



MVZ291

The Politics of Decision-making: American Presidents, and Israeli Prime Ministers in Crisis

Course Overview

- This course will focus on the connections between
 - the dynamics of foreign policy decisions and
 - the substance of specific foreign policy crisis.
- We will learn the relationships among the various decision types,
- How they are and how they were chosen,
- The constraints that work for or against effective decisions, the environmental influences affecting said decisions, and
- The substance of actual, historical foreign policy decisions.

Course Overview

- There will be case studies.
- Each case study is a crisis.
- Those that have been chosen have been done either for their decision type and how the leader with or without other policymakers concluded the crisis.
- While some case studies are well known others may not be.

Course Objectives

- The understanding of decision types and how political, psychological, cultural, social, and organizational factors influence said decision during crisis.
- Providing comprehension on various themes, historical events, and personalities of American and Israeli leaders.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the development of both the American presidency and Israeli premiership to evaluate the consequences and outcomes of the decision making process during crisis;
- Explain the formal and informal mechanisms that leaders can use to achieve objectives in a crisis when interacting with other branches of government, the bureaucracy, and the public;
- Identify institutional and political constraints that limit the leaders ability to achieve decision making;
- Analyze the major factors affecting the successful outcome of crisis
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different decision making type approaches.

Course Requirements

- assigned readings;
- class attendance and appropriate contributions to section discussions;
- two short-essay analysis papers;
- a mid-term examination; and
- a final examination or research paper.

Structure of class

- Overview of topic
- Case study
- Review and commentary

Expectations

- Arrive prepared and ready to participate
 - weekly readings
 - awake
 - not preoccupied
- Ask questions
- Respect to classmates and instructor

Exam Schedule

- Short-essay paper #1 (Week 4)
- Short-essay paper #2 (Week 8)
- Final exam (last week/January)

Grading

- 20 percent on participation.
- 20 percent for each of the two short papers.
- 30 percent on the final examination.

Readings

- Links are in syllabus to websites and PDF files.
 - Instructor will decide from readings
 - Not all readings listed will be used
- Uploaded to IS are chapters to read

Decision-Making

- Models
 - rational actor
 - bounded rationality cybernetic
 - poliheuristic
 - prospect
 - bureaucratic

Theme: Executive power

- Nature of Executive power
 - Constitution of U.S.
- Generally speaking, the role of the president as a true decision-maker in foreign policy and decision making regarding crisis has found in Article II.
 - Tradition in Israel
- Generally speaking, the role of the full cabinet as a true decision-making body has declined,
 - a marked tendency towards centralizing decision-making in the prime minister office.
- Israel is a good example where the full cabinet has rarely been the true center of decision-making.
 - there is a “kitchen cabinet” which enjoys constitutional authority to make final decisions in lieu of the full cabinet on security issues.

Executive power

- The chief executive's position within the executive branch and in relation to parties and other political players in the wider political process has been upgraded as a result of the effects of the modern mass media, which favor a high degree of personalization of politics.
- In addition to the legal and institutional structures, the personal style also affects executive power.
 - static
 - innovative

In Israel, as in other parliamentary democracies, the fusion between the executive and legislative branches tends to particularly strengthen and favor executive power, especially that of the chief executive.

The role of the full cabinet as a true decision-making body has declined and there has been a marked tendency towards centralizing decision-making in the prime minister's office.



Sources

- Dan Korn: “The Presidentialization of Politics: the Power and Constraints of the Israeli Prime Minister”