How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy:

A Theoretical Framework

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Two questions must be addressed if we are going to get inside the "black box" of government to understand the relevance of leadership to foreign policymaking: (1) What types of actors make foreign policy decisions? (2) What is the effect of these decision units on the resulting foreign policy? An examination of how governments and ruling parties around the world make foreign policy decisions suggests that authority is exercised by an extensive array of different entities. Among those making policy are prime ministers, presidents, party secretaries, standing committees, military juntas, cabinets, bureaucracies, interagency groups, legislatures, and loosely structured revolutionary coalitions. When we contemplate engaging in systematic comparisons of governmental decision-making bodies across and within countries, the number of possibilities becomes formidable.

The premise of this special issue is that there is a way of classifying these decision units that can enhance our ability to account for governments' behavior in the foreign policy arena. In particular, three types of decision units are found in the various political entities listed above: the powerful leader, the single group, and the coalition of autonomous actors. The decision units framework presented here is intended to assist the researcher in ascertaining when each of these types of units is likely to be involved in making a foreign policy decision as well as how the structure and process in the unit can affect the nature of that decision.

Although we recognize there are numerous domestic and international factors that can and do influence foreign policy behavior, these influences are necessarily channeled through the political apparatus of a government that identifies, decides, and implements foreign policy. Policy is made by people

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configured in various ways depending on the nature of the problem and the structure of the government. Indeed, we argue that there is within any government an individual or a set of individuals with the ability to commit the resources of the society and, when faced with a problem, the authority to make a decision that cannot be readily reversed. We call this set of decision makers the "authoritative decision unit" and seek to understand how it shapes foreign policy decision making across diverse situations and issues as well as different political settings.

We are interested in one stage of the foreign policymaking process: the point at which members of the authoritative decision unit select a particular course of action, that is, make a choice. Even though we are aware that the actual process of choice may not be a clear occurrence, that key decisions and those who make them are constrained by available inputs, and that subsequent implementation of a decision may lead to distortion, knowledge about how decisions are made is a powerful source of insight into what complex entities, such as governments, do. By learning about how foreign policy decisions are made, we gain information about the intentions and strategies of governments and how definitions of the situation are translated into action.

Core Assumptions of the Decision Units Approach

The decision units approach described here builds upon a growing body of research on foreign policy decision making (for reviews of this literature see, e.g., 't Hart, 1990; Maoz, 1990; Vertzberger, 1990; Bender and Hammond, 1992; Khong, 1992; Welch, 1992; Caldwell and McKeown, 1993; Evans, Jacobson, and Putnam, 1993; Hagan, 1994; Kupchan, 1994; Hermann and Kegley, 1995; Hudson, 1995; 't Hart, Stern, and Sundelius, 1997; George and George, 1998; Stern and Verbeek, 1998; Sylvan and Voss, 1998; Allison and Zelikow, 1999; Rosati, 2000). These works overview decision-making "models" that focus on bureaucratic politics, group dynamics, presidential advisory systems, governmental politics, leadership, coalition politics, and the strategies for dealing with domestic opposition. The decision units framework attempts to integrate this extant research literature.

The approach is grounded in three assumptions about foreign policymaking that merit some discussion. (1) These so-called models of decision making examine decision units that are found in most governments, yet researchers have wanted to declare one a winner—"the" explanation for how foreign policy decisions are made. The literature does not facilitate our understanding of foreign policymaking by treating them as separate, complementary frameworks for explaining the essence of decision. (2) Much of the decision-making literature, as well as that in international relations, has focused on the constraints that limit what decision units can do, failing to take into account the variety of

ways in which those involved in policymaking can shape what happens. Decision units are often active participants in the making of foreign policy. (3) We are intent on developing a framework that facilitates scholars exploring how decisions are made in all types of countries. To date models of foreign policy decision making have had a distinctly U.S. flavor. As a result, the models have not fared as well when extended to non-U.S. settings, particularly to nondemocratic, transitional, and less developed polities (see, e.g., Korany and Dessouki, 1991; Hagan, 1993; Stern and Verbeek, 1998). Indeed, "the U.S. bias" in the decision-making literature has made it difficult to generalize to other countries and has given researchers blind spots regarding how decisions are made in governments and cultures not like the American. Before explicating our approach further, let us examine in more detail the reasons for our first two assumptions, in turn, noting how our desire to be comparative has shaped the more integrated approach advocated here.

Viewing the Models as Contingent

Since Allison's (1971) seminal work exploring which of three models of decision making was most useful in understanding the choices American policymakers made in the Cuban missile crisis, scholars engaged in foreign policy analysis have tended to view the models—and, in turn, the types of decision units—in competition with one another as explanations of governments' actions in international relations. If the goal is the development of a comparative framework for understanding foreign policy decision making, we wonder if this strategy is the most appropriate. We do not dispute that there are alternative decision units and processes. At issue is the conclusion that any one decision unit is generally more valid than the others in explaining foreign policy decision making. In our view, all the various decision-making models in the literature have merit. Our strategy is to identify the theoretical conditions under which each set of decision dynamics is more likely to occur. For each type of decision unit, we want to specify the variables that lead to one particular process as opposed to the others. For example, what factors predispose a cabinet to engage in bureaucratic politics as opposed to groupthink? Thus, instead of exploring which set of variables is most potent in explaining a particular foreign policy action or applying "alternative cuts" to a case assuming that one will have more explanatory power than the others, our approach posits that it is theoretically possible to determine the conditions under which each of the models is most applicable and assumes that all models will apply in certain, specifiable situations. In other words, the various decision-making models are all relevant to understanding the foreign policymaking process; the decision units framework suggests in what political structures, kinds of problems, and situations each type is expected to prevail.

This kind of logic is especially important if decision theories are to have cross-national validity. As Hagan noted earlier in this special issue, much con-

ventional international relations research presumes that decision-making processes are determined by basic national and political system characteristics. Thus, Western democracies are viewed as having pluralistic processes while authoritarian political systems are seen as hierarchical and highly cohesive, and the policies in Third World polities are determined by the predominant leader's personal predispositions. In contrast, scholars with area expertise have shown the weaknesses in this argument. For example, states with predominant leaders have at times been governed more by coalitions of interests and group dynamics than by the views and goals of a single actor, while highly bureaucratized governments have seen a dominant leader centralize authority and push a particular ideology or cause (see, e.g., Weinstein, 1972; Lincoln and Ferris, 1984; Vertzberger, 1984; Korany and Dessouki, 1991; Snyder, 1991; Hermann and Kegley, 1995). These latter insights have helped to guide our development of a contingency model of foreign policy decision making. They caution against assuming that certain decision-making processes are a direct function of basic national attributes or the structure of the political system. Furthermore, they suggest that the nature of the decision unit is just as likely to vary within a single country as between different types of nations.

Considering the Full Range of Decision Processes

Our second assumption builds from our observation that there are a variety of potential outcomes that can result from the decision process. What happens within a decision unit in the decision-making process can lead to an array of different kinds of outcomes, indicating a need to move beyond characterizing the outcomes of decisions as simply "political resultants." Consider that in some cases there is a decision not to act or an inability to mount a new policy initiative while in other cases the decision dynamics may propel one party's position to dominate, leading to more extreme action than most would have desired. Somewhere between these two outcomes of deadlock and strong forceful action are more complex situations where policies are "watered down" as a result of internal bargaining and compromise or one party moderates its position in order to let another "save face."

Our point here is that a comparative explanation of foreign policy needs to recognize that decision-making dynamics do not have a direct, singular impact on foreign policy. Rather, they can produce various results from consensus to deadlock, from compromise to domination by one individual or faction. Our explanations need to account for both the "push" and "pull" of these decision-making dynamics—for when they are likely to moderate or diminish the nature of a proposed response as well as when they will exacerbate the situation and produce a stronger action than might otherwise have been chosen. Not only will clearer conceptual efforts enable us to better judge the effects of decision-

making processes, but they will make it possible to elaborate the linkages between decision units and decision outcomes.

To date, when the foreign policymaking literature has considered the outcomes of the decision process, the tendency has been to emphasize *pathological* decision-making behaviors (e.g., Allison, 1971; Halperin, 1974; George, 1980; Janis, 1982; C. Hermann, 1993; Stern and Verbeek, 1998). In other words, the emphasis has been on explicating decision-making models that account for suboptimal outcomes reflective of decision makers' failure to respond effectively to international pressures and domestic problems. Interest has centered around considering decision-making processes only when they seem to force dramatic deviations from the presumed norm of rational policymaking that involves being open to and understanding international and domestic constraints.

Regardless of whether actual decision-making processes conform to the ideals of rationality (about which there is debate), it does not follow that one must argue that these processes are always pathological or that they invariably lead to suboptimal decision outcomes. Indeed, we need models of decision making that not only reveal how things can go wrong, but reliably explain the process operating in a range of decisions irrespective of the evaluative assessment of those procedures and the results they produce. In particular, we want to understand the contingencies that increase the likelihood that a decision unit (a) adequately recognizes stimuli from its environment and (b) achieves timely collaboration among its members so that they can reach an agreement and engage in meaningful action.

Once again, such elaboration has particular importance for cross-national foreign policy research efforts. The premature connection of particular types of decision units and processes with specific kinds of countries or political systems can lead to distortions in our explanations of their foreign policies. We want to avoid the presumption that certain defects (or virtues) are inherent in particular political structures or philosophies—for example, that democratic decision making is *always* more reactive and incoherent than decision making in authoritarian regimes, or that the actions of rogue states are reckless and out of touch with any kind of reality. An understanding of the conditions conducive to particular kinds of processes and outcomes would not only improve our understanding of how far countries' foreign policy is likely to stray from the optimal, but also presumably help scholars avoid the application of simplistic stereotypes regarding what those states are likely to do.

A Decision Units Approach to Foreign Policy Decision Making

Building on the previous discussion, our proposed framework has several components: (1) it views decision making as involving responding to foreign policy

problems and occasions for decision; (2) it focuses on three types of authoritative decision units; (3) it defines the key factors that set into motion alternative decision processes; and (4) it links these alternative decision processes to particular outcomes. When combined, these components articulate a contingency approach to the study of foreign policy decision making. Figure 1 diagrams the interrelation of the various components. Although space does not permit explaining each component in detail, we will provide an overview of the framework here. The theories and decision logics embedded in each of the different types of decision units will be explicated further in the next three pieces in this special issue. (For more detail on the development of the ideas presented here see Hermann and Hermann, 1982; Hermann and Hermann, 1985; Hermann, Hermann, and Hagan, 1987; Hermann and Hermann, 1989; Stewart, Hermann, and Hermann, 1989; Hagan, 1993; C. Hermann, 1993; M. Hermann, 1993; Hermann and Hagan, 1998.)

Inputs to the Decision Units Framework

What triggers governments to make foreign policy decisions that, in turn, prod powerful leaders, single groups, and coalitions into action? What is it about the political setting that leads one or the other of these different types of decision units to assume authority for making a decision at any point in time? How do we know which of the three types of decision units should be the focus of our attention in studying a particular event? The answers to these questions form the inputs for the application of the decision units approach. They start the framework in motion. Of interest is what precipitates a foreign policy decision and a particular decision unit taking action. The inputs to the framework represent the stimuli from the international and domestic environments to which the authoritative decision unit is responding.

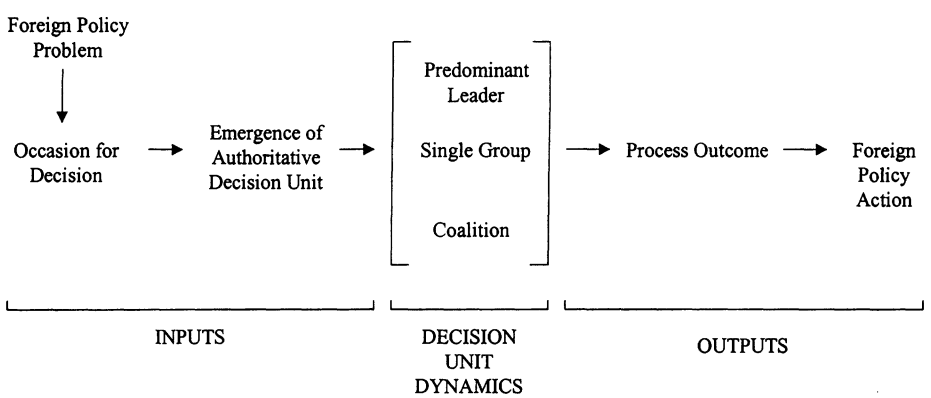

FIGURE 1. Decision units framework

Problems trigger decisions. Discussions with policymakers and policy analysts suggest that they respond to problems embedded in situations (see, e.g., George, 1993; Galvin, 1994; Kruzel, 1994). Policymakers have goals and objectives they believe are important and want to achieve during their administrations; agendas for foreign policy are formed around these plans. But often as they begin to take action on such goals and objectives, they encounter problems in their domestic and international environments that challenge what they want to do. Their agendas can also be changed as they are forced by situations happening elsewhere in the world to attend to issues not necessarily among their priorities. As a result, governments take action when policymakers perceive a problem in foreign policy that they believe they can or need to influence. Decisions are sought to deal with problems.

By problem is meant a perceived discrepancy between present conditions and what is desired. As this definition implies, problems are subjective. The nature of the problem—and, indeed, whether one exists at all—depends on policymakers' perceptions. Accordingly, different policymakers, and different governments, may observe the same state of affairs but recognize distinctive problems or no problem at all. Moreover, problems can pose opportunities as well as difficulties for policymakers and governments. A perceived discrepancy that suggests action can lead to a more preferable condition offers policymakers an opportunity; a perceived discrepancy that denotes things are changing or could change for the worse challenges what policymakers are doing and can become threatening.

A problem is recognized when policymakers state that something is wrong, needs attention, or presents an opportunity for gain if action is taken. Thus, expressions by representatives of a regime or administration about some current difficulty or potential opportunity indicate the recognition of a problem. Governments often organize their foreign policy bureaucracies to allow policymakers to monitor various regions of the world and certain issue areas for problems. For example, a South Asian Desk includes people whose job is to attend to what is happening in countries in that part of the world and to note when events or these governments' actions pose a difficulty or opportunity for achieving certain goals. A Bureau for Inspection and Verification oversees whether there are treaty violations by other countries with regard to certain weapons' systems that could threaten their government's programs and initiatives. We propose that when problems are recognized, decision units are generally convened to deal with them.

Thus, in exploring how foreign policy decisions are made, we start with a problem that needs addressing. Problems are the trigger or reason for engaging the decision units framework. Not only is the foreign policy problem the initial stimulus or input into the framework, attributes of problems provide us with helpful information in identifying the authoritative decision unit and some ideas

about the options under review. Although we know that considerable interest exists in understanding how societies and governments decide what problems to address and what priority to give them on their collective agenda, such is not the focus of attention of the decision units approach. We are studying who deals with problems once identified and how the process they use affects the nature of the decision. When policymakers have recognized a foreign policy problem, we want to determine who will be able to commit the resources of the government and how that individual or those entities go about making a decision.

Occasions for decision. Foreign policy problems arise episodically and often lead to a series of decisions. Policymakers generally do not deal with a problem by making a single decision and then sit back to await a response. Problems tend to get structured into a string of decisions that involve different parts of the government's foreign policy machinery. Consider as an illustration the British response to the Argentinean invasion of the Falkland Islands. The response consisted of a series of decisions made in the British cabinet, defense ministry, parliament, and foreign ministry. Different aspects of the problem were dealt with by policymakers in these various institutions—general guidelines for policy were developed by the cabinet, troop movements were defined by the defense ministry, cabinet policy was ratified by the Parliament, and diplomatic moves in the United Nations and elsewhere were determined by the foreign ministry (Franks, 1983; Hastings and Jenkins, 1983; Lebow, 1985). In effect, in responding to a foreign policy problem governments often are involved in a sequence of decisions.

Each time policymakers formulate a question about a recognized foreign policy problem that needs answering and arrange for someone or somebody to respond to it, we have an occasion for decision. Occasions for decision represent the instances in coping with a problem when the policymakers are faced with making a choice. They are those points in the decision process when there is a felt need by those involved to take action even if the action is the choice to do nothing or to search for more information. As a result, problems often include a number of occasions for decision that may be addressed across time by the same decision unit or by all three types of decision units.

Occasions for decision are usually perceived by policymakers as questions that need to be addressed. The questions that drive occasions for decision generally take one of three forms: (1) queries about whether action is needed in relation to this problem (e.g., are Iraq's troop movements toward the Kuwaiti border something we need to take action on at this time?); (2) queries seeking possible solutions to a problem (e.g., what should we do about the Iraqi troop movements toward the Kuwaiti border?); or (3) queries about whether one or more proposals for dealing with this aspect of the problem should be adopted (e.g., should we send troops to counter the Iraqis or should we go to the United

Nations Security Council with a resolution condemning their movement?). The first two types of occasions for decision lead to policy declarations in which broad policy directions are stipulated and goals and objectives are set. The third type of occasion for decision leads to a strategic decision in which a particular action is chosen and resources are committed.

Occasions for decision that call for policy declarations and strategic actions are distinguished in the present research from other types of occasions for decision. With the decision units framework we are interested in examining occasions for decision that lead to authoritative actions on the part of the government in dealing with a perceived foreign policy problem. We want to understand the processes that affect the commitment of a government's resources and its choice of policy. Of less interest are those occasions for decision that are focused on searching for more information about a problem, implementing previous authoritative decisions, or the ratification of a decision. Although we recognize that these latter types of occasion for decision have implications for policy declarations and strategic choices by providing more differentiated input into the selection process, by shaping the consequences or reactions to a policy choice, or by distorting how any decision is carried out, they are only the focus of attention in the decision units framework if they have resulted in an occasion for decision that calls for an authoritative decision on what the government is going to do or not do with regard to the problem at hand.

Typically an occasion for decision that calls for a policy choice or authoritative decision can be detected in reports that policymakers are looking for a means of handling a problem or considering whether or not to act on a problem they perceive in the international arena. Such occasions for decision are also recognizable in reports that policymakers are discussing a particular option or that there is a debate among policymakers about one or more options for dealing with a problem. Moreover, indications that there are disagreements among policymakers on how a problem should be defined or about what alternatives are feasible are suggestive that an authoritative decision may be in process or required soon.

Whenever the question that forms the basis for an occasion for decision changes, we have a new occasion for decision and the possibility for a new decision unit to address it. The question can shift for a variety of reasons. For example, the foreign recipient of a government's action can fail to respond in the expected manner; new information can cause a reinterpretation of the problem; issues can be raised in implementing a decision that bring the former decision into question; one of the major participants in the decision unit can change his, her, or its preferences; efforts can be made to overcome a deadlock by changing participants in the decision unit; a minority who lost out in influencing the decision earlier can resurface the issue again. Hence, the occasion for decision performs a similar function in the decision units framework as a

single frame of film does in a motion picture. The single frame is the building block from which a continuous strip of film is made. By focusing on occasions for decision, we take snapshots of the decision-making process at various points in time as policymakers attempt to deal with a problem. Together, just like frames in a movie, the occasions for decision form an episode such as the Cuban missile crisis, the Gulf War, or the Mexican peso crisis.

The occasion for decision provides observers and analysts a basic unit of analysis for studying how policymakers and governments deal with foreign policy problems. It facilitates isolating and examining the sequence of decisions that are made in handling such problems by breaking the sequence into its parts. In rebuilding the sequence we learn about the flow of decisions and who was involved in which decisions with what consequences to the decision process and actual choice. In effect, *each time* there is a new occasion for decision as policymakers cope with a foreign policy problem, we reapply the decision units framework to see if the decision unit has changed or some aspect of the setting within the decision unit has changed.

The authoritative decision unit. At the apex of foreign policy decision making in all governments or ruling parties is a group of actors—the authoritative decision unit—who, if they agree, have both the ability to commit the resources of the government in foreign affairs and the power to prevent other entities within the government from overtly reversing their position. The unit having this authority in a country may (and frequently does) vary with the nature of the problem. For issues of vital importance to a country, the highest political authorities often constitute the decision unit; there is a contraction of authority to those most accountable for what happens. For less dramatic, more technical issues, the ultimate decision unit generally varies depending on the type of problem the government is facing (military, economic, diplomatic, environmental, scientific, and so on). In governments where policy normally involves multiple bureaucratic organizations, the problem may be passed among different units—within one agency, across agencies, or between interagency groups. The basic point here is that for most foreign policy problems and occasions for decision, some person or collection of persons come together to authorize a decision and constitute for that issue at that point in time the authoritative decision unit.

As we observed earlier, an examination of the various decision-making models that have been proposed in the literature indicates that there are, in essence, three types of possible authoritative decision units. They are:

1. PREDOMINANT LEADER: A single individual who has the ability to stifle all opposition and dissent as well as the power to make a decision alone, if necessary.

2. SINGLE GROUP: A set of individuals, all of whom are members of a single body, who collectively select a course of action in consultation with each other.
3. COALITION OF AUTONOMOUS ACTORS: The necessary actors are separate individuals, groups, or representatives of institutions which, if some or all concur, can act for the government, but no one of which by itself has the ability to decide and force compliance on the others; moreover, no overarching authoritative body exists in which all these actors are members.

This categorization is considered both mutually exclusive and exhaustive. The actors who make authoritative decisions for governments in the foreign policy arena should correspond to one of these three configurations. Consider some examples of potential authoritative decision units from the early twenty-first-century international scene that represent each of these types: Cuba's Fidel Castro and Iraq's Saddam Hussein are predominant leaders; single groups include the British cabinet and the Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party; and coalitions of autonomous actors are in evidence in Iran where foreign policy can only result from the interaction of the more moderate forces led by President Khatami and the more conservative forces led by Ayatollah Khamenei as well as in Indonesia where the president and vice-president are drawn from different parties and points of view.

Determining the Authoritative Decision Unit for an Occasion for Decision

Figure 2 shows the sets of factors we consider in determining which of the three types of decision units—predominant leader, single group, or coalition—will have ultimate authority to respond to a particular occasion for decision. (See Hermann and Hermann, 1989, for a more detailed figure and discussion of what constitutes each of the factors.) Before we can begin to explore the ways in which decision units can affect policy, we need to ascertain the type of decision unit that has the authority to commit the resources of the government for a specific occasion for decision. Thus, once we have decided that policymakers recognize a foreign policy problem and are faced with an occasion for decision that calls for a declaration of policy or strategic choice, we have to determine who will make the decision.

The factors in Figure 2 take into account both formal and informal structures of government. At issue is where in the government is the problem under discussion and this specific occasion for decision likely to receive attention. To answer this question we need to determine how the government is structured by law as well as consider the norms that have arisen around these institutional arrangements. The questions in the figure focus first on the formal structures of

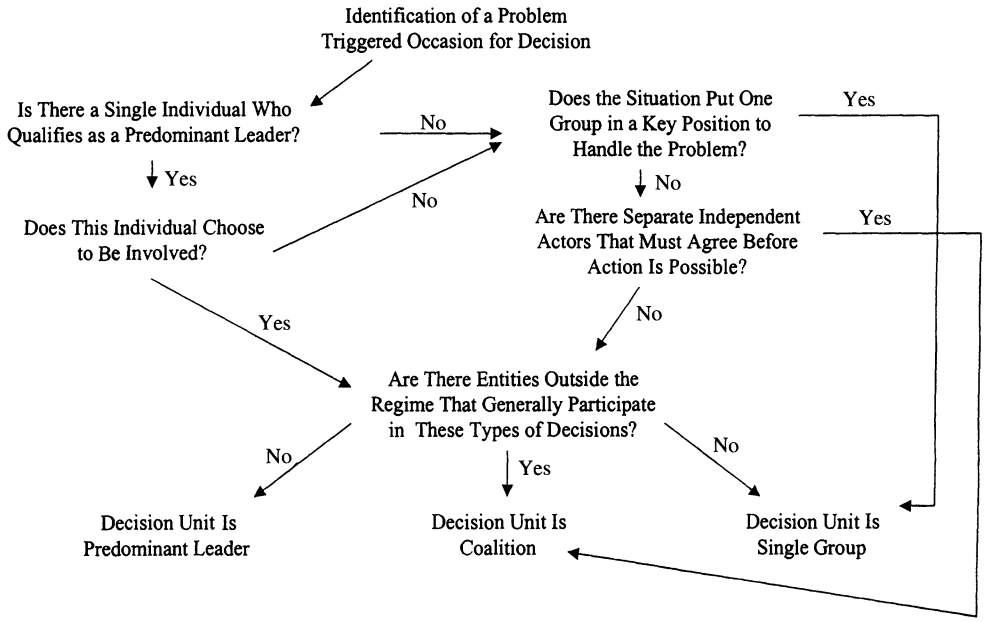

FIGURE 2. Factors involved in determining the nature of the authoritative decision unit for an occasion for decision

governance and then on the informal structures that may be in effect for a particular occasion for decision. We are interested in whether there is in the regime's leadership one individual with the power and authority to commit or withhold the resources of the government with regard to the problem at hand (a predominant leader), a single group that is responsible for dealing with problems like the current one, or two or more separate actors (individuals, groups, organizations) that must agree before the resources of the government can be committed for such problems (a coalition).

Conditions favoring a predominant leader. The decision unit for any occasion for decision is likely to be a predominant leader if the regime has one individual in its leadership who is vested with the authority—either by the constitution, law, or general practice—to commit or withhold the resources of the government with regard to foreign policy problems. A monarchy is an illustration of this kind of predominant leader as is a presidential political system in which the president is given authority over foreign policy.

The decision unit can also be a predominant leader if the foreign policy machinery of the government is organized hierarchically with one person located at the top of the hierarchy who is ultimately accountable for any decisions that are made. As Harry Truman said about the American presidency, "The buck stops here." Moreover, if a single individual has control over the various forms of coercion avail-

able in the society and, as a result, wields power over others, the decision unit can be a predominant leader. Dictatorships and authoritarian regimes fall into this category and often have predominant leaders dealing with foreign policy matters.

If we ascertain there is a predominant leader at this point in time, we need to determine whether or not he or she chooses to exercise that authority. We know, for instance, that even though Franco was a predominant leader in Spain during the 1950s and 1960s, he turned over much of his foreign policymaking authority to his foreign minister (Gunther, 1988). How can we assess if the single powerful leader is dealing with a specific occasion for decision? The literature on political leadership and foreign policy decision making suggests there are at least six conditions when such leaders are likely to exercise their powers (see Hermann, 1976, 1988; Holsti, 1976; Greenstein, 1987). These six conditions include certain types of situations that guarantee involvement—high-level diplomacy, crisis events—and particular aspects of the leaders' personalities that push them to want control over what happens—interest, expertise, and techniques for managing information and resolving disagreements.

If an occasion for decision involves high-level diplomacy where the predominant leader is expected to be a part of what happens, chances increase that he or she will take charge and exercise authority. Summit meetings are a case in point. Of necessity the predominant leader will be present and participating actively in the policymaking process. When faced with a crisis situation, predominant leaders are also likely to become involved in what is happening in foreign policy even if they are not generally involved. Literature on organizations and bureaucracies (e.g., Hermann, 1972; Lebow, 1981; Hampson, 1988; 't Hart, 1990) indicates that there is a contraction of authority during situations that are critical to the survival of the government. Policymakers at the top take part in the decision-making unit because their positions and policies often are under challenge. Their interest in overseeing the process heightens as their accountability for what happens increases.

Predominant leaders can be more and less prone themselves to want to take charge. Studies of political leadership (e.g., Barber, 1977; Burns, 1978; Hermann, 1984, 1988; Preston, 2001) have shown that predominant leaders are more likely to become involved in what is happening the greater their general interest in foreign policy and the more extensive their experience or expertise. Such leaders tend to gravitate toward the area of policy where they feel comfortable. These leaders are likely to choose to follow the issues arising in foreign policy and to help define the agenda and problems that are relevant to their administration. It is almost second nature to work on foreign policy problems first. Similarly, although a predominant leader may not generally be interested in foreign policy or have a lot of foreign policy experience, he or she may be particularly interested, or have expertise, in a specific type of foreign policy problem and insist on being involved when those interests or problems are

considered. For example, Dwight Eisenhower's special interest in controlling the spread of nuclear weapons through developing peaceful uses for atomic energy led him to want to take charge of any decisions the American government made regarding this topic.

Predominant leaders' preferred ways of dealing with advisers can also suggest whether or not they will generally exercise authority (see, e.g., Burke and Greenstein, 1991; Hermann and Preston, 1994; George and George, 1998). If such leaders organize those around them into a team and are interested in serving as the center of the team, they are likely to be involved in most foreign policy occasions for decision that emanate from the government. These predominant leaders maintain control by becoming the hub of the information network, having a better overall picture of what is going on than any one player on the team. Contrast this scenario with that for predominant leaders who prefer to receive information after it has been digested and sifted by advisers and those in the bureaucracy. These predominant leaders only want to deal with the "most important" decisions or those that make it through the hierarchy. Moreover, such leaders often make foreign policy by issuing directives for others to interpret. For predominant leaders with this latter leadership style, some occasions for decision will be dealt with by other policymakers. This type of predominant leader will more often be the authoritative decision unit for occasions for decision that focus on goal-setting or defining objectives than for those that involve deciding on particular strategies.

Conditions favoring a single group. If the government is not structured around a single individual, there may be a designated group that is responsible for dealing with the occasion for decision under consideration. Such a key group can take one of several forms depending on its location in the government and the nature of the problem stimulating the occasion for decision.

There may be one particular group whose role is to deal with the type of occasion for decision that is facing the government. If so, the authoritative decision unit becomes a single group rather than a predominant leader. The Politburo in the former Soviet Union and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the American government are illustrations of such single groups. Although responsible for foreign policy problems in their respective governments, these two groups differ in the extent of their authority. The Politburo appears to have been in on most occasions for decision that involved foreign policy; the Joint Chiefs of Staff focus only on military problems and, in turn, strategic choices rather than policy declarations. Often such groups develop around recurrent problems that the members all have a stake in solving and have some expertise in resolving. It is important in considering whether or not there is such a group to determine if certain people are brought together in a face-to-face setting in most instances when problems of this nature arise.

Governments also have in place groups that have as their mission handling crisis problems when they arise. Such groups become key to decision making when the problem is critical to the government. Thus, defense and foreign ministries have groups whose purpose is to respond to crises. Situation or war rooms are manifestations of such organizational structures. Personnel are trained to monitor and to consider devising standard operating procedures for coping with such problems. Moreover, the literature on crisis management (e.g., Lebow, 1981; Kleiboer, 1998; Stern, 1999) suggests that governments may create groups with the sole function of considering ways to defuse a particular situation. The American ExCom in the Cuban missile crisis is an example of this type of group. Its members, who were for the most part also cabinet members, were brought together to deliberate on the options the U.S. government had to deal with the so-called offensive Soviet missiles in Cuba. They no longer functioned as a group when the crisis was over.

Furthermore, for the current occasion for decision there may be a key group in a relevant bureaucracy that is charged with handling such problems. Bureaucracies are often organized around problem areas or regions of the world. For example, foreign ministries could have a Middle East Bureau that focuses on problems in that part of the world or they could have an agency paying attention to human rights issues. At times, there are also standing interagency committees that are charged with developing policies regarding security or economic problems that coordinate among bureaucratic organizations. Remember that to be considered a single group there need to be two or more people who interact directly with each other and collectively reach a decision. All persons necessary to committing the resources of the government with regard to the particular occasion for decision must be members of the group for us to have a single group as the authoritative decision unit. In effect, in the single group decision unit there is a collective, interactive (generally face-to-face) decision process in which all members participate.

Conditions favoring coalitions. At times in governments faced with an occasion for decision, the authoritative decision unit is composed of multiple autonomous actors. That is, two or more entities (e.g., individual leaders, groups of policymakers, bureaucratic agencies, interest groups) have the power to commit or withhold the resources of the government and none can allocate such resources without the concurrence of the other(s). Thus, in locating what is the authoritative decision unit for a particular occasion for decision, we need to consider whether or not there are separate, independent actors who must work together in making a decision or nothing will happen. As an illustration, let us examine the Iranian government during the period when the students took over the American embassy and held the personnel there hostage. In order for the Iranian government to make a decision regarding release or transfer of the

hostages, the following entities had to concur: Ayatollah Khomeini, the mullahs in the Revolutionary Council, the moderates in the government ministries, and the students who took the embassy. None could commit the resources of the government without the consent of the others. This type of decision unit consists of multiple independent actors who form into a single coalition or multiple coalitions in arriving at a decision.

The entities comprising the multiple independent actors can be from outside the government as well as from within the government. We have already suggested one instance of this with the Iranian students who took the American hostages. Several other examples may help make the point. Consider the leadership of the Catholic Church in a strongly Catholic country that may need to be consulted by the government in advance over policy issues central to its doctrine, or a politically active military that may be involved in decision making in a polity marked by recurrent military intervention. To be included as part of this type of decision unit, the actor outside the government must participate in the decision making on the issue not just in the implementation of the decision. Such actors need to have the possibility of withholding the resources necessary for action *if not consulted* as part of the decision-making process. These nongovernmental actors must regularly engage in the decision process on certain issues or have the power to veto or reverse government decisions to be considered part of the decision unit. Their veto or override authority may be based in law but more probably is the result of the entity's ability to block or alter implementation of a decision because it controls key resources or has moral authority in particular matters.

Multiple autonomous actors can also include foreign governments or their representatives, multinational corporations, or other international organizations (e.g., the World Bank or United Nations). The most common occurrence of this type of actor is in a government dominated militarily or economically by another country. Eastern European countries before the fall of the Soviet Union often had to consider the interests of the government of the Soviet Union in making their foreign policy. It is well known that Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines regularly consulted U.S. policymakers on issues of foreign policy that involved the United States in order to ensure future economic aid. To be considered part of the decision unit, such actors must routinely exercise control of the government's decisions regarding the particular resources involved in the occasion for decision.

Even if the formal structures of the government suggest that the authoritative decision unit for a particular occasion for decision is a predominant leader or single group, the presence of relevant actors outside the government can change the nature of the decision unit. As the example with Marcos implies, a predominant leader sought out the participation of others in certain decisions. Fearing an overthrow, a cabinet (single group) may consult the military regard-

ing decisions in which it might have an interest in order to prevent such from happening. The dispersion of power and influence in a government and society may change the authoritative decision unit from what appears formally the case to an informal set of actors who must collaborate for anything meaningful to be decided.

Some boundary issues in determining the authoritative decision unit. Experience in determining the nature of the authoritative decision unit for occasions for decision has posed some classification issues that fall at the boundaries of the definitions of the particular units. For example, is a leader-advisory group an instance of a predominant leader or single-group decision unit? Is a coalition cabinet a single group or a set of multiple autonomous actors? When a junta is a coordinating body for several parties or groups, is it a single-group or multiple-autonomous-actors decision unit? In other words, what are the rules for deciding which of these two types of decision units has ultimate authority when the entities have characteristics of both kinds? The following discussion builds on our experiences with these questions.

When the occasion for decision is under the purview of a predominant leader who has brought in a set of advisers, we become interested in knowing something about what has happened in the past in such a leader-advisory setting. Does this particular predominant leader tend to use his advisers as consultants to provide him with information and expertise but reserve the right to make the decision himself? Or does this leader see his advisers as forming a team with himself to make decisions on issues like that under consideration? In the first instance, we would have a predominant leader decision unit; in the second instance a single group with a dominant leader. As long as the leader retains the ability to make the choice he or she prefers, the decision unit is a predominant leader. If, however, the leader views the advisers as members of a decision-making team, the decision unit takes on the characteristics of a single group that is interactive and collective in its decision making.

If the decision unit appears to be a coalition cabinet, we consider the following in determining if we have a single-group or multiple-autonomous-actors decision unit. A coalition cabinet is a single group if the dynamics and structures of the parties represented in the coalition do not intrude into the decision-making process. A coalition cabinet is functioning as multiple autonomous actors when the members of the cabinet generally participate in a two-level process in which there is interaction with the leadership of the parties as well as with other members in the cabinet in coping with problems. Four conditions seem relevant to choosing which of these two situations holds. The coalition cabinet is a single group when (1) its members are the heads or leaders (de facto or de jure) of the various parties represented in the cabinet; (2) it has norms through which the parties give cabinet members wide discretion in mak-

ing decisions; (3) the occasion for decision facing it is time urgent and there is little opportunity to check with the parties; or (4) it generally conducts its deliberations in secret. In each of these instances there is less need, time, and/or reason to check back with the parties. Only those present at the cabinet session participate in the decision-making process. A coalition cabinet is composed of multiple independent actors when the opposite conditions hold; that is, members are not party leaders, norms give members little discretion in making decisions, there is an extended period of time for decision making, or decisions are being made on the record. For such cabinets, the parties become participants in the process as well as their representatives who are members of the cabinets.

Coordinating committees, boards of directors, and interagency groups can pose the same type of dilemma for distinguishing between single-group and coalition decision units. If, for example, a junta is formed from the various types of participants in a coup to coordinate policy for the government, is it a single group or coalition? At issue is the amount of control the coordinating committee can exercise over the multiple actors. If it can make decisions that cannot be readily reversed or modified by outside participants, the coordinators probably form a single-group decision unit. If, however, the outside entities can stipulate what the coordinating committee can and cannot do in response to a given occasion for decision, then we have a coalition decision unit. Some conditions that we have found to coincide with coordinating committees being considered as single groups include the following: (1) the group's existence does not depend on the endorsement of the various autonomous actors outside the group as it is established by law, accepted norms, or long continuous existence; (2) representatives to the coordinating committee cannot be readily replaced by their "home" entity once they are appointed; or (3) representatives to the coordinating committee are all heads of their respective organizations and have considerable substantive discretion in making decisions in the group.

Decision Unit Dynamics

Each kind of authoritative decision unit exists in one of several states that determines the nature of the decision process and the decision calculus for that unit. For each type of decision unit there is a particular "key contingency" that permits us to differentiate configurations leading it to operate in fundamentally different ways. For predominant leader decision units, the individual's sensitivity to information from the political context helps to define how much attention he or she will pay to others' points of view and to situational cues (see M. Hermann, 1984, 1993; Hermann and Kegley, 1995; Kaarbo and Hermann, 1998; Hermann and Preston, 1999). The less sensitive the leader, the more important his or her leadership style and beliefs become in determining what will happen; such leaders are usually more interested in persuading others and

in carrying out their own agendas and programs than in seeking advice or listening to others' points of view. These leaders want people around them who will implement their decisions and who will provide them with confirming rather than disconfirming information. Contextual cues are highly relevant to the more sensitive predominant leader who does not take action until the positions of important constituencies and pressures from the domestic and international environments are taken into account. The situation, not the person, becomes the focus of attention.

The operation of a single-group decision unit is, in contrast, conditioned largely by the techniques that are used to manage disagreement and conflict within the group. Since conflict in a problem-solving group can be debilitating, members often devote energy to developing ways of dealing with substantive differences. The literature indicates three different models to describe how single groups cope with conflict: (1) members act to minimize conflict by promoting concurrence ("groupthink"); (2) they acknowledge that disagreement is a fundamental, often unavoidable, part of the decision-making process and seek to resolve the conflict through debate and compromise ("bureaucratic politics"); and (3) even though disagreements are likely, members recognize that such conflict may have no resolution and enact a rule to govern decision making ("winning majority") (see Janis, 1982; C. Hermann, 1993; 't Hart, Stern, and Sundelius, 1997; Stern and Verbeek, 1998; George and George, 1998). Two variables that help to differentiate among these models of group decision making are the extent to which members of the group identify with the group itself or with external organizations and the decision rules used by the group. A focus on building concurrence and denying conflict is more likely when members' loyalties lie within the group. Members are concerned with what is happening in the group itself, in maintaining morale and cohesiveness, and in retaining their position in the group. When members' loyalties lie outside the group, the rules in place to guide decision making help to differentiate if conflict is accepted or resolved. With a unanimity decision rule, members recognize that no solution is possible unless it is acceptable to everyone; with a majority decision rule, members agree to abide by what a certain percentage of the group decides (see Miller, 1989; Levine and Moreland, 1990).

Basic political processes within a coalition of autonomous actors are influenced by the nature of the rules and procedures guiding interaction—the "rules of the game" that shape what is possible (see Hagan, 1993, 1994, 1995; Kaarbo, 1996; Hermann and Hagan, 1998). In particular, we are interested in the degree to which political procedures and norms are well established and "institutionalized." Where rules are essentially absent, we generally find a degree of anarchy and instability in the government with different actors vying for power. When there are established rules, the nature of the rules and theories of coalition formation help us ascertain the decisions that are likely to prevail. If the

decision rules permit an authoritative decision when a subset of actors (i.e., a majority) achieves agreement on a course of action, a minimum connected winning coalition is possible. If the decision rules—or political reality—require unanimity among all participants in the coalition, we have a "unit veto" system in which any single actor can block the initiatives of all others.

Knowledge about the nature of these key contingencies provides us with core theoretical insights into the operation of the decision units. Indeed, these key contingencies act as a kind of "theory selector" indicating which models of decision making we need to focus on in understanding the linkage between the decision process and outcome. Table 1 shows how the theory selector works. As the table indicates, each of the basic decision units can be found in three different forms depending on the nature of certain contingencies. The resulting nine types of decision units tap into a wide range of research and theory on how decisions are made by individuals and in groups, organizations, institutions, and political systems. Moreover, the decision units in this elaborated categorization engage in foreign policy decision making with different aims and highlighting different processes. Thus, for example, a coalition with no established rules will probably deadlock since the parties that make up the decision unit are less interested in resolving the substantive problem than in gaining control and power for themselves. A relatively insensitive predominant leader is likely to take strong, forceful actions as he or she moves to put into place an agenda or push for a cause. Members of a single group with an interest in resolving conflict but not wishing to "lose face" with the organizations they represent are likely to want to "paper over differences" or to engage in building a compromise all can accept.

In addition to telling us what theories to apply in understanding a particular decision, the contingencies also provide us with insights concerning whether the decision unit will be "open" or "closed" to the pressures of its environment, both domestic and international. In effect, they tell the researcher when to focus on the decision unit itself in determining the nature of the foreign policy decision and when there is a need to look outside the unit for influences that will shape the decision. Decision units with principled (less contextually sensitive) predominant leaders, single groups with strong internal loyalties, and coalitions with poorly established decision rules have internal dynamics that override external pressures and largely dictate their decision outcomes. Consider as examples Mao's leadership of the cultural revolution and isolation of China, decisions made within the Thatcher cabinet following the Argentinian invasion of the Falkland Islands, and the futile attempts at building a cohesive Iranian foreign policy during the hostage-taking crisis when Khomeini had yet to solidify his control over the government. In each case decisions were driven by *internal* dynamics, be it the personalities of principled leaders, the strong loyalty within a single group, or the severe politics within an unstable coalition. In marked

TABLE 1. Decision Unit Dynamics

Decision Unit	Key Contingency	Theories Exemplify	Decision Process
Predominant Leader	Sensitivity to Contextual Information:		
	(a) Relatively Insensitive (Goals and Means Well-Defined)	Personality Theory	Principled
	(b) Moderately Sensitive (Goals Well-Defined, Means Flexible; Political Timing Important)	Theories Based on the Person/ Situation Interaction	Strategic
	(c) Highly Sensitive (Goals and Means Flexible)	Theories Focused on the Situation Alone	Pragmatic
Single Group	Techniques Used to Manage Conflict in Group:		
	(a) Members Act to Minimize Conflict (Members Loyal to Group)	Group Dynamics ("Groupthink")	Deny Conflict and Seek Concurrence
	(b) Members Acknowledge Conflict Is Unavoidable; Group Must Deal with It (Members' Loyalty Outside Group; Unanimity Decision Rule)	Bureaucratic Politics	Resolve Conflict Through Debate and Compromise
	(c) Members Recognize Conflict May Have No Resolution (Members' Loyalty Outside Group; Majority Decision Rule)	Minority/Majority Influence and Jury Decision Making	Accept Conflict and Allow for Winning Majority
Coalition	Nature of Rules/Norms Guiding Interaction:		
	(a) No Established Rules for Decision Making	Theories of Political Instability	Anarchy
	(b) Established Norms Favor Majority Rule	Theories of Coalition Formation	Minimum Connected Winning Coalition
	(c) Established Norms Favor Unanimity Rule	Theories Regarding Development of Under- and Over-Sized Coalitions	Unit Veto

contrast, those decision units characterized by more sensitive predominant leaders, single groups whose members' primary identities are to other entities, and coalitions with well-established rules are penetrable and more susceptible to outside sources of influence; that is, they are "open" and more likely to take into account what is going on in the particular situation both domestically and internationally. As illustrations, note Brezhnev's waffling over the decision to invade Czechoslovakia in 1968 until he sensed there was unanimity among members of the Politburo and their important constituencies in taking such action, the struggles currently going on within the Israeli coalition cabinet as each party tries to gain domestic leverage through slowing down or speeding up the Middle East peace process, and the debate that occurred between President Clinton and the Congress over giving China most favored nation status.

The dynamics that characterize these different types of decision units are described in more detail in the three articles that follow this piece. Each article focuses on one of the basic decision units—predominant leader, single group, and coalition of autonomous actors—and elaborates the ways in which the various contingencies affect what happens in the foreign policymaking process. In addition, we asked foreign policy analysts who had studied particular foreign policy decisions extensively to apply the framework to their cases. These applications of the framework are included in the discussions of each type of decision unit and provide illustrations of how the framework can be used.

Outputs of the Decision Units Approach

There are two types of outputs from the decision units framework. First, there are the outcomes of the decision process itself. What happens when the decision unit configured in a particular way tries to cope with a specific occasion for decision? We call what occurs when the decision unit engages in decision making "process outcomes." In effect, process outcomes denote whose positions have counted in the final decision. Second, there are the actual foreign policy actions that are taken by the government. What is the substantive nature of the decision? In other words, how would we describe what the government, as represented by the particular authoritative decision unit, decided to do in substantive terms in response to an occasion for decision? Thus, one of the outputs records what happened in the decision process; the other indicates the content of the foreign policy decision that resulted from the choice process.

Process outcomes. There appear to be at least six possible outcomes in a decision-making process, that is, six distinctly different things that can happen in the course of a decision unit's deliberations. These six include "one party's position prevails," "concurrence," "mutual compromise/consensus," "lopsided compromise," "deadlock," and "fragmented symbolic action." In each case the

outcome of the process indicates the endpoint of the decision in terms of the preferences of those involved. Thus, when one party's position prevails, some of those in the decision process have their preferences accepted as the choice. In concurrence there is a shared sense of direction that either results from the decision process or is evident in the preferences of those involved in the beginning of the process. A mutual compromise/consensus indicates that all parties in the decision unit have yielded some of their position in order, in turn, not to lose out completely in the choice process. A lopsided compromise, in contrast, suggests that one party's preferences have prevailed but they have yielded a little to allow the others in the decision process to save face. With deadlock, those in the decision unit cannot agree and, in effect, at this moment in time "agree to disagree." Fragmented symbolic action is a deadlock in which the disagreement explodes outside the decision unit with each participant in the decision unit trying to take action on their own and/or complaining about the others' behavior. Such activity is often confusing to other actors in the international system who see what appears to be a set of uncoordinated behaviors on the part of the government and wonder who is in charge.

Deadlock, compromise, and concurrence can be arrayed along a dimension that shows how representative the decision is of the range of preferences of those who make up the decision unit. In a deadlock no one's preferences are represented in the decision because the unit is unable to reach a decision. In a compromise everyone gets some of what they want—the partial preferences of everyone are represented in the decision. And in concurrence, the decision represents the shared preferences of everyone.

This dimension has implications for how acceptable the decision will be to participants in the unit and for the extremity of any substantive response that is chosen. There is less closure to the decision process when a deadlock occurs than when the decision unit can reach concurrence. Deadlock leaves the occasion for decision unresolved; no one has won out but nothing has happened to deal with the problem either. Compromise suggests that everything that is possible at the moment with this set of participants has happened but leaves room for revisiting the decision at a later time when the situation or decision unit may have changed. Only in the concurrence situation is there real closure and a shared sense of movement on the problem. The decision represents what all wanted.

As a result, the decision is likely to be more extreme when there is concurrence than when there is compromise or deadlock. In fact, since deadlock usually results in minimal or no action, there is little substance to the foreign policy behavior when the decision process leads to deadlock. Because compromise—particularly a compromise with mutual concessions or one that represents a papering over of differences—indicates a give and take on the part of all participants, we argue that it leads to a more moderated foreign policy behavior.

The commitment of resources, the affective feeling indicated in any action, the instruments used, and the degree of initiative taken are likely to be more middle of the road than extreme with compromise. In effect, participants are adjusting their preferences toward the mean in the process of reaching a compromise. Therefore, decisions arrived at through concurrence are likely to be the most extreme content-wise. Based on a shared sense of what needs to be done in dealing with the problem, participants can take (or not take) initiatives, commit (or refuse to commit) resources, engage in military and economic activities rather than just diplomacy, and be openly cooperative or conflictual. They know that the others are onboard and back what is happening. The process can center on what to do rather than on mediating disagreements about what to do.

In the process outcomes we have just described members of the authoritative decision unit receive symmetrical payoffs. All parties are treated alike. Even in the deadlock where no decision is made, all participants experience the same outcome. Such is not the case, however, for some of the process outcomes. When one party's position prevails, there is a lopsided compromise, or there is a deadlock where the parties do not agree to disagree, the payoffs are asymmetrical—some of the participants benefit in the choice process while others lose out. That is, some members of the decision unit realize their preferences while others do not. Influence on the decision is unequal among the members of the unit.

The symmetrical-asymmetrical quality of process outcomes provides information about the instability of the outcome—the likelihood that the decision unit will want to revisit the decision later on. Some of the outcomes lead to a greater sense of deprivation on the part of those actors who do not "win" or see their preferences realized in the decision. For example, in a deadlock where the participants agree to disagree there is more stability to the outcome than if there is a stalemate among the actors with all leaving the decision unit deliberations still arguing their case and seeking others outside the decision unit to join in the fray. The first we have designated a deadlock; the second we have called fragmented symbolic action because it generally involves all parties taking their own actions with no coordinated governmental response. While the participants in the decision unit in a deadlock have come to closure, when the outcome is fragmented symbolic action the participants are worked up over the process and continue to try to exert power over one another by engaging in activity outside the decision unit.

A similar phenomenon occurs with compromise. The decision unit can arrive at a compromise where there are mutual concessions and all participants believe they have gained something or, at the least, not lost all they could have in the decision process. And the decision process can lead to a lopsided compromise where one party gains more than the other(s). In a lopsided compromise, generally the party that "wins" has offered the other(s) a way to save face. But

those who must give more have reason to monitor what happens and urge the decision be reexamined if the negative consequences they expect actually appear to be happening. A comparable case can also be made where one party's position prevails. When one party gets their way, the other actors are deprived of doing what they want to do and, again, have reason to call for a different decision if the desired consequences are not forthcoming. If, however, one party's position prevails because there is concurrence or consensus among the participants or a shared belief in the position selected, everyone's position is represented and the decision can have a certain finality.

Those members of the decision unit whose positions are not represented in the outcome can become agitators for different or further action. They are the part of the decision unit likely to want to keep the issue alive by pushing for reconsideration of the decision, by showing how the previous policy is not achieving what they perceive to be the objective, or by urging that a different or reconstituted decision unit examine the problem. For such members, the occasion for decision remains something of a "cause célèbre," particularly if they were strong advocates of the position that was not chosen. They become part of the shadow of the future and help to determine the implications of that shadow on future decisions. If these members become too vocal, there may be attempts by the rest of the decision unit to reconstitute the unit by isolating them—for example, by bypassing them in future decisions or meeting when they cannot attend. The Iran-contra actions during the Reagan administration illustrate these points. Weinberger and Schulz, respectively U. S. secretaries of defense and state under Reagan, were adamant in their criticisms of trading arms for hostages and urged at several points when key decisions were being made that the National Security Council staff stop their efforts to deal with Iran. As noted in the Tower Commission Report (Tower, Muskie, and Scowcroft, 1987) documenting and evaluating this case, these two policymakers were excluded from the decision process as they became more vocal in their critique of what was going on and had to find other ways of reaching Reagan to argue their case.

Table 2 summarizes our discussion. As is evident in the table, the process outcomes indicate different degrees of ownership of the choice that is made, different ways of monitoring what happens as a consequence of the decision, and different effects on the structure of the decision unit in the future. Indeed, by knowing what the process outcome is, we gain information about what is likely to happen as a result of the decision. A concurrence process outcome is the most likely to move the decision unit to other issues and problems unless the immediate feedback is highly negative. There is a certain finality to the decision until the situation changes or there is some kind of reaction from the international or domestic arena. At the other extreme is a decision process leading to fragmented symbolic action where no one is satisfied and all are working to seek outside support in order to reconstitute the nature of the decision unit

TABLE 2. Characteristics and Implications of Process Outcomes

Range of Preferences Represented in Decision	Distribution of Payoffs	
	Symmetrical	Asymmetrical
One Party's	Concurrence (All own decision; see decision as final; move to other problems)	One Party's Position Prevails (Only one party owns decision; others monitor resulting action; push for reconsideration if feedback negative)
Mixed Parties'	Mutual Compromise/ Consensus (Members know got all possible at moment; monitor for change in political context; seek to return to decision if think can change outcome in their favor)	Lopsided Compromise (Some members own position, others do not; latter monitor resulting action and political context, agitating for reconsideration of decision)
No Party's	Deadlock (Members know no one did better than others; seek to redefine the problem so solution or trade-offs are feasible)	Fragmented Symbolic Action (No members own decision; seek to change the political context in order to reconstitute decision unit)

more to their liking and closer to their position. The situation is very fluid with all parties jockeying for position. The rest of the process outcomes fall between these two extremes. When the distribution of payoffs is symmetrical, there is interest in monitoring the political context for change that might favor getting more than the other party(ies) but relations are viewed as okay at the moment. When the distribution is asymmetric, however, at least one party is generally agitated by what happened and ready to see the solution revisited. The reexamination is most pressing where there is fragmented symbolic action. Such pressure is more focused when one party's position prevails or there is a lopsided compromise. With these latter two outcomes, there is a specific target to attack and on which to center opposition.

In Table 1, we observed that the theories of decision making on which the decision units framework is based indicated a particular process outcome was characteristic of a specific type of decision unit. Having now described the set of process outcomes that form the outputs for the decision units approach, it is

possible to translate the dominant processes mentioned in the general decision-making literature into one of the six process outcomes that form the outputs of our framework. Consider the following:

Predominant Leader—

- Relatively Insensitive to Political Context—One Party's Position Prevails
- Moderately Sensitive to Political Context—Inaction, Concurrence, or Lop-sided Compromise depending on feasibility of preferred option
- Highly Sensitive to Political Context—Mutual Compromise

Single Group—

- Members Act to Minimize Conflict—Concurrence
- Members Acknowledge Conflict Is Unavoidable; Group Must Deal with It—Mutual Compromise or Deadlock
- Members Recognize Conflict May Have No Resolution So Accept Majority Rule—One Party's Position Prevails

Coalition—

- No Established Rules for Decision Making—Fragmented Symbolic Action
- Established Norms Favor Majority Rule—One Party's Position Prevails
- Established Norms Favor Unanimity—Deadlock or Mutual Compromise

The rationale behind these linkages is spelled out in detail in the next three articles in this special issue. Moreover, some techniques that members of these various decision units have used at times to achieve a different process outcome than that posed in the decision-making literature are also elaborated in these three articles.

Substantive outcomes. We are interested in the substantive nature of the decision as well as the process outcome. If we know in general the positions of the members of the decision unit, the process outcomes tell us which of these members' options were taken into consideration in the decision and, thus, provide us with some information about what the decision was. The question, however, becomes, are the process outcomes suggestive of certain types of substantive outcomes?

In another place, the author (Hermann and Hermann, 1989) has examined the relationship between process outcome and the extremity of the foreign policy response. That study built on the observation made earlier that more extreme responses will characterize decisions involving concurrence than where there is deadlock or compromise. In this research the substance of the decisions was

defined by the attributes of the foreign policy actions that were taken. Among the attributes included in the study were the degree of commitment of government resources to the activity, the type of statecraft the action required (diplomatic, economic, or military), and the intensity of the feeling, or affect, that accompanied the action chosen. These attributes are discussed in more detail in Callahan, Brady, and Hermann (1982). Examining five thousand decisions for twenty-five countries across a decade, we found support for the hypothesized relationship. Decisions resulting from a concurrence process involved a higher commitment of resources by the government, stronger expressed affect (for both cooperative and conflictual actions), and more of a focus on economic and military instruments of statecraft (on doing something) as opposed to diplomatic (only talking) than occurred when the process outcome was a compromise. Deadlocks led to minimal commitment of resources to the foreign policy activity, rather neutral affect expressed in any discussion of the decision, and a diplomatic response if one was demanded.

This research suggested the linkages between process and substantive outcomes presented in Table 3. We have added a fourth attribute of foreign policy behavior to this table which also seems related to the process outcomes: the degree to which the decision involves an initiative vs. a reaction to something in the international arena. As this table indicates, it is possible to move from the

TABLE 3. Substantive Nature of Decisions Corresponding to Various Process Outcomes

	Attributes of the Foreign Policy Response			
Process Outcome	Commitment of Resources	Intensity of Affect	Willingness to Take Initiatives	Instruments of Statecraft Used
Concurrence	High	Strong	High	Military/Economic
One Party's Position Prevails	High/ Moderate	Moderate	High/ Moderate	Military/Economic
Lopsided Compromise	High/ Moderate	Moderate/ Low	High/ Moderate	Diplomatic plus Military/Economic
Mutual Compromise	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Diplomatic
Fragmented Symbolic Action	Minimal	Strong	Each Actor Takes Initiatives on Own	Diplomatic
Deadlock	Minimal	Neutral	React	Diplomatic If Any Response Demanded

process outcomes to knowing something about the attributes of the resulting foreign policy action. Indeed, the decisions of the units become less extreme as we move down the process outcomes from concurrence to deadlock. The lopsided compromise and fragmented symbolic action result in somewhat more dramatic responses than the casual observer might expect. In fact, the lopsided compromise is more like the decision where one party's position prevails than is the mutual compromise. And with fragmented symbolic action, each member of the decision unit acts as if their particular position had prevailed, taking action on their own even though it does not represent the larger political entity.

The attributes of the foreign policy actions change as we move down Table 3 as well. Commitment of the government's resources is likely to be higher when there is concurrence or one party's preferences are represented in the decision than when the decision represents no one's position or a mixture of the preferences of the parties involved. Similarly, foreign policy initiatives are more likely to be taken when there is concurrence or one party's preferences are represented in the decision, while reactions to stimuli from the international environment are more likely when deadlock is the outcome of the decision process. It is difficult to do more than respond in this latter situation since there is no agreement on what to do or even if any action is necessary. Decisions are less likely to involve the use of a government's higher-priced instruments of statecraft (economic and military) when they involve compromise or deadlock than when the members of the decision unit concur or one party's position prevails. The temporary character of compromises and deadlocks suggests that any decision will be fairly tentative. The feeling tone of the decisions also seems likely to be more intense when one party pushes their position through—particularly if that position is one all agree to—than when there is a compromise or deadlock. The one exception to this norm is where the parties deadlock but cannot even agree to disagree and move to take actions on their own. Then affect becomes more intense in tone. In essence, when the decision represents a compromise or deadlock, foreign policy actions are more constrained than when a single position wins out.

In Conclusion

It has been the premise of this essay that the decision unit involved in making foreign policy can shape the nature of that policy. Whether the decision unit is a powerful leader, a single group, or a coalition of autonomous actors makes a difference in what governments can do in the international arena. In this article we have presented a framework for understanding how decision units influence the foreign policymaking process that is both derived from and attempts to integrate models of decision making that are extant in the literatures on inter-

national relations and foreign policy analysis as well as elsewhere in the social sciences. Although the decision units approach presented here is organized around the notion of three basic decision units, the behavior of the units is contingent on a set of key factors that help to specify the relevance of the immediate international situation and the political context within and outside the government as well as indicate the particular decision process and outcome that are likely to result. In this way, the framework provides the greater theoretical comprehensiveness and flexibility needed to do comparative analyses of foreign policy decision making. Our characterization of the three types of decision units is intended to capture the full array of actors that appear to be involved in foreign policymaking across political systems. In fact, the problem focus and contingency-based logic does not preclude any type of decision unit from occurring in any kind of polity. As a result, the contingencies that are key to determining the nature of the decision unit and process provide us with a mechanism for integrating different, yet complementary, conceptions of who is involved in foreign policymaking and how they are likely to affect the decision that is chosen. Said another way, we have established a blueprint that can be applied to specific cases of foreign policymaking in different countries to see if the proposed accounts of the effects of decision units give an adequate explanation of what really happens.

The rest of the articles in this special issue elaborate the decision units framework that has been described in this piece. As noted earlier, the next three pieces describe the three basic types of decision units, providing more detail on how the key contingencies operate and presenting more specifics about how the units incorporate optimal as well as suboptimal decision processes. Each article includes a set of cases that exemplify how the decision units approach works with that type of decision unit. The authors selected to do the case studies have all done extensive archival research on their cases and, thus, have in-depth knowledge about what did, indeed, happen historically in that particular set of events. After applying the framework, these authors were asked to compare the process outcome they found with what took place in the particular case and to evaluate the framework. We have chosen cases that not only illustrate the three types of decision units but also represent events and countries from around the world. The cases occurred in developing and developed countries as well as in states from various regions of the world.

The last article in this special issue reports a study of the application of the decision units approach to a large bank of cases (some sixty-five) and facilitates a more systematic exploration of the match between the framework and historical reality. In this research, we sought feedback that was intended to help in improving the framework. Thoughtful readers will already want to add features that we have excluded to date from this effort; they should hold onto those considerations until this last article where we discuss ways of amending the

framework suggested by the further examination of a large number of problems, occasions for decision, and decisions.

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