Resolve, Accept, or Avoid:

Effects of Group Conflict on Foreign Policy Decisions

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Groups are pervasive decision units in governments. Legislative committees, cabinets, military juntas, politburos of ruling parties, and executive councils are all candidates. The operation of many government ministries and agencies suggests that groups are also frequently at the core of the bureaucratic process. Coordination between bureaucracies creates both ad hoc and standing interdepartmental committees and boards that serve as decision units. In governments, groups usually convene to cope with problems. Such policy problems typically involve complex, cognitive tasks with no single correct answer.

If no one individual alone has the authority to act on behalf of a government, then we must turn to alternative decision units. As we have just observed, another possible, and frequently encountered, configuration is the single group. By a single group we mean an entity of two or more people all of whom interact

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directly with one another and collectively reach a decision. No definite boundaries are proposed with respect to the upper limit of group size. Thus, the group may be as small as two or three people or as large as a parliament of hundreds, so long as there is a collective, interactive decision process in which all the members who are needed to make authoritative commitments participate. (In practice, however, many large groups subdivide into committees, coalitions, or other subsets to conduct much of their decision making.) There is no stipulation in our definition that the group be a formal or legal body. For a group to be authoritative, it must have the definitive ability to commit or withhold the relevant governmental resources on the subject matter of the decision even if the entity is ad hoc or not part of an established institutional structure. (The ability to commit or withhold resources does not mean that group members themselves will actually implement the decision, leaving open potential discrepancies between choice and action.)

In differentiating a single group from the predominant leader and coalition decision units, we recognize several boundary issues. When a strong leader operates with a group of advisers, we may have difficulty determining whether the unit is a predominant leader or a single group. So long as the leader alone has the power to commit the regime's resources and does not delegate formally or tacitly that decision to advisers, the unit is a predominant leader. Another potential ambiguity arises when, for example, a parliamentary government consists of a multiparty coalition cabinet. In this case, the distinction must be made between the single group and coalition of autonomous actors whose representatives may meet together. When individual cabinet members are bound to specific positions taken elsewhere (e.g., by their political party) and they are not free to act independently, then the authoritative decision unit is a coalition. If, however, the cabinet officers can form or change their positions on a problem without outside consultation, then the unit is a single group.[1]

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[1]The conceptual boundaries between single group and either predominant leader or coalition decision units used in this special issue establish useful theoretical differentiations that facilitate inquiry. The boundaries allow us to isolate group effects on decision making. Nonetheless, it may be possible to conceive of a group effect under circumstances defined here in the domain of a predominant leader or coalition. For example, Garrison (1999) and Preston (2001) have explored the influence of U.S. presidents and their advisers on foreign policy, that is, leader-group interactions. A broader definition of the single group decision unit might state that if a group is present throughout the deliberations with a predominant leader, then the decision may reflect a collective effort. Similarly, if representatives of multiple organizations (i.e., a coalition) continuously meet to reach a decision, then the result may be more readily described as made by a group. For further discussion of this point see the last article in this special issue which presents an analysis of sixty-five cases using the decision units framework.

Through this examination of single groups, we seek to explore the following questions: How do group dynamics affect the choice or nature of a decision in foreign policy? When disagreements within a group arise, how are these conflicts handled? Clearly, there are many sources of influence on any foreign policy decision. The immediate concern in this essay is with the potential impact of structure and process on the output when the decision unit is a group.

Managing Group Conflict

Information and Options

The study of decision making in problem-solving groups suggests two major categories of activities essential to choice—the processing of information and the management of options. In the actual performance of groups information and option management are intertwined. For analytical purposes, however, it is useful to distinguish between them. Information management concerns the array of issues associated with the nature, structuring, and dissemination of information within a group. Option management concerns the development, advocacy, assessment, and selection of an option or alternative. An option or alternative is an expressed means of treating or coping with a recognized problem including as one possibility doing nothing. A great deal of group research has been conducted on communications and information management. Semmel (1982), Vertzberger (1990), and Gaenslen (1992) have each provided interpretive summaries of research on information processing as it applies to political groups.

Rather than focus on information processing, the models developed in this essay build upon option management in groups and, particularly, on the role that conflict among group members plays in that process. If from the beginning of their deliberations all members of a group prefer the same method for dealing with a problem and a specific means of implementing that solution, group decision making is relatively simple and straightforward. In dealing with policy problems in a political setting, however, members frequently disagree on preferred modes of coping with a problem. As has often been noted, conflict and its management are the essence of politics and policymaking.

Group Decision Outputs

A group's management of substantive disagreements among its members affects the resulting output, that is, their collective "solution" to the problem. That assumption is the cornerstone of this inquiry. And to begin with, we must construct a broadly applicable and meaningful way to categorize a group's decision outputs.

How might the options or choices of group problem solving be conceptualized? In some cases, a group may face a dichotomous choice—a jury must decide guilt or innocence; a commission must vote yes or no on a resolution, a cabinet has to choose whether or not to continue present policy. Other problems offer choice along a single dimension, usually involving a numerical continuum. For instance, how many dollars should be allocated to a department's budget; what percentage of the delegates should be selected by a primary; how many of the potential targets for aerial bombing should be selected? Still other problems may be "packaged" such that the choice is among multiple dimensions at the same time—should the organization be configured with three or four departments with some units headed by directors and others by ministers or should all heads of the departments be of the same rank, for example? Finally, the choices for dealing with some problems may appear to be framed without respect to any underlying common structure or dimensions. Consider that in the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, American policymakers were deciding among air strikes, an invasion, or a naval blockade.

The ways in which options are defined influences the effects that group processes can have on the output. For example, if the disagreements among group members are conceptualized as choice points on continuous dimensions, then analysis might involve indifference curves and trade-offs. Alternatively, studies exploring whether groups using a majority decision rule make different decisions from those requiring unanimity show that the results vary depending on whether the choice is dichotomous (as in a jury trial) or among multiple options along a continuum (as in budget allocations) (for reviews of this literature see Miller, 1985, and Hastie, 1993).

In the present essay, the focus is on group choices among one or more options lacking any perceived common underlying structure. Unstructured solutions are specified as the outcome to be explained for several reasons. First, a large number of public policy problems appear to have this quality. Indeed, outside of budget questions, exactly such problems are among the most complex and demanding choices policymakers face. Second, we are interested in how decision makers resolve internal disagreements. Thus, we want to minimize the explanations that rest on the possibility of "prominent solutions" such as splitting the difference or that lead to a mathematical best solution, for example, a pareto optimal choice. We are interested in policy problems that lack a determinable "right answer."

More specifically, the unstructured solutions that constitute the dependent variables in this work can be differentiated as: (a) deadlock; (b) prevalent solution; (c) subset solution; and (d) integrative solution. *Deadlock* defines a situation of stalemate in which group members reach no decision on how to resolve their differences. *Dominant* solution refers to a situation in which the group selects the one option that has been discussed from the outset; they exhibit

concurrence around a particular choice. In this type of situation it is a choice between that option or doing nothing. Such circumstances may result when no other option is perceived to meet the apparent decision criteria, when norms prevent articulating an alternative to an option advocated by an authoritative group member, or when there is a shared set of beliefs about what is appropriate in the particular context.[2] A *subset* solution is one that is satisfactory to some faction in the group, but does not capture the preferences of all members. Subset solutions generally mean that a particular faction's position prevails and takes priority over other members and factions' preferences in the group's decision. Finally, an *integrative* solution is an alternative that in the course of the group discussion comes to represent the preference of all members and involves some shift from their initial choices. An integrative solution may result from successful persuasion of some members by others to change their explicitly stated preference, by a shift in the preference orderings of all members, perhaps as a result of the creation of a new option not initially recognized by the group, or through achieving a mutually acceptable compromise.

Although these unstructured solutions are nominal categories, under some circumstances they may be viewed as representing an ordinal scale. To create such a scale requires us to assume that deadlock is the preference of no group member and that the dominant solution is the real preference of only one or two group members—perhaps an authoritarian leader or powerful faction. If that is assumed, then the outcomes are a continuum representing the number of group members whose preferences are captured in the solution. Deadlock is no one's preference. Dominant solutions represent one (or two) members' preferences. A subset solution is a coalition of members' preferences (more than one or two, but less than all). And an integrative solution captures the final preference of all members. Beyond this possible ordering of the solutions, they can reflect something about the quality of group decision making. We will return to this point later.

Managing Conflict

Opposing difficulties can beset a group's management of options. On the one hand, groups can lock in on a single option (sometimes flowing from an uncontested definition of the problem) and accept it, perhaps, uncritically. On the

[2] Mintz and his associates (1997) have advanced a "poliheuristic theory of decision" that recognizes policymakers may categorically reject options that fail to meet some strongly held value for which they accept no compensatory trade-off, even if such options have other highly desirable properties. If all but one option fail to fulfill such a requirement, then decision makers may conclude there is only one possible approach to a problem.

other hand, groups may be divided among several competing options and be unable to resolve their differences and achieve closure, or they may follow a procedure for resolving the differences that makes little reference to the relative merits of the advocated options.

We propose three basic models regarding how decision-making groups consider options drawn from insights about how group members manage substantive disagreement among themselves over preferred options. Essentially, the models represent three different ways groups can deal with internal disagreement or conflict. They can avoid it, they can resolve it, or they can accept it. The three models are designated:

Concurrence (producing a tendency to *avoid* group conflict)

Unanimity (producing a tendency to *resolve* group conflict)

Plurality (producing a tendency to *accept* group conflict)

The basic argument of this essay is that each of these modes of dealing with substantive disagreement in problem-solving groups creates a tendency toward one of the four solutions described above, namely, deadlock, dominant, subset, or integrative. To demonstrate their operation and plausibility, the models will be illustrated using three case studies: (1) the British cabinet decisions in the 1938 Munich crisis; (2) the Swedish government's responses to the discovery in 1981 that a Soviet submarine had run aground on their coast; and (3) the Israeli decisions in reaction to the 1967 Egyptian offensive preparations for an apparent military attack. But before we turn to explicating the models and the cases, let us examine previous theoretical work done on decision making in political groups which provides the foundation for proposing the hypothesized effects of a group's conflict strategy on its decisions.

Theoretical Foundations

Three major theoretical perspectives provide the conceptual grounding for the proposed models. In each case particular features have been selected or elaborated in the current presentation.[3] Groupthink, advanced by Janis (1972, 1982), provides the touchstone for the concurrence model. With its emphasis on suppression of disagreement to preserve the well-being of the decision unit, groupthink offers insights into conditions that can produce what we describe as dominant solutions.

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[3] It is important to underscore that in the discussion of each model in this essay selected features of the theoretical frameworks are emphasized without any attempt to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the original work.

Bureaucratic politics associated with the scholarship of a number of individuals including Huntington (1960), Allison (1971), and Halperin (1974) can be used to establish the foundation for the unanimity model and, to some degree, the plurality model as well.[4] The struggles among group members advocating the preferences of their respective agencies, which lies at the core of bureaucratic politics, provide us with quite different group problem-solving processes than those suggested by the groupthink perspective. The conflict envisioned by bureaucratic politics produces varying dynamics depending upon the group's established practice for handling recognized disagreements. If there is no formal decision rule or group norm for resolving such conflicts, then the solution is likely deadlock. Explicit decision rules or norms can provide a means for creating other probable decision outputs.

The use of a group norm or formal decision rule as an accepted procedure for resolving disagreements within a group taps into another body of research. Whether in a jury or some other decision group, the use of a plurality or majority rule accepts the possibility that a collective decision can be reached even though some members of the group continue to disagree with that choice. We view this process as leading to the acceptance of conflict as described by the plurality model. By contrast, when a group operates with a unanimity rule or norm, then the members must somehow resolve their disagreements to the satisfaction of all members if any decision is to occur. Research in social psychology suggests different processes and probable results depending on which decision rule prevails (e.g., Thompson, Mannix, and Bazerman, 1988; Miller, 1989; Kameda and Sugimori, 1993; Nielson and Miller, 1997). Thus, the study of groups using different decision rules can help us refine the expectations of bureaucratic politics, creating the basis for distinguishing between the Unanimity Model that approximates a strict form of bureaucratic politics and the Plurality Model in which continued disagreement by at least some members is acceptable. The reasons for these expectations are set forth below.

Concurrence Model

Avoiding Conflict

When problems are complex, uncertainty abounds, and the stakes are high—as is often the case with policy problems, it is not surprising that individuals frequently differ on what should be done. Disagreement seems more likely when the participants have significantly different life experiences and political or

[4] For an extensive contemporary review of the bureaucratic politics literature see the pieces in the symposium edited by Stern and Verbeek (1998).

administrative responsibilities. Although substantive disagreement in groups may be common, it can be debilitating. Humans frequently have difficulty distinguishing between another person's critique of their position and an attack on them as a person. (In fact, sometimes in policy circles the purpose of policy disagreement is to discredit the person holding opposing views.) Members may devote their energies to acrimonious attacks and rebuttals, to distortions or the withholding of information, to the creation of opposing subgroups, and a variety of other activities that not only prevent effective problem management but also can destroy the group as a collective entity.

If members value their group, for whatever reason, and if they are concerned about the potential damaging consequences of conflict, then they may act so as to minimize any substantive disagreements among themselves. Individuals and cultures may also attach high value to smooth, tranquil interpersonal relations. To preserve harmony in the valued group, members may suppress disagreements and engage in efforts to promote concurrence on substantive issues. This basic insight lies at the core of groupthink as developed by Janis (1972, 1982).

Many interpretations and evaluations of the groupthink concept have been advanced.[5] The Concurrence Model being described here makes very selective use of the ideas associated with groupthink. Our initial task is to sketch the likely processes that can occur in a group determined to avoid internal disagreements and to hypothesize the probable decision outcomes.

The process usually associated with how a group will manage a policy problem when under the influence of groupthink is premature closure around an initially advocated course of action. A group experiences premature closure when it accepts the option prominently presented, usually by an authoritative member, early in its deliberations without engaging in a serious evaluation of its potential limitations or undertaking a careful comparison of it with any other possible alternatives. In advancing the framework for groupthink, Janis (1982) considered a number of antecedent conditions that he argued contributed to the process of prompt concurrence-seeking and premature closure. Among these were situational properties (e.g., high stress) and structural features (e.g., common social and ideological backgrounds among members), but he contended that the one necessary condition was substantial group cohesion. "Only when a group of policymakers is moderately or highly cohesive can we expect the groupthink syndrome to emerge" (Janis, 1982:176). Earlier he noted (Janis, 1972:13): "*The more amicability and esprit de corps among members of a policymaking in-group, the greater is the danger that independent critical think-*

[5] See, e.g., Longley and Pruitt (1980), McCauley (1989), and 't Hart, Stern, and Sundelius (1997).

ing will be replaced by groupthink" (emphasis in original). In concluding his original treatise on groupthink, Janis (1972:197) observed: "The prime condition repeatedly encountered in case studies of fiascoes is group cohesiveness."[6]

Primary Group Identity

Group cohesion has long been recognized as a theoretically powerful variable in sociology and social psychology. Summarizing the research of others on cohesion, McGrath (1984:241) reports it is "the sum total of all the forces attracting members to a group." These forces are usually seen as the positive attraction among group members for each other, the value members attach to the work the group does, and the prestige or status individuals perceive to be associated with belonging to the group.

Although group cohesion provides an important explanatory variable in considerations of groupthink, it does not capture the idea of *relative* attraction that occurs when individuals are simultaneously in several groups or organizations dealing with the same policy problem. For example, in government, an individual may be involved in an interagency task force as a representative of some bureau or organization. The person may be attracted to the interagency task force (because of its prestige or the talented people it includes), but remain committed to his or her home department. Members of the task force, even though they greatly admire others in the group (i.e., manifest high affiliation needs and display cohesion), may feel an even stronger attachment to their home department since it determines their promotions, merit pay raises, and other rewards.

We need a concept that captures the member's attraction to a particular group relative to his or her commitment to other associations working on the policy problem. We propose the concept of primary group identity to capture this idea. In other words, when faced with conflicting pressures from entities with which the individual member identifies, does that group member attach a higher positive value to his or her present decision group membership or to some other outside association? A member's attraction to the group needs to be not only positive (group cohesion) but also more valued than other relevant identities with respect to preferences on the immediate policy problem.

It is this notion of whether, in situations of competing demands, members' overriding commitment is to the authoritative decision group that provides a

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[6] George (1997) interprets Janis as proposing that concurrence-seeking in groups occurs only as a result of severe externally produced stress that, in turn, triggers an increased need among members for affiliation (i.e., a strong need for cohesion). The interpretation advanced here is that a strong need to avoid disruptive conflict in the group can have the same consequence.

critical key for distinguishing group processes. When the primary identity of most group members is to the group, by definition they will place a high value on its continuation and well-being. They also will want to preserve their own good standing in the group. This commitment creates a predisposition in members to guard against activity that (1) may threaten the group, such as divisive disputes among members, or (2) may reduce their own acceptance by the other members—such as by expressing views that appear to be at odds with those of others in the group. In short, to preserve the well-being of the group, members will tend to avoid disagreements over the substantive problems they are addressing. By avoiding conflict, however, they risk reducing the critical assessment of ideas presented to them.

If strong group identity triggers the inhibiting processes just discussed (that is, avoiding disagreement and uncritically supporting the emerging course of action), then premature closure of the kind envisioned in groupthink is highly likely. It is probable that the group will adopt the dominant solution. This solution will be proposed early in the group's deliberations and promptly endorsed by key members after which no other options are likely to be seriously considered. The resulting action will be less complex, unqualified, and, in some sense, more extreme than an option chosen after rigorous evaluation and comparison to other alternatives. Of course, the dominant course of action presented to group members may turn out to be balanced and sensitive to nuances in the current situation. But without discussion of competing alternatives or criticism of the initial proposal, contextual subtleties and possibilities not anticipated by the original proposer are less likely to be taken into account. It is precisely this type of group interaction that is suppressed in the Concurrence Model for fear of creating interpersonal conflict and damage to the group's well-being.[7]

The reader should recognize that the effect is the same even if members of the group actually agree that the initially proposed solution is the only feasible option under the present circumstances and engage in no critical assessment because they have privately concluded it is the best (or only) course of action. Moreover, the outcome is the same as when some members privately question the merits of the proposed solution, but in the interest of group harmony do not speak out. Aware of this danger, George (1972) advocated building into the process what he called multiple advocacy. In his prescription, advocates of

[7] If groups permit disagreement and debate among members over the merits of a proposed option, the reverse effect can occur; that is, an initially advocated, coherent option can be diminished in quality by the modifications added to accommodate the preferences of other members. This danger may be most likely when agreement of all members is required for action.

different approaches are deliberately built into the discussion to avoid premature acceptance of an option. Such a procedure, he believed, would help to avoid quick group acceptance for the reasons stated above.

Concurrence Mediating Variables

A moment's reflection might lead one to the conclusion that a group whose members give it their primary identity would be exactly the collectivity where individuals would feel free to disagree. If they are comfortable with one another and have a good working relationship, dissent may not generate the personal antagonism or fear of group upheaval that disagreement might generate under other conditions. If such is the case, then we would expect other additional considerations to be important in determining whether primary group identity leads to suppression or acceptance of substantive disagreement. Specifically, group norms about the permissibility of expressing disagreement may be critical. Even if the group lacks such shared ways of behaving but has a current leader who allows disagreement, then premature closure can be avoided. With a leader who simultaneously encourages expressions of disagreement and works to maintain congenial interpersonal relations among participants, primary group identity need not be associated with quick concurrence and the adoption of a dominant solution. Assuming that disagreements then do indeed surface, additional options may be considered. Under these conditions integrative solutions (like compromises, trade-offs, innovative options) seem possible. Precisely because members share a loyalty to each other, they may search more vigorously for solutions acceptable to all rather than accept one that is opposed by some.

It should be apparent also that these two variables, group norms surrounding how to deal with disagreement and leaders' preferred discussion style, can work in the opposite direction. In effect, there may be group norms that discourage expression of dissent (what Janis expected would happen). Similarly, the group leader may act to suppress any disagreement with the proposed solution. Such leadership will be particularly effective in minimizing disagreement if such an authoritative figure expresses his or her preference for the tabled solution early on and vigorously advocates it.

In essence, group norms regarding how to handle disagreement and leaders' preferred discussion style are two important mediating variables in the Concurrence Model. Depending on their configuration, they either reinforce or modify the effects of groupthink on any group whose members assign it their primary identity. Figure 1 suggests the conditions in the Concurrence Model that result in the adoption of the dominant solution. We can state these expectations as formal hypotheses:

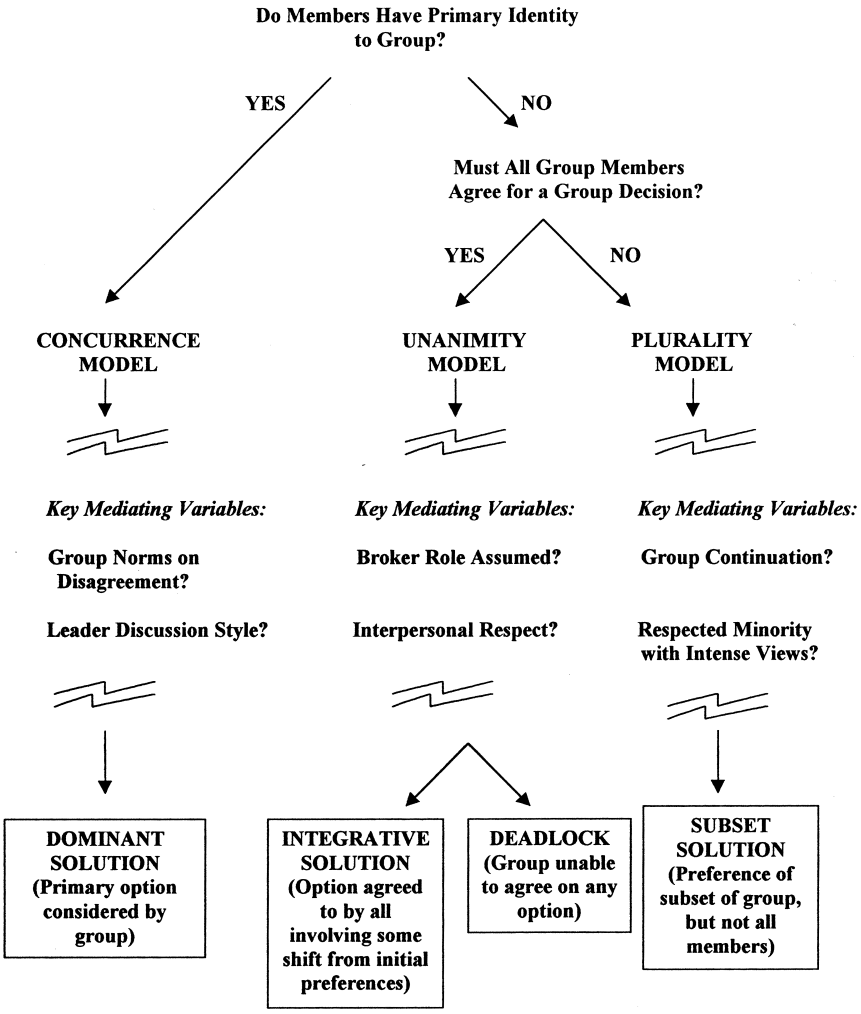

FIGURE 1. Summary decision tree differentiating Concurrence, Unanimity, and Plurality Group Models and the key mediating variables that can reinforce or deflect the most likely outcomes (shown in boxes)

1. Other things being equal, groups whose members have their primary identity with that group are more likely than groups whose primary identity is outside the group to choose dominant solutions to problems.
2. Groups whose members have their primary identity with that group and who have leaders who actively encourage generation of multiple options and their critical appraisal are more likely to choose integrative solutions to problems, whereas groups whose leaders suppress the articulation of multiple options and discourage critical assessment of favored proposals are very likely to choose dominant solutions.

3. Groups whose members have their primary identity with that group and have norms that permit internal disagreement and appraisal of each other's proposals are less likely to choose dominant solutions and more likely to select integrative solutions than such groups with norms that discourage expression of differences.
4. Groups whose members have their primary identity with the group and have both leaders who encourage consideration of multiple options and norms that permit dissent are most likely to choose integrative solutions when compared to such groups that have only either appropriate leaders or norms.

The 1938 Munich Crisis[8]

British cabinets usually conform to our definition of a single-group decision unit. In August 1938 the cabinet of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain received alarming intelligence reports that Germany planned to invade the Sudeten area of Czechoslovakia by October. As the situation unfolded, the cabinet convened repeatedly to decide how to deal with the problem. One of the first such occasions for decision occurred on August 30 in a session attended by eighteen of the twenty-one cabinet members. The foreign secretary, Lord Halifax, opened the meeting with an analysis of the situation. He then recommended that the British government deliberately create ambiguity for Hitler by not indicating whether it would take military action if Germany attacked Czechoslovakia. In effect, Halifax's proposal sought to complicate Hitler's strategy by "keeping Germany guessing." The prime minister endorsed his foreign secretary's proposal. During the ensuing discussion, only two officials spoke unequivocally in favor of another option—to explicitly warn Germany not to attack. At the conclusion of the meeting, Foreign Secretary Halifax responded to those who had urged that a warning be issued followed by the prime minister declaring the cabinet unanimous in support of a policy of deliberate ambiguity with the intention of keeping Germany guessing. No one present objected.

To fit this case and others to be discussed below to the models, Figure 2 presents a more comprehensive decision tree depicting the hypothesized effects of each variable in relation to others. To apply the decision tree in Figure 2 to a specific decision, the analyst must answer a series of questions about the status of key variables in the historical case. Answering each question establishes a dichotomous value for one of the model's variables, that is, it indicates whether the variable was present. The hypothesized relationships among variables in each model appear as the pathways through the decision tree. Figure 2 may

[8] This section and other discussions in this article of the 1938 Munich crisis draw from Walker and Watson (1989) and Walker (1990, 1995).

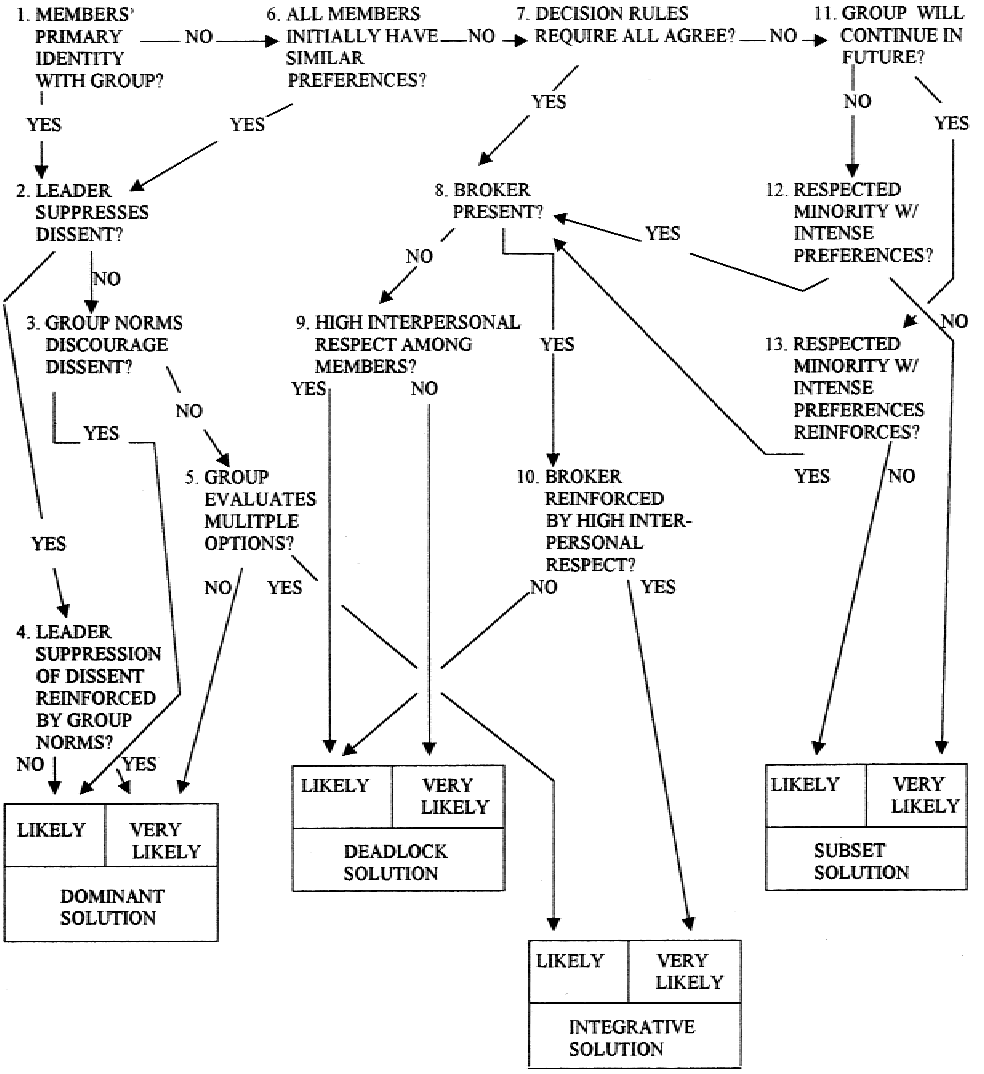

FIGURE 2. A decision tree representation of the effects of key mediating variables on group decision outputs in the three models

seem somewhat complex because it incorporates all three models. As we shall see later, by presenting it in this fashion we can denote how certain mediating variables are able to change the type of decision most clearly associated with one model to that of another.

Consider now the Chamberlain cabinet decision of August 30, 1938, using Figure 2. The first question with which every decision analysis must begin (Members' Primary Identity with Group?) appears in the upper left-hand corner of Figure 2. The major variables associated with the Concurrence Model can be found below that initial question on the left side of the figure. With respect to

the initial question, members of the Chamberlain cabinet can be said to have had their primary loyalty to that group. All were members of the same political party and served at the pleasure of the prime minister. Thus, the answer to Question 1 is "yes." This leads us to Question 2: Does Leader Suppress Dissent? Chamberlain clearly served as the group's leader with Halifax as his strong second. Both the prime minister and his foreign secretary made their own preferences clear at the outset, which appears to have had a somewhat chilling effect on the expression of disagreement. Question 2 also can be answered "yes." In Question 4, to which our previous affirmative answer directs us, the variable concerns group norms that reinforce the leader's suppression of dissent. In the British cabinet there is a tradition of permitting ministers to raise questions as well as express their preferences and the record shows that several members did precisely that during the meeting. The answer to Question 4 being "no," the likely outcome expected by the model is the Dominant Solution, that is, concurrence around the option that had been given initial prominence in the group's deliberation. For this particular occasion for decision, the "keep Germany guessing" position initially posed by Halifax, and immediately endorsed by Chamberlain, can be viewed as conforming to the model's expectation. Notice that the model would have expected the dominant solution to have been even more probable (very likely) had group norms reinforced the leader's tendency to discourage dissent.

Unanimity Model

Resolving Conflict

The opposite of a group committed to avoiding internal conflict is one that acknowledges disagreement as a fundamental, often unavoidable, part of the policymaking process. People have different information, experiences, and values; therefore, disagreements are natural. As has been suggested, group conflict can be constructive by forcing people to think through their arguments more carefully and, on occasion, to modify their views to take into account the insights and preferences of others. Even if outspoken advocates of competing positions cannot recognize the need and possibility of bridging their differences, other members of a group may be able to do so. From this perspective, disagreement and its resolution become central to the group process.

Recognizing the existence of substantive disagreements among group members is at the core of the theoretical orientation known as bureaucratic politics. Because groups in government are embedded in agencies, ministries, departments, or other bureaucracies, conflicts based on competing missions, interests, and interpretations are structurally built into the interagency process. The for-

mation of policy and other problem-solving tasks frequently involves the attempted reconciliation among these different organizational interests. The entity often faced with resolving such differences is an interagency committee, task force, or council.

Ever since his analytical study of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, in which bureaucratic politics served as one of three alternative interpretations for explaining American decisions, Allison (1971) has been associated with this approach. And, certainly, Allison assumed a pivotal role in the advocacy of the bureaucratic politics approach and his treatment has been the reference point for numerous applications and evaluations. Unlike the concept of groupthink, however, bureaucratic politics must be seen as the product of many analysts.[9] Distilling the essence of the bureaucratic politics orientation from the multiple developers is a matter of interpretation.

Outside Identity and Total Agreement

One essential feature of bureaucratic politics contrasts directly with notions about groupthink and the Concurrence Model we drew from it. Whereas the Concurrence Model necessitates that group members give their primary identity to the authoritative decision unit (the group), bureaucratic politics expects members of the group to have their primary loyalty elsewhere. They are, in fact, in the group to represent their bureau, agency, or some other outside interest. It is their home bureau whose views they are to present and defend. In all likelihood it is that bureau that pays their salary, determines their promotion, and confers status on them. If a civil servant or political appointee is not supportive of their home agency, that organization will surely look for ways to punish the wayward individual. For the Unanimity Model, we borrow the idea from bureaucratic politics that in certain problem-solving groups the members' primary identity with respect to the issue under consideration lies *outside* the decision group. For our purposes, however, it is not essential that group members represent government agencies; what we are concerned about here is that each group member assigns a higher priority to furthering the interests of some outside entity than those of the present group. This outside identity reduces their concerns with group harmony and makes likely their willingness to express disagreement when the preferences of that outside entity are not being served.

Another characteristic present in some interpretations of bureaucratic politics is also incorporated into the Unanimity Model: the requirement that all members must agree to a position before it can become the group's decision. This inclusiveness condition does not necessitate that all members have equal

[9] There have been numerous thoughtful critiques of the Bureaucratic Politics Model including Art (1973), Bendor and Hammond (1992), and 't Hart and Rosenthal (1998).

power. There may be substantial differentials among the members along several dimensions (e.g., status, expertise, and seniority), but no single individual or subset of members has the ability to decide alone. In the end all members must support the decision which means that each can veto a possible proposal.

Other studies of bureaucratic politics offer additional features, but it is these two properties (outside identity and agreement of all) that are incorporated into the Unanimity Model. These properties often lead to a distinctive group process. Because the members' primary identities are outside, group disagreement on substantive issues is quite common. As a result of the fact that each member can veto anyone else's proposal, members must listen and take into account the views of everyone else. In such circumstances, it is not an effective strategy to seek out only those members of the group whose views are similar to one's own and construct a faction with them because the excluded members can block the resulting option.

Do groups fulfilling the Unanimity Model conditions actually exist in foreign policy situations or other policymaking circumstances? In an earlier time, the American Joint Chiefs of Staff exemplified this model. Today many juries do. Gaenslen (1996) found examples—including the Brezhnev Politburo—in Russia, China, and Japan as well as the United States. If one acknowledges that major foreign policy matters are typically the function of a country's chief executive, then the expectation might be that this head of state is always in a position to be first among equals, if not the outright authoritative policymaker. We would like to argue here that a subordinate interagency group, however, may keep their decision away from a higher authority fearing that it will lose control of the problem, face an outcome it does not want, or be judged as incompetent. Leaders for their part may insist on a unified recommendation from an advisory group, delegate their authority to the group, or simply lose track of the problem enabling others to make the decision. Moreover, even without a formal rule requiring unanimity, representatives of agencies that need to work together on a range of issues may come to understand that taking action in one instance contrary to the preferences of one of their number may be shortsighted in the long run. In the future, the omitted agency may be in a position to ride roughshod over the preferences of its prior antagonists. An understanding of this feature of bureaucratic life creates the conditions under which groups may come to operate with a consensus or unanimity requirement.

What are the likely decision outputs associated with the Unanimity Model? Two different results are expected if no intervening mechanisms are introduced into the group dynamic. One outcome is deadlock. Group members are simply unable to bridge their differences and stalemate results. The other outcome is the integrative solution. Integrative solutions may constitute a compromise among members in which they accept a solution that is of lower value to them than their first choice. Alternatively, a solution may be discovered by the

group in the course of their deliberations that fulfills the interests of everyone. Bureaucratic politics scholars frequently mention a third type of integrative output that involves a trade-off among members or side payments to some holdouts to secure their support which is for the moment not a part of the present model.

Unanimity Mediating Variables

At this point, let us introduce two characteristics we believe differentiate the likelihood of deadlock from achieving an integrative solution. One such mediating variable is the presence of one or more members who assume a "broker role." The other is the degree of interpersonal respect among members.

The term "broker role" is used to identify an explicit set of activities that one or more individuals in the group assume who seek to find a solution to the problem that addresses the concerns and interests of all members. It is a particular type of facilitation that involves clarifying each member's concerns, proposing solutions that attempt to bridge differences, and encouraging others to invent such options. To be classified as playing a broker role, an individual must make repeated and varied initiatives of this kind rather than engage in a singular intervention in the group process. It is possible that more than one person in a group will assume such a role. Moreover, it need not be the formal chair or leader. The presence of a broker provides no assurance of an integrative solution in the group, but such participation increases the likelihood of such a decision and reduces the chances of deadlock.

The degree of interpersonal respect members have for one another is the other mediating variable in the Unanimity Model. In the previously described Concurrence Model, we expected members to have a high degree of interpersonal respect for one another because of their primary identity with that group. No such condition is necessary in the Unanimity Model whose members have their primary identity elsewhere. In fact, in such groups it is easy to imagine that members may regard others in the group as the opposition and consider these others' positions and arguments as unreasonable, foolish, or deliberately intended to damage their own well-being. If the members lack respect for at least some other members of the group, it is unlikely that they will devote much effort to finding a solution that incorporates the other members' concerns. Their energy will more likely be devoted to finding ways to get them out of the group or creating an alternative decision unit that excludes them. Although such low levels of interpersonal respect may exist between some members of Unanimity Model groups, it is a variable and not a constant. Thus, when members of such groups have positive views of one another, even though they disagree on the means of coping with the immediate problem, they are more likely to be prepared to work together for a mutually acceptable resolution. In such cases, the

likelihood of an integrative solution should increase with a corresponding decrease in the occurrence of deadlock.

The expectations associated with the Unanimity Model, shown in Figure 1, are captured in the following formal propositions:

1. Other things being equal, in groups whose members have their primary identity elsewhere but must all agree to any proposal for dealing with the problem, deadlocks and integrative solutions are the most likely outputs.
2. In groups whose members have their primary identity elsewhere but must all agree to any proposal for dealing with the problem, when one or more members assumes a broker role, integrative solutions become more likely and deadlock less likely.
3. In groups whose members have their primary identity elsewhere but must all agree to any proposal for dealing with the problem, the higher the degree of interpersonal respect among group members, the more likely are integrative solutions and the less likely is deadlock.
4. In groups whose members have their primary identity elsewhere but must all agree to any proposal for dealing with the problem, the presence of both the broker role and a high degree of interpersonal respect increase the likelihood of integrative solutions more than in such groups that have only the broker role *or* a high degree of interpersonal respect.

Soviet Submarine Aground in Sweden, 1981 [10]

Sweden has long practiced a foreign policy of armed neutrality. Throughout the Cold War it used its diplomacy and military to ensure that both superpower blocs respected its position. Thus, the Swedish government confronted an urgent problem when in the morning of October 28, 1981, they discovered a Soviet submarine trapped on the rocks in a restricted military coastal area. Initial Swedish decisions involved a set of demands to the Soviet government that the latter appeared ready to accept. Then the problem became more complicated. From outside the hull, Swedish defense experts detected radiation that led them to conclude nuclear weapons might be present.

For Sweden, the nuclear possibility changed the definition of the problem. Not only had a foreign submarine violated restricted coastal territory, but there was also an indication that it violated Swedish insistence on keeping nuclear weapons out of its territory. If the Soviets brought nuclear weapons into Swedish territory, sterner measures might be required. The Swedish government

[10] This section and other discussions in this article concerning the Soviet submarine that ran aground in Sweden in 1981 draw upon Sundelius (1990) and Stern and Sundelius (1992a, 1992b).

requested that its representatives be allowed on board to inspect the submarine's torpedo tubes to make a definitive determination. The Soviets refused; instead, they responded by building up their naval forces just outside the restricted territorial waters. Now the Swedish government had to decide its next move.

The Soviet ambassador conveyed his government's rejection late on Wednesday afternoon, November 4, 1981. That evening the Swedish prime minister convened an ad hoc group including, among others, his foreign minister, the permanent under secretary of foreign affairs, various other diplomatic and military officers, as well as the leaders of the two major opposition parties in the Parliament. Those present disagreed over whether to hold the Soviet submarine until an inspection was permitted or to ignore the possibility of nuclear weapons and tow the sub to open waters. Given the strong norms in Swedish policy for forging consensus, a compromise emerged. The policymakers agreed to a strong diplomatic protest note and to condemn publicly the Soviet Union for entering Swedish waters with a ship that likely carried nuclear weapons. Simultaneously with the protests, the Swedes would tow the submarine to international waters without an onboard inspection. Their solution met the requirement of some members of the group not to ignore the nuclear weapons issue while, at the same time, fulfilled the preference of other group members not to escalate the crisis dangerously.

To apply this case to the model, we again turn to Figure 2. The initial question concerning whether members' primary identity is with the group is answered in the negative. Recall that the ad hoc group consisted of both representatives of the foreign ministry and military and the two leaders of the major opposition parties. Moreover, members initially had different preferences on how to treat the problem (Question 6). Some wanted to confront the nuclear weapons issue and argued to hold the submarine until the Soviets agreed to an inspection. Others argued against a serious escalation of the crisis with a super power. Swedish requirements for consensus made unanimity the necessary decision rule (Question 7). Indeed, unanimity is an integral part of the Swedish foreign policymaking process; there is a normative aspiration to reach a common position based on shared values (Sundelius, 1989). At this point, Question 8 asks that we determine whether a member of the group played a broker role. We have no direct information on that matter, but it can reasonably be inferred that one or more individuals sought to devise a compromise. Given the pressure in Swedish policymaking for consensus and the evidence that a compromise was reached, the assumption that a broker was present seems plausible. Moreover, given the composition of this ad hoc group to which the prime minister had invited leaders of the political opposition, there would seem to have been a high level of interpersonal respect (Question 10). By tracing this path through the decision tree in Figure 2, we see that the model regards an integrative solution as very likely. The actual compromise involving a public and private

protest of a probable nuclear violation combined with the release of the submarine fits that expectation.

Plurality Model

At the core of the two previous models were opposing strategies for the management of disagreements in groups coping with a policy problem. In the Concurrence Model, conflict is avoided by all members as they promptly accept the initially advanced proposal. In the Unanimity Model, conflict is resolved by working through the disagreement until all members agree on a particular solution. The Plurality Model represents a third perspective on substantive conflict in groups. It acknowledges that disagreements are likely, but that achieving a resolution acceptable to all members may not be possible or may be achieved only at considerable costs—in the time required or in the creation of an awkward compromise satisfactory to no one. Some group decision, however, may be essential. Solutions that do not further the objectives of at least some substantial portion of the group members may be difficult to implement and enforce.

To avoid these potential difficulties, the Plurality Model recognizes that not all disagreements may be capable of resolution to the satisfaction of all members. In this perspective, a group can reach a decision when a certain proportion of the members concur, even though others may still remain opposed. In brief, in the Plurality Model members agree a priori to comply with a rule that permits acceptance of a solution when a certain proportion of the members agree. Although a plurality decision rule need not require agreement among more than half the members, majority rule (e.g., 50 percent plus 1; 2/3; 3/4, etc.) has been the most frequently studied form.[11]

In democratic political theory, the relationship between majorities and minorities—the divisions created by majority rule—has long been a topic of great concern (e.g., Chapman and Wertheimer, 1990). Comparing majority vs. unanimous decisions has engaged students of rational choice (e.g., Buchanan and Tullock, 1962; Rae, 1975). In addition, some American states and other jurisdictions have begun to introduce the practice of permitting a jury to reach a decision if two thirds or three fourths of the panel agree, rather than following the previously required unanimous verdict. Legal scholars have asked: Does it make a difference in decisions of guilt or innocence if all members must agree on the verdict or only a majority? In the United States, the matter has come before the Supreme Court (e.g., *Johnson vs. Louisiana* and *Apodace, Cooper,*

[11] Under certain conditions, a group may accept a plurality rather than a majority rule or they may agree that certain members must be included in the winning subset. Granting some but not all members a veto power has this effect.

and Madden vs. Oregon). In part prompted by the legal interest, a body of research has appeared in political science and social psychology. The findings from this literature have been reviewed by Miller (1989).

A broad array of studies have confirmed the expectation that groups governed by a majority rule typically take less time to reach a decision than those functioning under the requirement of unanimity. Those familiar with the public policy arena know that time is often critical, making a less stringent decision rule attractive. Beyond the time variation, however, there appear to be different dynamics within groups using some form of majority rule rather than unanimity. Under a unanimity rule, participants recognize that no solution is possible unless it is accepted by everyone. This recognition requires each person to take into account the views of all other members. Efforts at persuasion and the search for consensus must be addressed to all. In contrast, in a majority rule situation, persons can concentrate attention on those members whose views seem most similar to their own (or on persons who appear to be undecided or most open to persuasion). Those with extremely different views can be ignored in building a winning majority position.[12] This rationale provides the basis for our expectation that, other things being equal, groups whose members have their primary identity elsewhere will most frequently reach a solution that favors the position of a subset of their members.

Plurality Mediating Variables

As with the other models, the presence of certain mediating variables can alter the likelihood of groups representing the Plurality Model reaching a subset solution. Two that seem of particular importance are the distribution and intensity of preferences among members and the continuity of the group. Distribution of preferences refers to the degree of similarity or proximity among members' positions and interests and intensity refers to how strongly members value their preferences. For the necessary majority to form, a sufficient number of members must have or invent an option that is acceptable to them but not necessarily to all members. If the preferences and underlying interests of no set of members are more proximate than those of any others in the group or if those with somewhat similar views strongly resist concession, then a stable majority is unlikely. In such a case, either an option can be formed that is as acceptable to all members as it is to any potential subset and the decision output is an integrative solution, or the group deadlocks.

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[12] Riker's (1962) classic study of coalition formation, which triggered considerable research, argued that under many conditions groups would seek to include only the minimum number of members necessary for a winning coalition in order that any gains from success could be maximized among the winners.

Several scholars have examined the duration, continuity, and life span of decision groups and the effects of a group's current life stage on problem solving. For example, Stern (1997) explores what he calls "new group syndrome," or the consequences that emerge from groups that have only recently formed. Moreland and Levine (1988) have conducted research on the entire life cycle of groups. For our purposes, it is the very continuation of the group that is at issue. Do members expect the group to disband after it has dealt with the current problem or do they anticipate that it will continue for some time and deal with a range of other problems in the future? Knowing that the group will subsequently address other problems with the same members, a majority subgroup may be more reluctant to select an option that one or more members in the minority intensely oppose. In the future, those in the current majority may find themselves in the minority position on some issue that is of great concern to them. Thus, when the members expect the group to continue and there is a current minority with intensely held preferences, a greater effort will be made to find a solution that addresses some of the minorities' concerns. In such cases, an integrative solution is more likely even under majority rule. Conversely, when the group members do not expect to work together in the future on other issues, no such constraint is probable and a subset solution can be expected.

The right side of Figure 1 depicts the decision output most generally expected in the Plurality Model (a subset solution) and identifies key mediating variables. Examination of this path in the figure may suggest to the reader the existence of a tautology. If the definition of the Plurality Model includes the stipulation that all group members need not agree for a decision to be reached in that group, then is it not true by definition that the outcome will be a subset solution (i.e., a decision representing the preferences of some portion of the members but not all)? The subset solution is certainly expected when all members need not agree, but it is not *required* that such a group in disagreement must reach a decision that excludes some members. What defines a Plurality Model group is its operation under a rule that *permits* decision without complete agreement. Moreover, as indicated in the hypotheses below, some mediating variables are expected to influence the relationship between the group's decision rule and the expected outcome. The anticipated relationships for the Plurality Model are summarized in the following hypotheses:

1. Other things being equal, groups whose members have their primary loyalty elsewhere and are not required to achieve unanimity for agreement are very likely to reach subset solutions when members disagree.
2. In groups whose members have their primary loyalty elsewhere and are not required to achieve unanimity for agreement, if the minority in a dispute includes respected members who hold their preferences intensely, then deadlock or integrative solutions are more likely than subset solu-

tions, and, conversely, if none in the minority are held in high esteem or do not intensely advocate their preferences, a subset solution is increasingly likely.

3. In groups whose members have their primary loyalty elsewhere and are not required to achieve unanimity for agreement, if the group is expected to address other problems in the future and a current minority hold their preferences intensely, then an integrative solution is more likely, and, conversely, if the group is not expected to address future issues or if the minority does not express intense preferences, a subset solution is increasingly likely.
4. In groups whose members have their primary loyalty elsewhere and are not required to achieve unanimity for agreement, if neither a respected minority with intense preferences nor an expectation that the group will continue and address other future problems is present, then a subset solution is more likely than if only one of these two conditions is present.

Israeli Response to Egyptian Military Actions, May 1967[13]

The Plurality Model can be illustrated by a study of the Israeli decisions in response to threats from Egypt and other Arab states in the spring of 1967. A critical development in what was perceived by all as a deteriorating situation occurred late on May 16 when Egyptian President Nasser demanded the withdrawal of U.N. peacekeeping forces from the Sinai and subsequently moved Egyptian military forces into that desert bordering Israel. Then on May 22, Egypt blockaded the Straits of Tiran, preventing shipping access for Israel through the straits. This action triggered an urgent meeting of Israeli policymakers on May 23. They met first as the Ministerial Committee on Defense and then as the cabinet. These policymakers had to deal not only with the military actions of their Arab neighbor, but also with a request from United States President Lyndon Johnson who urged Israel to defer any action for forty-eight hours to allow the Americans to explore possible international response. Military Chief of Staff Rabin argued that to maintain the credibility of Israel's deterrence policy immediate action was required. Foreign Minister Eban countered that any action must be deferred until consultation with the United States had occurred. During the ensuing deliberations, Rabin and the military leadership acknowledged that a delay of forty-eight hours in the initiation of military action would not be critical. Subsequently the cabinet unanimously agreed to the Eban position of consultation.

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[13] This section and other discussions in this article of Israeli decisions regarding Egyptian military actions in May 1967 draw from Stein and Tanter (1980) and Stein (1990, 1991).

Because the Israeli cabinet operates with a majority voting rule, the Plurality Model clearly applies. More specifically, we begin our analysis in Figure 2 by establishing that the primary loyalty of members of the Ministerial Committee on Defense and the cabinet lies outside those groups (Question 1). In the spring of 1967, the Israeli cabinet included representatives from several political parties; it conforms to our definition of a group (rather than being considered a coalition) because in this crisis, cabinet members acted more or less as free agents instead of representatives who were expected to consult with their outside constituents before taking, or changing, their positions. Did cabinet members primarily identify with the cabinet, that is, the decision-making group? Given that the Israeli policymakers perceived themselves facing a grave national security crisis, one could argue that most group members gave their primary loyalty to the group. Although such an interpretation is plausible, it will be proposed here that the members' loyalty was to the nation in the crisis, but not necessarily to the cabinet. The group consisted of members of multiple political parties and of professional military and diplomatic personnel. It seems reasonable to assume that these individuals had their longer-term allegiance to these other entities rather than to the cabinet as a body. Thus, Question 1 in Figure 2 requires a negative answer. Unambiguously the answer to the next query along the path is "no" (Question 6: Do all members initially have similar preferences?). During much of its deliberation, cabinet members were divided between the opposing views of Foreign Minister Abba Eban and Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin. This leads to Question 7 that asks whether all members must agree for there to be a decision. Again, the answer is "no." The cabinet, however, is a continuing body that will deliberate on other issues; therefore, Question 11 must be answered "yes." At Question 13, we must decide whether respected minorities in the group have intense preferences that reinforce the mediating variable of a continuous group. That Rabin was a highly respected member of the cabinet is clear, but did he and his colleagues hold "intense" preferences for immediate action? As we observed earlier, under extensive questioning, the military experts acknowledged that a delay of action for forty-eight hours would have little consequence; when a final vote was taken the option of deferring action was accepted by all. Since Question 13 requires that the respected minority have intense preferences, it must be answered in the negative in this case. That response ends the path through the decision tree. Under the conditions specified, the expectation from the model is that a subset solution is likely. Does the actual Israeli cabinet decision in this case represent a subset solution? In the final vote, all members agreed to a deferral. The definition of a subset outcome recognizes the possibility of a shift in some members' preferences, but still assumes the final choice does not represent the preferences of all. In the end, did the actual preferences of Rabin and the other initial advocates of imme-

diate action change? There is some evidence that those favoring Rabin's position believed they still had time to take action and that the deferral would not limit their future options either through the allocation of resources or through the generation of expectations in others. It was still early in the process. They had not changed their original preferences but were willing to secure additional information before choosing to attack.

Further Occasions for Decision from the Historical Cases

At the outset of this essay, we suggested that decisions corresponding to the Concurrence Model are likely to involve dominant solutions. The dynamics within Prime Minister Chamberlain's cabinet illustrated how such a decision could occur. In the Unanimity Model, decisions tend toward either deadlock or an integrative solution. The Swedish response to possible nuclear weapons on the grounded Soviet submarine provided an example of a group—that required consensus—finding an integrative decision. Finally, groups operating in accordance with the Plurality Model are hypothesized to reach solutions preferred by a subset of the members. The Israeli decision in 1967 arguably indicates that a subset of the members of the cabinet got their preference adopted and that even though Rabin continued to want immediate action, he elected not to voice an objection to the majority preference given the belief there was still time left in which to act.

It is a major contention of this piece, though, that key mediating variables can alter the expected decision outcomes for each of the three models. A mediating variable either reinforces the model's disposition toward a certain outcome or alters it. Figure 2 reveals a variety of hypothesized paths in which the value of one or more mediating variables shifts the likely outcome from that associated with one model to that of another. In other words, the outcomes are contingent upon the status of relevant mediating variables.

To demonstrate this contingency feature, it is instructive to return to the three historical cases. The policymakers in each case were involved in a series of decisions in their efforts to cope with the problem at hand. The three previously reviewed decisions each isolate a single occasion for decision from what were, in fact, a string of occasions for decision that faced each set of policymakers across a period of time. In these other occasions for decision, the status of certain of the mediating variables changed from what they were in the decisions described above. Under these changed conditions, the models lead to different expected decision outcomes.

Recall that when Prime Minister Chamberlain's cabinet met in August 1938 to consider what to do about reports from British intelligence that Hitler was

planning to invade Czechoslovakia, Chamberlain and his foreign minister acted as a united team. Foreign Minister Halifax proposed a policy at the outset of the meeting; Chamberlain immediately endorsed it. In the ensuing cabinet discussion there was little dissent and Chamberlain declared that the recommendation proposed by Halifax was adopted.

In the following weeks, Prime Minister Chamberlain met twice with Hitler. After the second meeting, Chamberlain returned with written demands from Hitler. The British cabinet met four times on September 24-25, 1938, to decide on a response. In the first meeting, Hitler's memorandum was distributed and Chamberlain proposed Hitler's terms be accepted. The meeting then adjourned until the next day. At the second meeting, Foreign Minister Halifax started the meeting by recommending that Hitler's memorandum be rejected.

From the perspective of the Concurrence Model, a key difference emerges when these two occasions for decision are compared. Whereas earlier Chamberlain and Halifax had acted jointly to suppress disagreement, now Halifax begins by opposing his prime minister's recommendation. Under this latter condition, Chamberlain makes no serious attempt to curb disagreement among his cabinet. Thus, the mediating variable concerning the leader's effort to curb group dissent is different. In Figure 2, the answer to Question 2 shifts from "yes" (in the earlier decision) to "no." This change calls for exploring a different pathway through the decision tree. As we previously determined, the norms of the British cabinet do not discourage the expression of dissent (Question 3). In the second cabinet meeting held on September 25, multiple options are discussed (Question 5). This described path through the decision tree leads to the expectation that an integrative solution is likely.

The historical case appears to conform to this expectation. In the second cabinet meeting on September 25, the prime minister proposed an alternative approach that involved his writing a final letter to Hitler urging the Nazi leader to negotiate a compromise. Chamberlain's letter was to be delivered personally by a high-level British official. If in that meeting Hitler showed no disposition to compromise, then the British official would deliver a firm warning. At that meeting the cabinet debated Chamberlain's new proposal and certain modifications were made. They then adopted the new proposal.

The consideration of these two different occasions for decision by the Chamberlain cabinet underscores that a change in certain key process variables can alter the likely decision. The same group cannot be assumed to conform to a constant model of decision making even when they are considering the same problem. This point also is confirmed by the Swedish decisions on the Soviet submarine.

In the earlier account of the Swedish management of the Soviet submarine that had run aground on their territory, we examined their decision making after

officials detected radiation at external points along the hull of the ship. Days earlier, the government had worked through an initial occasion for decision that arose when they first learned (on October 28, 1981) that a Soviet submarine was aground in Swedish waters. The earlier, critical decision appears to have been made by an ad hoc group meeting in the Foreign Ministry on the morning of October 29. The permanent under secretary of foreign affairs presided over a group composed of several of his diplomatic colleagues and their counterparts in the Ministry of Defense as well as the supreme commander of the armed forces. The group's deliberations began with a briefing by the Foreign Ministry's international law expert who recommended a course of action and presented such a convincing case for his preference that other avenues were not fully explored. Considering the position of this expert in the Foreign Ministry and the likelihood that he had had discussions before this meeting with the permanent under secretary, it is highly probable that the articulated option was not markedly different from the latter's views. At the conclusion of the meeting, the chair of the group from the Foreign Ministry, his counterpart from the Ministry of Defense, and the military supreme commander briefed the prime minister and foreign minister on the group's recommendation which the political leaders accepted and ordered implemented.

Without reconstructing the detailed pathway in Figure 2 that this decision process appears to have followed, it seems evident that what started out as a candidate for the Unanimity Model—similar to the previously considered Swedish decision—got sidetracked. We find a recognized expert advocating a position at the outset of the deliberations. His position appears to have been endorsed by the group's chair. These similar initial preferences and their likely creation of an atmosphere not conducive to dissent become key switching variables. We have been told that the Swedish decision norm is for consensus (unanimity). Yet, in response to this occasion for decision, the actual decision is a dominant solution, as the decision tree path in Figure 2 would lead us to expect.

No less variation occurs between occasions for decision in the Israeli government's crisis of 1967. The Israeli decision—described previously—to defer an action for at least forty-eight hours had occurred on May 23. As a result, Foreign Minister Eban left to consult in Paris, London, and Washington. While he was away, the situation deteriorated. Egyptian troops continued to move into forward positions and on May 25 Israeli intelligence intercepted an order to Egyptian air force units instructing them to prepare to attack two days later. Senior Israeli military officers now urged an immediate preemptive attack. Meanwhile, U.S. President Lyndon Johnson urged a British plan for an international naval flotilla to open the blockaded strait. The Israeli cabinet began what became an all-night deliberation that continued the next day. In an informal vote early on the morning of May 28th, the cabinet was deadlocked as ministers divided

evenly in favor of and against attack. At that point, Prime Minister Eshkol recessed the session for a few hours of rest. During the break in the cabinet meeting, messages arrived from President Johnson and Secretary of State Dean Rusk giving an encouraging assessment of the potential for an international flotilla and warning Israel against unilateral action. When the cabinet reconvened, the prime minister and several others shifted their vote to support delay.

This decision sequence poses a fascinatingly intricate pathway cutting across mediating variables in the decision tree of Figure 2. Primary loyalty of members lies outside the group (Question 1) because of the cabinet's multiparty composition. Of course, in this case a clear disagreement existed from the outset (Question 6) in this group with established procedures that permit decisions by a majority vote (Question 7). The cabinet is a continuing group (Question 11). The prime minister and his foreign minister, both respected leaders, were among those on opposing sides who felt so strongly about their positions that an all-night session failed to change any views (Question 13). Inasmuch as all cabinet members appeared to have taken positions, no one appears to have been available to play a broker role (Question 8). Given those who were on the opposing sides, it can reasonably be assumed that there was substantial interpersonal respect among the members (Question 9). This protracted path through Figure 2 leads to a deadlock as the likely outcome. And when Prime Minister Eshkol called a recess in the morning that was the actual situation.

When, however, the cabinet reconvened in the afternoon, members had new information in the form of communications from the U.S. president and his secretary of state. Based on those communiques, Eshkol and the other members of his party in the cabinet changed their positions to favor delay; one member abstained. When a new vote was taken, only the minister of transportation, Moshe Carmel, opposed deferral of action; he was not a member of the ministerial committee on defense, the cabinet subgroup with special responsibility for security matters.

It is precisely the status of this individual who remains in opposition that must be assessed in applying the models in Figure 2. In this new Israeli occasion for decision following the messages from the United States, the answers to Questions 1, 6, 7, and 11 remain as before. What appears to change is the response to Question 13 that asks if there is also a respected minority with intense preferences. There can be little doubt of the intensity of Minister Carmel's views given that in the end he alone voted against delay. If, however, we infer that on issues of national security the minister of transportation's views may not be respected by others as reflecting considerable expertise or authority, then the outcome expected by the model is a solution representing the preferences of a subset of the group members. On the afternoon of May 28, 1967, the Israeli cabinet decided that way.

Conclusions

The examination of the additional occasions for decision in the historical cases illustrates an important point. Some of the earlier explanations of group decision making in the literature have tended to advance unqualified interpretations. Yet, as we have seen, the presence and status of certain mediating variables can dramatically shift the likely decision outcome. To oversimplify slightly, a situation that bears some of the hallmarks of groupthink may, in fact, generate a decision that one might more readily associate with bureaucratic politics. Thus, an important task is to identify the critical intervening group structure and process variables that play a role in shaping the outcome. In short, the models we have presented here regarding the effects that different conflict management strategies can have on group decision making must be viewed as contingent models.

Some mediating variables seem more likely than others to change values from one decision to the next. In general, one might expect process variables (e.g., a member's willingness to assume a broker role) to vary more readily than structural variables (e.g., decision rules or group norms). Yet even some of these seemingly more enduring group properties can change abruptly if the politically motivated group must deal with a variety of different kinds of problems.

Our review of multiple occasions for decision in the same historical cases introduces another issue. The models presented in this paper "slice" the decision process into narrow, discrete decisions. The British cabinet's dealings with Hitler in 1938, the Swedish government's response to the Soviet submarine in 1981, and the Israeli decisions about war in 1967, however, demonstrate that foreign policy decision making is seldom a "one-shot" task. Instead, foreign policy problems unfold over a period of time in part affected by policymakers' prior actions. Policymakers frequently engage in sequential decision making in which more or less the same individuals find themselves dealing with the same problem repeatedly with their current decisions being affected by what has gone before. In future theoretical development, models such as those proposed in this essay must be embedded in the longer stream of policymaking.

We must also recognize how the conflict management strategies that groups use fit into this larger context. This essay has argued that for numerous reasons people working in policy groups on problems with no known correct answer are likely to disagree about what is to be done. And such disagreements may extend to differences concerning the nature of the problem they are addressing (i.e., problem definition or framing issues). If these disagreements are permitted to surface, they can create conflict within a group. Groups tend to develop different dispositions toward the management of conflict among their members. We have suggested they can deny (or ignore) disagreement, they can resolve

it, or they can accept it. These differences provided the point of departure for this essay. At a macro level, the reasoning is that these dispositions toward conflict lead to group procedures regarding how to come to some interpersonal agreement (Concurrence, Unanimity, or Plurality Models). These procedures, in turn, affect the probable solutions the group will reach (dominant, deadlock, subset, or integrative). Certain group structure and process variables make the expected type of decision output more or less likely.

Let us conclude with a brief consideration of the implications of the different decision outputs associated with these models. Does it make a difference in terms of the quality of the decision if the group dynamics involve concurrence, unanimity, or plurality? Discussion of such a question must always begin with the caveat that process cannot ensure the quality of results. As has been noted before, good decisions can flow from a flawed process and fiascoes can emerge from a quality process. We would expect, however, that sound decision processes, rather than poor ones, would increase the chances of decision outputs that do what the policymakers intended.

Janis (1972, 1982) makes a strong case for the greater possibility of flawed decision making when a single option is accepted without critical evaluation or thoughtful comparison to other potential solutions. The critiques of Janis and the groupthink perspective generally have not disagreed with the potential harm of premature closure on a group solution.[14] As we observed earlier, concerns with such a flawed process led George (1972) to propose multiple advocacy. In this essay, the process associated with the Concurrence Model and a dominant solution carry the same risks for reaching a quality decision.

The merits of the processes associated with majority vs. unanimity decision rules are more varied. In majority rule vs. unanimous rule juries, Hastie and his associates (1983) distinguished between verdict-driven (majority) and evidence-driven (unanimous) juries, or what Gaenslen (1996:32) has subsequently characterized as "more data-driven than solution-driven, with unanimity-seekers more likely to ask 'what has happened and why?' and majority-seekers more likely to ask 'what should we do?'" With a majority orientation, individuals focus on finding the needed number of people in the group who agree with them. When unanimous agreement is required, it is necessary to engage everyone in the group concerning their reasoning and the information they have in order to reach a decision. This deeper and more extended exchange in groups

[14] Critiques of groupthink have been extensive. They have questioned both the antecedents and some of the effects that Janis attributed to premature closure. They have also challenged whether some of the foreign policy episodes that he used as illustrations resulted from the decision process. Despite this array of concerns, it has never been suggested that the uncritical acceptance of one solution is a sound decision process.

with a unanimity rule can lead to divergent thinking and the generation of solutions different from those initially envisioned by anyone.

In an experimental study in which groups worked to determine the right answer to math problems, those that got the correct answer usually had one or more members who determined the right answer and then persuaded the others. The authors, however, reported an unexpected finding. "The emergence of a correct solution in groups containing no correct members is a finding not previously reported. This 'emergence of truth' occurred primarily in groups assigned a unanimous consensus rule" (Stasson et al., 1991:32).

Although the problem-solving groups of present interest are neither juries with dichotomous choices nor students solving problems with known right answers, the examples point to a potential strength of decision processes under a unanimity rule. Such groups display a greater tendency to create or invent new solutions to problems. In the attempt to find a solution that works for everyone, unanimity seems to encourage participants to go beyond their initial positions. Such a procedure would appear to have considerable benefits in political situations.

The weaknesses of the unanimity rule when compared to majority rule include both the greater time that usually is involved and the greater tendency toward stalemate or deadlock. In situations such as crises where a prompt decision is required, the liability is clear. There may be additional benefits for majority rule groups that deal with a problem that evolves through time and requires careful monitoring to determine if the initial solution is working. If a majority-rule group takes action even though some of its members oppose the decision, that minority may be more alert to negative feedback.[15] Since they questioned the majority's solution from the outset, they are likely to be more vigilant in monitoring for indications that the prior response was mistaken. Assuming that the minority has not been removed from the decision group, they may be able to alert the group to the need for further consideration based on feedback that the majority has missed. By contrast, some evidence suggests that groups who have worked hard to build unanimous consent are very reluctant to reopen the deliberation and therefore may be slow to react to evidence that their decision is not achieving its purpose.

It is unlikely that there is one decision process that works best for all situations and problems. The implications for quality associated with each, however, add incentives for determining the conditions under which various processes emerge in a group and their impact on decision outputs. We have argued here that how a group handles disagreements may be one important key.

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[15] See Billings and Hermann (1998) for the development of this role of minorities in sequential decision making.

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