to seek a compromise if the disagreement focuses on a specific foreign policy issue and is lodged within the advisory group or government. Figure 16.1 displays in broad brush strokes the sequence of considerations that we propose comes into play when a predominant leader is responsive to the immediate political environment.[6]

President Kenneth Kaunda's management of Zambian responses to Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) provides us with an example of how opposition and ways of dealing with opposition can affect the foreign policy making of a sensitive predominant leader. Elsewhere we have established that Kaunda is a sensitive predominant leader (M. Hermann, 1984). Kaunda and his advisers on the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Cabinet shared three beliefs regarding Zambian foreign policy during the initial stages of the Rhodesian UDI crisis: humanism, nonalignment and pan-Africanism (Mtshali, 1973; Hatch, 1976; Anglin and Shaw, 1979). In working toward the goals embedded in these beliefs after UDI, they walked a tightrope trying to decrease Zambia's dependence on Rhodesia and South Africa by turning toward its East African neighbors while not incurring extreme economic costs to the country. This balance proved difficult to achieve given Zambia's landlocked position, its dependence before UDI on rail shipping through Rhodesia to the coast, and its large trade with South Africa. It was made even more difficult by Kaunda and his advisers' outspoken support for the liberation struggles in Southern Africa. How to manage the balance after UDI became a recurring source of division.

In such instances Kaunda was quick to listen to his advisers' concerns and to try to reach some consensus among those whose support he considered critical to implementing the decision. One particular problem that caused dissension concerned which of the two Rhode-

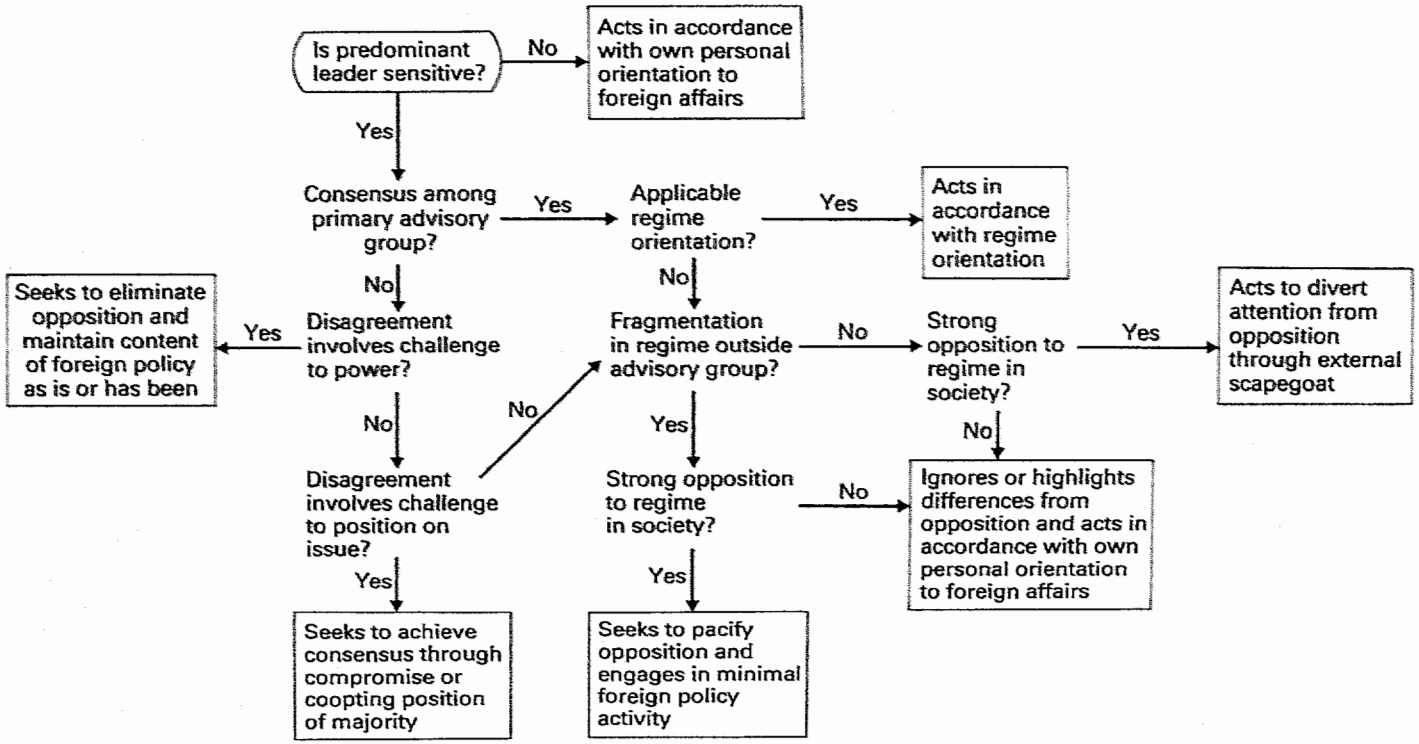


Figure 16.1 Outcomes depending on whether predominant leader is sensitive or insensitive to the political context

sian liberation groups Zambia should support. After "months of agonizing appraisal," Kaunda and his advisers chose Nkomo and ZAPU over Sithole and ZANU. Anglin and Shaw (1979, p. 247) have observed, however, that Kaunda worked ceaselessly to seek unity between these two Rhodesian liberation groups, ZANU and ZAPU, "because ZANU managed to establish close personal and political relations with an influential minority in the Cabinet."

The Rhodesian crisis also served Kaunda as a scapegoat for overcoming domestic opposition within Zambia. Mtshali (1973) has argued that Kaunda used the Rhodesian UDI as a way of uniting the various tribes and regions with their differing beliefs and customs into a nation. Kaunda, in effect, built a consensus within Zambian society around a foreign policy by diverting attention from strong domestic opposition in the society to the need to deal with a threatening external enemy.

In sum, the sensitive predominant leader uses information from the political environment to shape the foreign policy behavior he urges on the government. To determine how a sensitive predominant leader will react to a particular foreign policy problem, we need to know something about the current relations he has with those individuals or groups in the government and society who are likely to have a vested interest in what is done. The strategies the sensitive predominant leader uses in building a consensus among these individuals and groups will affect the foreign policy behavior he will advocate.

Single Group in Continuing Disagreement When the ultimate decision unit is a single group whose members are divided on the treatment of a foreign policy problem, the means of conflict resolution become important in interpreting the outcome. Although these processes may be contained within the group itself, group division greatly increases the potential effect of forces outside the decision unit. Bureaucratic politics offers one approach for characterizing the interplay of these forces. In effect, the forces are various political organizations seeking to build coalitions with sufficient power to resolve the dispute. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968—as interpreted by Valenta (1979)—illustrates such a process.

The ultimate decision unit in the Soviet Union with respect to the crisis in Czechoslovakia was the Politburo of the Communist Party. Evidence suggests that the membership of this group was divided with regard to how to respond to the liberalization movement in Czechoslovakia (Valenta, 1979, pp. 20–1). In June and July of 1968 the Soviet Politburo was deadlocked and members were searching for a means of resolving their disagreements. Thus, on July 29 almost the entire Soviet Politburo traveled to the Czech town of Cierna to negotiate

some type of accommodation with their Czech counterparts. Forty-eight hours after the meetings concluded, both sides reconvened with representatives from Bulgaria, East Germany, Hungary and Poland to ratify the bilateral compromise they had concluded and to issue the Bratislava communiqué. A diplomatic solution had been reached. The Czechs pledged—among other things—their commitment to the Warsaw Treaty Organization and to the foreign policy leadership of the Soviet Union. A strong case can be made that nothing happened in Czechoslovakia in the weeks following this agreement of which the Soviets were not aware on August 3 in Bratislava. In fact, very little happened objectively outside the Soviet Union concerning Czechoslovakia in the 17 days between the Bratislava agreement and the invasion on the night of August 20–21, 1968. Yet the Soviet leadership appears to have changed its collective judgment and reached a very different decision about how to handle the crisis. Why?

When a single group is severely divided over how to deal with a foreign policy problem, there is an opening for forces elsewhere in the political system to attempt to persuade members of the group to move in their direction. Such is particularly the case when the time for decision is long enough that these other parties can make their positions known. Members of the group become more susceptible to outside influences as they seek support for their ideas or some way to resolve the disagreement. The question becomes whether politically effective groups or individuals in the society or elsewhere in the government strongly advocate a common position or whether such groups and individuals are themselves divided on what should be done. If the political forces outside the single group for and against the various positions are roughly balanced, their attempts to influence group members may very well cancel each other out. Each faction in the decision unit will have its positions reinforced by these outside groups and individuals. No realignment will occur within the group. Such appears to have been the case for the Soviet Politburo in the Czech situation prior to the negotiations in Cierna and Bratislava. The groups outside the Politburo favoring and opposing intervention were roughly balanced (Valenta, 1979).

Under such circumstances, the presence of a strong leader or an influential subgroup within the decision unit may offer one means of resolving the conflict. A strong leader or subgroup has an incentive to do something if they have a definite preference with regard to the foreign policy problem under discussion. The strong leader or subgroup can mix persuasion, log-rolling, compromise and coercion to work toward agreement. If, however, forces outside the single group that is in disagreement over what to do are roughly balanced and there

is no strong leader or influential subgroup (or as in the case of the Soviet Politburo in the Czech situation, the strong leader refuses to make a choice), minimal action or compromise seem likely. Any foreign policy activity will probably be diplomatic in nature and involve little commitment as well as neutral affect. If any action occurs, it will keep options open and be reversible. The negotiations at the end of July and the beginning of August at Cierna and Bratislava respectively would seem consonant with this characterization.

Valenta (1979) argues that the very act of a negotiated settlement galvanized those political influentials in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe who opposed such an outcome. In the 17 days after the Bratislava declaration, a critical change took place in the strength of the domestic political groups and individuals favoring intervention. After Bratislava, the opponents of the diplomatic course of action had a concrete example of the kind of agreement they feared and as a result they were better able to dramatize their fears more effectively to others. According to Valenta (1979, ch. 4), their appeal had an effect on (1) bureaucrats responsible for ideological affairs in the Soviet Union, (2) members of the Ukrainian Party bureaucracy who feared the spread of Czech reforms into their republic, (3) sections of the KGB who saw a decrease in their ability to conduct intelligence operations in Eastern Europe, and (4) some segments of the Soviet armed forces who anticipated a change in their ability to maintain an effective presence in Eastern Europe. The increased strength of these proponents of intervention forced a realignment in the Politburo. "The advocates of military intervention in Moscow won the debate only during the last round of their offensive, which began around August 10. From this date until August 17 the pressure of the interventionist elements grew so strong that some of the wavering decision makers shifted to the side of the interventionists" (Valenta, 1979, p. 145). What had been a balanced opposition outside the decision unit became unbalanced with more individuals and groups favoring one option over the other. And the Politburo members seized on the swell of consensus outside the decision unit adopting the position of the strongest block—intervention.

Although Soviet Union decision making during the 1968 Czechoslovakian crisis is but a single example, we believe that the interplay of forces it suggests is part of the more general pattern shown in Figure 16.2. As the figure suggests, when a single group with the ultimate authority to make a decision is divided, three things can happen. A strong leader in the group, a subgroup, or some other elements within the group may devise a means to overcome the deadlock. Alternatively, political forces outside the group may pressure a preferred solution—provided these outside influences generally coalesce

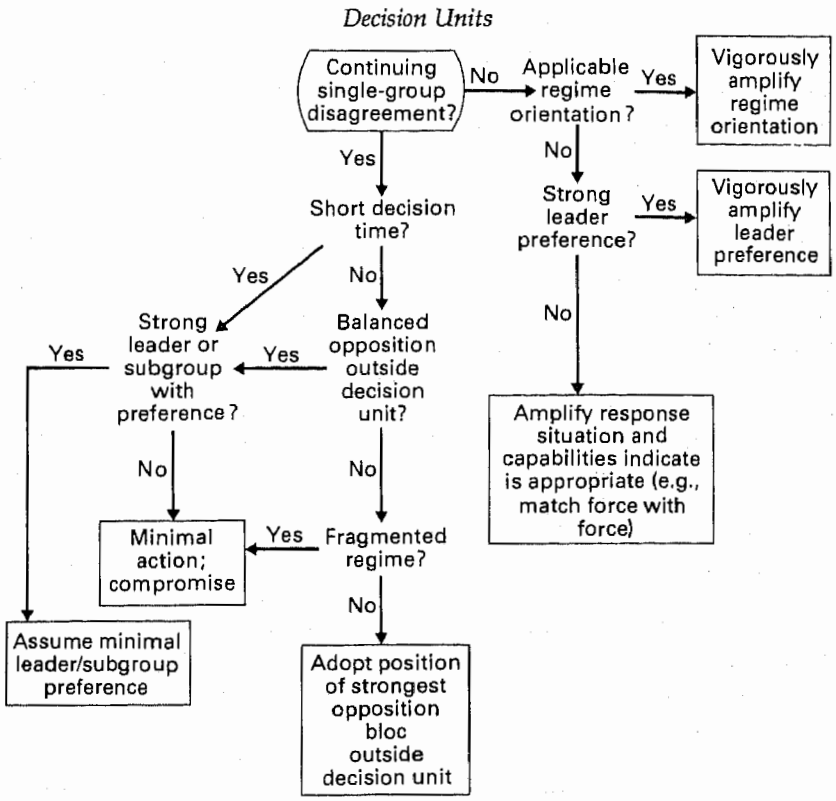


Figure 16.2 Outcomes depending on disagreement or consensus in a single group with authority to make decisions

around a preferred option. If neither of these developments transpires, no foreign policy action is likely to occur; or if the problem is too important to ignore, then minimal diplomatic action that involves limited commitments and is reversible can be expected.

Multiple Autonomous Groups with Non-Zero-Sum Relationship When multiple autonomous groups forming the ultimate decision unit have a non-zero-sum relationship, the groups recognize each other's legitimacy and are willing to interact with each other and to engage in bargaining. Such groups are generally able to reach some agreement with regard to a foreign policy problem because they have developed some formal or informal "rules of the game" that structure the interaction among the groups. In effect, their acceptance of each other's legitimate right to participate in decision making prods the groups to work out a process that facilitates policy making. To illustrate a

situation in which multiple autonomous groups with a non-zero-sum relationship formed the ultimate decision unit, we will examine the struggle within the United States government over ratification of the 1963 Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

The treaty banned the testing of nuclear weapons in outer space, the oceans and the atmosphere and was initialed on July 23, 1963, by officials of the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union. For the United States, formal acceptance of the treaty awaited a second hurdle—ratification by a two-thirds majority vote of the Senate. It is because of the "checks and balances" nature of the American Constitution that US decision making on this issue takes the form of multiple autonomous groups, involving the Senate and the President along with his advisers and the national security bureaucracies. And across time a set of rules of the game has developed between the President and Senate with respect to treaty ratification with both sides accepting the legitimacy of the other to exercise bounded authority over such matters.

In the case of the Test Ban Treaty the rules are summed up in the adage that "the President proposes and Congress disposes." The American Constitution, in effect, stipulates rules for resolving disagreements between the executive and legislative branches with regard to ratification of treaties that can be construed as favoring the legislative branch because only one-third plus one of the members of the US Senate are needed to block a treaty drafted by the executive. When, in a given situation, the rules appear to favor one group over the others, there is incentive for the other groups to try to bargain with the favored group to achieve some of their ends before the rules are set in motion and the favored group's position is adopted. Generally at issue is whether the less favored groups can offer some concessions or a trade-off to save some of their position.

Lepper (1971) notes that although the Kennedy Administration was jubilant about completing the negotiations with the Soviets on the Test Ban Treaty, they perceived that the general climate of opinion in the Senate opposed any treaty with the Soviet Union. Certain key senators on the important military and foreign affairs committees that were having hearings on the treaty (e.g., Jackson, Stennis and Russell) declared their hostility to the treaty openly. Realizing he had an uphill battle, Kennedy mobilized those in the executive branch who favored the treaty to campaign for it. "The Administration witnesses for the Congressional hearings were carefully selected and scheduled for their appearances before the committees" (Lepper, 1971, p. 84). But Kennedy's most important action involved the assurances he offered to the Senate when the treaty appeared to be getting bogged down in one

particularly hostile committee. He stated publicly that a number of safeguards would be taken to ensure that the United States was not disadvantaged by the treaty. These safeguards included promises that underground testing would be vigorously carried out, that the United States would actively watch for and strongly protest any Soviet violations of the treaty, and that the government would maintain a strong weapons research program. Lepper (1971) observes that these assurances helped convince undecided senators. Moreover, these assurances made the treaty more palatable to skeptical senators. And when the Senate vote was finally taken, it was 80 for ratification and 19 opposed. A mutually acceptable position had been reached among a working coalition on both sides. Kennedy traded the assurances for the treaty.

The Test Ban Treaty ratification illustrates some basic features of the multiple-autonomous-groups mode of decision making under non-zero-sum conditions. Bargaining and negotiation among the parties become important tools for resolving differences among the groups. Compromise between the preferred positions of the various parties is likely to be evident in the foreign policy outcome. Which parties can be expected to offer concessions more readily and more extensively depends upon who appears to be favored by the rules of the game as applied in the immediate situation. If the rules of the game are clear but the favored party seems uncertain, then bargaining among the parties still can be expected although the concessions may be more evenly matched. Where adequate rules do not yet exist, or are in the process of being institutionalized, multiple autonomous groups with a non-zero-sum relationship will have more trouble reaching agreement. Although the incentive to bargain will be present, the process may take longer, is more susceptible to outside manipulation, and still has some chance of deadlock. Figure 16.3 suggests what some of these possible outside forces are and their effect on foreign policy as well as summarizes our discussion of multiple autonomous groups with a non-zero-sum relationship.

Conclusions

In this essay we have argued that at the apex of foreign policy making in all governments or ruling parties there are a group of actors with the ability to commit the resources of the government and with the power to prevent other entities within the government from reversing their position—the ultimate decision unit. Although this decision unit may change with the nature of the foreign policy problem and across time,

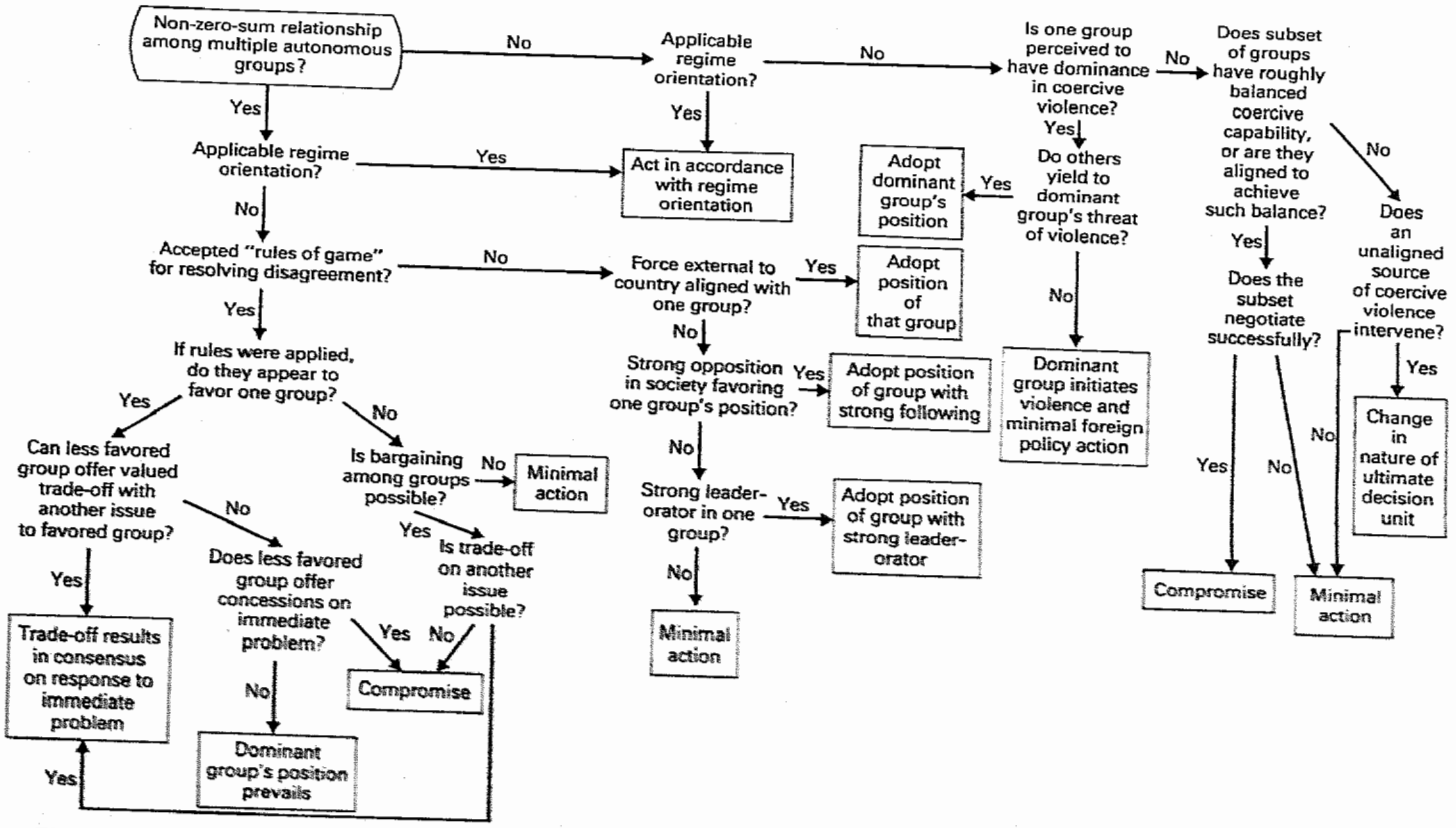


Figure 16.3 Outcomes depending on whether relationship among multiple autonomous groups is zero-sum or non-zero-sum

how it is structured will shape what a government does in the foreign policy arena. Our proposal is that the decision process in each type of decision unit channels and molds the impact of the wider domestic and international environment on foreign policy behavior. In other words, the ultimate decision unit serves either to "amplify" or "dampen" a government's initial predisposition to act on a foreign policy problem. In effect, the government's definition of internal and external pressures may predispose it to act in a particular manner, but the precise character of its actions will be modified by properties of the ultimate decision unit.

We have postulated that there are three types of ultimate decision units—predominant leader, single group and multiple autonomous groups. Each of these types of ultimate decision units exists in one of several states or conditions that help to determine whether the decision unit directly affects foreign policy making or whether factors outside the decision unit must be taken into consideration in understanding the decision-making process. By ascertaining which of the three types of decision units is the ultimate decision unit for a particular foreign policy problem and its state or condition, we have shown how an analyst can narrow the range of variables that need to be considered in explaining the nature of the resulting foreign policy behavior.

The framework we have outlined in this essay provides some basis for making cross-national comparisons among governmental decision-making bodies. It contains concepts that can be applied to a variety of different types of political systems. And it enables us to put into perspective the extensive array of different entities within a government that can make foreign policy. Furthermore, the framework gives us a means for comparing and contrasting different types of decision units. In effect, it makes the decision unit a more accessible unit of analysis for the student of comparative foreign policy.

Notes

Earlier versions of this chapter were presented at the International Studies Association meeting in Cincinnati, March 24–27, 1982, and at the International Society of Political Psychology meeting in Mannheim, West Germany, June 24–27 1981. Work on the chapter was supported by the Mershon Center of Ohio State University. The authors would like to thank Lloyd Etheredge, Richard Herrmann, Terrence Hoppmann, Steve Ropp and Dina Zinnes, as well as members of their research group (Aaron Adler, Valerie Hudson, Greg Peacock and Eric Singer) for their helpful comments on previous drafts of the chapter.

1 To make our presentation less complicated we have been discussing here

leaders who are either sensitive or insensitive. In actuality, there is probably a continuum of sensitivity with leaders differing in their degree of openness to information from the environment. Sensitivity also may not be a general phenomenon but change with issues or by level of interest or expertise in the area of the foreign policy problem. We will use the term "relatively" sensitive or insensitive to indicate that we realize sensitivity has some subtle nuances we are not confronting directly in what is described in this chapter.

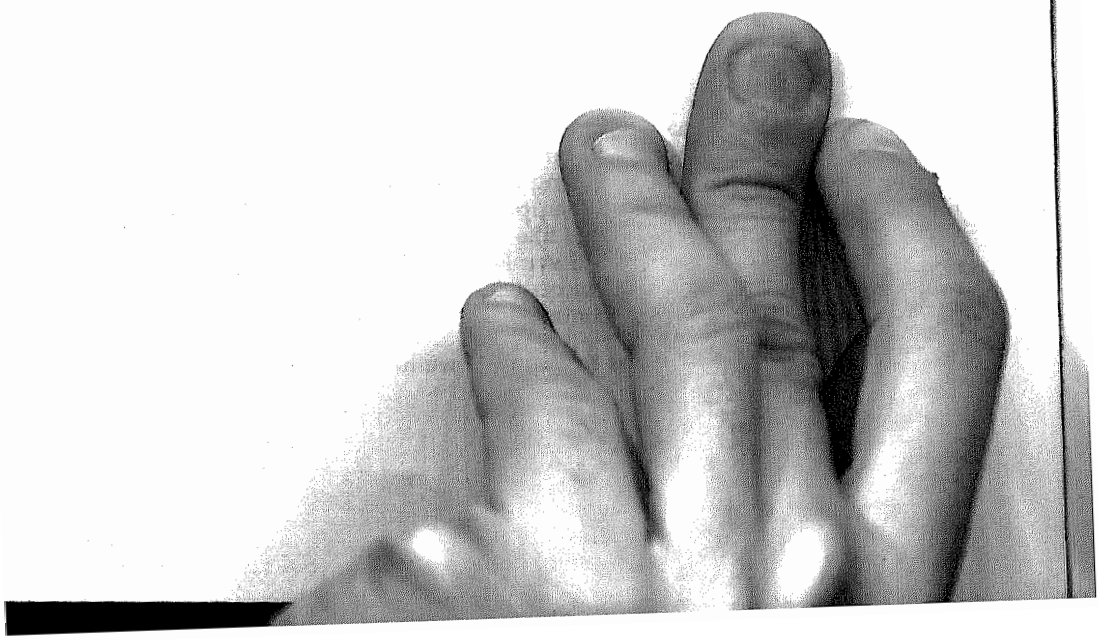
2 In another place (M. Hermann and C. Hermann, 1982), we have described a way of determining which of the three types of decision units is the ultimate decision unit for a particular regime in a given situation. Through the use of a decision tree, we can ascertain for a particular foreign policy problem and regime whether the ultimate decision unit is likely to be a predominant leader, single group or multiple autonomous groups.

3 In this case illustration, as in the others presented in this chapter, we have depended on specific sources for interpretation of the events that took place. We are not experts on the various cases and are, therefore, not able to evaluate the analyses. We, however, have found these particular descriptions of the cases useful in our own thinking about decision units and as examples of the conceptual material.

4 In June 1970, the United States government made a new proposal to the Israelis that fulfilled the peace conditions of some of the members of the cabinet but not those of other members and, therefore, did not enable an appeal to a regime orientation nor such a prompt consensus.

5 Useful treatments of the Iranian political scene, the events surrounding the hostage crisis, the Iranian decision making during the crisis include Rouleau, 1980; Keddie, 1981; Kifner, 1981; Smith, 1981; Stempel, 1981; and Sick, 1985. For more limited coverage, see Rubin, 1980; and Ledeen and Lewis, 1981.

6 In this figure as well as in the two other figures presented in this essay, a "yes" answer to the first question leads into the series of questions that determines foreign policy behavior for the externally penetrable decision unit while a "no" answer leads into the questions appropriate to determining foreign policy behavior for the self-contained decision units.



PART VI

Domestic Influences on Foreign Policy

17

Regimes, Political Oppositions, and the Comparative Analysis of Foreign Policy

JOE D. HAGAN

Although it is often assumed that "politics stops at the water's edge," domestic politics and foreign policy are typically closely interwoven. For Americans, this has become particularly apparent over the past decade. Constrained by the breakup of the Cold War consensus and the reassertion of congressional powers, presidents have found it increasingly difficult to cope with the ambiguities and interdependencies of the international system in the 1980s. Nor are these pressures unique to the pluralist American political system. Few governments, democratic or authoritarian, appear to be immune from domestic political constraints. Many are weakened by internal divisions and/or lack of support from the wider polity. Domestic politics further complicates foreign policy making, leaving these governments even less capable of coping with an already complex array of foreign policy problems.

This chapter is concerned with the status of political explanations in the field of comparative foreign policy. It begins with a brief summary and critique of existing comparative foreign policy research on political influences, noting that most empirical studies have addressed mainly the role of accountability, often using it as a surrogate measure of domestic constraints. It seeks to develop more precise indicators of domestic political constraints, ones based on actual, existing political oppositions that can potentially occur in any type of political system. Conceptualizations of two kinds of regime-level opposition are offered—regime fragmentation and vulnerability. A brief empirical analysis is presented, one identifying and classifying regimes and another examining their correlations with several dimensions of foreign policy behavior. This analysis serves two purposes. First, it illustrates how one can effectively collect cross-national data on political opposi-