Class on Allison

1. **Three approaches**

   (i) Aim is to understand foreign policy decisions, understood in the first instance as action undertaken by a government.

   (ii) Proposing an approach to foreign policy, not to regularities of international politics, ala Waltz. In particular, all the focus here is on agency, no structure, structural causation (selection). Agents are either single rational decision makers; or members acting on logic of approrpriateness; or plurality of rational actors.

   (iii) What are the three approaches?

   (a) rational actor: the action results from the goals and beliefs of a decision maker who is assumed to have a coherent set of goals and to be taking what he/she believes to be effective means to achieving those goals (even if those means are not in fact effective).

   (b) organization theory: the decision results from actions within organizations that follow the routines of those organizations.

   (c) bargaining: the decision results from bargaining and argument among political leaders and heads of organizations, who are themselves rational agents but pursuing different goals.

   (iv) Are these competing ways of explaining a government decisions? They may be, if we focus on the case in which an action might be either the

product of rational decision or of organizational routine. But there may also be cases in which an outcome is a product of a mix of rational and organizational factors. So suppose for example that the head of a firm decides to drop a product line because the firm's routines make it hard to produce the product (rational decision structured by capacities), or routines are creating troubles (routines are dangerous) and rational decision is made to cease an activity as a way to avoid the danger (see 164).

2. Organization theory

(i) Organizations, whether established to achieve an externally defined purpose or defined by internally generated purposes and identity, have: a division of labor with reasonably well-defined tasks and areas of responsibility; training in the performance of those tasks; standards of performance associated with different tasks; and in particular routines—or standard operating procedures—by which they work to achieve their goals (whether externally defined or self-defined).

(ii) Members follow a "logic of appropriateness": assess action not by their results (their contribution to the larger purpose of the organization) but by their conformity with rules or standards or values associated with positions in organization. [[Examples]]

(iii) Decisions by government are (in part) the product of conduct that uses these procedures and follows this logic, not of a fresh assessment of

which action will produce the best results. So we expect a bias for continuity: persistent patterns of conduct (as in the Pearl Harbor case).

(iv) Leaders need to be attentive to the capacities of organizations in deciding what to do—what goals to pursue. Organizations, when they operate well, are blunt instruments that cannot easily be steered.

(v) NB: If the organization is part of government, then there may be conflict between efforts of leaders (chief executive) to move the organization and results of organizational routine. And part of the issue is: when there are such conflicts, do we see results that flow from organizational routine, or are the routines overridden—or if not always overridden, then overridden during periods of crisis or high conflict.

3. What does organization theory help to explain?

(i) Generically, used to explain outcomes that are hard to make sense of if we think of the outcomes as the product of a single rational agent, pursuing goals in light of beliefs, or the product of a bargain or compromise among a plurality of agents with different goals. Instead, we see the result as the product of a routine or standard procedure, which (for one reason or another) cannot simply be adjusted to circumstances: establishing a capacity to adjust routines to circumstances (error detection capacity) would either conflict with goals of agents, or would defeat the purposes of having an organization.

(ii) Problem: any outcome *could* be product of a rational agent: depends on the agent's goals and beliefs. And any outcome could be the result of bargaining or compromise among rational agents: depends on what they are aiming at, and what their positions and beliefs are. No matter how ill-fitted an outcome is to a goal, nothing forces an organizational explanation.

4. **Cuban Missile Crisis**

(i) Three questions about Cuban missile crisis: why the missiles were put in, and how was their insertion implemented; why did the US respond with a blockade (rather than doing nothing, talking to Castro, taking the missiles out with large air strikes, or invading with ground forces); and why did the Soviet Union respond by withdrawing the missiles.

(ii) Rational actor view: (a) put the missiles in to get leverage on US with respect to Berlin: pressure the US to pull out, and keep the US from using force by threatening US territory. Not just Cold War bargaining, or protection of Cuba: (b) impose blockade/ultimatum because seen as middle way between doing nothing, which would be invitation to general political defeat and show a failure of resolve, and doing something that would directly lead to nuclear war; left next step to Khruschev; conduct conflict on favorable military terrain; (c) withdrawal because of concerns about US ultimatum, and threat of air strike or invasion.

(iii) Organization theory question: So what anomalies are left by this account? What is hard to explain if we see the government decisions as products of rational agents pursuing goals?

- With respect to putting the missiles in: (a) apparent insensitivity of Soviets to observation of missiles by U2 overflights: SAMs do not shoot down U2s; no camouflage for IRBMS or MRBMs; do not work at night, to hide work; sites are patterned on Soviet sites, so photos of the sites are that much easier to interpret: (b) inconsistency: why not get the MRBMs in first (less expensive and conspicuous); no protection from overhead observation despite care on the ships; trainers operational before combat aircraft (no protection); (c) contingencies for the missiles/launchers/warheads: no hardening of sites (first strike?); extra BM for each launcher (what is the reload plan?); (d) secret assignment of tactical weapons for battlefield and for coastal defense, which is not consistent with the idea of deterring an attack; (e) no effort to disguise identity of personnel, who are not in uniform but travel in formation.

- **NB: none of these anomalies/puzzles have to do with decision to insert nuclear weapons, but all have to do with the implementation of that decision, and with the fact that the implementation seems at odds with the purpose. Of course could be that we have misunderstood the purpose, which did not require secrecy but detection.**

o☐ With respect to decision to impose blockade and issue ultimatum: (a) failure to appreciate the danger in the 9/19 NIE (will not put in offensive missiles), or to detect presence of missiles until October 14; (b) organizational options: air force presents the options and does not offer a surgical strike option, so the choice is between blockade/ultimatum and large numbers of sorties or invasion. This explains why they did not choose a limited air strike, but in turn raises a question about why the option set was limited in this way; (c) organizational implementation: why

o With respect to the decision to pull the missiles out: not so clear that there is something anomalous, but there were a series of troubling events that could have produced escalation: (a) Vandenberg test flight of ICBM, scheduled earlier; (b) extensive ASW operations; (c) dispersion of bombers to civilian airports; (d) pulling Oxford out of range; (e) false early warning signal; (f) protection of U2 by nuclear armed fighters; (g) SAM attack on U2.

(iv) How does organization theory help to account for these anomalies?

- Putting the missiles in: (a) basic story is that Cuban implementation of plan is by Strategic Rocket Forces, who carry routines with them: no hardened sites in USSR; relaunch capability; no routines for camouflage (no need for it); (b) no SAM shoot down of U2 because they are used for air defense, not defense against spying (orders not to train radar on spy planes); (c) and keep information about tactical

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weapons from enemy, even though that defeats the point of deterrence, because militaries oppose revealing information; but (d) not the whole story: (i) change routine of wearing uniforms; and an alternative explanation of day time work and no camouflage is that there is a tradeoff between rapid readiness, which makes night work and camouflage impossible (because of the heat), and higher probability of keeping work secret. It is not obvious that rational actor would have chosen otherwise, given the tradeoffs and the importance of rapid deployment; (ii) unsure that U2 was around, so no reason to fire; (iii) maybe the battlefield weapons are there for defense, and the IRBMs and MRBMs are there for deterrence. Generally speaking, there is an interesting case for the proposition that the implementation, esp. on secrecy of the operation, was at odds with the purpose, but it is not clear that this was a result of organization rather than the sheer riskiness of the operation and the need for tradeoffs.

- Blockade/Ultimatum: (a) not at all clear what the organization theory adds to the intelligence issue. On any story about information gathering, it is accumulated gradually; (b) on the organizational options from air force, there appear to be two arguments. The first is that the administration was limited because the air force did not offer a surgical strike option, and they did not offer one because there was no such option with high probability of getting all the missiles. That point is not about organizations: that is a case of blaming the messenger. The

second argument is that the air force wanted an invasion, so made the air strike options seem unattractive. Now there may be an organizational story about why militaries push aggressive options, though the story may have to do with ethos or with selection of personnel, but story could also be about bureaucratic politics; (c) on organizational implementation, the argument seems to be more about how President won a conflict with the Navy and maintained close control over implementation (distance of the perimeter, boarding), because of communication possibilities that had not previously existed. [Posen-style story, about civilian control in periods of high tension.] Also, the ASW, depth charges: new procedure, not a persisting organizational routine.

- Why Soviets pulled back. Not clear how the events mentioned earlier account for the result, but maybe the story is as follows: Khruschev and Kennedy were both concerned about organizational outputs leading to disaster, either automatically or because they would force undesirable choices. Khruschev came to see that he could not depend on organizations to avoid the disastrous results, because the routines might well lead to disaster. So the only alternative, given organizational pathologies, was to stop the missile placement. But this also seems only minimally organizational. The point is that, in a dangerous situation, events may threaten a disastrous response, as in the case of

the early warning signal. But not clear how Khruschev was responding

specifically to organization-driven dangers.