

A Useful Description of Decision-Making

Pluralist Decision/Policy Making (Complex Interaction)

I. Decisions of any government are the result of a **Complex Interaction** among the institutions involved, various agencies and individuals. Also the pluralist process is applicable to all states, but this document is tailored for the US.

- ❖ Each institution, agency and individuals has its **Own Perception** of the state's national interest and the best way to achieve that interest.
 - Ultimately **What Ought to be Done and HOW**
- ❖ Each participant has its own ability to influence the outcome, which is its own **Ability to Make Things Happen.**
- ❖ Each has its **Own Behavioral Patterns and Interests**
- ❖ Each has its **Own Ties** with the public, interest groups and its **Own Relationship** with the political culture.

Conclusion: The results of this process are outcomes that do not fully provide solutions for the problems. Instead we see the result of **Behavioral Influences From the Participants** (institutions, agencies, individuals) each trying to influence the outcome.

Pluralist Decision/Policy Making (Structured by a Process)

II. **The Complex Interaction Between the Participants is Structured** by a process, which facilitates policy that is developed through this process. The Process is determined by:

1. **Situation:** Crisis, Routine, etc.
2. **Issue at Hand:** Military, Economic, Domestic/International
3. **Participants (Institutions, Agencies and Individuals) Involved:** Constitution, Structure of the Executive/Legislative Branches, President's Styles/Tendencies and Interests (meaning what interest groups will be involved)
4. **Public Interest/Involvement**
5. **Involvement of Other States and International Institutions (NGOs)**
6. **The Policy-Making Sequence:** At what point are we at?

Conclusion: Ergo, **No One Decision-Making Model Describes The Process Fully.** Each academic model tends to focus on specific elements. Also the process may adapt/change to accommodate the needs as the situation develops.

Pluralist Decision/Policy Making (Decision-Making Situations)

III. Decision-Making Situations:

- ❖ **Crisis:** Cuban Missile Crisis, Hurricane Katrina, 9/11
- ❖ **Critical Issue With Limited Time:** Invasions of Afghanistan and the Invasion of Iraq
- ❖ **Time Sensitive Issues,** which is dependent on the actions of others: N. Korea, Rwanda, Haitian Refugees, Darfur
- ❖ **Major Issues of Policy:** Relationship with other world powers (Russia, UK, China, etc.), NATO's strategic concept and Policy toward environment, trade, human rights, etc.

- ❖ **Minor Issues of Policy:** Situations that require high-level authority/involvement, but not the President and sometimes not even his cabinet members.
- ❖ **Routine Management of Policies and Issues:** Actions and operations of the agencies involved that limit and influence the policy decisions and the implementation period.

Decision Making in Small Groups

Small Group Decision Making

A Particular Way to Make a Decision:

1. **Ad Hoc Group:** Formed to deal with a specific problem, which is usually an informal group without an institutional base. Most presidential decisions **emerge** from such a group.
2. **Formal, Permanent Group:** This group has an institutional base with specific tasks provided. Most bureaucratic processes are based on these groups. Most presidential decisions are often **based** on the work of such groups.
3. **Informal Group:** A group that meets regularly without institutional base. Typically not used in decision making because its not usually informative.

Group Think Syndrome

A Problem of Small Groups Making Decisions:

Characteristics:

- ❖ Overestimation of the power and rightness of the group
- ❖ Closed-mindedness
- ❖ Often with the decision already framed, usually focused on what not to do and why not to do it
- ❖ Very selective with information used

Conclusion: There is a lot of self-censorship present and much pressure toward uniformity.

Individuals and Decision-Making

Individuals and Decision-Making

- ❖ People who are either in or from institutions will make the decisions (This has to do with seniority and experience). In essence they are **A Representation of Their Institutional Culture** and in turn they are a product of the political and social cultures relevant to the issue being decided.
- ❖ Their decisions and behavior **Reflect a Myriad of Influences** that can be generalized as facilitating from individual interests, institutional interests, national interests and ethical interests. **Or More Broadly From the Seven Levels of Influence.**
- ❖ **They will behave to achieve what they perceive to be the necessary interests and will use whatever power they have to achieve that interest.**