INTL 4260

Foreign Policy Decision Making

Jeffrey D. Berejikian

Department of International Affairs

jberejik@uga.edu

706 542 1849

Overview:

Understanding human decision making is central to the study of foreign policy. In this class, we will examine different conceptions of decision making (indeed, human nature) to inform our study of international behavior. Increasingly, foreign policy analysis is influenced by the fields of cognitive science and behavioral economics. Rather than assume that governments routinely make rational decisions, these approaches evaluate the degree to which elites and the public rely on decision heuristics and biases when making foreign policy judgments. Importantly, while heuristics and biases often produce good decisions, they can also lead us astray and/or vulnerable to political manipulation.

However, we are in the very early stages of understanding how cognitive science can help us understand important foreign policy choices about, for example, war and peace. This represents an opportunity for us. The first major component of this class applies cognitive concepts (often developed in other academic disciplines) to explain puzzling foreign policy behavior. While we are in the initial period of investigation, there are still a lot of unanswered questions. We will begin to answer some of them here, for the first time. In the second component of this class, you will work in teams to identify a new set of research questions, construct testable hypotheses using concepts adapted from the readings, craft a series of decision experiments, and collect and analyze the resulting data.

Graded Components:

Analytical Essays: Select three (3) topics identified in the syllabus. The purpose of the (750-word) essays is to apply course concepts to contemporary foreign policy issues. These essays can also include conceptually motivated hypotheses as a first step toward crafting decision experiments. Essays are due in class on the Tuesday after we discuss the readings (100 points each).

Three in-class examinations (essay format): The timing of examinations will not be provided in advance (100 points each).

Foreign Policy Decision Experiment – Working as teams and guided by the class concepts, you will construct a set of decision experiments, program the study using an online platform, analyze the data, and present the results (300 points).

A timeline and detailed instructions for this experimental component will be provided in class, along with grading rubrics for all of the assignments.

There is no formal attendance policy. However, make-up exams are only possible if accompanied by a documented explanation for the absence as permitted by university policy.

Grading Scale (percent basis):

A 100-93

A-   92-90

B+ 89-87

B   86- 83

B- 82-80

C+ 79-77

C 76-73

C- 72-70

D 69-60

F 59 and below

Readings Assignments:

Please Note:

1. Readings identified as "deep dives" are not required but are very helpful in understanding the content. In addition, they cay serves as supporting/reference material for the construction of decision experiments.
2. Reading assignments may change. Please check the online syllabus each week (www.berejikian.net)

Week 1: Introduction and Course Mechanics

Political Authority, Milgram, and Why We Kill.

- Radiolab: "The Bad Show" (for Thursday) (https://www.wnycstudios.org/story/180092-the-bad-show/ – First 25 minutes are most important for our discussion, but the remainder is fascinating and tragic!)

Week 2: Rational Wars

- Fearon, J.D., 1995. Rationalist Explanations for War. *International organization*, 49(3), pp.379–414.
- Putnam, R.D., 1988. Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games. *International organization*, 42(3), pp.427–460.

Essay Topic 1: Identify a conflict that is consistent with Fearon's explanation for war.

Week 3: Behavioral Psychology and Foreign Policy

- Simon, H.A., 1985. Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science. *The American political science review*, 79(2), pp.293–304.
- Hafner-Burton, E.M. et al., 2017. The Behavioral Revolution and International Relations. *International organization*, 71(1), pp.1–31.

(Deep Dive: Olivial Goldhill. (2107) "Humans are born irrational, and that has made us much better decision-makers" *Quartz.* https://qz.com/922924/humans-werent-designed-to-be-rational-and-we-are-better-thinkers-for-it/)

Week 4: Taboos

- Press, D.G., Sagan, S.D. & Valentino, B.A., 2013. Atomic Aversion: Experimental Evidence on Taboos, Traditions, and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons. *The American political science review*, 107(1), pp.188–206.

Week 5: Aversion to Losses

- Jervis, R., 1992. Political Implications of Loss Aversion. *Political Psychology*, 13(2), pp.187–204.
- Nincic, M., 1997. Loss Aversion and the Domestic Context of Military Intervention. *Political research quarterly*, 50(1), pp.97–120.

(Deep Dive: Camerer, C., 2005. Three Cheers—Psychological, Theoretical, Empirical—for Loss Aversion. *JMR, Journal of marketing research*, 42(2), pp.129–133.)

Essay Topic 2: Discuss and analyze an example(s) where a president or other political leader used loss aversion to cultivate political support for a foreign policy initiative)

Week 6: Framing and Risk Taking

- Berejikian, J. and F. Justwan (forthcoming) Testing a Cognitive Theory of Deterrence. In Jeffrey Knopf, ed. *Behavioral Economics and Nuclear Weapons*. University of Georgia Press – Link HERE
- Feng, H. & He, K., 2018. Prospect theory, operational code analysis, and risk-taking behavior: a new model of China's crisis behavior. *Contemporary Politics*, 24(2), pp.173–190.

(Deep Dive: Quattrone, G.A. & Tversky, A., 1988. Contrasting Rational and Psychological Analyses of Political Choice. *The American political science review*, 82(3), pp.719–736.)

Essay Topic 3: Identify examples of gains or loss framing by a president or other political leader that you believe was designed to manipulate public opinion)

Week 7: Analogies as a Shortcut to Rationality

- Houghton, D.P., 1996. The Role of Analogical Reasoning in Novel Foreign-Policy Situations. *British journal of political science*, 26(4), pp.523–552.

(Deep Dive: Oppermann, K. & Spencer, A., 2013. Thinking Alike? Salience and metaphor analysis as cognitive approaches to foreign policy analysis. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 9(1), pp.39–56.)

Essay Topic 4: Identify a popular metaphor commonly used to explain a current foreign policy issue. Explain, per Houghton, how the metaphor serves as a cognitive shortcut)

Week 8: Emotional Decision Making

- Gadarian, S.K., 2010. The Politics of Threat: How Terrorism News Shapes Foreign Policy Attitudes. *The journal of politics*, 72(2), pp.469–483.

- Renshon, J. & Lerner, J., 2012. The role of emotions in foreign policy decision making. *Encyclopedia of peace psychology*, pp.313–317.

Week 9: Personality

- Gallagher, Maryann E., and Susan H. Allen. "Presidential personality: Not just a nuisance." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 10.1 (2014): 1-21

(Deep Dive: Thies, C.G., 2017. Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis in Latin America. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 13(3), pp.662–681.)

Week 10: Gender and Sex Differences

- Eichenberg, R.C., 2016. Gender Difference in American Public Opinion on the Use of Military Force, 1982–2013. *International studies quarterly: a publication of the International Studies Association*, 60(1), pp.138–148.

- Cohn, C., 1987. Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 12(4), pp.687–718.

(Deep Dive: Zak, P.J. et al., 2005. The Neuroeconomics of Distrust: Sex Differences in Behavior and Physiology. *The American economic review*, 95(2), pp.360–363.)

Topics: Readings TBD

Fairness

In-group Bias

Threat Fear

Status