INTL 4260

Foreign Policy Decision Making

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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).

Two in-class examinations (essay format): The timing of examinations will not be provided in advance (150 points each).

Foreign Policy Decision Experiment: Working as teams you will construct a research project using an experiment motivated by a class concept. (300 points).

Each student will activate a Qualtrics account by the third week of class (20 pts).
- https://www.fcs.uga.edu/otis/faq-qualtrics-accounts

Each student will complete training and earn certification to conduct experiments on human subjects by the fifth week of class – Social and Behavioral Research (100 points).
- https://research.uga.edu/hrpp/citi-training/

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 they are helpful in understanding the content. In addition, they can serve 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.)

Warning: Please know that this podcast begins with a story that touches on issues related domestic violence. While this is not the central theme, the topic is used to motivate the broader discussion. If, for *any* reason, you find this topic uncomfortable and would rather not listen to the podcast then please feel free to pass. There will be no negative impact on our grade and this will not affect your ability to perform in the class.

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/)

Assignment Due!
- *Qualtrics: Send me a PDF copy of the email indicating that you have successfully activated a Qualtrics account. Send the email with the **exact subject heading** "Qualtrics Account Verification"*

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)

Assignment due:
- *Complete IRB certification. Send me a copy of your CITI (human subjects) certification* **with the exact subject heading** *"CITI Certification Document"*

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

Initial research questions due

- 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 analogy commonly used to explain a current foreign policy issue. Explain, per Houghton, how the analogy 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.

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

Essay Topic 5a: Summarize Gadarian's explanation of how threat perceptions shape policy attitudes. Identify another foreign policy issue where the same mechanisms are at work.

Essay Topic 5b: Extend the logic Gadarian's conceptual framework to a new foreign policy issue, and propose an experiment designed to test your analysis

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.* 60(1), pp.138–148.

(Deep Dive #1: 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 #2: 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.)

Essay Topic 6: Extend the logic from any of this week's readings to a new foreign policy issue, and propose an experiment designed to test your analysis.

Week 11: Groupthink

Two-page experiment summary due

- Dina Badie; Groupthink, Iraq, and the War on Terror: Explaining US Policy Shift toward Iraq, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Volume 6, Issue 4, 1 October 2010, Pages 277–296.

(Deep Dive: Janis, I. L. (1972). Victims of groupthink: A psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascoes. Oxford, England: Houghton Mifflin.)

Essay Topic 7: Extend the logic of groupthink to a new foreign policy issue and propose an experiment designed to test your analysis.

Week 12: Polihueristic Decision Making

- Mintz, A. (2004). How do leaders make decisions? A poliheuristic perspective. *Journal of conflict resolution*, *48*(1), 3-13.

Essay Topic 8: Is the poliheuristic theory of decision making a helpful tool for foreign policy analysis. Use examples/evidence to support your answer

Week 13: Fairness

(Note: the next two weeks involve heavy doses of neuroscience. Aspects of these readings will be challenging and unfamiliar. That's OK. I want you to focus on 1) The theoretical argument (regarding fairness and in-group bias), 2) the structure of the experiments, 3) the main conclusions. Also, instead of focusing on the names/labels of specific regions of the brain, just pay attention to what affected regions do - e.g. process negative emotions, calculate complex probabilities, etc.)

Sanfey, Alan G., et al. "The neural basis of economic decision-making in the ultimatum game." *Science* 300.5626 (2003): 1755-1758.

Essay Topic 8: How to decision makers react when confronted with issues of fairness? Which topics in international politics do you think are most likely involve fairness? Describe a foreign policy experiment that would examine the role of fairness.

(Deep Dive: Ringius, Lasse, Asbjørn Torvanger, and Arild Underdal. "Burden sharing and fairness principles in international climate policy." *International Environmental Agreements*2.1 (2002): 1-22.)

Week 14: In-group Bias

Emile Bruneau and Rebecca Saxe "Attitudes Toward the Outgroup are Predicted by Activity in the Precuneus in Arabs and Israelis" *Neuroimage*v.52 n4 2010

Essay Topic 9 (final essay) : Design an experiment that uses outgroup bias to explain foreign policy attitudes.

(Deep Dive# 1: Grit Hein, et al. "Neural Responses to Ingroup and Outgroup Members' Suffering Predict Individual Differences in Costly Helping" *Neuron*v.68 n.1 2010)

Deep Dive # 2: Belle Derks and Michael Inzlicht "The Neuroscience of Stigma and Stereotype Threat" *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* v.11 n.2 2008)

Week 15: Research Proposals Due

Week 16:

Discuss Results!!!!

Final write-up due:
Date TBD