People and Processes in Foreign Policymaking:

Insights from Comparative Case Studies

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The previous articles in this special issue have elaborated a framework for classifying the people involved in foreign policymaking into decision units. Of particular interest has been examining the circumstances under which one type of decision unit takes responsibility for making the choice regarding how to deal with a foreign policy problem and the effect of the nature of that decision unit on the substance of the action selected. The present article is intended to report the results of the application of the framework to sixty-five case studies involving foreign policy issues facing thirty-one countries from all regions of the world. A list of the cases can be found in the appendix.

In applying the framework, specialists and advanced graduate students were asked to focus on a particular foreign policy problem, identify specific occasions for decision that confronted the government in dealing with the problem, decide which of the three types of decision units had the authority to commit the resources of the government for a specific occasion for decision, and examine the decision process leading to the selection of a foreign policy action regarding that occasion for decision. Beyond building a cross-national set of case studies that employ the same framework, we were interested in the answers to three questions. (1) How easy is it to apply the framework to actual cases of foreign policymaking; can the queries in the framework be answered with the kinds of case materials that are available? (2) Do the variables and theories embedded in the framework correspond at all with the factors that historical evidence suggests are central to conceptualizing the decision process? (3) What lessons can we learn from the case applications to help us elaborate and refine the framework further?

We make no claim that the set of cases reported on here are a representative sample. A number of the cases (23 percent) were selected because the individuals knowledgeable about the case materials were also scholars with a strong interest in improving the conceptual rigor in comparative foreign policy analysis and had already done extensive research on the case to be examined. We were not asking for new research but rather for an application of the framework to ground familiar to each. The cases used as illustrations in the discussions of the three types of decision units in the previous articles were completed by these specialists. We asked them to consider how the model could be made richer theoretically to capture what happened in the historical situations. The rest of the cases (77 percent) were done by advanced graduate students who were interested in studying particular countries and governments; they wanted to increase their expertise regarding a region of the world and to explore the ramifications of the framework for understanding how foreign policy is made.[1] In their case studies, the students indicated their degree of confidence in the choices they were making in applying the framework given the materials available to them.

An attempt was made to include cases that showcased each of the three types of decision units. Some 40 percent (26) of the cases focused on decision units that involved predominant leaders, 37 percent (24) on decision units that were single groups, and 23 percent (15) on decision units that were coalitions.

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[1]The graduate students who did the case studies were participants in several summer workshops devoted to exploring the decision units framework at the Mershon Center, Ohio State University, as well as students in Comparative Foreign Policy Analysis courses at Ohio State University and in the Maxwell School, Syracuse University, taught by Margaret Hermann.

The countries represented in the case studies ranged in their degree of democratization, their level of development, and their status in the international system. We were also interested in exploring a mix of types of issues. Thus, the cases examined decisions to use force in response to immediate military concerns, attempts to negotiate conflicts peacefully, economic interactions, initiation of diplomatic activities, and problems growing out of human rights and environmental concerns. Although in a majority of the cases the governments were addressing time-urgent situations, roughly one quarter of the cases were more routine in nature. All but one of the cases occurred during the post-World War II era.

In what follows, we will report what we have learned about the decision units framework from the case studies and from the case analysts' comments after applying the framework to case materials. While none of the analysts found it impossible to use the framework, all provided us with insights about how it did, could, or should work. In several instances, these insights raised issues we had not considered before; in other instances, they helped to clarify problems we had identified but not yet resolved. Overall the analysts' questions posed challenges to the framework in three areas: (1) the overall importance of a decision-making perspective; (2) the difficulty in making some of the conceptual distinctions demanded by the framework; and (3) the comprehensiveness of the framework. Let us examine each of these areas in more detail.

ARE DECISION UNITS IMPORTANT IN SHAPING FOREIGN POLICY BEHAVIOR?

A basic premise of the theoretical effort described in this special issue is that the foreign policy actions of governments are shaped in significant ways by the nature of the unit involved in the decision-making process. Although we recognize that numerous domestic and international factors can, and do, influence foreign policy activity, we argue that these influences are channeled through the political structure of a government that identifies, decides, and implements foreign policy. We propose that the configuration and dynamics of the decision unit can affect the foreign policy action that is chosen, particularly if the resulting decision unit has the ability both to commit the resources of the society and to make a decision that cannot be readily reversed. In effect, the decision unit perceives and interprets the pressures and constraints posed by the domestic and international environments. Do the sixty-five case studies lend support to our premise? In other words, do the decisions specified by the framework match the choices made in the historical cases? And, are there any patterns to the effects that the decision units seem to have on governments' foreign policy behavior?

Match Between Framework-Determined and Historical Decisions

An examination of the match between the decisions resulting from the application of the framework with what happened in the historical cases indicated an overlap in fifty-four of the sixty-five cases (83 percent).[2] Case analysts were asked to compare the process outcomes they identified through applying the framework to their cases with what the historical material suggested happened. The authors determined the extent of the match based on the case analysts' comparisons. Recall from the previous description of the decision units framework that process outcomes denote whose positions have counted in the final decision and indicate the end point of the decision-making process. There are six possible outcomes: concurrence, one party's position prevails, mutual compromise/consensus, lopsided compromise, deadlock, and fragmented symbolic action.

The advanced graduate student case analysts also indicated their confidence in the choices they made in applying the decision units framework. They did so by noting high and low confidence in their decisions at the various choice points posed by the framework. Since the students generally had to rely on secondary sources for information on their cases, this indicator also reflects the amount of information that was available on which to make the determinations required by the framework. On average, the student analysts reported high confidence in their choices 75 percent of the time. For the cases where there was a match between the predicted outcome using the framework and the historical outcome, average high confidence was 85 percent; for the cases with a poor fit, average high confidence was 45 percent. More revealing, perhaps, are the data that show 95 percent of the cases where all the ratings of the analysts indicated high confidence exhibited an overlap between the outcomes proposed by applying the framework and reported in the case material. This percentage was 47 for those cases where none of the ratings of the analysts were high in confidence. Analysts indicated, on average, higher confidence in their choices in applying the framework to cases involving a predominant leader decision unit (80 percent) than the other two types of decision units. The average percentage of high confidence ratings for cases with a single group decision unit was 70 percent and for cases with a coalition decision unit, 67 percent. These data suggest that when there was sufficient detail available on how a particular decision was made the analysts were confident in the choices they were asked to make via the framework. Examining the process provided information about the resulting decision that was a good fit to what appeared to actually happen.

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[2] The data on which this analysis and the others reported in this article are based are available from the authors at mgherman@maxwell.syr.edu.

An examination of the "misses"—those cases where the framework failed to lead to a choice that resembled history—permits several observations about the relevance of decision units to understanding governments' foreign policy actions. The framework provides little extra information about a decision when all members of the decision unit concur on what should be done from the outset (or, if the decision unit is a predominant leader, the leader has a position that is reinforced by outside information). Consider, for example, the British cabinet's response to the invasion of the Falkland Islands or the Greek government's response to the Turkish intervention into Cyprus following the ouster of President Makarios. In cases like these where there is a foreign threat or challenge to the legitimacy of the government, members of the decision unit tend to put aside disagreements among themselves and focus their attention on the survival of the regime. The decision-making process is short-circuited as the members of the decision unit share a position regarding what needs to be done from the outset and act on this position.

The decision units framework described here becomes important when the members of the decision unit disagree or, at the least, do not have an initial consensus about what should be done in response to a particular occasion for decision and problem. In such instances, the framework provides one way of understanding how such decision units are likely to cope with these differences based on how they are configured. Of the sixty-five cases we have explored, 71 percent involved decision units where there was dissensus among those involved in the policymaking process. Often until these disagreements are resolved and some kind of consensus is built, little action is possible. The framework facilitates our saying whose positions are likely to count in this type of policymaking setting and indicates the process likely to be favored as well as what decision will probably be made.

The decision units framework also becomes useful in deciphering anomalous situations where the structure of the political system suggests one kind of policymaking is in effect while the domestic politics of the moment dictate another. Consider the incident where U.S. hostages were taken in Iran in 1979. American policymakers believed they were dealing with a regime that had a predominant leader, the Ayatollah Khomeini. Application of the decision units framework indicates, instead, that they were dealing with a coalition of actors in the process of determining the nature of the Iranian political structure following the revolution (see discussion of this case in the previous article on the coalition decision unit). The many variations in the behavior of the Iranian government in dealing with the problem was more reflective of the fragmented symbolic action often characteristic of coalition decision units where the various actors cannot agree than of the actions of a decision unit headed by a predominant leader. A more contemporary example involves the current Chinese leadership. Following in the footsteps of a Mao Zedong and Deng Xiao-

ping, it is an easy assumption to make that Jiang Zemin, like these other two, is a predominant leader. But examinations of the negotiations between the United States and China over the latter's entry into the World Trade Organization in the spring of 1999 and the Chinese government's reaction to the NATO bombing of their Belgrade embassy in May 1999 using the decision units framework reveal that these decisions were made by a single group composed of individuals with positions ranging from hard-line to moderate regarding the manner in which the Chinese government should deal with the United States (Chen and Chung, 2000; see also Gilboy and Heginbotham, 2001).

Effects on Foreign Policy Behavior

An examination of the sixty-five cases suggests that what goes on in the decision unit can affect governments' foreign policy behavior by highlighting or reinforcing domestic, international, or cultural constraints and pressures and, thus, amplifying the importance of such constraints on what happens, or by diminishing such constraints and pressures by giving them less credence. In the first instance, the decision unit reduces its own effect on foreign policy while in the second it enhances its role. Asking graduate students in a methods course to indicate which of the outcomes in the sixty-five cases appeared to emphasize the nature of the political context and which the nature of the decision unit revealed that 51 percent of the time the configuration of people making the authoritative decision had a greater effect on the choice than the constraints in the environment; 46 percent of the time what was happening in the political landscape was highlighted by the decision. The other 4 percent could not be classified.[3] Let us review some of the case examples from previous articles in this special issue to illustrate both types of decision units.

In analyzing Dutch decision making with regard to NATO's proposed deployment of cruise missiles as advocated by the Reagan administration, it was observed that forces in the society that both favored and opposed deployment were represented in the coalition cabinets charged with making a decision. The debate being waged in the domestic environment outside the cabinet was reinforced in the policymaking process as an antideployment wing of one of the major coalition parties prevented their leaders in the cabinet from supporting other party leaders and foreign ministry officials in accepting the missiles. The upshot of the division was a deadlock until the domestic forces against deployment calmed down.

International and cultural constraints can also be reinforced by the decision unit. In examining the Israeli government's decisions in 1967 in response to a

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[3] The inter-coder agreement among the students for these judgments averaged .88. Twelve students participated in the exercise.

clear threat from the Arab states, we note that policymakers sought information about U.S. support for military action before committing themselves to an action. Knowledge about what the United States would condone was important to shaping the options the Israelis believed they had in this particular instance. The importance of the norm of neutrality for the Swedes affected their government's response to the Soviet submarine stuck in their waters. Conditioned to live by this norm, Swedish policymakers did not consider alternatives that had any chance of jeopardizing neutrality.

But decision units also diminish the relevance of outside constraints, paying little attention to, or even dismissing, external pressures. These units shape what the government does more directly. Consider the Nigerian government's quick recognition of the MPLA as the legitimate government in Angola in 1975. This response can be traced to the presence of a strong political leader, Murtala Mohammed, who was intensely interested in this issue and in building an activist foreign policy for Nigeria as well as improving his country's power and legitimacy in inter-African affairs. The leadership style of a predominant leader overrode a wide variety of constraints that might have precluded such strong action by a pro-Western African regime. An examination of the British decisions during the Munich crisis also show the importance of what goes on in the decision unit in shaping what happens. Throughout the crisis, the inner cabinet included a leader who had strong preferences and members who raised questions about these preferences. The power, respect, and status of these opponents vis-à-vis the leader at any point in time had a greater impact on the decision than did information about the situation. Similarly, in the Iranian response to the student takeover of the U.S. embassy in Teheran in 1979, the struggle for power between the more militant mullahs, the moderates, the student captors, and the Ayatollah Khomeini coalesced around the hostages with all parties needing to participate in any decision to maintain their credibility as a force to be reckoned with in domestic politics. Who would win depended on who could exert the most influence in the decision unit on what happened with the hostages.

Whether the decision unit is likely to amplify or diminish the influence of external constraints appears to depend on the nature of the decision unit itself, in particular, the nature of the key contingencies in the parlance of the framework being discussed here. Decision units that amplify external constraints tend to be those that are more open to outside influences such as more sensitive predominant leaders, single groups with limited loyalty to the group itself and a unanimity decision rule, and coalitions where unanimity is required for a decision to be acceptable. In each of these types of decision units, information about the domestic and international environments is important to shaping what the policymakers see as feasible alternatives as well as to helping them define the problem they are facing. The decision unit is structured so that policy-

makers are interested in seeking information from outside the unit to under-stand where important constituencies stand and to determine the options they can support. The members of the decision unit perceive a certain responsibility to these external forces and bring them into the decision process.

Decision units that tend to diminish the effects of outside constraints seem generally more closed to what is going on around them. The focus of attention is on what is happening inside the decision unit—on what the relatively insensitive predominant leader wants, on maintaining the cohesion of the group for members whose identity resides in the group itself, on solving the problem for members of the single group with loyalty elsewhere but with a majority decision rule, on winning out over the others for members of the coalition with no rules, and on reaching some modicum of agreement among members of the coalition with rules that allow for majority rule. The members of these decision units are turned inward and are intent on achieving a particular goal. They become rather oblivious to external forces; outside information intrudes only as it helps to bolster a member's position.

In another place, two of the authors (Hermann and Hermann, 1989) found a relationship between this open-closed phenomenon and governments' foreign policy behavior. In an examination of the foreign policy activity of twenty-five countries, the closed decision units (those that tend to diminish external pressures) engaged in more extreme foreign policy activity than the open decision units (those that tend to amplify external constraints). The open units displayed more cautious behavior, resorting to compromise more than the closed units. Indeed, the closed units were more likely to push their positions, to commit their resources, and to be conflictual in the foreign policy arena than the open units. In essence, the open units were more constrained by the situation in their foreign policy behavior while the closed units appeared to go their own way. Hagan (1993) found a similar set of results examining how these different types of decision units related to domestic opposition. The open units were more likely to accommodate to opposition; the closed units to challenge (suppress, scapegoat, highlight differences, co-opt, etc.) any opposition.

This analysis seems to suggest that an understanding of how decision units shape foreign policy may be more relevant if the decision units being studied have the characteristics of a closed rather than an open unit. But, on reflection, an examination of the open units provides the analyst with information about which external forces are probably going to be taken into consideration by the decision unit in its deliberations and how such constraints are likely to affect the decision. Moreover, if the decision unit has the characteristics of an open unit, the analyst can rather safely hypothesize that it will engage in fairly cautious, deliberative behavior that will not commit many of the resources of the government and be more cooperative in tone. In effect, the closed unit bears within it the seeds of innovation, change, and unilateral initiatives as well as

deadlock. The open unit reflects more of an interest in maintaining the status quo, being relatively incremental and provisional in its behavior.

How Easy Is the Framework to Use?

A major value of the case studies has been to aid in the identification of problems, both theoretical and mechanical, in the framework. Both the specialists and students who prepared the case studies took seriously the request to consider how easy it was to apply the framework to a historical situation. While none found it difficult to use the framework, they did raise a number of questions as they worked through the case materials. Their observations fall into four categories: (1) the information required by the framework, (2) the focus on a single occasion for decision, (3) the specification of the boundaries between types of decision units, and (4) the relevance of theory to defining what happened.

Information Required by Framework

A reading of the pieces in this special issue that describe the various types of decision units suggests that in applying the framework the analyst needs rather detailed information about the decision-making process. And, indeed, it is for this reason that many scholars of foreign policy and international relations have precluded studying how decisions are made. They argue the information is too hard to find and often, when available, is incomplete. Thus, we were fortunate to have among those doing case studies for us individuals who had studied a particular case extensively and in that examination paid close attention to the policymaking process. These experts pushed us to clarify the criteria for making certain judgments and facilitated the elaboration of the guides now provided to analysts starting to apply the framework. But they also complemented the framework for its focus on the use of key contingencies to differentiate among types of decision units. By distinguishing how sensitive a predominant leader is, where the primary identity of members of a single group lies, and if a coalition has rules or not, the framework points the analyst in a particular direction and specifies the kinds of information that will be needed to indicate what is likely to happen. Once these initial distinctions are made, only certain kinds of information are necessary to denote the process and substantive outcomes. An attempt has been made in the framework to limit the analyst's task after the initial specification of the decision unit. In effect, the decision unit framework helps the analyst denote whose positions are probably going to count in the policymaking process for a particular problem, thus narrowing down the number of people and groups that have to be studied.

An examination of the graduate students' cases that were completed in the past several years indicates that the ease in collecting detail about the policy-

making process has increased as more countries and governments use the Web to provide current information about events and policies. Although some care must be taken to ensure the authenticity of the information, students have been surprised by what is available on how decisions were made. Moreover, the media has become more involved in analyzing particular decisions, interviewing those who participated in the decision-making process and overviewing available documents. Autobiographical and biographical materials are increasing as policymakers' points of view and involvement are documented. Because, however, it still remains easier to report on and study the decisions of one leader than to examine what goes on within a group or coalition, more of the materials that are extant provide information about predominant leader decision units than those involving single groups or coalitions of actors.

In applying the framework to the sixty-five cases, we have been reconstructing history. That is, those engaged in the case studies have used the framework to examine decisions that have already been made and about which we have some records. Another way to think about the framework is to envision it as a forecasting tool, as a means of understanding what a government is likely to do in response to a foreign policy problem. A number of the experts and students in the present study observed that once having applied the framework they recognized that it provided them with a tool for organizing new case study information. Indeed, one (Sundelius, Stern, and Bynander, 1997; see also Stern, 1999) has found parts of the framework relevant to examining crisis management in a number of European countries. Could it also serve as a way of collecting material regarding a current case? Knowing something about the structure of the government facing the problem, could we ascertain what decision unit is likely to deal with such issues and begin searching for information to answer the appropriate questions regarding that particular type of unit? Where information is sparse, we could follow several paths in ascertaining the nature of the process outcome to see which best matches what actually appears to happen. When a governmental decision on the problem became evident, we could compare our prediction with the decision that was made and examine what information did, or would have helped, in making the correct inferences.

Focus on a Single Occasion for Decision

The decision units framework is triggered by a foreign policy problem facing a government and, in particular, a specific occasion for decision that requires action. Those writing the sixty-five case studies examined here had little difficulty in isolating occasions for decision. In fact, most cases involved a number of such occasions; in several it was possible to identify over twenty occasions for decision. The data indicate that policymakers make multiple decisions in responding to a problem. In reality, what scholars often identify as a single case

is composed of a variety of points in time when some decision unit is faced with making a choice. And often the kind of decision unit responsible for taking action changes across these occasions for decision in the course of dealing with a problem. Consider the number of occasions for decision that faced the new Bush administration in the spring of 2001 as the U.S. government tried to get its crew and plane back from Chinese soil after a collision with a Chinese fighter off the South China coast. As observers of this event, we counted fifteen.

Although we instructed those doing the cases to explicate only the occasions for decision that resulted in authoritative actions on the part of the government, it became quickly evident that such decisions are not made at a single moment in time when policymakers meet and resolve the issue. Instead, there can be multiple such occasions for decision that cross days, weeks, and even months—if not, at times, years. By applying the framework to these different occasions for decision, the analyst gains a perspective on the twists and turns that policymakers engage in as they try to cope with the problem facing them. Analysts also learn what decision units were involved in working on the problem and how the type of unit may have changed across time. The multiple occasions for decision described in the case studies being discussed here suggest the viability of injecting a dynamic element into the decision units framework by focusing on the sequence of choices that appear to be contained in many foreign policy problems. Understanding how the results from one occasion for decision influence and/or mingle with information from the environment to shape the nature of the next occasion for decision can provide us with insights about the choice-making process across time. Whereas examination of a single occasion for decision provides us information about policymaking within a particular type of decision unit on an aspect of the problem, examination of multiple occasions for decision enables us to learn about the government's strategy and way of coping with the more general problem. Like the meteorologist, studying one occasion for decision is similar to giving the weather forecast for tomorrow in a specific city, while exploring multiple occasions for decision suggests what to expect the general pattern of the weather to be over the next week or month. At issue is how does what happens in each occasion for decision influence what goes on in the others. We will return to this topic in a later section when we consider how to make the framework more dynamic.

Specification of Boundaries Between Types of Decision Units

Although a lot of effort went into distinguishing the conceptual boundaries between the three types of decision units and the conditions of the key contingency variables, the case study authors raised some further concerns. Their problems grew out of the framework's focus on involving the informal decision structures in foreign policymaking not simply the structural arrangements for-

mally stipulated by a constitution or the like. Some examples will illustrate the issues.

What if we have a fairly powerful leader and his advisers meeting in response to an occasion for decision. And assume for the moment that the leader is sensitive to contextual information and, thus, interested in input from the advisers. Is the authoritative decision unit in this instance a sensitive predominant leader or a single group with a dominant leader whose members are loyal? The critical issue here is the role of the advisers. Are they simply providing advice and information which the leader will take and use in making his or her own decision or do the advisers wield authority within the group such that they constrain what the leader can do—that is, can they say no to what the leader wants and have their decision become governmental policy? Sometimes scholars can disagree over the answer to this query. Take, for instance, Britain's decisions during the Munich crisis. While some (e.g., Walker and Watson, 1989; Walker, 1990) argue that Chamberlain operated as the leader of a single group (the inner cabinet) whose members' primary identity was to the group in this crisis situation, others (e.g., Colvin, 1971; Middlemas, 1972) conclude that Chamberlain was a predominant leader who used the inner cabinet to legitimate his own decisions. For this case, analyzing the five occasions for decision that occurred during the height of the crisis reveals "a pattern of Cabinet decisions rather than Prime Minister's Rule" (Walker, 1990:23). Indeed, in the fourth and fifth occasions for decision the cabinet overruled Chamberlain's preferences.

Another problem in distinguishing among decision units revolved around the presence of "outside experts" (e.g., the military, financial consultants, regional specialists). What is the role of experts who are invited into a group's deliberations and appear to have a significant impact on what happens but are not generally a part of the group? The answer to this question has implications for the single group decision unit when unanimity is required. And it can suggest that what usually is a single group decision unit may become a coalition of autonomous actors for a particular occasion for decision. Consider the roles that the ministers responsible for Cyprus and EU affairs played in the Turkish inner cabinet's decision in 1999 regarding whether or not to accept candidacy in the European Union that carried with it certain stipulations not applied to other candidate states relating to Cyprus and its Aegean disputes with Greece (Cuhadar, 2000). Both ministers participated in the discussions concerning what the Turkish government's response should be even though they were not official members of the decision-making group. Unanimity was the decision rule governing this particular group composed of the leaders of the three parties who had formed the government and the minister of foreign affairs. An examination of the decision-making process indicated that unanimity was required only among those who usually made up the group because as leaders of their parties each had the capability of bringing the government down if he or she did

not agree with the decision. Moreover, for the most part, this inner circle had been the group that had handled the negotiations with the EU over candidacy. The "extras" in the meetings were viewed as experts on the issues under discussion; they served in an advisory capacity to provide information the others needed in pursuing a decision. This case suggests that an important criterion in determining the role outside experts are playing revolves around whether or not they can block or reverse the decision. Even though the minister for Cyprus disagreed with the decision the inner cabinet made, he did not have the authority or legitimacy to change it once made nor to be considered among those whose acceptance was necessary for there to be unanimity.

A third cloudy area in distinguishing among types of decision units comes when we are faced with a coalition cabinet. Because coalition cabinets in parliamentary systems are generally composed of representatives from different political parties, they are usually considered coalitions of autonomous actors. Yet, at times, they can be viewed as single groups. Often such coalition cabinets become single groups when the government faces a threat to its survival or legitimacy—for instance, there is a suicide bombing or Arab attack on the Israeli government which has in recent times been led by a coalition; there is a challenge to the neutrality principle of Sweden or a foreign submarine trapped in its waters. Quick decisive action is demanded and differences among parties and groups become more muted. At issue here is how necessary is it that the cabinet members check back with their party leadership before presenting or considering a proposal before the cabinet. If the cabinet member cannot make a decision on his or her own without checking first with the party leadership, the decision unit is a coalition. If, however, the cabinet member can act more autonomously—he or she is the leader of a party—we argue that the decision unit is a single group.

Relevance of Theory to Defining What Happened

The variables that become relevant to examine for each of the decision units in the decision-making process were derived from bodies of theory that have emerged from several decades of research examining the impact of leaders, groups, and coalitions on governments' foreign policy. These theories have been detailed in the articles in this special issue on each of the types of decision units. The key contingencies were selected because they differentiated among the various theories that have developed around these three types of units. We were interested in whether the case studies reinforced the theoretical insights already built into the variables in the framework, provided us with new variables that elaborated previous theory, or indicated lack of support for a theory. Using these questions as a guide, we have examined the "decision paths" designated in the previous articles for the fifty-four cases where there was a fit

between the process outcome from an application of the framework and the historical outcome. Generally there were three to four cases to study for each of the types of decision units after the key contingency variables were applied.

Predominant leader. For the most part the twenty-two cases where there was a match between framework-determined and historical outcomes for predominant leader decision units also reinforced theory. The best fit occurred for the highly insensitive leaders—the crusaders—who exhibited expansionistic or evangelistic leadership styles. Figures like Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic followed expectations in the cases that were examined. The worst fit between theory and outcome was for the moderately insensitive leaders—the strategists—who though they challenge constraints do so by testing the political winds and seeking out a range of information. These leaders have goals but the means of achieving them are determined by the nature of the political context and what seems feasible at that point in time. Hafez al-Assad, F. W. deKlerk, and Anwar Sadat are examples of such leaders who were studied in the cases. It is easy for the analyst to expect a more extreme action than the rather moderate, low-risk responses that can result. Important in considering what strategic leaders are likely to do appears to be knowledge in the particular situation about what are relatively "safe" bets politically that will facilitate movement toward a goal. If there are none, inaction is a real possibility. Moreover, strategic leaders are highly influenced by the people who provide them information about the current political context; thus, examining these individuals' views can aid in determining what may be viewed by the leader as safe politically.

Single group. In 80 percent of the twenty groups examined in the case studies that matched the historical outcomes, at least half the variables identified as relevant to understanding the decision process in single-group decision units were included in the analysis. And in most instances the case studies that determined a single group was the authoritative decision unit and were predicted accurately by the framework fit theoretical expectations. Those that differed from the theory reinforced our view that there are alternative processes that allow groups to bypass the so-called pathological outcomes of group decision making proposed in discussions of groupthink and bureaucratic politics.

    In several cases, the single-group decision units whose members' primary identity was to the group were able to break out of the groupthink mold because group norms permitted serious examination of other options or there was an individual in the group who forced the leader to review other alternatives. Consider the role Clark Clifford played in President Johnson's Tuesday Lunch group during the Vietnam War. It was difficult for Johnson to continue disregarding Clifford's growing distaste for the war given his general admiration and respect for Clifford's ideas in general. Here was somebody the group thought

highly of who was not going along with the majority and calling the options the group was discussing into question. If the group was to continue to function, members had to listen to Clifford and consider how to incorporate his views into the group's decisions.

Single groups that must reach unanimity before action is possible and whose identity lies outside the group appear able to escape the so-called resultant effect concomitant with bureaucratic politics through the presence of a broker. These are members who have no personal or organizational stake in what happens with regard to the issue under discussion but have the ability to question others closely about the relative merits of their options and to push for evidence for their interpretations of what needs doing. The Soviet Politburo's decision to resume sending offensive weapons to Egypt in January 1973 was the result, in part, of the efforts of Suslov to act as a broker on this issue in return for a quid pro quo in the future (Stewart, Hermann, and Hermann, 1989). The Brezhnev Politburo had the norm of building consensus/unanimity before taking action.

Coalition. In 75 percent of the twelve coalitions examined in the cases studies that matched historical outcomes, over half the variables identified as relevant to understanding the decision process in coalition decision units were included in the analysis. And in most instances the case studies that determined a coalition was the authoritative decision unit and were predicted accurately by the framework fit theoretical expectations. The couple that differed from the theory reinforced our view that pivotal actors, particularly those that control relevant resources, have an important role to play in the decisions that coalitions make. In coalition decision units there are two types of pivotal actors. In considerations of coalitions where the majority can rule, a pivotal actor is a member for whom "the absolute difference between the combined votes (weights) of members on his right and of members on his left is not greater than his own weight" (De Swaan, 1973:89). Any policy agreement must necessarily include this actor. Or, in coalitions where there are no rules and anarchy prevails, the pivotal actor is that person, group, or institution who controls disproportionate amounts of key political resources. Such actors can shape the nature of the process by pushing for their preferences or by acting as a mediator.

An illustration of the role a pivotal actor can play is found in examining the Turkish government's reaction to the overthrow of Makarios on Cyprus and a threatened Greek annexation of the island in the summer of 1974 (Ozkececi, 2000). The coalition involved in responding to this occasion for decision included the cabinet, the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the military, and the National Security Council; the coalition could take action with a majority supporting a response. At the outset, however, there were hot debates within all circles as to the appropriate action. With authority in or over each of the members of the coalition, Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit attended all the meetings of the various entities,

keeping all informed of the others' positions and arguments. Using this personal diplomacy, Ecevit was able to build a majority among the members of the coalition for intervention into Cyprus. In this instance, the prime minister used the authority he had to interact with all members of the coalition to press a position that he favored and to gradually counter the arguments against his preference.

How Comprehensive Is the Framework?

Of interest in the development of any framework are concerns over capturing the essence of the domain one is trying to model. A valuable outgrowth of the collection of case studies that we now have applying the framework is that their authors have considered if there are major elements missing from the framework—if we have inadvertently excluded important decision-making dynamics from consideration. They have made some highly relevant suggestions.

But before turning to these proposals, let us reiterate that the decision units framework is not intended to be a general explanation of foreign policy. The focus, instead, is on foreign policy decision making at the point of choice. The framework examines the policymaking processes of those actors (powerful leaders, single groups, or coalitions of actors) who have the authority to commit the resources of the government with respect to a particular occasion for decision without having their decision reversed. International and domestic factors are only included as they are interpreted by, or represented in, the members of the decision unit. Moreover, the framework currently does not explore how the problem gets defined or how decisions get implemented. In essence, the framework is intended to aid in understanding how foreign policy decisions are made by those with the authority to commit the government to a particular action or set of actions when faced with an occasion for decision.

Having thus delimited the focus of the framework, the case study authors argue that we inadvertently let in the "back door" some of what was supposed to be excluded. There are the "outside experts" who are not part of the official, or even unofficial, authoritative decision unit with power to make a decision without reversal and yet, nonetheless, help to frame the problem and the options being considered by those with authority. Then there is domestic political opposition that, if strong, can shape the expectations of what is possible in the authoritative decision makers' minds if the latter hope to retain their positions and legitimacy. And what about the degree of uncertainty the authoritative decision makers have regarding the nature of the problem that is facing them; when is a problem sufficiently defined to take action? Moreover, how do cultural and political norms restrict the kinds of choices policymakers can make regardless of the nature of the decision unit? Let us explore these concerns in more detail.

A number of the issues raised by the case study authors center around the definition of the problem phase of the decision-making process and, in particular, who or what gets to frame the way the problem is viewed. In certain instances, those who discover something has happened have the initial chance to define the problem, however accurate their representation is. Thus, a Swedish nuclear plant manager perceived that his plant had had an accident because of the increased radiation on his employees when, indeed, the radiation was coming from the Chernobyl plant in the Soviet Union (Stern, 1999). It may take time to re-frame the problem once policymakers lock onto an initial perception of what is occurring. Who the authoritative decision makers are may, in turn, shift as the problem definition changes. Similarly, domestic political opposition may inadvertently help to transform how a problem is represented. Consider the effect of the opposition voices that crowded into a stadium to listen to Clinton's foreign policy team discuss the relevance of military air strikes against Iraq in the winter of 1998 weapons inspection crisis (Swords, 2000). In what the Clinton White House had considered a safe midwestern venue, their foreign policy team was roundly criticized and on national television. What was supposed to be merely reporting a decision had the impact of re-shaping the nature of the problem and what options were viable.

Certain cultural and political norms can limit the kinds of options that can be considered in dealing with a problem. Indeed, problems and options may be linked. For example, the Israeli image of certain Arab states and groups as enemies translates into conflictual behavior when policymakers perceive even the slightest threat. It takes little activity on the part of these Arabs to be viewed as threatening. The norm of Swedish neutrality is another case in point. Under such a norm, violent options are almost unthinkable in response to a foreign policy problem unless one's survival is at stake; only those alternatives that maintain neutrality are feasible.

Just like cultural and political norms, the expectations and experiences of the policymakers can also influence not only how problems are framed but the types of alternative actions that can be pursued. In the presentation of the material on the coalition decision unit, Everts discussed the cross-pressures facing the Dutch cabinet in the highly controversial cruise missile case. The concerns that Dutch policymakers had regarding their own futures probably were more important in defining the options that the cabinet viewed as available to them than the external pressures from their NATO allies. Although the parliamentary opponents and leaders of the antinuclear movement did not participate in the proceedings of the decision unit (nor were they really in a position to remove the cabinet from power), by their actions they were able to shape the policymakers' expectations of what was possible. So-called outside experts invited to provide information and options to members of the decision unit can also shape what the decision makers view as feasible. And depending on which experts are

included or excluded from participation, certain options can be highlighted or not discussed at all (see Hoyt and Garrison, 1997).

What we have been describing here seems to be an important characteristic of most decision units when faced with a problem: they engage in reducing their uncertainty regarding the nature of the problem and the options they have for dealing with the problem. And they use a number of different tactics to delimit what they are experiencing. Moreover, policymakers may buy time to search for more information through fairly minimal or maintenance-oriented foreign policy behavior when the occasion for decision is perceived to involve a high degree of uncertainty. As a result, a decision unit may be involved in more occasions for decision when the problem is uncertain and combine the definition of the problem and choice-making stages of the decision process together or work back and forth between the two. Several of our case study authors have proposed that the decision units framework may be more appropriate for those occasions for decision when the members of the decision unit believe they understand both the nature of the problem and their options and are ready to act.

These challenges to the decision units framework all center around the fact that a decision unit does not come to each occasion for decision as a tabula rasa acting as if it were, in essence, a brand new problem. An important next step in making the framework more comprehensive in detailing the decision-making process involves constructing a more dynamic model by examining a sequence of occasions for decision. In the process, we can begin to elaborate the parts of the framework that now appear truncated.

TOWARD CONSTRUCTION OF A DYNAMIC FRAMEWORK[4]

The decision units framework was designed around the occasion for decision as the basic unit of analysis because it denoted that period of time when the authoritative policymakers responsible for handling a specific foreign policy problem remained constant. The occasion for decision is like the single frame in a movie. When new information is perceived that calls for another round of decisions, we have a new occasion for decision and, perhaps, another type of decision unit. And just as with a movie, we recognize as an outgrowth of the sixty-five case studies that it is critical now to devise a means of putting the film into

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[4] This section builds on two papers by Hermann and Billings (1993, 1995). The authors would like to thank Robert Billings for his many insights regarding sequential decision making.

motion and explaining how we get from one frame to another. We need to locate discrete occasions for decision into a dynamic process that captures a particular decision unit's experiences with prior choices and relevant intervening developments. Should the authoritative decision unit shift in an ongoing problem, it is important that we can identify to what degree, if any, these policymakers are likely to build upon, or react to, the actions of the previous decision unit. In essence, we are interested in the relationship between the decision units framework and sequential decision making.

Thoughtful scholars have long acknowledged that policymaking is itself an ongoing process in which decisions (and nondecisions) generate responses that create new opportunities for choice (e.g., Lindblom, 1959; Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin, 1962; Brecher, 1972; Steinbruner, 1974; Axelrod, 1984). Indeed, recognition of the serial nature of decision making appears in the literatures on cybernetics, incrementalism, game theory, escalation of commitment, and risk taking. But generally after raising the issue most studies include only one or two iterations or simply treat the actual sequence as a given (see Stevenson, Busemeyer, and Naylor, 1990). As a result, the following discussion is necessarily preliminary and awaits further exploration, as does the notion of sequential decision making in the study of foreign policymaking more generally.

In the following discussion we will consider that sequential decision making occurs when policymakers engage in a series of decisions about the same problem across a period of time. Decisions (to take certain actions or to do nothing at present) are made in response to an initial occasion for decision. With these first steps comes a momentary sense of closure and those involved turn their attention to other matters. The decision making becomes sequential when these same actors find themselves faced with reconsidering the problem or some variant of it. In elaborating the decision units framework, we seek to understand the circumstances under which prior decisions are allowed to stand, are adjusted, or are completely altered. To help with this task, we need the answers to two questions: (1) When will a decision unit reconsider a prior decision about an ongoing problem rather than continue the status quo without deliberation? (2) When a decision unit does reconsider a prior decision, under what conditions will it change its earlier position?

Reconsideration vs. Continuation

In some instances policymakers may recognize that their current decisions will necessitate future decisions on the same problem. When the Israeli cabinet decided to send Foreign Minister Eban to consult with the American government in the face of the rapidly deploying Arab forces just before the Six-Day War in 1967, they knew there would be further decisions to make in the near future. In other circumstances, those in the authoritative decision unit may expect

that they have acted definitively on a problem. Probably the Dutch cabinet believed in November 1985 when they finally were able to agree on the deployment of the new cruise missiles on Dutch soil that they had at long last disposed of what had seemed a never-ending problem. So, in these latter cases, what leads the decision unit to take up the issue yet again?

Moreover, reconsideration of a previous decision or set of prior decisions is only the first step. When policymakers do reconsider a decision, will they change their prior position? A decision unit may reconvene to review its past actions and subsequent developments, concluding that no new decisions are appropriate. Or they may elect to redouble their efforts and increase their commitment to the course previously established. Alternatively, they might choose to change direction, that is, to terminate the prior action and follow another course. If a new action is taken, it may vary from past actions in both magnitude and direction. It might involve only a minor adjustment or clarification in the previous activity or it could entail a major increase in the commitment to the prior act. And the decision unit could initiate a complete break with the previous behavior and reverse their policy direction. During the long course of the American involvement in Vietnam, all these different types of responses occurred at one time or another.

From an analytic point of view, we can suggest a number of circumstances under which policymakers logically could be expected to reexamine a prior decision and modify the actions they took earlier. If the prior action was *successful* in achieving its objectives, then the decision unit might reconvene to reallocate resources to other tasks. Conversely, if the implemented action appeared to be a *failure*, the decision unit might wish to determine whether another course could better achieve the intended results or should they consider foregoing the objective. Sometimes actions that appear to be effective with respect to a particular purpose also have serious *unintended consequences;* policymakers may decide to review their earlier decisions because the costs of implementing the action have become too high or its side effects too costly. In other words, feedback from the environment can lead to reconsideration and possible change in the prior response to the problem. The feedback can cause the decision unit to alter its definition of the problem and, as a result, to make different assumptions than those they followed in the previous decision(s).

An examination of the sixty-five cases in the present study indicates that responding to feedback from the environment is more characteristic of the so-called open than closed decision units. The units that depend on information from the context in making their decisions—the more sensitive predominant leaders, the single groups whose members' primary identity resides in outside entities and have the need to reach consensus, and the coalitions convened under a rule of unanimity—are more likely to use the responses to their actions as a guide to next steps. The closed units—the other eight types of decision

units—are going to be more selective in their perceptions of the effectiveness of their policies and actions. These units are more likely to resist reconsideration of their decisions and change. Unless such decision units themselves change as a result of a reshuffling of who is involved or there is a regime change, the emphasis will be on stability and continuation of policy rather than change. Only dramatic and unrelenting failure or quite costly unintended consequences are likely to jolt such units from the status quo.

The case data suggest that rules governing sequential decision making may differ depending on the nature of the decision unit. The question becomes under what conditions might the open decision units become more resistant to feedback from the environment around them and the closed decision units become more willing to deal with this same feedback? The literature on decision making in politics and organizations suggests several factors could play a role in reversing the ways these different types of decision units respond to feedback: expectations, agitators for change, and accumulated experience.

Expectations

In their selections of a response to an occasion for decision, decision units develop expectations about what the action will accomplish. They may believe that it will yield more information; reveal an adversary's intentions; generate support for their position; or slow, stop, or reverse the effects of the problem. Policymakers' expectations indicate when they are likely to recognize and interpret new information from the environment that can trigger further consideration of the problem. An analysis of our sixty-five case studies suggests that the actions range along a continuum reflecting the decision units' relative certainty on how to interpret and cope with the problem they are facing. At one end are actions that involve further search for information and at the other are definitive actions that are intended to resolve the problem. In between are provisional actions that are tentative and limited in their scope and conditional actions that demand a response from some other indicating whether future decisions are necessary.

When decision units initiate a search for information, they expect feedback. Indeed, members are interested in improving their understanding of some aspect of the problem. In some instances the policymakers may have formed a hunch about the problem they seek to confirm through the search. Regardless, they are proactive in canvassing the environment for data that can help them deal with their uncertainty. Unless the search is a smoke screen for inaction, the decision unit knows that it will be deliberating further on what to do about the problem when an answer is forthcoming. Even if the search is unsuccessful, there will be a need to reconvene. Anticipation of future reconsideration of the problem is built into the search decision.

When decision units choose provisional actions, they perceive a need to make some effort to address the problem but in a tentative and limited fashion. Since the policymakers remain uncertain about the effectiveness of the response that was chosen, provisional actions are generally small incremental steps that keep options open, including the ability to terminate the activity or limit its consequences if it does not seem to be working. Decision units that implement provisional actions are sensitive to information from the environment that indicates how successful their actions have been in resolving the problem. They are prepared to reconvene if the steps they have taken do not appear to be having an effect.

In undertaking conditional actions, decision units expect a response from the environment. Such actions signal that future behavior will be contingent on what others associated with the problem do. By initiating conditional action, the decision unit has probably accepted a certain causal interpretation of what is happening that enables them to specify what certain others must do (or stop doing) to alleviate the problem. Positive or negative incentives are offered for compliance with the action. The expectation is that there will be a response establishing whether the appropriate others have conformed to the directives. If the response is as anticipated, there may be little need to reconsider the previous decision. If the conditional action is unsuccessful, the decision unit is likely to reconvene.

Decision units that use definitive actions believe they have adequately diagnosed the problem and have an effective means of dealing with it. Such policymakers see no reason to make their activity dependent on others or to defer what appears to be a reasonable way of resolving the problem for more information. Confidence in their own ability to cope with the problem is likely to reduce this decision unit's sensitivity to negative feedback and provide them with little incentive to reconsider the issue. So far as the decision unit is concerned, the matter is settled.

As this discussion implies, members of decision units appear to become more certain about the appropriateness of their reactions as they move from search to definitive actions and the actions themselves become less cautious. Decision units are more committed to their current course of action as the behavior changes from that of searching for more information to being provisional to acting conditionally to being definitive. With increased certainty and commitment goes reduced alertness to signals that things might not be going well and greater reluctance to changing course if forced to reconsider. Indeed, research (e.g., Staw and Ross, 1987; Brockner, 1992; Uhler, 1993) has found that decision units with a strong commitment to a previous action tend to increase their commitment to that action when confronted with negative feedback rather than change course. They engage in an escalation of commitment by investing more effort in the goal of the prior action. Moreover, policymakers are more

likely to pay attention to information from the political environment the more it conforms to their prior expectations. In fact, these expectations will dictate the kinds of information they will regard as relevant. Thus, whereas decision units engaged in a search will be interested in answers to their questions, those involved in provisional and conditional actions will be looking for the impact of the action on others and these others' response. Furthermore, the more strongly committed a decision unit is to its prior action, the more likely members are to interpret information from the context as supportive and not to recognize disconfirmatory information (Vertzberger, 1990). Taking a definitive action may diminish a decision unit's vigilance for feedback.

The case data in this study indicate that the initial actions of a greater percentage (61 percent) of the open types of decision units were of the search and provisional kind while the larger percentage (64 percent) of the initial actions of the closed types of decision units involved conditional and definitive behavior. The open types of decision units do, in fact, appear to be more interested in feedback from the context than do the closed types. And there is some indication in those cases where the analysts examined more than one occasion for decision that the open units were involved in more occasions for decision as they worked to deal with a problem than the closed units. Across all the decision units, predominant leaders who were crusaders and single groups whose members' primary identity was to the group engaged in the most definitive actions. Based on the theory behind these two types of decision units, they are likely to be the most confident and committed to their actions and ready to move on. But they are probably also the most willing to engage in escalation of commitment if things appear to be going wrong. Search and provisional activities were most frequent among the predominant leaders who were opportunists and the coalitions without defined rules of the game. In the case of the opportunists, they need constant information on which to base any decision; in the case of the coalitions without rules, members are often so focused on deciding who is in charge that they can only act provisionally. The foreign policy problem may be used in the struggle for power.

Among all fourteen different types of decision units, predominant leaders with a strategic leadership style and single groups as well as coalitions that allowed for majority rule evidenced the most variability in the kinds of actions they pursued and the number of occasions for decision in which they participated in the course of dealing with a problem. The strategic predominant leaders appear to have used search and provisional activities as "trial balloons" to see what response they might encounter should they choose a particular action. Conditional and definitive actions only followed when these leaders were confident they were in control of what was likely to happen. Consider Egyptian President Sadat's circuitous route to the October War in 1973 detailed in the discussion of the predominant leader decision unit. Because who is in the major-

ity can change in single groups and coalitions with this decision rule—and, indeed, those who once were included in the decision unit can be excluded because of their positions on a particular issue—it is probably not a surprise that such units evidenced a variety of kinds of action. The presence of some who lose out means that there are always members interested in monitoring what is happening and pushing for reconsideration; there are always potential agitators for change present in the group or coalition.

Agitators for Change

In describing the process outcomes that result from the application of the decision units model, we noted the asymmetric quality to some of the outcomes and the fact that such decisions are rather unstable. Built into certain process outcomes is the notion that members of the decision unit are likely to want to revisit the decision later on. When one party's position prevails, there is a lopsided compromise, and participants in the decision unit are engaging in fragmented symbolic activity, some participants in the decision unit do not "own" the decision that is made and have a reason to monitor resulting action and agitate for reconsideration of the decision should feedback be negative or not have the effect they want. These individuals are motivated to monitor the environment for signals relevant to a given problem because of their discontent with the prior action. In the process, these agitators can become advocates for change.

As was observed earlier in this special issue in the description of the decision units framework, these process outcomes are thought to be more dominant for certain types of decision units. Having one party's position prevail is proposed to be more characteristic of the relatively insensitive predominant leaders, single groups with outside loyalty and a majority decision rule, and coalitions with a norm favoring majority decisions. Lopsided compromises were expected to occur more often with moderately sensitive predominant leaders when their preferred option was feasible. Fragmented symbolic action was considered more likely in coalitions with no established rules and high political instability. And, in fact, an examination of the sixty-five cases in this study lends support to these assignments. A little over half of the outcomes for these decision units were of the predicted type. Thus, agitators for change may cluster in particular kinds of decision units where they believe themselves to have had less chance to influence the outcome than others in the unit. And like a George Ball or Clark Clifford in U.S. decision making on Vietnam, the current hard-line members of the inner circle of the Chinese Communist Party with regard to partnership with the United States, or the reformers in Iran on economic opening to the West, they may push for reconsideration of decisions that go against them when events support their original positions.

These agitators for change often represent a minority position among advisers, in a group, or in a coalition. By minority we mean individuals with divergent perspectives and preferences for action as well as competing definitions of the problem and occasion for decision from those of a majority. Research on minority influence over the past two decades in social psychology and foreign policymaking has shown that there are certain conditions when the agitators being discussed here have the possibility of bringing about the desired change (see Kaarbo, 1998; Kaarbo and Beasley, 1998; and Kaarbo and Gruenfeld, 1998, for reviews of this literature). Minorities appear to have an effect when they argue their position consistently over time (Mugny, 1975; Moscovici, 1985), are moderate in size (Wood et al., 1994), appear to focus on the group's interests rather than self-interest (Eagly, Wood, and Chaiken, 1978), and have support in the larger societal context (Clark, 1988; Mugny and Perez, 1991). The research suggests that the impact of minority views takes time to develop. But after hearing the minority persist in repeating its views and challenging the majority's ideas, members of the majority may begin over time to reappraise the situation and develop new perspectives—while different from their prior view, not necessarily those advocated by the minority. Such reappraisal is particularly likely when the group receives negative feedback on its previous actions.

This literature on minority influence has implications for the effects that agitators for change may have on future actions of decision units. Because such members have reservations about the merit of the prior decision, they are more likely than those whose positions are represented in the choice to recognize discrepant feedback from the environment, particularly if such feedback does not fulfill the earlier expressed expectations of members of the decision unit. By assuming a postdecision monitoring function, these members increase the likelihood that the majority will be forced to acknowledge negative feedback and reconsider the problem. And if said agitators persist in their message, retain a consistent position, and argue their position is for the good of the decision unit given what is happening to the prior behavior, they may persuade enough members to reconstitute the majority. Consider the change in Soviet policy toward Czechoslovakia in 1968 when the interventionists on the Politburo who were the minority in July maneuvered to become the majority by agitating for their position in a persistent manner and by presenting information that demonstrated a deteriorating situation in Prague (Valenta, 1979). Alternatively, the agitators may induce some members of the majority to engage in divergent thinking and create a new position that can gain support among both the majority and the minority (Wood et al., 1994). In either case, the agitators for change have pushed the majority to reconsider its position.

Even if the agitators for change are not successful in influencing the majority to modify their prior position, they may have some effect indirectly on the majority by reshaping the latter's values or decisions on related issues. Hal-

perin (1972, 1974) argues that such indirect change occurred in U.S. decision making surrounding the deployment of the antiballistic missile (ABM) system in the late 1960s. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara took a position in opposition to the majority of the bureaucrats who favored rapid deployment of the ABM. McNamara was not successful in delaying deployment but did have an effect on long-term strategic thinking. Indeed, Halperin attributes U.S. acceptance of ideas regarding nuclear sufficiency rather than superiority and the talks with the Soviet Union on limiting ABMs to McNamara's earlier efforts.

Agitators for change may not be limited to members of the decision unit. Decision units are ultimately accountable to certain constituencies be they voters, special interests, other leaders, the bureaucracy, or a legislature. They have to justify their decisions to these others. A number of factors can affect the relationship between a decision unit and relevant constituencies: the ability of the constituents to assess the performance of the decision unit, their access to the decision unit in order to convey their preferences, the nature of the feedback that is perceived by the constituents about the decision unit's performance, and how accurately such feedback is interpreted. Knowing that an election is near, that one's approval ratings are low, that the military needs very little excuse to stage a coup, or that the media is investigating will probably enhance the effects that outside constituencies can have on limiting the options the decision unit can consider at that point in time and may even truncate work on a particular problem. Certainly if policymakers discover a major discrepancy between their past actions and the preferences of powerful constituents, major changes are likely. But in order not to appear inconsistent, the changes will probably be by expansion or elaboration rather than explicit reversal.

At issue is what happens when the decision unit's actions are ineffective or failing and these constituents start to lobby for change, for example, when the U.S. marines died as a result of the bomb explosion in their barracks in Lebanon or the U.S. soldiers were killed and their bodies dragged through the streets in Somalia. The decision unit is forced to reconsider its actions and to either find some external cause on which to affix blame or accept responsibility, while at the same time outlining steps they are about to take to deal with the difficulty. In assuming accountability, however, the decision unit is likely to assign the failure to inadequate implementation (e.g., choosing the wrong solution or not using enough resources) or to unsupportive minorities in the unit—attributions that do not challenge the diagnosis of the problem or the unit's goals and can be adjusted (see Wong and Weiner, 1981; Salancik and Meindl, 1984). Here is where we may see a difference among types of decision units. Believing themselves more accountable in general, the open units may be more willing to attribute failure to a lack of goal clarity or incorrect problem diagnosis than the closed units and, as a consequence, to engage in more extensive reconsideration of their prior positions and a potentially more dramatic shift in direction.

The closed units will probably stick to their original interpretations while slightly modifying what they were doing. Agitators for change within the decision unit may increase in stature within the open units but may be excluded, isolated, or used as a scapegoat in closed units. "I told you so" is not what the closed units want to hear.

Accumulated Experience with the Problem

The history that a particular decision unit has with a problem can also influence when actions will be reconsidered. If a problem is being confronted for more or less the first time, a decision unit is likely to be tentative and their actions will probably involve further search for information or be provisional. New information (even if negative) will be eagerly sought and used to shape policymakers' emerging views. Beliefs about the new problem are less likely to be well-established, nor are governmental organizations likely to have entrenched positions and procedures for dealing with the problem. As the problem is encountered repeatedly, decision makers are likely to develop views about what is happening, why, and what needs to be done. Of course, the nature of some problems may be so perplexing and illusive that policymakers' convictions about preferred modes of treating them may never develop or are held with low confidence. For several U.S. administrations, the Israeli-Palestine conflict seems to have had this quality. But for many problems, the decision unit develops a set of routines for dealing with them and resistance to further review and examination begins to increase. Beliefs about the nature of the problem become well established, investments are made in particular actions, and a number of disincentives—programmatic comparisons of costs and benefits, personal esteem, institutional practices—kick in to encourage the unit to stay the course and conclude that little new can be gained by another round of deliberation.

As these convictions about the nature of the problem and the means of coping with it become stronger with successive decisions, it will probably take the occurrence of a very costly and highly visible failure or a major success with recognizable reorganizing consequences to get the decision unit to reconsider what it is doing and undertake change. If negative feedback persists over an extended period of time during which no further reconsiderations have occurred, we postulate that the resistance to re-addressing the problem may decline. Such is particularly likely if the negative feedback is becoming newsworthy, if such feedback is evident to important constituencies, or if the set of agitators for change within the decision unit has persistently opposed the present course of action and appears to be gaining in strength. These conditions may even persuade the most closed decision units—the insensitive predominant leaders and the single group whose members are highly loyal—to reconsider and change their actions. More probably, though, in the case of the closed decision

units, such conditions will lead to a change in the decision unit given authority for this particular problem. The Iran-contra affair is a case in point (Hermann and Hermann, 1990). Reagan's National Security Council staff believed they had been given the authority to get the hostages being held in Lebanon released; the group had "a strong consensus . . . that the President's priority in the Iran initiative was the release of the U.S. hostages" (Tower, Muskie, and Scowcroft, 1987:79–80). They formed a cohesive unit and worked to keep people who disagreed with what they were doing, such as the secretaries of state and defense (Shulz and Weinberger), out of the process. For all intents and purposes, the group, believing they knew what the president wanted and had been given the green light to make the decisions necessary to accomplish the goal, led a covert operation that functioned largely outside the U.S. government, that is, until the story broke and members of the group were held accountable for their actions. At that point the decision unit was forcibly changed.

Conclusions

We have merely begun the process of making the decision units framework more dynamic. More theoretical and empirical work is needed to elaborate the different ways in which the open and closed decision units can shape or be shaped by what has happened previously in dealing with a particular problem. The expectations decision units have when engaging in an action, the likelihood that an action leaves some members dissatisfied, and the accumulated experiences of the decision unit with the current issue all appear to influence whether or not feedback is monitored, decisions are reconsidered, and the next decision in the sequence involves some change. By setting the policymaking process into motion, we have started to embed the decision units framework into the larger domestic and international environments and moved from portraying a single occurrence to being able to examine a sequence of moves as well as how each impacts the next and emerges from the previous decision. In so doing, it has become clear that the open decision units are more affected by the context in which they find themselves and are interested in both taking advantage of and fitting into what they perceive are relevant constraints. It has also become clear that while often willing to make innovative and risky decisions, the closed decision units are less likely to heed feedback from their environment to move away from the status quo once they have acted. The nature of the decision unit appears to be important in determining how a sequence of actions is going to play out.

   All the discussion in this special issue and most of the case studies reviewed in this article have focused on the foreign policy decisions of the governments of states. In the last decade, there has been an explosion of other kinds of actors in the international arena. In fact, some might argue that transnational politics

has replaced international politics or, at the least, the two exist side by side—sometimes in conflict with one another (the demonstrations at World Bank or WTO meetings) and at other times living in peaceful coexistence. Among such actors are nongovernmental organizations, international institutions and organizations, regional organizations, multinational corporations, and transnational advocacy networks. Moreover, many important problems in today's world cross borders and are not located within a particular state. Does the decision units framework have applicability to these new actors on the world stage and these new types of problems? Or, more accurately put, can the decision units framework be elaborated to become applicable to such actors and problems?

A number of graduate students whose case studies are not included in the present study because they chose to apply the decision units framework to nonstate actors found it relatively easy to use the framework with other than a state government. They explored such cases as the European Union Council of Ministers decisions regarding imposing sanctions on Austria in response to the election of Jorge Haider, leader of the far right Freedom Party, and the granting of candidacy to Turkey with certain stipulations regarding Cyprus; the Palestinian Liberation Organization decisions regarding the Oslo Accords; decisions to expand the membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Chechen reactions to the invasion of their territory by Russian forces; and the response of the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) to the Mexican peso crisis. Although they found all three types of decision units in the cases at various points in time, the students commented on what they viewed as increasing reliance by such nonstate entities on coalitions and the need to achieve consensus before actions were taken. They also noted the blurring of the lines between what is considered "domestic" and "foreign" and argued for the applicability of the decision units framework to policymaking more generally. Their studies and recommendations are intriguing and invite the development of a set of cases that focus on a wider range of nonstate actors—an important next step for those of us interested in exploring how people and processes are involved in influencing world affairs.

The intent of this special issue was to present a way of understanding how foreign policy decisions are made that emphasizes whose positions count, how such actors are organized, the processes that are likely to result from this organization, and the effects that these processes can have on the decision that results. We have drawn on several decades of research from across the social sciences to propose a contingency approach to studying foreign policymaking that delineates a range of different types of decision units based on their sensitivity to contextual information, where their primary identity lies, and the availability of decision rules. An initial exploration of the accuracy of the framework for explaining historical decisions indicates a rather high degree of overlap between the two. To date the development of the framework has been an iter-

ative process as those involved have moved between theory-building and the examination of historical cases. It is time now for others to join us in applying the framework and helping with its elaboration.

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Appendix: Case Studies

Country	Date	Case
Argentina	1978	Inspection visit of Inter-American Commission on Human Rights regarding violations
	1982	Decision to invade the Falkland Islands
	1984	Ratification of Beagle Channel Treaty
Brazil	1991	Pressures to preserve the Amazon jungle
Britain	1938	Munich crisis
	1956	Decisions regarding the Suez crisis
	1982	Response to Falkland Islands invasion
Canada	1969	Reduction of commitment to NATO
China	1962	Border dispute with India
	1990	Negotiations on purchase of advanced Soviet aircraft
	1995	Taiwanese president's visit to the United States
	1999	Negotiations with the U.S. over entry into the World Trade Organization
Colombia	1997	Negotiations over demilitarized zone in FARC territory
	1999	Peace talks with FARC and ELN
Egypt	1962	Intervention into Yemen
	1973	Decision to go to war with Israel
France	1959	Recognition of Algerian independence
	1991	Breakup of Yugoslavia
Germany	1970	Ostpolitik negotiations
Greece	1974	Turkish intervention into Cyprus
India	1962	Forward Policy and Operation Leghorn
	1967	Refusal to sign Nonproliferation Treaty
	1971	Involvement in Pakistani Civil War
Indonesia	1998	Reactions to demands of IMF during Asian financial crisis
Iran	1979	Taking of American hostages
	1995	U.S. blocks Conoco oil deal
	1999	Visits to Western Europe seeking trade and investment
Iraq	1996	Breach of cease-fire between Kurdish groups
	1997	"Cat and mouse" game with United Nations weapons inspection team

Country	Date	Case
Israel	1967	Series of threats by Egypt and other Arab states
	1976	Raid on Entebbe
	1982	Invasion into southern Lebanon
	1991	Reaction to Iraqi bombing
Japan	1969	Reactions to the "textile wrangle" with the United States
	1971	Response to "Nixon shocks" and pressure to devalue the yen
	1972	Tyumen Development Project
	1992	Negotiations surrounding the Peacekeeping Operations Bill
Mexico	1962	Organization of American States' vote on Cuba
Netherlands	1980s	Acceptance of NATO cruise missiles
New Zealand	1985	Negotiations regarding visiting rights for U.S. ship
Nigeria	1975	Recognition of the MPLA
South Africa	1989	Decisions regarding "shadow membership" in nuclear club and nuclear rollback
South Korea	1998	"Sunshine Policy" toward North Korea
Soviet Union/Russia	1956	Invasion of Hungary
	1961	Construction of Berlin Wall
	1968	Invasion of Czechoslovakia
	1973	Negotiations regarding providing offensive weapons to Egypt
Sweden	1981	Soviet submarine trapped on the rocks within Swedish territory
Syria	1976	Intervention into Lebanese civil war
	1987	Tensions with Hezbollah in Lebanon
Taiwan	1999	Decision to declare "two-states theme"
Tanzania	1978	Invasion by Ugandan forces and annexation of Ugandan territory
Turkey	1974	Ouster of Cyprus President Makarios
	1999	Response to offer of EU candidacy with conditions
Ukraine	1992	Decision to sign the Lisbon Protocols to the START I Treaty
United States	1961	Reactions to tensions in Berlin
	1965	Escalation of U.S. involvement in Vietnam
	1980	Rescue mission of hostages in Teheran
	1982	Decisions regarding the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea
	1986	Dispute with Japan over semiconductor trade
	1986	Bombing of Libya
	1990	Iraqi invasion of Kuwait
	1992	Development of the Lisbon Protocols to the START I Treaty
Yugoslavia	1995	Negotiations leading to the Dayton Accords
	1999	Negotiations over Kosovo at Rambouillet