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The Barometer

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THE BAROMETER

(Writer comments on Dr. Howe's article "Wolfpack: Measure and Counter" in the April issue.)

Dr. Howe's article "Wolfpack: Measure and Counter" provides a reader with an accurate and comprehensive understanding of Wolfpack tactics as they have been used in the past. However, it appears that his approach to the advantages and disadvantages of the tactical usefulness of a wolfpack tactic in a future confrontation have been oversimplified and, therefore, his conclusion that "... it is apparent that the submarine coordinated attack is once again feasible," perhaps needs additional consideration.

He lists as significant technological changes since World War II which favor the submarine as the nuclear, self-guiding, and enhanced ranges capabilities of the weapons; the improvement in passive sonar detection capability; and the enhanced submerged endurance and speed of the submarine brought about by the advent of nuclear power.

The considerations given in favor of ASW units of expendable aircraft sonobuoys, powerful active surface ship sonar, and improved radars and electronics intercept equipment are certainly to be considered valid as deterrents against a wolfpack tactic. However, the problem of command and control of the submarine if they cannot communicate with one another without fear of detection raises serious doubts as to the feasibility of employing the wolfpack tactic. The conditions for a wolfpack attack to develop suggested by Dr. Howe still exist, i.e., either the

command headquarters must be able to maintain an accurate tactical picture (which it is considered to be extremely difficult, if not impossible on a real time basis) and transmit this information to each attacking submarine (who is now presumably transiting deep at high speeds with limited communication reception capability) or there must be an on scene commander to coordinate the attack. If the latter is to be the case, then modern technology has significantly reduced the ability of the submarine to remain concealed. An active sonar or radio transmission may alert the adversary and the advantage of surprise lost.

In contradiction to this dilemma is the advantage of longer weapon and sensor ranges which could permit a wolfpack to open up its tactical formation in order to reduce the dangers of mutual interference, thereby permitting tactical control from a shorebased headquarters, however, such a dispersal would no doubt result in area assignment thereby reducing the probability that a number of submarines would be within effective weapon range at a given time.

Given the capabilities of today's submarines and antisubmarine forces, it appears feasible that perhaps more than one submarine could be designated to attack a surface force, but not by using a wolfpack tactic similar to that employed by Doenitz in World War II.

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(Writer critiques Mr. Norford's paper "Systems Analysis: a Missing Element in Foreign Policy Planning" in the January issue.)

Mr. Richard F. Norford's paper titled "Systems Analysis: a Missing Element in Foreign Policy Planning" (*Naval War College Review*, January 1971), called for, as the title suggests, the adoption of systems analysis in our foreign policy planning. His scholarly paper argued a viewpoint that is becoming increasingly popular. There are, I believe however, some basic misconceptions concerning the general operational application of systems analysis to foreign policy planning. In this critique I will attempt to demonstrate that systems analysis, as we now know it, is applicable only to specialized areas of the foreign policy process.

Mr. Norford argues that our foreign policy planning is inadequate. He questions the existence of any attempt at long-range planning and the evaluation of long-term consequences of possible actions. He suggests that the traditional (rational decisionmaking) approach, has not been able to satisfy all planning needs and suggests that "systems analysis" could conceivably fill the gap.

A prime attribute claimed for systems analysis is that it recommends or helps a decisionmaker make a choice. And it is designed to systematically define, create, and evaluate all feasible alternatives to broad and complex problems in such a way that areas requiring value judgments are clearly identified.¹ As I understand Mr. Norford, he identifies five elements of systems analysis:

- **Problem definition.** Systems analysis was developed to analyze complex problems involving choice and to help establish long-range policies.

- **Alternative approaches.** Systems analysis aids in the search for, and evaluation of, alternative approaches or policies for accomplishing or pursuing objectives.

- **Expense.** Systems analysis identi-

fies the costs to be incurred, such as time, money, and resources.

- **Analytical model.** Systems analysis provides a model to compare and evaluate the consequences of alternative policies and objectives.

- **Alternative ranking.** Systems analysis provides the criteria for ranking alternatives and for indicating the most promising alternative within the limitations of the analysis.

Mr. Norford provides us with abundant descriptive material about the capabilities of systems analysis, but does not demonstrate how it can cope operationally with real world foreign policy planning situations. In answer to his own question, "What is Systems Analysis?," Mr. Norford responds, "Systems analysis cannot be described in a meaningful way by a simple, short definition. . . . However, it is probably safe to say that during the past decade the most popular association of the term 'systems analysis' has been with the process of weapon systems development and evaluation."² Operationalizing the concept and adapting it to foreign policy planning is the crux of our discussion, for without this capability systems analysis is not a usable element in political planning.

In order to arrive at a judgment whether systems analysis is transferable to foreign policy planning as an operational concept, we shall first clarify the term "system" and then explore the concept of "systems analysis" in the context of two versions mentioned by Mr. Norford—the David Easton and the Department of Defense models. (Mr. Norford does not imply that the Easton model is operational for foreign policy planning. This model is, however, commonly referred to in the political science discipline and, accordingly, is considered an excellent basis for explanation of the systems theory.)

Professor John P. Lovell, in his discussion of the process of making foreign policy decisions, sees the concept of a

"system" as implying a series of component parts that together are capable of performing some purposeful activity.

Thus, although Winston Churchill's six volumes on World War II are components of a set, this set is not a system, since the books themselves perform no activity. We would, however, consider the network of pipes, furnace, air vents, and thermostat in a house a system, because the aggregation of components performs the purposeful activity of heating the house.³

He sees the system concept as implying "... a functional interrelationship of the major components of the system."⁴

The major points then, are the purposeful activity associated with a system and the functional interrelationship of system components, such as the organs within the human body, that stress system maintenance or equilibrium.

According to David Easton, ... there is already implicit the notion that each part of the larger political canvas does not stand alone but is related to each other part; or, to put it positively, that the operation of no one part can be fully understood without reference to the way in which the

whole itself operates . . . it is valuable to adopt this implicit assumption as an articulate premise for research and to view political life as a system of interrelated activities. These activities derive their relatedness or systemic ties from the fact that they all more or less influence the way in which authoritative decisions are formulated and executed for a society.⁵

Systemic reasoning is certainly an acceptable concept in today's complex arena of international politics, but can we operationalize Easton's model for foreign policy planning?

Figure 1 shows Austin Ranney's adaptation of David Easton's simplified model of the policy process.⁶ The *domestic* policy formulator, in this schema, is part of the POLITICAL SYSTEM. The policy formulator is moved to action by some type of DEMAND, and after a legitimation process, his product is represented by policy OUTPUT. After implementation, the actual or empirical results of the policy are known as the OUTCOME. The foreign policy planner, on the other hand, has a more difficult problem as he is faced with the complexities of the domestic planner plus additional factors superimposed at the regional and inter-

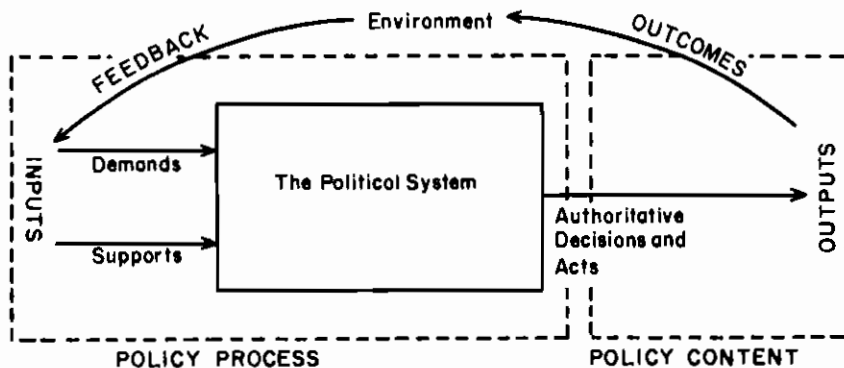


Fig. 1—The "Policy Process"

Source: Adapted from David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York: Wiley, 1965) diagram 2, p. 32.

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national levels of foreign affairs. For example, the domestic planner finds proposing an increase in monthly social security payments a controversial issue within the U.S. political system. The foreign policy planner, in recommending a reduction of U.S. troop strength in Europe, finds domestic debate, regional resistance in NATO, and international implications vis-a-vis possible Soviet reactions. Our problem remains. Is the model really operable for foreign policy planning? David Easton said, "This diagram represents a very primitive 'model'—to dignify it with a fashionable name—for approaching the study of political life."⁷ Easton's objective is to develop a general empirically oriented theory as the most economical way, in the long run, to understand political life. As a tool for political understanding, the Easton model is used to analyze past events in a known and describable environment. As such, the systems model is basically static and structural-functional. That is to say, for instance, in analyzing the U.S. decision to enter the Korean war—various structures of Government, like the executive, legislative, defense, and judicial are individually analyzed to determine their particular function (action or inaction) in bringing about the decision. This type of historical analysis tends to emphasize stability, consensus, and general equilibrium in the political system—none of which typify reality in the planning of foreign policy. The Easton model is a useful heuristic device for the understanding of the policy process; however, there is a danger in "pushing" the model beyond its intended use, by attempting to adopt it as an operational foreign policy planning tool.

Mr. Norford cites Dr. Enthoven as stating,

... systems analysis [as practiced in the Department of Defense] is just one name for an approach to problems of decision making that good management has always

practiced... it is a reasoned approach to highly complicated problems of choice characterized by much uncertainty; it provides room for very differing values and judgments; and it seeks alternative ways of doing the job.⁸

This again according to Dr. Enthoven, is merely describing disciplined, orderly thought. Perhaps, then, the nature of the problems considered in defense planning, as contrasted with foreign policy planning, may determine if systems analysis is the suitable analytic tool to use. The nature or type of problem considered may also help explain why systems analysis has been so successful in the Department of Defense.

The following type of question appears particularly suited to the application of systems analysis in the Department of Defense context: What mix of ICBM's will provide the United States with an assured second-strike capability, of unacceptable proportions to any enemy, after the United States has been subjected to a preemptive strike? It seems this type of question lends itself superbly to the analytic framework described by Mr. Norford. His five elements of systems analysis, mentioned earlier in this paper, appear a natural "fit" to the very essence of the problem. Certain assumptions must be made, such as what constitutes unacceptable damage to the enemy, what is the survival factor for existing U.S. strategic missiles in the face of a surprise strategic attack? Given the quantity and characteristics of the various U.S. and enemy ICBM's, a mathematical approach could be followed where, in all probability, alternate solutions would satisfy our question—but at different costs. The systems analysis approach would assist us in alternative ranking. Resolution of such a question demands complicated, rigorous analysis followed by a choice of the best alternative; but it should be

noted, the generic choice is predefined—ICBM's!

Foreign policy, on the other hand, is seldom unilateral and often interdisciplinary. It can affect the political, military, economic, sociological, and a host of other disciplines with equal facility. Its implications and ramifications can, and often do, cause unforeseen responses in unanticipated areas. To plan for "unlikely events," such as the Czechoslovakian invasion, The "Seven Day" war, The Cuban missile crisis, or the seizure of the *Pueblo*—to name but a few situations in which U.S. foreign policy planning has been criticized—would appear to be asking for an infinite number of contingency plans. Once the event or situation is perceived, however, a framework of references can be established in which the field of choice becomes more manageable. At this point purposeful and practical planning can become a reality.

Still, one must admit systems analysis could be useful in such current type of issue as the SST controversy. Now that the U.S. Congress has withdrawn Federal support from the American version of the plane, there must be a policy on overflights of the United States and landing rights in the United States for the Soviet as well as the Anglo-French aircraft. It seems a frame of reference could readily be derived and a manageable number of choices could systematically be evaluated for this perceivable event.

In a change of leadership situation, for instance, could systems analysis assist foreign policy planners prepare for an event like the death of Stalin? Here again the quantity of dependent and independent variables is overwhelming. As a basic premise, our overall policy toward the U.S.S.R. is one that supports our national interest, as perceived by our political leadership. Then, perhaps, our problem is one of implementing rather than of changing the existing policy. This would depend more upon

the actions and attitudes of the new Soviet leadership than upon the fact that Stalin must die. The point here is that the seemingly limitless possibilities and probabilities attached to an inevitable event, which will occur at an unknown time, mitigate against any formalistic advance plan, whether it be accomplished by systems analysis or "traditional" methods. Pertinent to this situation is the aged problem of political science, differentiating fact from value. (What "is" vs. what "is thought to be.") Perhaps nowhere is it more apparent than in prognosticating the outcome of a foreign policy. If this isn't convincing, one only has to attempt to build, for example, a U.S. policy toward the People's Republic of China effective upon the death of Chairman Mao. The three conditions any political order tries to fulfill—security, satisfaction, and flexibility—can be assumed to be the basis of present and future policy.⁹ However, the practical implications of a definitive policy to fulfill these general goals are dependent upon the attitude of the post-Mao regime in the international environment at that time.

The highly publicized and dramatic international event, like in the previous examples, tends to emphasize deficiencies in foreign policy planning. And it is in these exact areas that accurate planning is critically needed, but also it is a tenuous area because of the numerous unknowns in any future political situation. Systems analysis, it seems, offers precious little assistance here.

The discussion here is to question systems analysis as a concept operationally suitable for general foreign policy planning. It seems Professor Lovell best summarized our position when he wrote:

... rarely are all the facts relevant to a given decision available; those facts that are available often become so intertwined with values that it is impossible to distinguish a factual appraisal of a given

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course of action from a value judgment about its relative merits.¹⁰

... policy decisions, far from representing the systematic application of pure reason to a given set of circumstances, facts and opinions, characteristically represents a process of trial and error in which policy changes are made incrementally in response to the exigencies of both domestic and foreign politics.¹¹

The complexities of facts, values, and unknowns, inherent in the formation of foreign policy, preclude the arbitrary application of systems analysis to every policy problem. This in no way dis-

misses quantitative analysis or the scientific methodology as irrelevant and a waste of time in the field of political science. They are both useful tools to the foreign policy planner in situations where meaningful data and a conceptual framework for the situations are available. Systems analysis falls into the same special category. As desirable as it may be, neither the Easton nor the Department of Defense model is transferable to all areas of foreign policy planning as fully operational concepts. Political scientists must make further advances and theoretical breakthroughs before systems analysis becomes a routine procedure in the planning of foreign policy.

NOTES

1. Richard F. Norford, "Systems Analysis: a Missing Element in Foreign Policy Planning," *Naval War College Review*, January 1971, p. 88.
2. *Ibid.*
3. John P. Lovell, *Foreign Policy in Perspective: Strategy, Adaptation, Decision Making* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), p. 214.
4. *Ibid.*
5. David Easton, "An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems," *World Politics*, April 1957, p. 383-84.
6. Austin Ranney, "The Study of Policy Content: a Framework for Choice," Austin Ranney, ed., *Political Science and Public Policy* (Chicago: Markah, 1968), p. 9. I use Ranney's adaptation of Easton's model in this discussion because it elaborates the policy process more fully than the original model, and without altering Easton's conceptual framework.
7. Easton, p. 334.
8. Norford, p. 89.
9. Stanley Hoffman, *The State of War* (New York: Praeger, 1965), p. 20.
10. Lovell, p. 221.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 222.

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