MAKING AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

GREGORY F. TREVERTON

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Preface

This book owes to a happy concurrence of congenial circumstances. The first, one I allude to in the introduction, was my own growing awareness of the connections between my Kennedy School teaching duties in public management and foreign policy. When I came back to the School as a faculty member in 1982, we taught public management, domestic in orientation, through cases, and the emphasis was on process—trying in specific instances to align the triangle of the manager's goals, his or her institutional capacity, and what the broader "authorizing environment" of public, bosses, and legislative bodies was signalling about the limits of discretion.

In our foreign policy offerings, however, the emphasis was much more on strategic issues than specific processes. I came to think that emphasis mistaken. Not that strategy or national interest is irrelevant, quite the contrary; it is both the purpose of the enterprise and the frame within which the pullings and haulings of policy occur. But strategic choices are the first step toward accomplishing sensible public purposes, not the last, and so I came to see that my perspective on public management could enrich my thinking about—and my teaching of—foreign policy.

Two enterprises provided incentive to pursue the connections. The Pew Charitable Trusts embarked on a program of case writing and teaching in international negotiations, which the Kennedy School joined in partnership with the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. The Pew folks probably had in mind a more traditional agenda of interstate negotiations, but they had the good sense, or forbearance, to let us construe "negotiation" very broadly to include what went on before and away from the formal negotiation table—in particular, the "negotiations" with the domestic "authorizing environment" that licensed and approved formal negotiations.

The Central Intelligence Agency sponsored our efforts to write other cases, focussing on the role of intelligence in the making of policy, and to test them on professional intelligence officers in week-long executive programs. I came to see intelligence analysts in foreign policy as the kin of policy analysts or other holders of special expertise—doctors or lawyers, for example—in domestic policy.

Finally, I had the chance to test both cases and approaches by discussing them after I had left the Kennedy School in my part-time teaching at Columbia's Graduate School of International and Public Affairs and from time to time back at the Kennedy School.

It is to all those who are called students but actually are partners in exploring cases that I owe my largest intellectual debt. My debt to the writers of the cases in this book, or to those who helped me write some of them, is one I happily acknowledge in each of the cases. Case writing is an art of its own, very unlike writing seminar papers or doctoral dissertations.

I also owe a debt to the three best case teachers I've known: Mark Moore, who taught me that the most critical preparation for a case is a strategy for the blackboard plus three "discussible" issues; to the late Manny Carballo, whose teaching reminded me that in class the impromptu is the invaluable, a chance to embroider a casual skein of comment into a conversation that will be remembered because it is the class's, not the teacher's; and Ronnie Heifetz, from whom I learned the demanding lesson that tension in class usually is produced by the heat of work being done, and so is to be sought, not shunned.

My friends and mentors, Richard Neustadt and Ernest May, were also my partners in the intelligence project, perhaps the happiest circumstance of all. Indeed, that project played no small part in my move not just from teacher to practitioner, but into the world of intelligence. Bob Gates, then the CIA's deputy director for intelligence, was our sponsor in the project; later, as director of central intelligence (DCI), he first proposed that I make that move.

And so I now have the good fortune to test my conclusions not on my students but on myself, as vice chair of the National Intelligence Council (NIC). There, I have the better fortune to work with Jim Woolsey, the DCI, and Joe Nye, Harvard colleague and friend, the Council's chair, and to cross paths with scores of those who participated in the Harvard executive seminars on intelligence and policy. But especially since this book was completed before I joined the NIC, neither the NIC nor any of those good people should be blamed for any of the book's contents. Those are mine and the case writers' alone.

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Making American Foreign Policy

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Introduction: Getting Down to Cases

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This book derives from my experiences as a foreign policy practitioner in the American government and, especially, from my time at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government and later at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs, postgraduate professional schools oriented toward public-sector problem solving. I have had the chance to try the cases on students ranging from undergraduates, including numbers of non-Americans, to senior American military officers and their civilian equivalents.

GETTING DOWN TO CASES

Learning about foreign policy or international relations through cases was and remains novel, even at the Kennedy School. When I arrived there as a faculty member, the culture of case learning was fairly well established in courses about public management in domestic policy settings. Not so in the School's foreign policy offerings: There, more traditional methods still predominated, perhaps spiced with occasional simulations or discussions of particular decisions.

However, the more I taught both public management and foreign policy, the more I realized what I should have known all along: They were similar domains, not different, and so my teaching of the two converged. Not everything can be learned efficiently through cases, but much real learning can occur. (I recall my Harvard colleague, Howard Raiffa, describing his own introduction to higher mathematics, done by exploring numbers with chalk and symbols at the blackboard, much as we will explore cases with words—and sometimes with chalk at the blackboard.)

Indeed, cases provide the grit of reality. Foreign policy issues do not arise in real life in the abstract. They come with histories attached, when officials have their hands full with a dozen other tasks; they arrive, perhaps especially in the American government, embedded in domestic politics, a tug that is nicely illustrated by a non-American example. From afar, the Falkland/Malvinas islands hardly looked worth fighting for in 1982 by either Britain or Argentina. That is a fair argument in the abstract—one that merits your attention.

It takes a sense for the politics of the issue to understand what impelled the Argentinian junta to act and what moved the

Tory government of Britain to respond. Those politics become vivid when, for instance, you outline the pros and cons of various responses as though you were a staffer to the British Cabinet Committee on Overseas and Defense Affairs, or to the Argentinean junta.

Then, you might want to step back and think for a minute about the international system surrounding this clash of ideas: self-determination, as represented by that of the Falkland islanders, versus the Argentinean sense of territorial integrity against a colonial past. Now that the glacial ice of the Cold War has receded, these conflicts of ideas are being played out all the more intensely—from Europe's east to south Asia.

Some of our language obscures reality. We speak of "policy making" or "decision maker" as though policies or decisions got *made*, authoritatively, once and for all. If that may be approximately true some of the time for the private sector, it is seldom the case for the public sector, in the realms either of domestic or foreign policy—surely not in the American democracy. Each episode nudges government action a little in one direction or another; each is the opening of a new round of contention. Each may activate a new set of interested parties, inside and outside the government. The making of policy is a process, seldom a point.

Cases help you think about and work through what issues look like "over there" in another country. Otherwise, it is all too easy to presume, usually without realizing it, that the other government is like our own, or, sometimes, that it is completely unlike it (Iran under the ayatollahs, for instance)—two forms of what is called "mirror imaging." In my experience in Washington, it is also all too easy to forget that foreign policy has to do with *other* countries. The process in Washington is so complicated that you can use all your energy worrying about "those SOBs" at Treasury or on the Hill. The other country, the ultimate purpose of the enterprise, recedes from view.

Cases can provide an antidote to mirror-imaging, one I hope you'll keep in mind beyond the classroom. I recall once at the Kennedy School assigning an Israeli mid-career student, an intelligence officer, to do a brief critique of the Camp David agreements of 1978 among the United States, Israel, and Egypt, from the perspective of Syria, which had stridently opposed the agreement. His critique was devastating. We all wondered for a moment why anyone could have favored the agreement, one that is generally regarded as President Carter's shining foreign policy success.

Cases also make you think concretely, not vaguely; and specifically, not generally. A colleague used to work for Senator John Stennis, the long-time chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Stennis, he reported, would listen to recommendations, then drawl: "What do you want me to do, specifically?" In talking through a case, all of us are tempted to say, "I'd tell the president..." or "I'd send Ruritania a message to..." But our view often changes when we try specifically to do what we recommend, perhaps by role-playing the conversation with another student taking the part of the president, writing the message, or having the experience of explaining the action in a mock press conference. Often it turns out that our advice is vague; we are tempted to tell the president "how to suck eggs," as we used to put it in the crudity of bureaucratic vernacular, meaning that we would tell him something he knew already, not something he could use to address his problem.

Cases reinforce the lesson that details matter. Early in the Carter administration in 1977, I was working on Europe for the National Security Council. The Soviet Union sent us a sharp note, markedly sharper than the previous such note, over an incident in Berlin, the Cold War's thermometer. We hastily convened the various agencies, in secret, to consider this crisis we had not expected; Berlin issues had been settled, we thought, by the four-power agreement of 1971: Was Moscow reviving the issue? If so, why? Was this a test of Jimmy Carter comparable to Khrushchev's testing of John Kennedy nearly two decades earlier?

Two days later, some wise hand (not me) had the sense to look a little more deeply into the details of the episode. We discovered two things that let us fold up our crisis tents and go back to other work, having wasted two days. The first was the Soviet note itself, which in Russian turned out to be the same as its predecessor. The operative Russian verb had two shades of meaning, one hard, the other softer, and had been given the soft translation the previous time, the hard one in this instance.

A second "detail" was what occasioned the note. The United States continued to send military patrols, soldiers in jeeps streaming American flags, into East Berlin, a curious remnant of the dawn of the Cold War meant to uphold the principle that, despite the Wall, Berlin was still a single city. One of these flag patrols, so-called, had seen an official East German motorcade for a visiting dignitary; presumably curious, the GIs had cut through the motorcade and pulled alongside the dignitary's car. Boys will be boys, but a note of protest by Moscow on behalf of its East German ally did not seem amiss. It was business-as-usual; no new Cold War crisis impended.

WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT FOREIGN POLICY

In all these ways, learning by cases is different and complements other methods by which you learn about foreign affairs. I think you'll find the difference thought provoking, and exciting.

In working through cases, the tools of policy analysis, rooted in economics, provide a structure: What are my (or their) objectives? What are the alternatives? How do they look in light of the objectives? That structure seems trivial, but much writing on foreign policy (and a lot else) never quite gets around to it. By the same token, formal techniques help us acquire the habits of marginal analysis and of thinking about second-order effects—often called "unintended consequences."

Most of the tools in the policy analyst's kitbag start from a presumption of "rationality"—where "rationality" does not mean "wisdom," only the capacity to choose so as to maximize *the chooser's* values"—be they lofty or venal. Those tools assume deciders are capable of knowing their preferences and making tradeoffs among them. For instance, decision analysis, pioneered by Raiffa, recognizes that no one carries around an explicit ordering of preferences in his or her head, but it permits analysts to infer one from answers that most people can give to straightforward questions.

So, too, much of the theory of negotiation shares the rationality presumption. Based on analogy with labor-management negotiations, it tends to focus on what happens at the negotiating table between the two sides, mediators and arbitrators. In addressing, for instance, how questions can be framed to produce gains for both sides, rather than turning the process into a zero-sum game in which one's gain is the other's loss, it presumes that both sides can and will rationally assess alternative outcomes against their preferences.

The starting point for international relations theory—and, as you'll discover, for many case discussions—is the "realist" perspective, reflected in the classics of Hans Morgenthau or E. H. Carr. That perspective takes nation-states as the central actors on the international stage. It does not look inside those actors but rather aggregates societies into units that then are presumed to act rationally.

That worldview is powerful. It is all around, used well and used badly. Think how often newspapers personify nations as their capitals or leaders: New Delhi did this, Gorbachev intended that. That perspective does help us think about the broad purposes that, after all, foreign policy is meant to be about. While the nation-state has more competitors now, it still is the preeminent international actor, so some fairly stylized notions of its interests and interactions provide a point of entry to the problem.

Beyond that, if the foreign policymakers we'll see in the cases sometimes seem myopic, even narrowly self-interested in their own careers and political futures, they argue in terms of the national interest. In my experience, most of them are sincere in doing so. Arguments about the national interest are the frame in which the debate takes places.

One especially powerful branch of realist theory is nuclear strategy, as developed in the 1950s and 1960s in the work of scholars like Bernard Brodie and Thomas Schelling. They brought game theory and other sophisticated techniques to bear, but mostly they thought hard about how the pronouncements or actions of one nuclear superpower could affect the incentives of the other. Their work prefigured the more recent blooming of rational choice models, in the writings of scholars like Robert Axelrod, for example.

For nuclear issues particularly, it seemed reasonable to presume that the awesomeness of the weapons would impose a kind of rationality to decisions made about them. Moreover, since only governments had nuclear weapons, and only a few governments to boot, the further presumption of unitary actors also made sense. Given those presumptions, their work was economical—the presumptions required relatively little detailed knowledge of the governments and how they worked—and elegant, their insights powerful.

The presumption of rationality rattling around in all these approaches is not in itself a

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problem. It is, rather, a source of powerful insights. Yet the presumption can easily lead a careless practitioner to a dangerous ethnocentrism or "mirror-imaging,"—to an assumption that other governments resemble one's own. And to carry the presumptions from nuclear issues to other foreign policy questions can be even riskier, as we'll see.

It is easy for all of us to forget that those tools are highly stylized representations of part of reality. They are not how the world works. Nor are they necessarily how it *should* work. The latter fallacy is always a temptation for bright, young students; at the Kennedy School we used to call it the "technocratic fantasy" or, more bluntly, "smart-ass-ery."

And so the limitations of the realist perspective have propelled a number of other approaches: A second generation of strategists, who shared the presumption of rational decision making, worried that in the real world signals would be distorted or misperceived. Scholars such as Robert Jervis or Richard Ned Lebow asked how perceptions and misperceptions might lead governments to mistakes—that is, how they might induce decisions that were not, in fact, value-maximizing.

More fundamentally, the realist nation-state is no more than a convenient abstraction, and so other students have delved within it, looking at the national leaders who make choices and how they make them, and at the large organizations of government, whose routines determine the menu of choice and constrain how choices are implemented. Graham Allison's *Essence of Decision* is the now-classic summary of these perspectives.

The organizational perspective—growing out of an older tradition, mostly in the private sector, associated with names like Herbert Simon or Richard Cyert and James March—is sharply at odds with the rationality presumption. In the real world, the power of organizations is their capacity for organizing people around routines and standardized tasks. Those routines change slowly in the absence of external shocks. Instead of maximizing, organizations tend to "satisfice" by engaging in limited searches for acceptable solutions involving the least change in existing operating procedures.

Graham Allison's focus on the politics of decision making at the top of government drew on another tradition, one associated particularly with Richard Neustadt. However, Allison's decision-making process was a very restricted one, the American ExCom during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. In many ways the ExCom seems a construct designed to reproduce the attributes of the rationality paradigm. Domestic politics was hardly absent, but other cases take us further into the pulling and hauling of those politics, and so direct our attention to the rich writing on domestic politics and foreign policy—exemplified in the masterful book by Raymond Bauer, Ithiel de Sola Pool, and Lewis Anthony Dexter.

Still other strands of inquiry take us into the impact of group sociology or individual psychology. If a value-maximizing decision process was the ideal—actual people, not disembodied nations, ranging widely over alternatives to assess them against objectives—Irving Janis asked how that ideal process might be short-circuited by the pressures of a group, by "groupthink," to use his famous term. To equate the nation with its leader, in the fashion of newspaper editorials, is plainly a mistake; but just as plainly, those leaders matter.

Because they matter, John Steinbruner and others tried to apply lessons from cognitive psychology, searching for patterns in the behavior of those leaders. Some may be ideologues, often referred to inside government as "theologians," who come to an issue with strong predispositions. Others, by contrast, may be uncommitted thinkers, seeking to assess alternatives in light of their own stakes—thus, reproducing the presumptions of the "realist" paradigm at the level of individuals. The rub for us analysts is not only that information about leaders' thought patterns is hard to come by, but also that any leader's pattern will vary: An ideologue on one issue may be an uncommitted thinker on another.

Much of postwar writing on international relations, especially by American political scientists, has been dominated by the "scientific" or "behavioral" approach associated with names like Karl Deutsch, James Rosenau, Ole Holsti, and James David Singer. This group is not easy to characterize, but its common emphasis is upon data, hypotheses, and the quantitative techniques for testing them. They do not necessarily presume rationality, but they do search for general theories, rules, or laws that govern international relations—the presumption being that such exist.

The quest for general regularities is the essence of science. Being aware of those regularities can be helpful in addressing particular cases.

A leader who comtemplated a show of military force, for instance, would be well advised to have at hand—better yet, in mind—empirical studies suggesting in which circumstances displays of force have achieved their near-term objectives, or indicating that in persuading would-be opponents, one's credibility as represented by past toughness may matter less than the visible balance of forces.

Sometimes, though, framing hypotheses that can be tested with quantitative techniques leads to rigorous confirmation of the trivial, or to insights that are too general to be of much help to those interested in policy. Knowing, for instance, which factors have historically been correlated with the outbreak of war is interesting but of limited use to you in contemplating a particular contingency: whether this case conforms to the pattern or diverges from it will be what matters most. And the answer will turn on all the things abstracted away by the behavioralists—political culture, the specific issues, popular passions, who is in charge, and the like. For practice in assessing those more particular factors, I think there is nothing better than working through cases.

The study of international politics has been enriched by a renaissance of political economy and "regime theory," associated with scholars like Robert Gilpin, Robert Keohane, and Stephen Krasner, as well as by Kenneth Waltz, whose path-breaking work spans several categories. Political economy, much of it realist in inclination, asks how the structure of domestic economies bears on the political determination of the nation's interest.

While realist theory presumes nations compete for power and therefore finds international cooperation surprising, regime theory starts from the observation that states do in fact manage to cooperate to their mutual interest. That cooperation may develop into a "regime"—a pattern of expectations and norms, which may come to acquire mechanisms and institutions. Those regimes range from the relatively loose—the notions of free trading embodied in GATT—to the highly institutionalized—such as Europe's Common Market, which has become a political actor in its own right.

In any particular case, thinking about regimes reminds us of the shadow cast by the existing configuration of international politics. That reminder is all the more apt now that international regimes seem to be changing, perhaps dramatically; regime theory can help us understand why patterns of cooperation develop or break up.

A CHECKLIST FOR FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS

As you work through the cases in this book, you'll want to develop your own rules of thumb, a checklist, or questions you want to ask yourself as you think about foreign policy problems—whether you're in government, outside it but trying to influence it, working in international business, or simply trying to make sense of what's going on behind the evening TV news.

For starters, here's my checklist. There is nothing magic about it; it's a first word, hardly a last. I'm a sucker for alliteration, so mine is five Ps, five overlapping frames of analysis:

- Problem
- Past
- Perspective
- Politics
- Process

These are hardly novel; they are less levels of analysis than sources of different questions.

Too often governments jump, like my colleagues and me during the Berlin crisis we nearly created, into canvassing actions before inquiring into exactly what the *problem* is, why it's a problem, and for whom it is a problem. Sometimes, waiting does foreclose possible actions, but there is almost always a few minutes for reflecting on the nature of the problem. Often, the need for immediate action is less than its seems in the heat of the first events, and taking pause to learn a little more is worth the time.

This is also a time to look at the problem as perceived not by you but by relevant actors, nation-states or others, including those "over there" (where "over there" may also include your boss). What does this issue look like to *them*, not me? What is *their* problem, not mine? As it turned out, the problem for the Soviet Union during our manufactured Berlin crisis was not us at all. Rather, it was standing up for the interests of their ally, East Germany.

A frequent error in assessing other governments is to imagine too narrow a range of possible actions by them. It is all too tempting to assume that they will act in ways that suit *your* convenience. Thus, I try to remember to ask the question: What is the most *in*convenient thing "they" could do? That stretches thinking about possible actions by "them"—where, again, "them" may include your boss. In 1980, for instance, the United States mapped out responses for what it feared—a Soviet intervention in Poland to crush the nascent Solidarity movement. But when the shoe dropped, it was another shoe: the crackdown was done by the Polish regime, not by Soviet soldiers. That result probably was better for Poland, even for the world. But it caught Washington unprepared. It was not the worst-case; rather, it was the *in*convenient thing.

Past is shorthand for delving into some history of the issue and how that history has shaped current perspectives of it, both for your government and for others interested in the issue. That sense of history is all too rare in foreign policy analysis, especially by Americans, who by national habit assume that any new problem we confront is also new to the rest of humanity. Locating issues in their time stream, perhaps by drawing a quick timeline, can help, a technique emphasized by my Harvard colleagues, Ernest May and Richard Neustadt.

Had those in London drawn a timeline for the Falklands in 1982, their sense for impending hostilities might have been sharper. The 150th anniversary of British presence in the islands, an anniversary scarcely known in Britain but on everyone's mind in Buenos Aires, loomed, and a look at political events in Argentina would have hinted that time was running out for the governing junta.

I use *perspective* to refer to those abstracted calculations of national interest as they are widely shared across nations. Alliteration aside, *mind-sets* would be another term, capturing the fact that issues do look different to people in different nations. The Falklands/Malvinas islands were a fourth-order issue to Britain, whose details were known before 1982 only to a handful of foreign office specialists and parliamentary lobbyists; by contrast, Argentineans might disagree over how important the islands were or over tactics for dealing with the issue, but almost all believed they belonged to Argentina.

In December 1979, NATO decided to deploy 572 American Pershing and cruise missiles with range enough to reach Soviet territory. The rational logic of nuclear strategy was enough to indicate that the decision would be contentious, that NATO would not be able to render the arguments for it in bumper-sticker language, so trouble lay ahead. (A timeline also would have helped.)

Because nuclear weapons are so awful, threatening to use them was bound to be beset by problems of credibility. The threat might be tolerably credible against a threat to one's homeland, but the United States through NATO was threatening to use them to deter a Soviet attack not just on the United States but on Europe as well. Europeans were bound to ask, "Why are the new Pershings and cruise missles more deterring than American strategic weapons not based in Europe?" If the answer seemed to be "because if used, the Soviet Union might retaliate against their location, Europe, not their owner, the United States," that made the missiles seem more provocative than protective.

The *politics* of an issue are not independent of abstracted national interests. Yet those politics very much have a life of their own. At this level, I try to capture broad contours of how an issue falls into those national politics. It would be hard to understand the American debate over sanctions against South Africa in the mid-1980s, for example, without seeing apartheid against the context of America's own unfinished racial business, or without seeing a Congress controlled by Democrats (the Senate after 1986), frustrated, and trying to confront a popular president. Pushing a little further would have identified a group of Republican members of Congress—Reaganites in general—eager to see their party become the regular majority party, and therefore concerned about how to reach out to socially conscious would-be Republican voters among younger Americans.

Or suppose you were a European trying to assess protectionist pressures in the United States. Your first impression is that those pressures are strong, but your timeline tells you they have been present throughout the postwar period. Your first mapping of the issue focuses your attention on the middle-sized industries deeply threatened by exports as the prime lobbyists for protection, and on Congress as the forum for pleading their case.

Yet, a second look suggests that Congress has not been a vehicle for protectionism; on the contrary, Congress at bottom prefers that the trade policy buck stop somewhere else—at the executive branch. By now, you as European analyst have a mild headache and have made only mild progress. At least you have shifted your focus to the executive and sharpened your questions. What are the pressures operating on the executive? What deadlines does it face? Is there any reason to believe that Congress might now reverse tradition and enact protectionist legislation?

Finally, depending on your purpose, you may need to dig into the fine-grain detail of decision-making *processes*. Sharper focus and better questions are about all we can expect. One source of those questions is the reminder that the governments we seek to understand are in fact collections of large organizations. That is true whether the government in question is Pakistan, Britain, or the Soviet Union. No doubt it is also true if the "government" is the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Thus, government actions may be less the intentions of national leaders—the rationality presumption—than the outputs of those large organizations, acting on the basis of their senses of mission and their standard operating procedures. The British decision in 1981 to withdraw its last major naval vessel from the South Atlantic was interpreted in Argentina as a sign of disinterest in the Falklands. Perhaps it was, but not in any direct or calculated fashion; rather, the Royal Navy, faced with imminent budget cuts, concentrated on *its* principal mission, which lay elsewhere, in the North Atlantic, not the south.

Turning from explanation to prediction, the features of organizations will be especially important at two stages in the process leading to action: What organizations can do will limit the choices available to national leaders—if it ain't on the menu of some organization, it ain't an option—and organizational routines will shape how decisions are implemented.

My favorite examples are from the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, but we'll see others throughout these cases. When President Kennedy first found out about the Soviet missiles, he and his advisors first leaned toward a "surgical" airstrike to take them out before they could be made ready to fire. Trouble was, what the U.S. Air Force was ready to do by way of a "surgical" strike was not very tidy—500 bomber sorties entailing lots of harm to civilians, including Soviet technicians. The air force was not being obstinate, or not just that; rather it was telling the president what it had trained to do and what it would take to have a high confidence that all the missiles were destroyed—what we presumably pay the military to do.

So the "surgical" airstrike was not an option. The president toyed with trying to create another "surgical" strike, perhaps by asking the Central Intelligence Agency if it could do it. In the end, however, he decided on the naval "quarantine" of Cuba. He wanted suspicious ships, especially Soviet ones, stopped as close to Cuba as possible to give Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet leader, as much time as possible for reflection in the war of nerves. But, apparently, the U.S. Navy began stopping ships much farther out. Kennedy was angry, feeling let down. The navy, however, did the quarantine as it had been trained to do blockades; to move the picket line in too close to Cuba would have been to give itself no second chances against would-be blockade runners.

At the point of decision, organizational factors yield pride of place to political ones in the deliberations of a small group of "decision" makers. The focus of attention, and questions, is exactly *how*, through what process, the decision will be taken; *who*, therefore, will participate; and *what* the positions of those people will be. In assessing the likely positions of participants, their organizational role will matter ("where you stand depends on where you sit"); in the absence of detailed information, we expect a minister of defense to have a different perspective than a foreign secretary. What is known about the leader's political stakes and personal history are other sources of clues about position. The insights of cognitive psychology have a role to play, though applying them is elusive.

This perspective on process expects that resulting decisions will reflect the interplay of competing positions, and thus may not be the preferred choice of any of the participants. It directs attention to *deadlines*; otherwise the process of contention may simply roll on. It also serves to remind that what motivates them "over there" is *their* stakes in *their* politics and processes. Your actions may influence their decisions but only as they refract through their stakes and their politics.

Suppose, after working my way through an issue with the information I can quickly lay hands on, my best bet is that a particular outcome will ensue. As a check I ask exactly how, through what chain of events—what scenario—that outcome will occur. Another nuclear example may make more vivid how. By the middle of 1981 I was out of government, sitting in London, now an interested bystander to the NATO deployments. I would have bet that none of the cruise and Pershing nuclear missiles that NATO had decided to deploy in Europe beginning in 1983 would actually be deployed. What I saw were huge protests in the streets of Europe, fed by the European perception that the American administration was trigger-happy and uninterested in arms control.

Yet if I had asked specifically what scenario would produce my predicted outcome—no cruises or Pershings—I would have been less confident in it. Protest alone would not undo the decision, for that protest in the street was not much connected to the ways decisions would be taken. It was, in that sense, both literally and figuratively "noise," surely important to the future politics of the nations concerned but nevertheless a distraction with respect to my immediate bet. Undoing the decision would have taken a change of position by one of the three main European governments—Britain, Italy, and the Federal Republic of Germany. In Britain, the Thatcher government was firmly committed to the deployments, and Italy seemed hardly to notice the fuss. So that left the Federal Republic. With a Social Democrat government in power, a change of position was possible, but it was unlikely: to do so would have been a major break with the United States and the NATO Alliance.

As another check, I ask: Why is my assessment popular with me? We all carry around a hundred presumptions buried in our heads. Examining all of them would be impossible; time would not permit even if human psychology would. But asking the question may surface a critical—and unexamined—presumption: Am I betting my convenience? Am I mirror-imaging? Am I too distracted by particular noise, perhaps the very last turn of events?

I have one final rule of thumb. It reminds me of the connection between foreign policy choices and domestic politics; understanding "them" abroad begins at home. In looking at so-called intelligence failures in international policy, from the German invasion of France in World War II to the fall of the shah of Iran, I was struck by how often the problem lay less in assessing "them" than in understanding one's own government.

My favorite example, one my Harvard students always treat with skepticism and you may too, is the Vietnam War. Looking at the secret documents around the American decision to escalate the war in the summer of 1965, I'm struck by how good the assessments of the war half a globe away were: It would take several years and several hundred thousand American GIs to begin to turn the tide.

Two and a half years and 500,000 American soldiers later came the Tet Offensive, now generally regarded as an enormous military defeat for North Vietnam. But, politically, it was a defeat for the United States, the beginning of the end. What those American policymakers had gotten wrong in 1965, and what they could have gotten right, was the effect on the campuses and streets *at home* of a long, ambiguous, and bloody war. Hence the rule of thumb: the less you understand about "them," the more you better understand about "you"—your politics and your institutions.

But these are my rules of thumb. The way to develop your own is to dig into the cases, which I hope will in their turn provide vivid hooks to serve as reminders of your rules.

THE CASES

A word about the cases themselves. Because making policy is a continuing process, the cases in this book do not, like business school cases, typically come to a focus at one decision point. They tell the whole story, with several points of decision and action. You can slice into them at different points as you choose, asking how different assessments and actions at one point might have affected the next, and the next.

If journalism is the first draft of history, case studies are the second. They tell a story; you draw the lessons. These cases are from the last handful of American administrations, all too recent for many relevant documents to be available. Capturing what went on inside the government means relying on accounts by those who participated.

If some of the cases are as much as two decades old, most of the specific issues are still with us. They thus can provide a springboard for thinking about, and discussing, just what has changed and how much with the ending of the Cold War—in the broad shape of international politics behind particular issues, and in the nature of the issues themselves and of the

American governmental machine trying to address them. I'll bet you'll decide some of the changes are less than they seem at first.

They are organized into clusters around major themes in the making of American foreign policy—the pull of the domestic political context, the politics of international negotiation, and diplomacy and the use of force and dealing with regional turmoil. Life, however, is never so tidy as book outlines—or course syllabuses. The clusters are partly artifical; most of the cases illustrate lots of features of the policy process.

The introductions suggest some connections across the clusters; you'll want to draw others, or regroup the cases to suit your purposes. For instance, you might want to try the kind of "focussed comparisons" employed by Alexander George, singling out, for example, the domestic politics of the cases. Do you discern any broad differences in the shape of those politics—between economic and military issues, or among issues involving friends, foes, and countries that are neither. Or you might want to focus on negotiation and bargaining, which is present in virtually all the cases—tacit versus formal, bilateral versus multilateral, with mediators versus without, or with nations versus with subnational groups.

The individual introductions contain some of my reflections on the cases. Like my rules of thumb, they're a first word, not a last. There are no "right" answers; the cases are an exercise in learning by arguing, not a game of hide-and-seek. You'll want to argue—with your teachers and with me, but most of all with each other.

FURTHER READING

The following works have helped me think about ways to understand the making of foreign policy:

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