



# BOUNDED RATIONAL ANALYSIS

## BOUNDED RATIONAL ANALYSIS (II)

The process of making policy is not a rational one. In reality, policy emerge from the rough and tumble of a political process.

Not only may there not be a clearly defined goal, there usually are many competing goals, all deserving consideration, some requiring close scrutiny.

How a country defines its goals depends on its political system, which determines who participates, what is considered, and how decisions are made.

Additionally, even when goals are agreed, there are usually a number of way to try to achieve those goals.

This is a political, therefore very subjective, process.

## BOUNDED RATIONAL ANALYSIS (III)

Although the actual process is not a rational process and may not result in a fully reasoned policy, the best way for you to think about policy is in a rational manner.

You, however, from a lack of information, experience, and conceptual ability.

Therefore, your “effective ability” is bounded.

Your task is to learn to think rationally -- bounded rationally, but rationally -- about American foreign policy.

## BOUNDED RATIONAL ANALYSIS (IV)

This means using a simple process of bounded reasoning –  
understanding the situation,  
determining the goals that arise from that situation,  
considering the ways to achieve those goals,  
selecting the best course of action, and  
being able to justify your choice.

The quick process. You become aware of a situation. You have only the information at hand. **Your first thought** – what should be the goal of the U.S. in this matter?

# BOUNDED RATIONAL ANALYSIS (V)

## THE PROCESS OF ANALYSIS (THE WEIGHING THE OPTIONS)

Here is where the bulk of your thinking should be, although the bulk of your work will be in your research related to the situation.

A well-researched effort is of little use, if your analysis is poorly done or misguided.

The question – how to weigh the policy options so that one can be recommended?

The answer – do the best you can within your bounded capabilities.

This is an extremely difficult step, one where neither the necessary information nor an effective weighing methodology is always available.

In general, **THINK** and conduct a simplified cost-benefit analysis, with the costs and benefits broadly defined, probably without specific figures.

## BOUNDED RATIONAL ANALYSIS (VI)

Effectiveness. *How effective will it be in achieving your national goals?*

Here you are analyzing the ability of the United States to make this course of action happen and if it happens the degree it will achieve your national goals. This usually is the critical criterion.

It is here where you must deal with the seven levels of causality. What will get us from A  B.

These are two separate considerations.

*The first is about the power (ability)* of the U.S. to achieve this course of action given what you know about its capabilities. Remember that power is relative to the interests and capabilities of the other states, international actors, and transnational forces involved.

The second is about *what would happen* if the course of action were carried out. What would be the effect toward achievement of the national goal? What might be other possible consequences?

## BOUNDED RATIONAL ANALYSIS (VII)

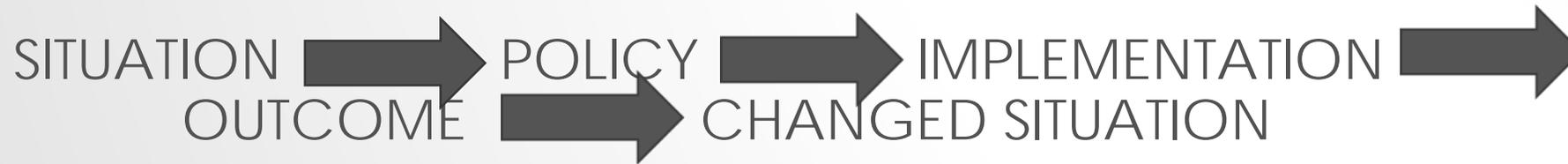
FROM PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH RESEARCH AND POLICY PAPERS, THERE HAVE BEEN TWO SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS:  
1) THE ANALYSIS WANDERS AWAY FROM THE GOAL AND  
2) THERE IS AT LEAST ONE PLACE, USUALLY SEVERAL, WHERE THE REASONING STRING BREAKS DOWN.

THIS LATTER PROBLEM SHOWS UP IN THE STUDENT HAVING TO RELY ON THE **"MIRACLE MOMENT"** TO GET FROM A  B.

THIS MEANS THERE IS NO LOGICAL WAY SHOWN IN YOUR PAPER FOR YOUR CHOSEN POLICY GET TO B.

## NATIONAL INTERESTS AND GOALS (I)

The purpose of policy is to cause changes in the existing situation that are beneficial to the state and its people – getting from A to B.



WE WANT THAT CHANGED SITUATION TO SUIT OUR NATIONAL INTEREST, OUR GOALS.

The task is to design policies to achieve these goals. The interests/goals (the ends) become the focus for the implementation, where we allocate resources and use the instruments of power (the means).

# NATIONAL INTERESTS AND GOALS (II)

## THE CORE NATIONAL INTERESTS

When considering policy, it is very useful to focus on the primary area of concern. Narrowing the focus of our analysis will help simplify our analytical efforts. What one considers if there is a security threat will be very different from what should be considered if the issue involves education or trade.

There are three core national interests. Although these core national interests are the same for all states, those below are written in terms appropriate to the United States:

1. The physical survival and safety of the United States and its people, national security broadly defined
2. The human development of the American population, which includes the economic well-being, education, and health.
3. The survival of the political and cultural values of the United States and its people

# NATIONAL INTERESTS AND GOALS (III)

## A HIERARCHY OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Every foreign policy **should be focused** on one or more of those core national interests. However, these give us only a general idea of what needs to be done. There must be greater specificity of purpose, if our government is to design useful policies or, for ourselves, if we are to analyze and judge what that policy should be.

With the core interests as North Stars, we can **develop hierarchies of subordinate goals and objectives for each**, from the very general to the very specific. As we get closer to the very specific, the objectives become less goals and more ways (the means) to achieve goals.

An example:

- 1) national security narrowly defined requires
- 2) no use of weapons of mass destruction against the U.S., which requires
- 3) no use of such weapons by small states against the U.S., which requires
- 4) no use of such weapons by North Korea against the U.S., which requires
- 5) no use of nuclear weapons by North Korea against the U.S., which requires
- 6) the means to ensure that North Korea has no nuclear arms, or to deter North Korea from the use of such arms, or to build an anti-ballistic missile system to defend against small scale attacks. At this point, the hierarchy has clearly become less goal-like and more means-oriented.
- 7) Each of these means requires subordinate means in order to be implemented.

# NATIONAL INTERESTS AND GOALS (IV)

## DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN NECESSARY AND OTHER GOALS

Some interests are or appear to be more important than others.

Disagreement over what to emphasize

Disagreement over how to achieve the goals and over what are the subordinate goals we need to achieve.

All goals and subordinate goals are not critical or vital.

One can think in terms of four levels:

- A level where you believe the goal is necessary to the achievement of a core interest
- B level where you believe the goal is necessary, but of secondary nature
- C level where you believe the goal is helpful to achieve the core interest, but not necessary
- D level where what you are considering is closer to a means to achieve a goal than a goal.

# NATIONAL INTERESTS AND GOALS (V)

## THE SPAN OF INTERESTS AND GOALS

The three core national interests provide a **spread, or a span, of interests**, from the safety of persons to the survival of our values.

The hierarchy of interests, however, focuses our attention on a series of subordinate goals and means that we believe are necessary to achieve a core interest.

There are **many hierarchies underneath each core interest**.

There is a tendency to focus on the problem at hand and to neglect the impact of actions being implemented to achieve one subordinate goal on the other core national interests and other subordinate goals that are important.

An obvious example is the **need to consider all three core interests** when dealing with China. This often causes conflict among those who seek greater human rights, those who seek improved relations for security, and those with economic concerns.

**The span of national interest also needs to include domestic concerns.**

## NATIONAL INTERESTS AND GOALS (VII) GOALS WITH CONFLICTING MEANS

- No state in opposition to the US in control of Western Europe
- The USSR does not control Western Europe
- The means to contain the USSR in Europe
- The military means to contain the USSR in Europe
- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- NATO's strategic concept
- Flexible response to deter USSR actions
- Adequate conventional forces & a
- credible threat of 1st use of nuclear weapons
- No use of WMD against the US
- No use of WMD by the USSR against the US
- No use of nuclear weapons by the USSR against the US
- Deterrence of the use of nuclear weapons by the USSR against the US
- Mutual deterrence of use of nuclear weapons, because of nuclear parity
- No 1st use of nuclear weapons by either the US or the USSR

# NATIONAL INTERESTS AND GOALS (VI)

## YOU AND GOALS

We may not know what Washington believes it knows, but we can, better than Washington, **consider issues from our own perspective**. This is what much of this course is about -- analyzing issues and developing our own views. In most cases, it starts with the development of what you believe to be the goals and objectives.

A statement of a subordinate goal to a core national interest has two primary parts – **an assertion and support for that assertion**.

When considering a foreign policy issue always ask: What do we want and why? When you hear someone say something is in America's national interests, ask why they hold that view. **Judge the quality of their "national interest" by the quality of their reasons supporting why.**