

Bureaucratic Politics and Organizational Process Models FREE

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Print Publication Date: Mar 2010 Subject: Organization Online Publication Date: Nov 2017

DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.2

Abstract and Keywords

Graham Allison's *Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (1969) and *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (1971) introduced two new decision-making approaches—the bureaucratic politics model and the organizational process model—to explain the October 1962 confrontation between the United States and the former Soviet Union. Despite being the subject of significant criticism for nearly four decades, the models are enduring elements of the foreign policy analysis lexicon. The bureaucratic politics model, however, has generated and continues to attract far more attention than the organizational process model across a wide range of academic disciplines. The bureaucratic politics model embraces the perspective that foreign policy decisions are the product of political resultants or bargaining between individual leaders in government positions. These resultants emerge from a foreign policy process, characteristic of a competitive game, where multiple players holding different policy preferences struggle, compete, and bargain over the substance and conduct of policy. The policy positions taken by the decision makers are determined largely by their organizational roles. On the other hand, the organizational process model maintains that foreign policy actions are generated by organizational output, namely the behavior of large bureaucracies with parochial priorities and perceptions following standard operating procedures. Thus, foreign policy is the product of organizational output, namely the behavior of multiple bureaucracies with distinct responsibilities and interests following standard operating procedures.

Keywords: bureaucratic politics model, organizational process model, Graham Allison, foreign policy, policymaking, bureaucracy

Introduction

The publication of Graham Allison's "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis" (1969) and *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (1971) revolutionized foreign policy analysis. In those seminal works, Allison introduced two new decision-making approaches – the governmental politics model (more commonly referred to as the bureaucratic politics model) and the organizational process model – to explain the October 1962 confrontation between the United States and the former Soviet Union. The

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bureaucratic politics model embraced the perspective that foreign policy decisions are the product of political resultants or bargaining between individual leaders in government positions, whereas the organizational process model maintained that foreign policy actions are generated by organizational output, namely the behavior of large bureaucracies with parochial priorities and perceptions following standard operating procedures. Using these conceptual lenses alongside the traditional rational actor model (Model I), Allison pursued a new path of foreign policy analysis by creating alternative explanations for a single foreign policy episode. Given that the organizational process model (Model II) and bureaucratic politics model (Model III) were pluralist or liberal perspectives that disaggregated the decision-making unit into a collection of competing individuals and organizations, Allison challenged the longstanding realist assumption that states behave as rational, unitary actors.

Although the subject of significant criticism for nearly four decades, Models II and III are enduring elements of the foreign policy analysis lexicon. *Essence of Decision*, which is now in its second edition (1999), sells thousands of copies each year and has been cited in well over 1500 journal articles (*Social Science Citation Index*, 2008; *Google Scholar*, 2008). The models remain prominent fixtures in university courses and textbooks. In relative terms, however, the bureaucratic politics model has generated and continues to attract far more attention than the organizational process model across a wide range of academic disciplines. Within international relations and foreign policy analysis, case studies based on the model, while less numerous than in the 1970s, continue to appear along with articles, literature reviews, and conference panels that reference the model or the behavior that it seeks to capture. In contrast, the organizational process model, which was never a widely used analytical tool, has been overshadowed by new developments in public administration and organizational theory. Consequently, this essay, while not neglecting the organizational process model, devotes considerably more discussion to the origins, underlying assumptions, current treatment, and future prospects of the bureaucratic politics model.

The Intellectual Roots of the Bureaucratic Politics Model

The bureaucratic politics model's intellectual roots can be traced to the field of public administration, the early systematic study of foreign policy decision making, and classic studies examining the role of domestic politics in public policy making.

At the time when the field of public administration was dominated by the scientific management movement and advocates of the politics-administration dichotomy, Herring's groundbreaking work (1936) recognized and accepted the political role of bureaucrats. Drawing on their own experience in government during World War II, scholars of the postwar era became increasingly skeptical of the separation of politics and administration as a description of reality and a prescription for action. Kozak (1988:5) writes, "It was out of this adverse reaction to the politics-administration dichotomy that the bureaucratic

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politics paradigm was born.” For instance, Appleby (1949) and Long (1949) emphasized the importance of discretionary power, the broader political process, and the involvement of bureaucrats and their agencies in policy formulation, as well as implementation. These themes were developed further and more rigorously in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s by public administration theorists writing about bureaucratic politics. A representative sample of works includes Simon et al. (1950), March and Simon (1958), Holden (1966), Downs (1967), Seidman (1970), and Gawthrop (1971). Public administration scholars did not generate a genuine model of bureaucratic politics. Yet their focus on the political roles of bureaucrats and their organizations fostered a realistic and intuitively appealing perspective for the study of modern government.

Snyder et al. (1954; 1962) also contributed to the evolution of Allison's bureaucratic politics model. In a challenge to the traditional orthodoxy in the field, Snyder and his colleagues argued that human decision making rather than the rational choice of a unitary actor was essential to understanding foreign policy behavior. In their view, a state's foreign policy was determined “by the way in which a situation was defined subjectively by those charged with the responsibility for making choices” (Snyder et al. 1962:212). This subjective definition, in turn, was the result of individual decision makers responding to four extensive sets of variables: (1) the external setting of decision making, (2) the internal setting of decision making, (3) organizational-individual factors, and (4) situational properties (ibid.). Just as Allison would later argue in *Essence of Decision* (1971), Snyder et al. (1962:98) stressed that individuals and organizational context matter, writing “*who becomes involved in a decision, how, and why* is essential to an explanation of why decisionmakers decided the way that they did” (italics in the original). Moreover, they emphasized that decision makers’ actions must be understood in light of three factors: spheres of competence, communication and information, and motivation. A further link to Allison's subsequent work is readily apparent given that “sphere of competence” refers to a decision maker's role or behavior that advances an organizational goal. In a similar way, Rosenau's pre-theory (1966) also laid the foundation for Allison's bureaucratic politics model with idiosyncratic, role, and government variables constituting three of the pre-theory's five categories of explanatory factors.

Despite their inherent limitations as analytical tools, the Snyder et al. framework and Rosenau's pre-theory had a considerable impact on foreign policy analysis. The importance of individual decision makers, organizational factors, and the policy process was soon featured significantly in research examining the domestic politics of policy making (see, e.g., Hilsman 1959; Lindblom 1959; Almond 1960; Neustadt 1960; Huntington 1961; Schilling 1961; 1962; Braybrooke and Lindblom 1963; Hammond 1963; Hilsman 1967; Lindblom 1968; Neustadt 1970). Some of these studies were focused on US foreign and defense policy, whereas others discussed public policy more broadly. For these scholars, the essence of policy making – why states do what they do – was politics rather than a rational, cost-benefit analysis of geopolitical and strategic considerations. These now classic works articulated a set of ideas that collectively have come to be known as the “democratic politics model” (Kohl 1975:1) or the “political process model” (Hilsman 1990:58).

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Art (1973:468–9) provides a summary of the approach's basic assumptions about how foreign policy is made.

- 1 Political power (the ability to get someone to do something he [or she] would otherwise not do) is widely distributed [among institutions] at the national government level.
- 2 Within these institutions, which Schilling termed “quasi-sovereign powers,” sit participants within the policy process with differing views on what they would like done on any given issue.
- 3 Political leadership within or across institutions is exercised primarily through persuasion, but with persuasion dependent upon skill with which a figure makes use of the limited power his [or her] position [provides].
- 4 Foreign policy making is a political process of building consensus and support for a policy among those participants who have the power to affect the outcome and often disagree over what they think that outcome should be [...] [F]orging of a policy consensus is achieved through the standard techniques of negotiation, bargaining, and compromise.
- 5 The content of any particular policy reflects as much the necessities of the conditions in which it is forged – what is required to obtain agreement – as it does the substantive merits of that policy.

Given the centrality of these general assumptions to Allison's later work, Hilsman, Neustadt, Huntington, Schilling, and Lindblom are considered progenitors of the bureaucratic politics model. Yet it is also important to note the important differences that separate this first generation of bureaucratic politics scholars – the proponents of the political process model – from Allison. Unlike Allison's bureaucratic politics model, the political process model contends that decision makers behave both as individuals in governmental positions *and* through organizations. It also highlights rather than virtually ignores the role of domestic politics, placing a greater emphasis on actors outside the executive branch, such as the Congress, interest groups, the media, and the public. In addition, the political process contends that decision makers' policy preferences are far more influenced by their worldviews than their governmental roles and the policy-making process. Lastly, it treats foreign policy outcomes as *intended* political resultants, tied closely to the preferences, strategies, and expectations of the decision makers (see Art 1973:468–72; Hilsman 1990:88–9). These distinctions gain greater clarity once the underlying assumptions of the bureaucratic politics model are articulated.

The Bureaucratic Politics Model

As discussed in the introduction, the bureaucratic politics model was one of three conceptual lenses that Allison (1969; 1971) employed to explain US foreign policy making during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. More accurately, Allison termed it the governmental politics model. However, it is often simply referred to as Model III to distinguish it from the rational actor model (Model I) and the organizational process model (Model II). In

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essence, the bureaucratic politics model views the actions of government as political resultants. These resultants emerge from a foreign policy process, characteristic of a competitive game, where multiple players holding different policy preferences struggle, compete, and bargain over the substance and conduct of policy. The policy positions taken by the decision makers are determined largely, although not exclusively, by their organizational roles. Miles' Law (Miles 1978:399-403) – “where you stand depends on where you sit” – is an oft-cited proposition associated with this aspect of the model. The final government decision is not the product of a single rational choice where a unified body of decision makers methodically pursues a coherent set of national objectives, but rather “politics is the mechanism of choice. Each player pulls and hauls with the power at his [or her] discretion for outcomes that will advance his [or her] conception of national, organizational, group, and personal interests” (Allison 1971:171).

Specifically, the bureaucratic politics model encompasses more than twenty detailed assumptions, organizing concepts, or general propositions (see Allison 1971:164-81). However, its most significant claims can be summarized as follows.

- 1 Individuals in governmental positions make government decisions and actions.
- 2 Actors outside the executive branch play a far less influential role in policy making than those inside. (Allison does not state this claim explicitly. His presentation, however, clearly leads to such an inference; and related case studies and critiques for nearly four decades have drawn the same conclusion.)
- 3 An individual's policy preference can be predicted from his or her governmental position. Decision makers' policy stands, however, can also be affected by idiosyncratic factors.
- 4 An individual's policy goals and interests are influenced by national security, organizational, domestic, and personal concerns.
- 5 Deadlines and events compel busy individuals to take policy stands on a variety of policy issues.
- 6 Different individuals see different sides of the same policy issue, because they occupy different governmental positions.
- 7 An individual's influence on particular policy issues is dictated by (a) bargaining advantages, (b) willingness to use such assets, (c) skill in using such advantages, and (d) other actors' perceptions of the second and third items.
- 8 Action-channels – “regularized means for taking action on a specific kind governmental issue” – activate bargaining advantages and formal or informal rules that govern political interactions.
- 9 Governmental decisions and actions are *unintended* political resultants. That is, political bargaining produces outcomes that do not reflect what any one actor would have selected independently.

Of the three models within *Essence of Decision*, Model III immediately generated the greatest attention and enthusiasm. Many analysts found it accurate and intuitively appealing to depict government actions as “intranational political resultants” where “players in positions” adopt policy stands based on their “parochial priorities and

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perceptions" (see Allison 1971:162–81). The model's descriptive element resonated particularly with American scholars who had long seen multiple actors, overlapping jurisdictions, poor coordination, and conflict as prominent features of the US political system. Several studies employing, refining, or relating to the new framework were published in the 1970s (see, e.g., Allison and Halperin 1972; Destler 1972; Halperin 1972; Rourke 1972A; Allison 1973; Gelb and Halperin 1973; Halperin and Kanter 1973; Thompson 1973; Allison 1974; Halperin 1974; Gallucci 1975; Halperin 1975; Beard 1976; Allison and Szanton 1976; Destler et al. 1976; Jefferies 1977; Peters 1978). In fact, the initial popularity of Allison's work led one scholar to observe: "the bureaucratic interpretation of foreign policy has become the conventional wisdom" (Krasner 1972:160).

Of these second generation bureaucratic politics scholars, Morton Halperin's work is most noteworthy. Allison and Halperin (1972) combined elements of Allison's Models II and III into a bureaucratic politics paradigm. In addition to aggregating the models, the authors extended Model III in four ways. First, they assumed that in some instances organizations could be treated as single policy actors, just as senior, junior, and ad hoc players were in Model III. Second, Allison and Halperin included shared attitudes and organizational factors as constraints on political bargaining and final outcomes. Third, a distinction was drawn between policy, decision, and action games. Fourth, they offered advice, in the form of a "planning guide," to senior policy makers on how to play the game of bureaucratic politics more effectively. Overall, Allison and Halperin sought to refine the bureaucratic politics model (as outlined in *Essence of Decision*) so it could be employed as a more effective analytical tool. Nonetheless, Allison's original Model III remained the prevailing means of explaining the influence of bureaucratic politics on foreign policy behavior; and the presence of two bureaucratic politics frameworks ultimately created confusion rather than facilitated clarity, with some observers mixing elements of the two together to create an amorphous bureaucratic politics "approach."

Morton Halperin's *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (1974) was chiefly responsible for supplementing the bureaucratic politics approach as articulated by Allison (1971) and Allison and Halperin (1972) by providing his readers with a richly detailed account of how the game of politics is played within the foreign policy-making arena. Specifically, his contribution was threefold. Halperin identified and described the wide range of executive branch actors – the president, political appointees, career bureaucrats, and organizations – that are consistently engaged in foreign policy decisions, namely military and security affairs. Importantly, the book described these players' interests, which emanate from their governmental roles and are essential to understanding their policy positions. In this context, he introduced the concept of "organizational essence," which relates to how bureaucrats interpret their organization's mission through the performance of particular tasks. Halperin also addressed extensively how these policy positions are advanced and defended through the use of arguments, the manipulation and control of information, and a variety of other bureaucratic maneuvers. Furthermore, he stressed the significance of distinguishing between decisions and actions with particular attention to the bureaucratic politics that pervade the implementation process and often distort decisions. However, Halperin (1974) did not refine or extend the preexisting bureaucratic politics model

(1971) or paradigm (1972), introduce a new framework, or tackle the issue of *how much* bureaucratic politics truly matter within the foreign policy-making process.

The Bureaucratic Politics Model under Attack

While the bureaucratic politics model remained the dominant framework within the second generation literature, its scholarly appeal began to wane. By the late 1970s, the number of published critiques began to rival the number of published studies employing Allison's model (see, e.g., Holsti 1972; Krasner 1972; Rourke 1972B; Art 1973; Ball 1974; Conford 1974; Perlmutter 1974; Wagner 1974; Brenner 1976; Freedman 1976; Yanarella 1976; Caldwell 1977; Steiner 1977; and Nathan and Oliver, 1978). While critics argued the bureaucratic politics model was plagued by a number of deficiencies, including some descriptive inaccuracies, the most serious charges concerned its explanatory power. In essence, the model was considered too complex. The same quality that allowed the model to offer accurate description, namely its rich detail, was seen as an impediment to parsimonious explanation. Some critics, moreover, complained that this added complexity did not eliminate the model's ambiguity on key issues (discussed below). Overall, scholars consistently identified nine criticisms of the bureaucratic politics model.

1 *The bureaucratic politics model, as it is presently constituted, is too complex* (Allison 1971:274; Holsti 1972:139; Bendor and Hammond 1992:302, 318). Bendor and Hammond (1992:318) argued, "Model III is simply too thick. It incorporates so many variables that it is an analytical kitchen sink. Nothing of possible relevance appears to be excluded."

2 *The bureaucratic politics model is too ambiguous and imprecise* (Art 1973:486; Ball 1974:84, 87-8; Conford 1974:241-2; Wagner 1974:448; Steiner 1977:390-1, 406; Nathan and Oliver 1978:86; Bendor and Hammond 1992:302-4, 314, 317, 319; Welch 1992:121, 136). According to critics, some underlying assumptions and propositions of Models II and III are difficult to separate analytically. Critics also asserted it was not clear whether the players in Model III act according to pure or bounded rationality.

3 *The bureaucratic politics approach is not a genuine, social-scientific model* (Holsti 1972:138-9; Ball 1974:87-8; Wagner 1974:448; Yanarella 1976; Caldwell 1977:95; Steiner 1977:419-21; Bendor and Hammond 1992:302, 319; Welch 1992:120). Holsti (1972:137) observed, "there are relatively few if-then propositions which link independent and dependent variables. It is one thing to identify a cluster of factors as important; it is quite another to show how changes in these variables will affect the political process and, more importantly, the nature of decisions."

4 *The bureaucratic politics model virtually ignores the role the Congress, interest groups, and other actors outside the executive branch play in the US foreign policy process* (Art 1973; Ball 1974:79; Wagner 1974:450-1; Brenner 1976:327; Freedman 1976:445; Caldwell 1977:96; Nathan and Oliver 1978:88-9). Nathan and Oliver wrote, "We can [...] gain only a distorted view of policy from the perspective of pub-

lic governmental process if our conception of that process is too narrowly drawn" (Nathan and Oliver 1978:88).

5 *It is not clear that an actor's policy stand is determined by governmental position* (Krasner 1972:165-6; Art 1973:472-3; Ball 1974:77; Caldwell 1977:94; Bendor and Hammond 1992:317; Welch 1992:121; Rhodes 1994). Krasner (1972:165) asserted, "Decision makers often do not stand where they sit. Sometimes they are not sitting anywhere. This is clearly illustrated by the positions taken by members of the Ex-Comm during the Cuban missile crisis which Allison elucidates at some length."

6 *Bureaucratic politics analysts underrate the significance of idiosyncratic factors in foreign policy making* (Art 1973:486; Kohl 1975:4; Caldwell 1977:95-6). Critics complained that the governmental politics model ignores the importance of personal background, personality, operating style, generational mind-sets, and past experiences.

7 *By its very nature, the bureaucratic politics perspective undermines accountability and democratic responsibility* (Krasner 1972:160; Steel 1972:46; Ball 1974:85; Conford 1974:237; Caldwell 1977:94; Steiner 1977:395; Clifford 1991:141). Krasner (1972:160) noted, "[The model's] vision is [...] dangerous because it undermines the assumptions of democratic politics by relieving high officials of responsibility and [...] offers leaders an excuse for their failures."

8 *The bureaucratic politics model gives inadequate attention to the position and power of the president in American foreign policy making* (Krasner 1972:166-9; Rourke 1972B:432; Art 1973:474-80; Perlmutter 1974:90; Kohl 1975:3, 5; Caldwell 1977:96-8; Bendor and Hammond 1992:315-17). Critics held that the key to explaining foreign policy is in the "strong leader" assumption (Art 1973:480; Viotti and Kauppi 1993:238), the "royal-court model" (Kohl 1975:3), or "a central institutional constitutional political struggle" (Perlmutter 1974:90). They took issue with Allison's assertion that the president is both a regular player *and* a first among equals (see Allison 1971:162; Art 1973:474-5).

9 *The bureaucratic politics model is too closely tied to the American political system, raising questions about the extent of its cross-national applicability* (Migdal 1974: 515-16; Caldwell 1977:94; Hill 1978:2-3; Smith 1980:31-2). On a related note, Nossal (1979; 1984) finds that the bureaucratic politics model is applicable to parliamentary systems, but the centralization of authority in such systems reduces the likelihood that players will engage in political conflict to secure their policy preferences.

Allison and other second generation scholars failed to counter these nine major criticisms with refutations or corrections. Instead a small number of scholars used the model as a point of departure for theory building. Rosati (1981) drew on the insights and limitations of the bureaucratic politics literature to present a systematic decision-making framework, encompassing decision context, structure, participants, process, and outcome. Kellerman (1983) sought to complement Allison (1971) by developing a Model IV, Model V, and Model VI to capture the role of small groups, the dominant leader, and the cognitive process in shaping decisions. Vertzberger (1984) used elements of what he termed the organizational and bureaucratic paradigms, coupled with intra-group dynamics, to explain the for-

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foreign policy behavior of developing states. Drawing on the agenda-control literature, Hammond (1986) developed a set of propositions related to the effect of organizational structure on bureaucratic politics and policy making. Hollis and Smith (1986) explored the reasons why decision makers do what they do by probing the relationship between bureaucratic roles and decision makers' individual perceptions. Lastly, Kozak (1988) drew on Allison (1971) and Halperin (1974) as well as Appleby (1949), Long (1949), Rourke (1972A), Peters (1978), and Wildavsky (1981) to develop a broader, more loosely defined model of bureaucratic politics for the study of national security policy.

More commonly, however, scholars simply employed the bureaucratic politics model (1971) or the bureaucratic politics paradigm (1972) as an explanatory tool in cases when bureaucratic or governmental factors were clearly salient (see, e.g., Weil 1975; Valenta 1979; Rosati 1981; Townsend 1982; Smith 1985; Hicks 1990; Spear 1993; Jones 1994; 1999; Qingshan 1994; Conley 1998; Holland 1999; Wiarda 2000; Carey 2001; Jones 2001; Tayfur and Goymen 2002; Zhang 2006; Lavallee 2007). These case studies, many of which were characterized by low presidential engagement and high bureaucratic involvement, provided useful insights on a range of issues, including foreign policy decisions related to crises, the use of military force, arms control negotiations, export control policy, arms sales, the revolution in military affairs, weapons procurement, oil pipelines, humanitarian intervention, and bilateral relations between the United States and particular countries. At the same time, critiques continued to appear (see, e.g., Hill 1991; Bendor and Hammond 1992; Welch 1992; Rhodes 1994), suggesting that the bureaucratic politics model remained flawed, but nonetheless worthy of continued scholarly interest and discussion. These critiques, coupled with fewer applications of the model, caused the political approach to foreign policy analysis to become less fashionable. Realists clung to rational choice models; and many pluralist analysts devoted more study to group dynamics, cognition, perception, and decision-making style than to the influences highlighted in Allison's Model III (for an overview, see Hudson 1996:224-5; Garrison 2003:155-202).

The publication of a second edition of *Essence of Decision* (Allison and Zelikow 1999) did nothing to alter this state of affairs. Instead it prompted sharp criticism (see, e.g., Bernstein 2000; Houghton 2000; Rosati 2000; Garrison 2003:179). As Bernstein (2000:147) observed, "The revised volume seems hasty and less like a thorough revision and more like a patchwork operation: inserting new material, adding qualifiers, and acknowledging much of the new history, but not dealing thoroughly, and often not adequately, with many criticisms published since the 1971 edition." In another review, Rosati (2000:396) wrote that Allison and Zelikow's revision of the governmental politics model "is extremely disappointing [...] Indeed, the 'original' chapter on [Bureaucratic] Politics in the first edition remains clearer and much more powerful than the revised chapter. Why the authors chose to ignore so much relevant literature and why they decided to review literature that had limited application to Model III is unclear [...] This is the model that required the most updating and refinement, but it has been neither enriched nor extended." Arguably, the most interesting aspect of the revised discussion of Model III related to role-based behavior, namely the oft-cited and much criticized Mile's Law - "Where you stand depends on where you sit." Allison and Zelikow (1999:307) explained that a player's policy stand

on an issue is not “always determined by where he or she sits, but rather is substantially affected by bureaucratic position.”

Where the second edition of *Essence of Decision* did not fall short was in its solid updating of the three descriptive case studies that parallel the discussion of each of three conceptual lenses – Model I, Model II, and Model III. It incorporated a wealth of new information from US and Soviet sources that simply was not accessible when Allison first wrote the book. Similarly, Halperin and Clapp's second edition of *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (2006) followed the path of the first edition and did not make significant theoretical contributions. However, its expanded treatment of Capitol Hill did recognize the growing role and influence of Congress in US foreign policy making. With that element noted, the real value of the updated edition was an interesting collection of new examples of bureaucratic politics in action based on developments in the Carter, Reagan, Bush I, Clinton, and Bush II administrations. If anything, the book served as a convincing illustration of the continuing salience of bureaucratic politics within a foreign policy process marked by more actors, issues, and overall complexity.

A Third Generation of Bureaucratic Politics Scholarship

Although Allison and Zelikow (1999) failed to respond seriously to two decades of criticisms of the bureaucratic politics model, the publication of a second edition of *Essence of Decision* coincided with renewed scholarly interest in the approach. Given that Allison drew from an earlier or “first generation” of scholars to create his “second generation” model, new contributions to the bureaucratic politics literature, which began to emerge in the late 1990s, are best characterized as “third generation” work. This wave of scholarship tends to use the term “governmental politics” to highlight the significance of policy actors with and beyond the bureaucracy and executive branch.

One prominent example of third generation literature is a symposium in which eight American and European scholars critically evaluate the current state and future prospects of the bureaucratic (governmental) politics literature (see Stern and Verbeek 1998). From a positivist perspective, Welch (1998) argues that the research program tied to the bureaucratic politics model has been largely unsuccessful, because it has not produced “carefully designed studies testing rigorously deduced expectations from logically coherent theories.” Only by proceeding down a more scientific path, Welch maintains, will the approach have the capacity to cumulate meaningful knowledge about the true role of bureaucratic politics in shaping state behavior. One real benefit of Welch's contribution is his “menu for a bureaucratic politics paradigm,” in which he provides a helpful overview of the bureaucratic politics approach's key axioms, assumptions, and concepts from both an individual and organizational perspective. Weldes (1998) diverges from Welch to embrace an “argumentative turn.” Specifically, she proposes that critical social construc-

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tivism may offer a more fruitful path for bureaucratic politics analyses by devoting greater attention to the discursive elements of policy struggles and power relations.

Kaarbo and Gruenfeld (1998), however, see more promise in updating the bureaucratic politics approach through the social psychology literature, especially if one wishes to understand the sources of political conflict and conformity within and between groups of policy players. This position is consistent with Ripley (1995), who argues that blending bureaucratic politics with insights from the social cognition and organizational culture literatures offers a potentially fruitful path for reinvigorating the study of bureaucratic politics and foreign policy analysis. Interestingly, Ripley (1995:96) writes, "Although successful policy bureaucrats may differ substantially in personality, power, or issue positions, they share one common characteristic: a highly nuanced understanding of the policy-making process. Perhaps this understanding is the 'true essence of decision' in foreign policy analysis."

't Hart and Rosenthal (1998) recognize bureaucratic politics as a pervasive and permanent phenomenon. Writing from the perspective of public administration, they advocate that scholars find ways to move beyond the taboos and risks associated with bureaucratic politics by devising strategies to live with bureaucratic politics, highlighting instances when such interactions enhance policy outcomes (see, e.g., Rosenthal et al. 1991), and identifying the means to "channel BP interactions in productive ways." Consequently, 't Hart and Rosenthal contend that two foci of study are in order: (1) an empirical analysis of the sources of and reasons for bureaucratic politics, and (2) a normative appraisal of the implications of bureaucratic politics. Lastly, Stern and Verbeek (1998) conclude by proposing a "neopluralist approach to bureau-governmental politics." Such a framework should reformulate Miles' Law to account for players' multiple and often conflicting roles, capture how organizational culture shapes conflicting roles and policy views, and seek to explain a wide range of substantive issues as well as transnational and cross-national policy behavior.

Several studies pursue lines of inquiry related to the issues featured in the 1998 symposium. For example, Preston and 't Hart probe the political psychology of bureaucratic politics to "explain how the interaction between leaders and their advisory groups may create bureaupolitical dynamics that affect (in either a positive or a negative manner) how groups function and how the policy process is likely to evolve over time" (1999:91). In the course of their study, they reconceptualize bureaucratic politics as a multidimensional variable rather than a permanent condition of foreign policy making. The authors also outline two new conceptual frameworks, one of which is used to evaluate empirically the degree to which bureaucratic politics is present in the policy-making structure and process in any given case. The other is employed normatively to assess the impact of bureaucratic politics on the quality of the decision making. While Preston and 't Hart find the Johnson administration's Vietnam policy-making process marked by "decisional pathologies associated with bureaucratic confrontation," they stress that the presence of

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moderate forms of bureaucratic politics in other cases could potentially enrich the quality of the decision-making process (1999:90–92).

In an effort to recognize the breadth and diversity of actors, interests, and politics tied to foreign policy making, Jones (1999:282; 2001:65) suggests the development of a new governmental politics paradigm encompassing multiple analytical models. On one level, the models would share a common set of assumptions capturing the general characteristics of governmental politics, such as multiple actors, role-based behavior, and politically generated outcomes. On another level, each model could be distinguished by particular actors, forms of politics, and other procedural characteristics, which might vary with salience of the policy issue or the locus of decision making. Jones (1996; 2007) presents this approach in greater detail, building on the insights of Allison's bureaucratic politics model and then moving beyond by integrating a procedural issue area variable, several clarifications, and fewer underlying assumptions. These modifications seek to respond directly to the leading criticisms of Allison's bureaucratic politics model and lay the groundwork for a more analytically useful framework.

Similarly, Michaud (2002) reassesses Model III, as presented by Allison and Zelikow (1999), concludes it remains a useful mode of analysis for describing policy-making processes, and then seeks to address one of its longstanding weaknesses – failure to operationalize the model. The study argues that this shortcoming can be addressed by integrating Allison's work with Vincent Lemieux's "structuration of power" approach (1989). According to Michaud (2002:272), Allison does not provide a means for knowing *how* political games affect policy outcomes. Yet, Lemieux's framework offers a remedy, because it "allow[s] the researcher to consider the actors involved in the pulling and hauling games Allison refers to, and the power they wield in order to see their preferred option win or establish dominance." The new approach is then applied convincingly to a case study of Canadian defense policy, namely the formulation of the June 1987 White Paper, suggesting its *initial* utility as well as the general importance of power structures for comprehending foreign policy making.

Other noteworthy research proceeds in different but related directions. For instance, Brower and Abolafia (1997) draw directly on Allison as well as their own broad ethnographic study to extend the traditional bureaucratic politics model. The result is a framework designed to explain the political behavior of low-level officials rather than the "pulling and hauling" between the high-level players depicted in Allison's work. The "politics from below" are motivated by the pursuit of personal identity and reflect a more improvisational and nondeterministic character than the "politics from above" specified in Allison's Model III. Another study, Hoyt (2000), argues that proponents and critics of the bureaucratic politics model have overemphasized the *structure* of the policy-making environment at the expense of giving real definition to elements of the policy-making *process*, such as bargaining, pulling, and hauling. Using literature in political science, public administration, and social psychology as a point of departure, Hoyt argues that a potentially fruitful bureaucratic politics research program lies in process-oriented studies, which emphasize the process of resolving intra-group conflict. Christensen and Redd (2004) are al-

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so interested in process, but in a different way. They test the relative explanatory power of bureaucratic politics model and poliheuristic theory to uncover which approach best captures how foreign policy makers assess information provided by their advisers and decide final courses of action in a crisis situation. Consistent with poliheuristic theory, Christensen and Redd find that decision makers consider alternatives in political terms, employing a noncompensatory principle, rather than bargain over options. However, their study reveals that these political evaluations and the choices that follow can be shaped by the presence of multiple advisers representing different foreign policy bureaucracies.

Another area of emerging scholarly interest involves the relationship between ideas and bureaucratic politics. Through a statistical analysis of US Navy force posture over a four-decade period, Rhodes (1994) finds that ideas and images offer greater explanatory power than the bureaucratic roles and interests. The author contends that his study is especially troubling news for the bureaucratic politics model, because it examines a policy area that should be well explained by Allison's work. In a direct challenge to Miles' Law, Rhodes writes, "where decision makers stand depends not where they sit or whom they represent, but on what they think - and what they think is independent of where they sit." Mitchell (1999) strongly disagrees. In his own study of US naval strategy in the 1980s, he shows that the navy's service unions have a far greater impact than represented by Rhodes (1994). Mitchell also dismisses the separation of ideas and interests, as well as the claim that ideas are superior. Instead his evidence leads to the conclusion that ideas and interests are mutually dependent phenomena and essential ingredients of a successful naval strategy.

Lastly, Drezner (2000) contends that his modified ideational approach addresses critical research gaps in the bureaucratic politics literature by drawing attention to the sources of bureaucratic preferences, the means employed to maximize organizational interests, and the use of organizational culture to sustain ideas that are critical to shaping final outcomes. Through case studies of the United States Peace Corps (1961-76) and the State Department's former Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs (1976-88), Drezner explores the capacity of "missionary" (idea-infused) organizations to survive and thrive within an environment marked by bureaucratic politics. The key variable is the institution's placement relative to others. Agencies that are insulated from other bureaucracies have a better chance of surviving (maintaining their ideational mission) than embedded agencies. However, those embedded agencies that are able to survive are more likely to thrive (influence national policy) than insulated agencies.

As the foregoing discussion has outlined, there is an active and potentially rich contemporary research agenda associated with the bureaucratic or governmental politics approach to foreign policy analysis. Scholarship since the publication of the second edition of *Essence of Decision* (1999) would suggest that future work will proceed along several different but interrelated paths. These lines of inquiry are likely to include:

- attempts to respond to the criticisms associated with Model III with particular attention to making it a more genuine social scientific and analytically useful framework;

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- efforts to examine and broaden the cross-national, decision maker, and issue area applicability of the model;
- studies refining and extending the bureaucratic politics approach through theoretical insights from other literatures, such as public administration, poliheuristic theory, and political and social psychology with an emphasis on intragroup interactions; and
- analyses of the sources of decision makers' preferences, namely the complicated nexus between ideas and interests, idiosyncratic factors and bureaucratic roles (for example, see Hollis and Smith 1986), and leadership style and advisory systems.

Yet until a new, widely accepted bureaucratic politics approach to foreign policy analysis emerges and dominates the intellectual landscape, Allison's bureaucratic politics model (1969; 1971; 1999) with all its imperfections will remain the focal point of this literature. Its durability and pervasiveness, coupled with the intuitive appeal of its depiction of foreign policy making as an inherently political process, makes it difficult to believe otherwise. On a more fundamental level, the bureaucratic politics model is simply an important frame of reference to consider when certain conditions are present, namely low presidential engagement and high bureaucratic involvement, which are characteristic of more routine, technical foreign policy issues and particular defense and security-related matters.

The Organizational Process Model

The organizational process model, Allison's Model II, also merits discussion, albeit far less than the bureaucratic politics model. As noted earlier, the organizational process model was one of two new decision-making approaches introduced in the groundbreaking book, *Essence of Decision* (1971). According to this model, the national government is neither a unitary actor nor an entity comprised of individual policy makers in governmental positions. Instead it is a collection of fairly autonomous bureaucracies or what Allison describes as “a constellation of loosely allied organizations on top of which leaders sit” (1971:79–80). The government considers foreign policy matters through and from organizational perspectives. Consequently, bureaucracies factor problems, process information, define options, and follow preestablished repertoires and routines. This organizational behavior, in turn, is shaped by “parochial priorities and perceptions,” which emanate from missions and roles, selective information, recruitment and retention, small group pressures within agencies, and the distribution of institutional rewards. Thus foreign policy is the product of organizational output, namely the behavior of multiple bureaucracies with distinct responsibilities and interests following standard operating procedures (see Allison 1971:78–96).

Two additional points are in order. Since issues rarely fall neatly into one organization's domain but rather cut across overlapping jurisdictions, coordination is essential and overall foreign policy coherence is less than assured. In fact, Allison writes, “Central direction and persistent control of organizational activity [...] is not possible” (1971:86). Furthermore, organizations and their programs and standard operating procedures do not

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change significantly over time. They adapt slowly and incrementally over time. Bureaucratic inertia rather than innovation is the prevailing condition. This reality is troubling for high-level officials, who must rely on organizations to implement the decisions that they make and who sometimes encounter foreign policy challenges that do not correspond to preexisting bureaucratic routines (Allison 1971:87-91).

As the preceding description suggests, Model II may be particularly appropriate for capturing low-salience decision making, namely routine or technical policy areas dominated by bureaucracies rather than high-level officials. It also seems especially suitable for explaining the implementation of foreign policy decisions. Clearly, this has been the long-standing lesson derived from the classic examples found within the Model II portion of Allison's study of the Cuban Missile Crisis and decision-making discussions in foreign policy textbooks. Yet, the organizational process model does not enjoy a rich intellectual history similar to the bureaucratic politics model. In short, while Model II is widely cited within scholarly articles, it is rarely employed as an explanatory tool. Beyond the discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the examples of Model II's applicability cited in Allison and Zelikow (1999) relate to Medicare and the space shuttle program. There is no cottage industry of foreign policy case studies based on the model, or new scholarship seeking to correct, refine, or extend the framework. A major review of the state of foreign policy analysis makes no mention of the organizational process model (see Garrison 2003).

What factors account for this state of affairs and, in particular, the absence of a research program? First, the data collection requirement for applying the organizational process model's many underlying assumptions is considerable, if not prohibitive. Moreover, interviews, the memoirs of key decision makers, and news accounts help facilitate selective use of the bureaucratic politics model. However, accessing information from large, cumbersome foreign policy bureaucracies, especially those charged with guarding national security, is a formidable if not prohibitive task. Second, as Bernstein (2000:140) notes, "*Essence [of Decision]* was sometimes unclear on why a part of the book's narrative on the missile crisis or its findings on certain events fell into Models II and not III, or vice versa." As discussed earlier, the ambiguity over the dividing line between these models is highlighted in critiques of the book. A more recent study not only challenges the Model II explanation that organizational routines and plans constrained decision makers' choices during the Cuban Missile Crisis, but concludes "the distinction between the two [models] now seems much more artificial than it did when Allison first offered his theoretical account more than 30 years ago" (McKeown 2001:1187).

Third, Allison never encouraged use of the organizational process model. In fact, one year after the publication of *Essence of Decision*, Allison seemed to discredit it when he and Morton Halperin articulated a "bureaucratic politics paradigm" (1972), which incorporated aspects of the organizational process model. Organizational processes were treated as constraints and conditions were specified for when organizations could be considered "players" or unitary actors within the policy-making process (see also Jones 1999; 2001). The result was a framework clearly focused on "politics" rather than Model II's emphasis on "bureaucracy." Similarly, Halperin (1974) introduced the concept of organizational

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essence and other ideas related to the functioning of foreign policy institutions, but he did so within the context of a broader examination of bureaucratic *politics*. These developments went a long way in ensuring the subsequent neglect of the organizational process model within the foreign policy analysis literature. New organizational theories relevant to the study of foreign policy, which appeared soon after the publication of *Essence of Decision*, compounded the problem (e.g. Cohen et al. 1972; Steinbruner 1974).

Fourth, the second edition of *Essence of Decision* did not spark renewed interest in Model II, which Allison and Zelikow (1999) label the “organizational behavior paradigm.” Instead their own review of the literature since the book's first edition simply convinces one that Model II has been eclipsed by subsequent developments in public administration and organizational theory. For example, a good portion of this scholarship relates to what is referred to as the new institutionalism, agenda control, the principal-agent model, and the new economics of organization (see, e.g., March and Olsen 1984; Moe 1984; McCubbins 1985; Pratt and Zeckhauser 1985; Hammond 1986; Bendor 1988; Eisener and Meier, 1990; Moe 1991). These authors see political institutions (principals) as able to shape and manipulate the preferences of bureaucratic organizations (agents) through rewards and sanctions. Another relatively new body of work, more consistent with Model II's perspective, affords bureaucrats considerable discretion over key decisions, especially managerial choices (Heymann 1987; Haass 1994; Rainey 1994; Moore 1995).

Collectively, these four considerations strongly suggest the organizational process model will not enjoy a future similar to its theoretical counterpart, the bureaucratic politics model. That is, it is not likely to generate continuing interest, lively debate, and a new generation of scholarship. Rather, the organizational process model will remain essentially as it has for nearly four decades: an interesting pedagogical tool for the study of foreign policy, especially when the focus is on implementation rather than formulation.

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Bureaucratic Politics and the Department of National Defence. At www.cda-cdai.ca/symposia/2000/hataley.htm, accessed Jul. 2009. Most bureaucratic politics analyses focus on actors, politics, and policy outcomes in the United States. However, this presentation does not. Instead, this paper “examines the policy making process in the Canadian Department of National Defence and [seeks] to determine if the bureaucratic politics model was applicable to that process.”

Bureaucratic Politics Module. At www.ssc.upenn.edu/~rousseau/archived_web/psci150/modules/bur/index.htm, accessed Jul. 2009. David L. Rousseau of the University of Pennsylvania created this website in 2001. It offers a useful undergraduate-level lecture as well as a range of supporting pedagogical tools related to bureaucratic politics and foreign policy analysis.

Campaigning for Change: Organizational Processes, Governmental Politics, and the Revolution in Military Affairs. At www.airpower.au.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj98/fal98/conley.html, accessed Jul. 2009. It is commonplace for the bureaucratic politics model to be applied to US national security decisions and strategy. However, the value of this paper is that all three of Allison's conceptual models are references. In the words of the author, “[t]his article employs the example of the Desert Storm air campaign to illustrate those aspects of organizational processes and governmental politics that tend to inhibit the adoption of innovative technology and doctrine. Its methodology employs insights gained from the three models developed in Graham T. Allison’s *Essence of Decision*.”

Institutional Politics and the US Military's War Plan Orange. At www.ohiolink.edu/etd/send-pdf.cgi/Pedler,%20Steven%20J..pdf?acc_num=bgsu1182351613, accessed Jul. 2009. This detailed, relatively recent analysis examines the influence of bureaucratic poli-

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The US Recognition of Israel: A Bureaucratic Politics Model Analysis. At www.publications.villanova.edu/Concept/2005/US_Israel_recognition.htm, accessed Jul. 2009. This short but interesting paper investigates how bureaucratic politics shaped the US decision to recognize the State of Israel.

Acknowledgments

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Patrick James, Jeffrey Pickering, and two anonymous reviewers.

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