

STATE LEVEL THEORY # 2

Decision-Making Process Theory



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Decision-making process theory is a state-level theory that emphasizes the role of bureaucratic organizations and how the process of decision-making within these organizations, and within the government as a whole, can affect its foreign policy and international relations.



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Decision-making process theory disassembles the state bureaucratic structure, taking a targeted look at specific component parts to understand how decisions are made.



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY



The idea behind this theory is that different factions of a large bureaucracy are likely to approach problems or issues from different perspectives and with different preconceptions and priorities.

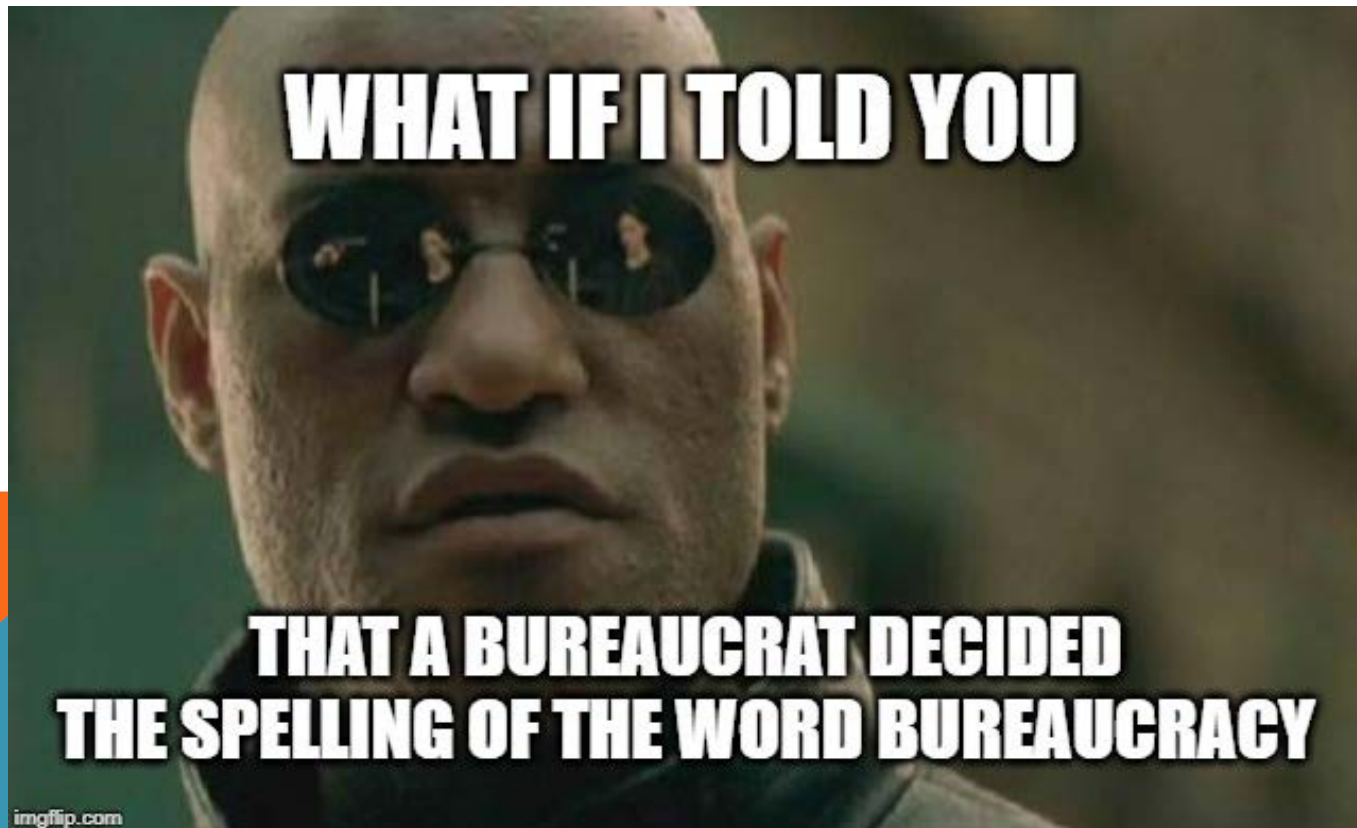
DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

So bureaucratic agencies address issues from different points of view, or, as the saying goes, “Where you stand is largely determined by where you sit.”



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

According to **decision-making process theorists**, the inner workings of the bureaucracy – bargaining strategies, departmental priorities, and the like – cannot be disassociated from an assessment of foreign policy or international relations.



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Bureaucracies and Decision-Making

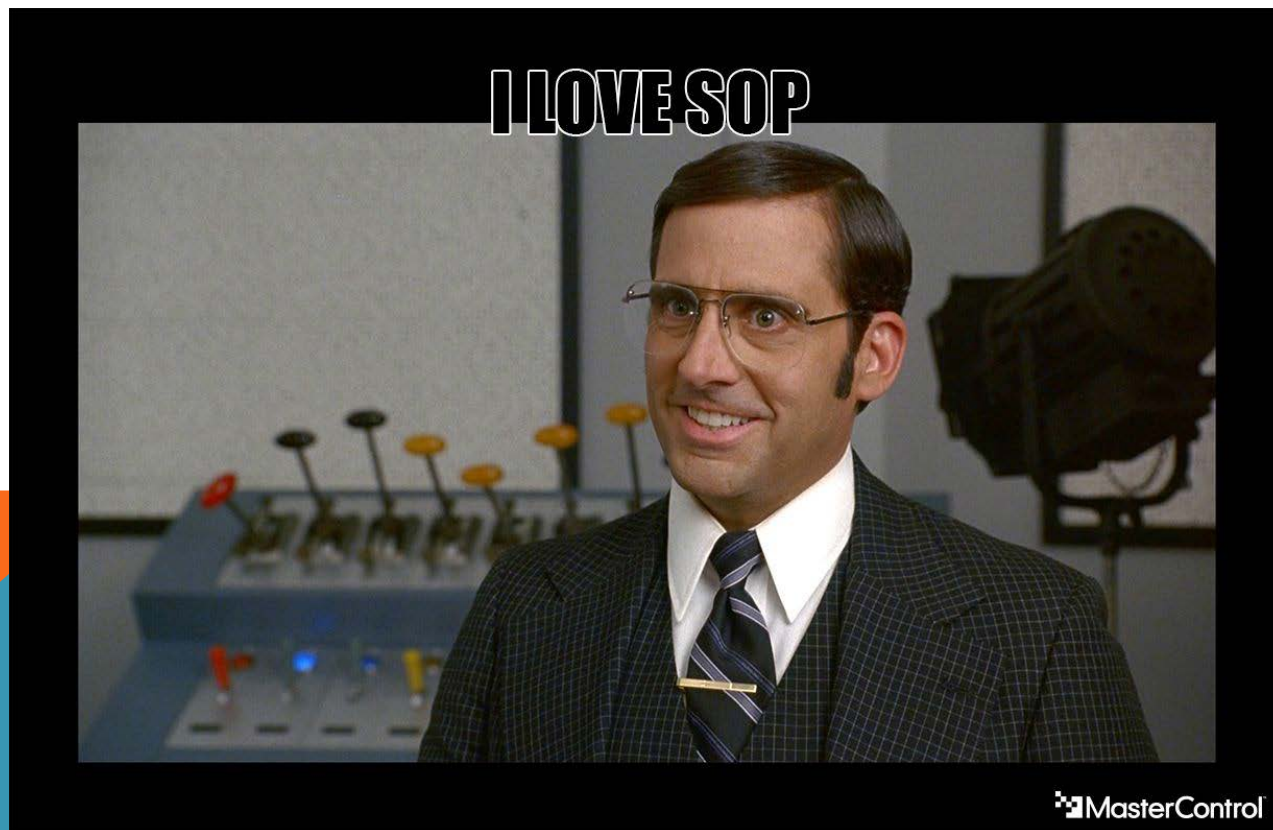
A **bureaucracy** is a network of interconnected departments and organizations designed to manage and administrate the operations of a state.



The method that a state or bureaucracy uses to reach decisions is called **decision-making**.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

A key part of this process and a defining feature of large bureaucracies is their dependence on **standard operating procedures (SOPs)**. SOPs are accepted routines or patterns used by bureaucracies to organize and simplify the decision-making process.



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

New policies are often the result of what is called **incrementalism**, which means that bureaucracies allow only incremental or marginal alterations in existing policy to prevent major changes from established norms.



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

States and Foreign Policy

Decision-making process theorists view foreign policy and international relations largely as a by-product of these inner workings and the interaction of various state bureaucracies.

Foreign Policy Bureaucracies

State Department
Defense Department
Central Intelligence Agency
National Security Council



President's Daily Brief: The world's most current intelligence information is provided to the President for making decisions.



Chris Alden and Amnon Aran

FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS

New approaches

Second edition



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Graham T. Allison's three distinct models for explaining foreign policy decisions.

Three Models (Graham Allison)

Model I:

**Classical Rational Actor
Model (RAM)**

**Realism & Neorealism:
Morgenthau, Schelling,
Kennan, Waltz, Kissinger, etc.**

**Unitary states as key players who
act rationally, calculating costs &
benefits of policy choices to
maximize utility**

Model II:

**Organizational Process or
Behavior Model**

**Liberalism & Neorealism:
Keohane, Doyle**

**Not "act" or "choices" but
OUTPUTS of organizational SOPs**

**Model III: Bureaucratic or
Governmental Politics
Model**

**e.g. President Obama vs.
Republicans in both Houses
of Congress**

**Competition among decision
making units; no single strategic
master plan; diverse conceptions
of nat'l, org'nal & personal goals**

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

With the **rational actor model**, decision makers carefully define and identify foreign policy problems, gather all available information about the foreign policy options, weigh all possible alternatives, and select policies that are most likely to promote the state's national interests.

Rational Actor Model

- Foreign policy is viewed as a calculated response to the actions of another actor
- That causes a calculated response from the first actor which leads to reevaluation and readjustment by the second actor
- Throughout this process, the state is seen as unitary and rational
- Domestic politics, governmental organization, and personalities are discounted
- Seen in Realist Theory

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Organizational Process Theory: How do Organizations Work? (Allison Model II)

1. Primary responsibility for particular areas necessarily divided.
2. Several organizations within government acting at same time, only partially coordinated, to respond to problems.

The **organizational process model** focuses on the routines, standard patterns of behavior, and institutional perspectives of particular agencies, and their impact on foreign policy decisions.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

The **bureaucratic politics model** emphasizes the struggle between various agencies of the government and its impact on the decision-making process.

This model contends that the formulation of policy is largely the result of the competition among government agencies, representing diverse views.

The Bureaucratic Politics Model

- government is made up of separate, distinct organizations
- different organizations have different interests
 - based on professional norms
 - based on self-interest
- government action is a *resultant* of the interplay between these forces
 - what gov't does is -- most often -- different than what any particular actor wants
 - no single agent strong enough to dominate

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

The Components of Decision-Making Process Theory



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Focus of Analysis

Internal decision-making process of governments



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Major Actors

Bureaucracies,
agencies, and
organizations
within
government



BUREAUCRACY


Nothing can stop it.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Behavior of States

States not necessarily
rational actors;

Complex interplay of
internal and external
factors



**Bureaucracy defends
the status quo long
past the time when the
quo has lost its status.**

--LAURENCE J. PETER

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Basis of a State's Foreign Policy

Compromise / competition
between government
agencies;

Adherence to standard
operating procedures;

Incrementalism



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Key Concepts



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

THEORY

Key Concepts

Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy is a network of interconnected departments and organizations designed to manage and administrate the operations of a state.



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

THEORY

Key Concepts

Bureaucratic Politics Model

One of three conceptual models devised by **Graham Allison** to explain and predict the foreign policy behavior of states. The bureaucratic model focuses on the struggle between various agencies of the government and its impact on the decision-making process. This model contends that the formulation of policy is largely the result of the competition among government agencies, representing diverse views. Such a competitive process means that foreign policy is often based more on **domestic political struggles than on objective calculations of the national interest.**

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Key Concepts

Bureaucratic Politics Model



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Key Concepts

Decision Making

Decision making is the process of identifying problems, devising alternative policy options, and selecting which one of the alternatives to pursue.



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Key Concepts

Incrementalism

Incrementalism is a tendency of decision makers to make only incremental or marginal alterations in existing policy in order to prevent major changes from established norms.



Incrementalism ceases to be a good strategy when there's a cliff on the route.

— Seth Godin —

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Key Concepts

Organizational Process Model

The **organizational process model** is the second of the three models devised by **Graham Allison** to explain and predict the foreign policy behavior of states. The organizational process model focuses on the routines, standard patterns of behavior, and institutional perspectives of particular agencies and their impact on foreign policy decisions. It assumes that all governments generally rely on **standard operating procedures**, are relatively predictable, and favor only marginal changes in existing policy.

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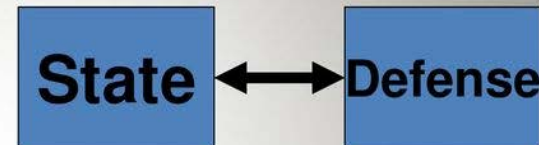
Key Concepts

Organizational Process Model

2. Organizational Process Model

Solution to foreign crisis?

- State: Negotiate
- Treasury: Sanctions
- Commerce: Trade
- DNI: Need better intelligence
- CIA: Covert Operations
- Defense: Use force
 - Army: Ground troops
 - Navy: Carrier air power
 - Marines: Amphibious landing
 - Air Force: Bombing



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

THEORY

Key Concepts

Rational Actor Model

The **rational actor model** is associated with the **realist theory** of decision making and the first of three models used by **Graham Allison** to explain and predict the foreign policy behavior of states. According to the rational actor model, decision makers carefully define and identify foreign policy problems, gather all available information about the foreign policy options, weigh all possible alternatives, and select policies that are most likely to promote the state's national interests.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Key Concepts

Rational Actor Model



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Key Concepts

Standard Operation Procedures

Standard operating procedures (SOPs) are accepted routines or patterns used by bureaucracies to organize and simplify the decision making process. Standard operating procedures are utilized to handle problems or make decisions on a wide array of issues that confront governments on a daily basis—from internal personnel decisions to matters of international trade and diplomacy.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Key Concepts

Standard Operation Procedures

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OF THE ACADEMY AWARD® WINNER*
THE FOG OF WAR

A FILM BY
ERROL MORRIS

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

THE SCANDAL
WAS A COVERUP



**DECISION-MAKING PROCESS
THEORY**

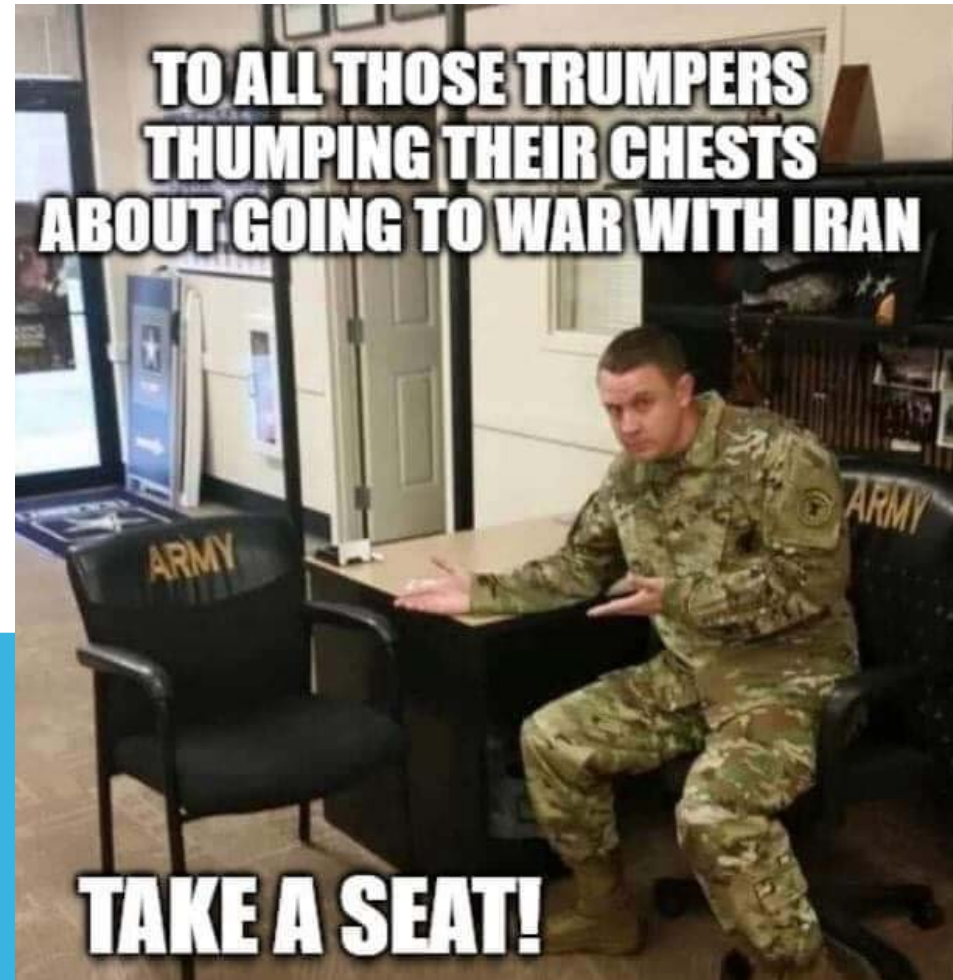
**Critiques of
Decision-Making
Process Theory**



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Critiques of Decision-Making Process Theory

Realists criticize the inclusive approach of **decision-making process theory** for focusing too much on the details of foreign policy-making process, thus losing the broader analytical and theoretical implications of history and events.



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Critiques of Decision-Making Process Theory

Because they attempt to incorporate such a broad range of factors into their analysis, **decision-making process theorists** are often accused of describing the interaction of states, as opposed to providing a true story of international relations.



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Critiques of Decision-Making Process Theory

Decision making theory has also been attacked for being western-centric (meaning it is only valuable when explaining the foreign policy process of western democratic governments).



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEORY

Critiques of Decision-Making Process Theory

