

DECISION-MAKING IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

This foreign policy analysis textbook is written especially for students studying to become national security professionals. It translates academic knowledge about the complex influences on American foreign policymaking into an intuitive, cohesive, and practical set of analytic tools. The focus here is not theory for the sake of theory, but rather to translate theory into practice.

Classic paradigms are adapted to fit the changing realities of the contemporary national security environment. For example, the growing centrality of the White House is seen in the “palace politics” of the president’s inner circle, and the growth of the national security apparatus introduces new dimensions to organizational processes and subordinate levels of bureaucratic politics.

Real-world case studies are used throughout to allow students to apply theory. These comprise recent events that draw impartially across partisan lines and encompass a variety of diplomatic, military, and economic and trade issues.

Nikolas K. Gvosdev is a Professor of National Security Affairs and holds the Jerome E. Levy Chair in Economic Geography and National Security at the US Naval War College. He is the former Editor of *The National Interest* policy journal and previously was a senior fellow at the Nixon Center (now the Center for the National Interest).

Jessica D. Blankshain is an Assistant Professor of National Security Affairs at the US Naval War College where she teaches courses on foreign policy analysis, decision-making, and civil–military relations.

David A. Cooper is The James V. Forrestal Professor of National Security Affairs at the US Naval War College and is the former Chair of the Department of National Security Affairs.

DECISION-MAKING IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

**Translating Theory into
Practice**

Nikolas K. Gvosdev

US Naval War College

Jessica D. Blankshain

US Naval War College

David A. Cooper

US Naval War College



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-42714-2 — Decision-Making in American Foreign Policy
Nikolas K. Gvosdev, Jessica D. Blankshain, David A. Cooper
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108427142

DOI: 10.1017/9781108566742

© Nikolas K. Gvosdev, Jessica D. Blankshain, and David A. Cooper 2019

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2019

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-108-42714-2 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-44768-3 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Brief Contents

	List of Figures	<i>page</i> x
	List of Boxes	xi
	Preface	xiii
	Author Note	xv
1	Introduction	1
2	Foreign Policy Analysis	14
3	Unitary State Perspective	52
4	Cognitive Perspective	88
5	Organizational Process Perspective	125
6	Bureaucratic Politics Perspective	162
7	Palace Politics Perspective	192
8	Sub-Bureaucratic Politics Perspective.	238
9	Domestic Politics	284
10	Other Countries	334
11	Conclusion.	369
	Annex: Case Studies	378
	Index	411

Contents

	Brief Contents	<i>page</i> v
	List of Figures	x
	List of Boxes	xi
	Preface	xiii
	Author Note	xv
1	Introduction	1
	Understanding Why National Security Decisions Happen	3
	Why Study Foreign Policy Analysis?	7
	Textbook Organization	10
	Some Final Thoughts	12
2	Foreign Policy Analysis	14
	Providing an Analytic Toolkit for Practitioners	17
	Intellectual Roots of Foreign Policy Analysis	20
	Different Models of Decision-Making	27
	Foreign Policy Analysis Today and Tomorrow	38
	Taking a Textbook Approach	46
	Chapter Summary	49
	Discussion Questions	51
	Further Reading	51
3	Unitary State Perspective	52
	Conceiving Countries as Rational Actors	54
	Basis in Rational Choice Theory	58
	Relationship to International Relations Theory	65
	Does the United States Approximate the “Unitary State” Ideal?	71
	Applying the Unitary State Perspective	80
	Chapter Summary	86
	Discussion Questions	87
	Further Reading	87

viii Contents

4	Cognitive Perspective	88
	Seeing Leaders as Human Beings	91
	Limits on Human Cognition	97
	Yes, Leaders Matter	115
	Applying the Cognitive Perspective	120
	Chapter Summary	122
	Discussion Questions	123
	Further Reading	123
5	Organizational Process Perspective	125
	Conceiving Organizations as Habitual Actors	127
	Unpacking Organizations	131
	Foreign Policy as Organizational Output	145
	Applying the Organizational Process Perspective	154
	Chapter Summary	160
	Discussion Questions	161
	Further Reading	161
6	Bureaucratic Politics Perspective	162
	Focusing on Players in Positions	164
	Defining Bureaucratic Interests	170
	Nature of Bureaucratic Bargaining	175
	Applying the Bureaucratic Politics Perspective	184
	Chapter Summary	190
	Discussion Questions	191
	Further Reading	191
7	Palace Politics Perspective	192
	Old Idea, New Salience: Intellectual Roots of Palace Politics	194
	All the President’s Advisors	198
	Advancing the President’s Interests	205
	Sources of Persuasion and Influence	212
	Applying the Palace Politics Perspective	223
	Chapter Summary	235
	Discussion Questions	237
	Further Reading	237
8	Sub-Bureaucratic Politics Perspective	238
	Politics Beneath the Surface: A Knowledge Gap in Foreign Policy Analysis	241
	Conceptualizing a Missing Perspective	253
	Players and Patterns of Sub-Bureaucratic Politics	268
	Applying the Sub-Bureaucratic Politics Perspective	278
	Chapter Summary	281
	Discussion Questions	282
	Further Reading	283

Contents	ix
9 Domestic Politics	284
Beyond the Executive Branch: Linkage Politics and Two-Level Games	290
External Institutional Influences: Congress, the Courts, and Elections	296
Non-Governmental Influences	313
The Domestic Politics Factor in Action	330
Chapter Summary	332
Discussion Questions	333
Further Reading	333
10 Other Countries	334
Inside the Black Boxes of Others	337
Comparative Foreign Policy (CFP)	345
Middle-Range Comparative Theorizing	351
FPA of Other Countries: Practical Takeaways	360
Chapter Summary	366
Discussion Questions	367
Further Reading	367
11 Conclusion	369
Understanding the Terms	371
Summing Up	376
Annex: Case Studies	378
The Importance of Case Studies	378
A Quick Reference Guide for Case Study Analysis	380
Five Case Studies	383
Index	411



Figures

Figure 2.1	Types of Analysis	<i>page</i> 18
Figure 2.2	Levels of Analysis	24
Figure 3.1	IR Theory and the Unitary State Perspective	68
Figure 4.1	From Unitary State to Cognitive Perspective	93
Figure 7.1	The Schattschneider Effect	220
Figure 8.1	Intra- and Interagency Hierarchy	265
Figure 9.1	Two-Level Games	293



Boxes

Box 1.1	National Security versus Foreign Policy	<i>page</i> 3
Box 1.2	President Obama’s Libya Intervention	5
Box 1.3	Models of Foreign and National Security Policymaking	8
Box 2.1	The “Black Box” of Decision-Making	23
Box 2.2	The Cuban Missile Crisis	28
Box 2.3	The May Group	29
Box 2.4	Guidance to NSC Staff: Where FPA Intersects with the Policy World	48
Box 3.1	“Policy Hill”	73
Box 3.2	The National Security Council, <i>c.</i> 2018	74
Box 3.3	Donald Rumsfeld’s Assessment of the NSC’s Role in 1975	75
Box 3.4	Imitation is the Sincerest Form ...	75
Box 3.5	Hotlines around the World	79
Box 4.1	Donald Trump and the Personified State	92
Box 4.2	Choice of Roles	96
Box 4.3	Interpreting Intelligence in the Run-Up to the War in Iraq	98
Box 4.4	Scripts and Analogies: Avoiding Munichs, Falling Dominos, and No More Vietnams	112
Box 4.5	Dual-Track Thinking and the Ultimatum Game	114
Box 5.1	Reforming the CIA?	136
Box 5.2	A Clash of Organizations: State versus Treasury	138
Box 5.3	The Mission Goes On ... US Military Personnel in Niger	151
Box 6.1	The Origins of Miles’ Law	167
Box 6.2	The Mandarin Algorithm of Power	174
Box 6.3	Iraq and Afghan Surges: Initial Positions and End Results	182
Box 7.1	Kremlinology at Mar-a-Lago	201
Box 7.2	The Unhappy Tenure of General Jones	214
Box 7.3	The Reagan “Troika”	215

xii List of Boxes

Box 7.4	Access and “Tiered Rap Sessions” in the Second Term of the Obama Administration	218
Box 7.5	The Afternoon Wrap Walk	230
Box 7.6	The Policy Entrepreneur	234
Box 7.7	Kissinger, Kushner, and Cui Tiankai: A Back Channel between Donald Trump and Xi Jinping	235
Box 8.1	Condi Rice and the Art of the Insider Memoir	243
Box 8.2	Fears of the Deep State	250
Box 8.3	Who Negotiates for the United States? Check Circular-175!	252
Box 8.4	Human Rights versus Counterterrorism	267
Box 8.5	Muddled and Mutable Roles for Undersecretaries	270
Box 8.6	“The Cardinal Richelieu” of Foggy Bottom	272
Box 8.7	Face Time and Top Cover	274
Box 9.1	Blocking an Ambassador ...	299
Box 9.2	The War Powers Resolution	301
Box 9.3	Chicken Legs: The Most Important Issue in the US–Russia Relationship?	304
Box 9.4	The Iran Nuclear Deal ... An Agreement Shaped by the Two-Level Game	305
Box 9.5	The Death Penalty: A Domestic Issue with International Ramifications	316
Box 9.6	The Next Hitler ... And the Victorious Little War	320
Box 9.7	“Operation Restore Hope” and the “Black Hawk Down” Effect	321
Box 9.8	The Constitutionality of Lobbying	324
Box 9.9	How Does One Join the “Foreign Policy Community”?	326
Box 9.10	The Surge of Ideas	327
Box 9.11	The CNN Effect	329
Box 10.1	American Exceptionalism and Foreign Policy	342
Box 10.2	What is a Democracy?	354
Box 10.3	Harnessing Middlepowermanship at the G20	359
Box 10.4	Questions to Adapt American FPA Concepts for Other Countries	361
Box 10.5	Palace Politics and the Seizure of Crimea	362
Box 10.6	Spoiling a Summit: Himalayan Organizational Processes?	363



Preface

This is a foreign policy analysis (FPA) textbook that is designed especially for graduate students or advanced undergraduates who are studying to become foreign policy and national security analysts or practitioners. These are the type of students – current or prospective national security professionals – that we have been teaching for many years. We therefore keenly understand their need for a balance between conceptual scholarly rigor and applied professional relevance.

There are already many excellent textbooks and other books on foreign policy analysis and US foreign policy. However, most of these either approach the study of theory for its own sake or, at the other end of the spectrum, by and large eschew engaging with theory in favor of providing descriptive analysis of the contours and content of American foreign and national security policy. By contrast, this textbook provides a detailed overview of the rich body of academic theorizing that seeks to explain American foreign and national security policymaking, but with the specific goal of offering a practical set of conceptual tools geared for the current or future national security professional. Unlike graduate-level FPA textbooks tailored for the future academic, the focus here is not to explore theory for the sake of theory. Instead, the goal is to translate theory into practice.

We approach the contemporary field of knowledge about American foreign and national security policymaking in a comprehensive manner. The textbook builds on the foundational works of seminal theorists from decades past. However, it updates these classic paradigms to adapt them to the changed circumstances of the modern national and international security environment, which has evolved significantly over the intervening years. For example, it takes into account the increasingly centralized role of the White House by according greater analytic focus to “palace politics” within the president’s inner circle, and to the growth and transformation of Washington’s national security apparatus that affords new dimensions to organizational processes and subordinate levels of bureaucratic politics.

In adapting the classic paradigms to the needs of practitioners in today's milieu, we take a number of deliberate liberties with traditional nomenclature and organization. Taken together these adaptations provide students with a cohesive and comprehensible set of conceptual lenses. This synthesized conceptual approach includes parsing and building out Graham Allison's eminent and enduring three models of decision-making into six discreet and intuitive analytic perspectives, integrating additional frameworks that look beyond the Executive Branch (such as Kenneth Waltz's "levels of analysis" and Robert Putnam's "two-level game"), and considering how these various FPA theories and the cognate field of comparative foreign policy (CFP) apply to understanding the foreign policy of other countries. Although the textbook is organized in a logical sequence, each chapter is able to stand on its own and therefore can be assigned in a different order.

Throughout the textbook we incorporate real-world examples and mini case studies to illustrate the practical application of theory. There is also an annex of foreign policy decision-making case studies that are available for instructors to assign in conjunction with any of the chapters. These real-world examples and case studies are drawn impartially across partisan political lines and encompass a diverse variety of diplomatic, national security, and economic and trade issues. Most of these real-world examples and case studies are drawn from relatively recent events from the Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump administrations.

As an author team we have decades of combined academic, think tank, and government experience in the roles of scholar, policy analyst, and national security official. We have taught foreign policy analysis, American foreign policy, and international relations in various graduate and undergraduate professional education programs, including at the US Naval War College, National Defense University, Harvard University Kennedy School of Government, Brown University Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs, Georgetown University Walsh School of Foreign Service, and American University School of International Service. Over these many years of teaching we have searched in vain for a foreign policy analysis textbook that would fit the specialized needs of our students in these types of professional schools of international relations. Frustrated with waiting, we decided to write that textbook ourselves.



Author Note

Foreign policy analysis (FPA) is a vibrant academic field that features methodological diversity, active and ongoing conceptual debates, and unresolved differences in understandings of paradigmatic structures, nomenclature, emphasis, and interpretation. This makes it an especially exciting field for scholarly research and discourse. However, what is exciting for scholars can be confusing to practitioners.

This textbook is geared toward students who are current or prospective national security professionals. Our primary goal in engaging the extant FPA literature is to render this conceptual field of knowledge into a cohesive, comprehensible, and useful analytic toolkit for these students who are seeking practical professional knowledge that can be readily applied to the complex and evolving realities of the contemporary national and international security environment. Toward this end we have taken deliberate liberties to update and standardize how certain concepts are named, organized, and understood. We do not claim that this approach represents an authoritative encapsulation of the FPA field as it stands today, nor do we aver that scholars should mimic our approach for their own scholarly purposes. The academic debates will continue evolving, and we do not wish in any way to imply that these debates have been, or even necessarily should be, resolved along the lines we suggest here.

The authors are grateful to various colleagues who have challenged and informed our thinking, but we take full responsibility for any errors of fact or arguable suppositions, inferences, or conclusions. In other words, all viewpoints are solely those of the authors.