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A Frame of Reference for the Study of American Foreign Policy-Making

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ABSTRACT — This study outlines a frame of reference which might be helpful to political scientists in the analysis of foreign policy decision-making. It is part of a larger effort which seeks to learn more about state action in general and American foreign policy decision-making in particular.

The approach which is utilized is one devised by Richard C. Snyder. It has been modified by the author to suit the purposes and objectives of the present study. Basically, the approach is a conceptual scheme which postulates that state action results from the way identifiable, official decision-makers define the situation of action in order to arrive at a decision. The scheme focuses inquiry on these decision-makers in an attempt to determine why a particular decision was made rather than some other. Basic to the theory is the premise that decision-making behavior takes place in a complex organizational setting which can be accounted for by the interrelation of three clusters of variables: sphere of competence, motivation, and information-communications.

The basic assumption is that all factors which influence the results of a decision can be accounted for by these variables. Ultimately, the theory holds that, if a sufficient number of factual propositions on the behaviors and activities implied by these variables can be established, the interrelationship of these three sets of propositions becomes the empirical foundation for the explanation of a decision.

The present study, utilizing this scheme, focuses on three contemporary U.S. Presidents — Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson — in an effort to draw conclusions from their foreign policy decision-making methods. A number of preliminary findings are presented to illustrate the type of information which can be derived from an application of the decision-making approach.

This paper is a report on research in progress which seeks to apply an analytical scheme to the study of decision-making at the state level. Taken in its broadest perspective, the study represents an effort to demonstrate the feasibility of using the decision-making approach to collect, analyze, and relate data relative to the actions of decision-makers. More specifically, the study is an attempt to compare the decision-making activities of three contemporary United States Presidents — Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson — in order to provide grounds upon which to generalize regarding American foreign policy-making.

It is hoped that the brief description of the conceptual scheme and the preliminary data presented here will be helpful to others interested in foreign policy research and analysis.

Approach

The approach applied here is a modified version of one devised by Richard C. Snyder at Northwestern University in the 1950's (Snyder, 1962). Commonly called the "decision-making" approach, the scheme is basically an ordering device, or a frame of reference, which conceives of state action as resulting from the way identifiable decision-makers define the situation of action in order to arrive at a decision. The scheme focuses inquiry on these decision-makers in an attempt to determine why a particular decision is made rather than some other. It postulates that decision-making takes place in a complex organizational setting and can be accounted for by the interrelation of three clusters of variables: spheres of competence, communications and information, and motivation. The basic assumption is that all factors which influence a decision can be accounted for by these variables.

Two different perspectives are included in the scheme: the properties of the decision-makers — defined as the intellectual setting — and the properties of the system within which they operate — defined as the organizational setting. Ultimately, the theory holds that, if a sufficient number of factual propositions on the behaviors and activities implied by these variables can be established, the interrelationship of these three sets of propositions becomes the empirical foundation for the explanation of a decision.

Spheres of Competence

Under the heading of competence is included the "office" or "role" of the decision-maker. The term competence is used as an inclusive device to take in the totality of the activities of the decision-maker relevant and necessary to the achievement of the organizational objective. The decision-maker's conception of his role or office, both in terms of explicitly prescribed rules and conventional norms, as well as the manner in which he structures his relationships with his subordinates is classified.
under this heading. Inasmuch as we are dealing with the interaction of the decision-maker and his competence, a consideration of his value system, his prior experience, and his learned behavior are also considered highly relevant and are included in the overall consideration of competence.

**Information and Communications**

Classified under information and communications are data which refer to the system or network of communications by which information is channeled to the decision-maker, as well as to the information which is actually available to him when he makes his decision. Considered in these terms, the entire organizational and decisional system may be viewed as a communications "net" which serves three basic functions. First, it supports or confirms the structure of authority. Second, it makes possible the circulation of orders and directives. Finally, it enables the decision-maker to define the situation in terms of relevant information. The entire system, then, has a direct bearing on the decision-maker's authority relationships and his perception of situations requiring action.

A study of information and communications is undertaken in an effort to answer such questions as: what is the source of specific information? how is it brought to the attention of the decision-maker? is information filtered through a number of subordinates before it reaches the decision-maker? where does information enter the system? how is it considered by the decision-maker?

**Motivation**

Due to the many difficulties involved in the determination of individual motives, most conceptual schemes which endeavor to probe the minds of decision-makers tend to assume motivation and do not treat it as a specific entity. Snyder, however, despite the difficulties involved, includes an analysis of motivation as an integral part of his scheme, noting that, "to assume motivation begs many of the most significant questions which arise in the study of international politics" (Snyder, 1962: 137).

Implicit in the study of motivation is the assumption that the actions of a decision-maker cannot be explained in terms of a single motive. Thus, multiple motives are assumed and these are treated as constituting a system in which they relate to one another and are expressed in related actions.

Also, it is important to note that motives are not behaviors, but rather they are inferences drawn from behaviors. Thus, they are indirectly inferred, not directly observed. As Snyder suggests, "motives are postulated as a basis of understanding and are verified by observing behavior" (Snyder, 1962: 139).

The study of the decision-maker's motivation centers around this concept in an effort to determine, from his behavior, what inner drives, needs, and goals motivated him to take action. Necessarily included is a study of the decision-maker's personality, attitudes, perceptions, norms, values, role expectations, and intellectual skills.

The search is for the answer to "why" questions: why did the decision-maker act as he did? why did he perceive of the situation as one requiring action? why did the action take the particular form that it did in a particular situation? In short, what inner tendencies of the decision-maker prompted him to take action and how did these affect the type of action which was taken?

**Connection Between the Variables**

It has been noted that the variables which constitute the determinants of decision-making are interrelated. One of the tasks confronting the researcher, then, after isolating the major determinants, consists of logically connecting the variables and showing how their summation led to the decision which was made. Such a linkage is suggested by the paradigm in Figure 1. The model is intended to serve as a general outline of the theory to more explicitly conceptualize the interrelationship of the variables.

The paradigm suggests that knowledge and information must be communicated to the decision-maker who then perceives of the situation in terms of this information + competence + motives. The aggregation of the three sets of variables takes place in the organizational and intellectual setting of the decision-maker and a desired course of action then results from this summation. Thus, there is an "input" and an "output" function. And the decision which is eventually made — output — can be

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**Figure 1**

*A Decision-Making Paradigm*

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**Given**: The decision-maker and the necessity to act.

**Where**:
- \( C \) = Decision-maker's sphere of competence.
- \( M \) = Decision-maker's motivation.
- \( I \) = Decision-maker's information-communication.
- \( D_x \) = Variables which determine sphere of competence.
- \( D_y \) = Variables which determine motivation.
- \( D_z \) = Variables which determine information.
- \( D_p \) = Possible decision.
- \( D_d \) = Possible decision.
- \( D_b \) = Possible decision.

**Then**: \( D_x \cdot D_y \cdot D_z = C \)

And: \( C \oplus M \oplus I = \text{The decision taken (} D_p \text{, } D_d \text{, or } D_b \text{)}. \)

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explained in terms of the summation and interrelation of
the three variables representing input.

Scope and Methodology

The larger study, which constitutes the basis for this
report, focuses on three specific decisions of Presidents
Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson: Eisenhower's de-
cision relative to the Suez crisis of 1956, Kennedy's de-
cision in the Cuban crises of 1962, and Johnson's deci-
sion to resume the bombing of North Viet Nam in Feb-
uary 1966. No attempt will be made, however, to ac-
count for these decisions; that will be left for the more
comprehensive report. Instead, a sample of some of the
findings derived from the study to date will be presented
to illustrate the type of information which can be ob-
tained from such an analysis.

As to methodology and sources, it might be mentioned
that newspaper and magazine articles written at the time
of each decision are especially valuable in reconstructing
the decisional events. By pooling information from news-
paper and magazine sources with whatever documents
and official accounts are available, a reasonably accurate
reconstruction can be made.

Personal interviews with the decision-makers and their
staff are, of course, a prime source of information and,
when such interviews are not feasible, questionnaires can
be sent to these individuals in an effort to elicit infor-
mation. In addition, where neither personal interviews
nor questionnaires prove fruitful, journalists who have
talked with the decision-makers can be contacted.

Finally, the more traditional sources consisting of
public documents, speeches, memoirs, etc., are an impor-
tant source of data which can be integrated with the
other material.

Specific Characteristics of Eisenhower, Kennedy
and Johnson

A study of the three major variables—spheres of com-
petence, motivation, and information-communications—as
they relate to Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson has
resulted in the isolation of some fifty specific characteris-
tics of these Presidents which are highly relevant to their
foreign policy-making activities. A sample of these, along
with the hypotheses drawn from each, is presented below
to illustrate the type of information which emerges from
such an analysis:

Eisenhower—Sphere of Competence

Characteristic: Eisenhower placed a great deal
of reliance on his Cabinet, espe-
cially his Secretary of State.

Specific Hypothesis: The reliance that Eisenhower
placed upon his Cabinet led these
individuals to formulate and exe-
cute policy on their own. In the
case of the Secretary of State,
this meant that much of the for-
eign policy of the U.S. was ac-
tually developed and put into ef-
fact without the specific approval
of the President.

Eisenhower—Motivation

Characteristic: Eisenhower was motivated by a
genuine desire for peace with jus-
tice.

Specific Hypothesis: His desire for peace with justice
many times ruled out courses of
action that could not readily be
identified as peaceful and led to
rather a narrow outlook towards
the world political situation.

Eisenhower—Information and Communications

Characteristic: Eisenhower depended almost ex-
clusively on his staff to furnish
him with information.

Specific Hypothesis: His dependence on his staff to
furnish him with information re-
sulted in his being supplied with
information which they thought
was important; thus placing a
great deal of emphasis on his
staff's interpretation of relevancy.

This, in turn, many times resulted
in Eisenhower's being unaware
of information which he should
have had available to make a de-
cision.

Kennedy—Sphere of Competence

Characteristic: Kennedy maintained a fluid and
flexible staffing system.

Specific Hypothesis: His maintenance of a flexible
staffing system in which fixed
routines and assignments were
lacking, stimulated the "produc-
tive tension" which he believed
resulted in a more independent
perspective on the part of his ad-
visors. The overlapping of assign-
ments and roles inherent in this
system served to broaden the
range of alternatives in problem-
solving and kept uniformity of
advice to a minimum.

Kennedy—Motivation

Characteristic: Kennedy desired to be a strong,
independent President who would
enhance the power and prestige
of the Presidential office.

Specific Hypothesis: His desires in this regard meant
that he, and only he, would make
important decisions and that such
decisions would be positive-ac-
tion decisions designed to
strengthen the prestige of the U.S.
Kennedy—Information and Communications
Characteristic: Kennedy did not rely solely on his staff for information and endeavored to keep as many channels of information as possible open to himself.
Specific Hypothesis: The fact that Kennedy did not rely entirely on his staff for information lessened the chance that his perception of situations requiring action would be formed by his advisors. It meant that Kennedy, not his advisors, would be the final judge as to what information was important.

Johnson—Sphere of Competence
Characteristic: Johnson conceives of his advisory staff more as friends than as idea men and tends to personalize his relationships with his staff to a great extent.
Specific Hypothesis: Johnson’s personalization of his staff has led to a rather close supervision of his staff by him. This has resulted in the exodus of many of Kennedy’s “intellectuals” who disliked working under conditions of close supervision. Reflecting the Johnson image, his staff is now made up largely of pragmatic individuals who can provide the President with hard facts rather than extreme positions from which he can choose in making decisions.

Johnson—Motivation
Characteristic: Johnson desires to be a “great” President.
Specific Hypothesis: His desire to go down in history as one of the great Presidents pervades all of his actions and makes him extremely conscious of criticism in his foreign policy decisions. Thus, decisions are made at the margin, leaving ample room for maneuver should consensus fail to develop in support of those decisions.

Johnson—Information and Communications
Characteristic: Johnson believes in working through his advisory staff in the procurement of information.
Specific Hypothesis: His reliance on his advisors to solicit information has created a situation where it is more difficult to gain access to the President than in his predecessor’s administration. This has diminished the amount of information which reaches the President from sources other than his advisors. In the end, it may mean that the number of alternatives available to him in problem solving may also be diminished.

Typologies

Snyder suggests that there are six decision-making types: the communicator, the innovator, the traditionalist, the literalist, the power-seeker, and the career servant (Snyder, 1962: 169). In attempting to cast Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson into one of these typologies, it was found that they were a bit too restrictive to properly typify any of the Presidents adequately. Thus, a combination typology for each was developed.

Eisenhower could be classified as the “traditionalist—career servant” type. He was a traditionalist in that precedent and long-standing habits of procedure and thought governed his decision-making. In addition, his actions contributed to the slowing down of organizational change and to rigidities of approach to problems. The career-servant typology is applicable in that he was the type of decision-maker who maintained a carefully correct attitude with respect to role limitations.

Kennedy would be the “innovator—power-seeker—communicator” type since he was a risk taker—in a sense a rebel against the normative order—and an original thinker who was a catalyst as far as the intellectual processes of decision-making were concerned. He pressed towards the outer limits of the negotiable area of his sphere of competence and his position clearly dominated his behavior. Kennedy was a leader who had a definite skill in translating specialists to each other and in providing bases on which the different perspectives of decision-making could be integrated. He further personified this typology in that he was a leader who took a broad view of his sphere of competence and tended to personalize his relationships even when it meant departing from normal channels of communication.

Johnson is the “power-seeker—literalist” type. Like Kennedy, his position in the political system clearly dominates his behavior. He is the type who will violate procedural norms and take public stands on policy issues if it serves his purpose. Like Kennedy, Johnson takes a broad view of his sphere of competence. He is a self-styled “realist” who perceives only the major essentials of situations or problems. Johnson is the type of leader who wishes to deal with specifics much more than with abstract generalities and his decision-making activities are characterized by pragmatism and a search for facts.

General Characteristics of the Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson Approaches

Possibly the most striking aspect of the Eisenhower approach to foreign policy matters was his delegation of authority to his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles.

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There seems to be little doubt that this delegation was virtually complete and that policy formulated by Dulles was rarely, if ever, reversed by Eisenhower. Indeed, Sherman Adams has written that such delegation, “included the responsibility for developing the specific policy . . . the decision where the administration would stand, and what course of action would be followed in each international crisis” (Adam, 1962: 92). This aspect of Eisenhower’s competence was manifestly evident in the Hungarian and Suez decisions where careful analysis failed to resolve the question of who actually made the decisions, Eisenhower or his Secretary of State.

All this was in sharp contrast to the Kennedy approach which placed the Secretary of State in a subordinate position to the President in foreign policy matters. Where Eisenhower had looked to Dulles for foreign policy and left its formulation and execution in the Secretary’s hands, Kennedy did not consider foreign policy to be policy unless and until it had gone through his hands and had his personal approval. In fact, under Kennedy, many top policies originated in the White House and then moved through the policy-making machinery of the State Department for appraisal and comment. It is true that Kennedy did endeavor to enhance the prestige of the State Department and the Secretary of State, however, he did not do this by abdicating his responsibility or authority in foreign policy matters.

Johnson’s relations with his Secretary of State lie somewhere between the extremes presented by the Kennedy and Eisenhower approaches. Johnson, who feels more at ease with domestic affairs, relies on his Secretary of State, uses him and his other advisors as sounding boards for his own ideas, and then, after some sort of consensus is reached, makes the decision himself.

Besides the differences in relation to their Secretaries of State, Eisenhower and Kennedy had divergent views regarding the staffing of the Executive Office itself. And here again, Johnson treads the middle ground between the two.

Eisenhower, relying on his long years of Army experience, set up a rigid staff system in the White House which was highly reminiscent of the armed forces system. Eisenhower’s staff system provided for fixed lines of authority and explicit functions for each member of the staff. Everyone fitted into an orderly and carefully prescribed organizational system headed by Eisenhower’s chief of staff, Sherman Adams. Only Adams reported directly to the President; everyone else had to report to the Chief Executive through the chain of command—much like the procedure in the armed forces. Adams, during most of the Eisenhower Administration, kept a tight grip on White House affairs as assistant to the President—some have called him the “assistant President”—and ruled with a firm hand, shielding the President from all but the most urgent problems.

Kennedy created a staffing system which was much less rigid than was Eisenhower’s. Kennedy’s personal tastes regarding the Presidential office made it practically a foregone conclusion that no chief of staff would channel information to him or, what is more important, speak for him. Kennedy meant to be his own chief of staff and endeavored to work directly with the individuals involved in an issue; not through a staff of subordinates. Kennedy intended to keep his hands directly on the controls of government and a chain of command system clearly was incompatible with such an approach. While Kennedy did have trusted assistants, they did not perform the function that Eisenhower’s assistants did in shielding him from matters they did not consider important. Kennedy’s assistants acted more in the role of intermediaries or liaison men who could keep him informed while carrying out Presidential directives. Whereas, the channels of communication to Eisenhower were jealously guarded by his assistants, no such powers were given to Kennedy’s staff men. Lines of communication were always open to Kennedy and no staff filtered information before it reached him. His practice of leaving his door open periodically each day so that his staff could come in and discuss their ideas with him was a reflection of Kennedy’s desire to keep the channels of information open to himself.

Johnson’s staff system, inherited from Kennedy, has developed along the Kennedy lines but with a marked Johnson style. While not embracing the rigid staff system of Eisenhower, Johnson nevertheless has not developed a flexible system like Kennedy’s. Johnson’s staff people do not fit into rigidly specific roles as with Eisenhower but they are more in the nature of “generalists” than were Kennedy’s people. The exodus of the Kennedy intellectuals in the months after Johnson succeeded to the Presidency reflects a basic difference in Johnson’s, as compared to Kennedy’s approach.

Johnson is more interested in advice as to the best course of action in a particular situation than in the merits of that situation. Accordingly, his staff is structured along these lines. He believes, and is like Eisenhower in this respect, in the machinery of government and endeavors to work through this machinery wherever possible. His staff is “chain-of-commandish” to a great extent but not as pronounced as was Eisenhower’s.

Johnson’s concept of the Presidency is reflected in the close supervision his staff is subjected to and, incidentally, is the reason given by many of Kennedy’s staff people for leaving the Johnson Administration. Gone too is Kennedy’s practice of leaving his office door open for his advisors to come in; Johnson has replaced this with a system whereby his advisors must make appointments before seeing him.

Another facet of the approach to the handling of the Presidency which distinguishes the three Presidents has to do with the Cabinet as an advisory body. While Eisenhower relied on full, formal Cabinet meetings to discuss important decisions, Kennedy considered Cabinet meetings a waste of time and energy and preferred to confer only with those directly involved in a problem. Kennedy placed more reliance on ad hoc groups formed to consider specific problems and chose men for these groups whom he felt would give him the most valuable advice and counsel on a particular problem. With Kennedy, the nature of the problem determined the group with which he would work. Full Cabinet meetings were usually
called only for the consideration of government-wide problems having to do with domestic affairs. When it came to foreign affairs, Kennedy preferred to confine Cabinet activity to briefings by the Secretary of State and other trusted advisors and experts from his White House Staff, the Defense Department, and the State Department.

Johnson's relations with his Cabinet are very much like Kennedy's were. Like Kennedy, he does not call many formal Cabinet meetings on foreign policy matters and tends to rely on a small group of advisors. Johnson does, however, utilize full Cabinet meetings for domestic matters and his respect for the "governmental machinery" concept evidently leads him to hold Cabinet meetings merely as a formality at times. There is every indication, however, that policy is made by Johnson's small group of advisors rather than by the Cabinet as such.

The manner in which each of the Presidents perceived of and approached situations requiring action is also revealing and deserves examination. Eisenhower seems to have waited in the White House for situations to develop. His staff shielded him as long as possible, then presented facts in outline. Decisions were often deferred until they became absolutely necessary. Kennedy, by contrast, reached out and gathered information, stimulated situations requiring action, and then acted with determination. There is every indication that Johnson's approach is much like Kennedy's in this respect except that there is more emphasis on consensus before decisions are made and more effort to float "trial balloons" before policy is announced.

With regard to the level at which decisions were made, it would seem that, whereas Eisenhower preferred to have as many decisions as possible made at the staff level, Kennedy wanted to make all important decisions and at least know about the less important ones. The Johnson approach is similar to Kennedy's in this respect; possibly more extreme in that Johnson makes a tremendous effort to control every facet of decision-making.

Concerning the acquisition of information, research indicates that Eisenhower, who was never a voracious reader, liked to have his staff condense information into one page memoranda and brief him on developments. Johnson also prefers the written word to face-to-face confrontation with his advisors and wants information presented to him in this manner. Kennedy, on the other hand, liked to read everything and interpret for himself that which was relevant. Unlike Eisenhower and Johnson, however, Kennedy enjoyed the give and take of face-to-face confrontation with his advisors and encouraged them to present their ideas to him in this manner.

Eisenhower differed from Kennedy and Johnson in that he liked to be presented with decisions already worked out so that he could say "yes" or "no" to the finished product. Kennedy wanted to be presented with many alternatives in rough form then choose what he felt was the correct one. In effect, Eisenhower had one method of reaching decisions: by initiating decisions his staff presented him with. Kennedy utilized at least four approaches; as does Johnson with minor variations: 1) Decisions might be made by the President based upon the recommendation of a Cabinet officer without consultation with any members of the White House staff. Kennedy used this technique more than does Johnson who is interested in getting the reaction of others on almost all decisions. 2) Decisions might be made after asking staff members to make recommendations and after sounding out these recommendations with other advisors. 3) Decisions might be made within the context of National Security Council meetings or Cabinet meetings after these bodies discussed the relative merits of the situation. While Kennedy relied less on the National Security Council than did Eisenhower in this regard, it would seem that Johnson de-emphasizes the role of the Council even more. 4) Policies might simply be delineated within the framework of which Cabinet officers and other top officials could make their own decisions. Kennedy relied on this device much more so than does Johnson. Kennedy used at various times, and Johnson still uses, any or a combination of these methods.

**General Conclusions Applicable to Foreign Policy Decision-Making**

A study of decision-making at the top-level enables the observer to draw certain general conclusions which, while they are drawn from specific cases, form the basis for generalization regarding foreign policy making in general. Several of these observations are listed below by way of illustration:

**Conclusion 1:** Sweeping delegation of authority by a President to his Secretary of State leads to the concentration of foreign policy decision-making in the hands of the Secretary of State; thereby debilitating Presidential initiative in the formulation and execution of foreign policy.

**Conclusion 2:** A "traditionalist" President who views his powers and prerogatives narrowly tends to define courses of action open to him in the same restrictive terms. Such an attitude on the part of a President necessarily limits the range of alternatives available to him in the solving of foreign policy problems.

**Conclusion 3:** "Narrow gauge" foreign policy objectives, e.g., "peace with justice," tend to limit the possible responses to crisis situations.

**Conclusion 4:** Too great a reliance on staff and their determination as to the relevancy of information may cut a President off from important information; thus limiting the President's perception of situations requiring action. Such limitations on perception in turn leads to solutions to problems which might not always be in the national interest.

**Conclusion 5:** A staff system which is so structured as to provide for rigidly specific roles and the assignment of explicit duties cuts down on cross-currents of opinion and leads to a diminution of alternatives for the solution of problems.

**Conclusion 6:** An accessible President, i.e., one who keeps all channels of information open to himself, is in a much better position to make decisions based on relevant information.

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Conclusion 7: A President who requires his subordinates to submit important decisions to him before they are finalized and before they are executed can keep a tighter grip on foreign policy matters than one who allows staff members to make decisions on their own authority.

Conclusion 8: Positive response decisions are more apt to be made by an "independent" President who takes a broad view of his powers. Such an interpretation of power increases the range of alternatives, thus enhancing positivism.

Conclusion 9: Decisions which are based on limited or incomplete information are more likely to be decisions which include a passive response to crisis situations. This is true because a decision-maker, possessing inadequate information, tends to choose alternative courses of action which leave the most margin for error and which offer the least danger.

Conclusion 10: A fluid and flexible staffing system in which fixed routines and assignments are kept to a minimum, stimulates the type of productive tension which results in carefully worked-out decisions. Such a staffing system, due to the overlapping of roles and assignments, broadens the range of alternatives used in problem solving and keeps uniformity of advice to a minimum.

Methodological Conclusions

The analytical device utilized in this study is an extremely valuable research tool for two primary reasons. First, because it specifies the relevant factors which need to be investigated, it insures that pertinent components which may have contributed to the decision under study will not be overlooked or disregarded by the analyst. The systematic classification technique embodied in the frame of reference provides for the categorization of all the variables which may have had a bearing on the decision and thus provides the researcher with a conceptual framework within which he may study each of these variables individually; thereby constructing an empirical explanation for the decision. Secondly, because the frame of reference sets the limits and establishes the boundaries of investigation, it provides for parsimony in the collection of data. By limiting the researcher only to those variables which are most likely to have a direct bearing on the subject under analysis, the scheme keeps unnecessary research to a minimum and insures that irrelevant material will not be included in the analysis.

In conclusion, then, it can be said that the decision-making approach outlined here is a useful device which provides a much needed frame of reference for relating the many aspects of state action. The scheme, presenting as it does a common frame of reference which specifies what data ought to be collected and how these data can be most fruitfully ordered, does away with the random search for information which so often characterizes foreign policy-making studies. Thus, the decision-making approach introduces a measure of order in a field which is badly in need of such direction. In this respect it constitutes a major contribution to the discipline.

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