A Hybridization Of An Allison-Barber Model Of Decision-Making In Explanation Of The Iran-Contra Affair

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A HYBRIDIZATION OF AN ALLISON-BARBER MODEL OF DECISION-MAKING IN EXPLANATION OF THE IRAN-CONTRA AFFAIR

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Graduation with Honors to the Department of Political Science at Carroll College, Helena, Montana

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April 2, 1990
This thesis for honors recognition has been approved for the Department of Political Science.

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ABSTRACT

The Iran-Contra Affair of the 1980's created such a scandal upon its discovery that it was likened to the Watergate scandal of the 1970's. For a time there were fears that a second U. S. President might be forced to resign his office in disgrace. Serious questions were raised about the intent and direction of the U. S. foreign policy. I will argue that the entire affair occurred as a result of a combination of a certain Presidential type and a certain process of decision-making. I will rely heavily on the work of Graham T. Allison and James David Barber to formulate an explanation as to why the Iran-Contra Affair was possible.
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CHAPTER 1
AN INTRODUCTION

The last year has seen an occurrence of world events that in the not so distant past seemed utterly impossible. Communism's apparent decline in the Eastern block has proceeded at a pace that is startling. The Berlin Wall, long a reminder to the West of what the future held should vigilance be abandoned, is now becoming the source of entrepreneurial profits. On the other side of the world in Nicaragua, where Communism had apparently gained that feared first stronghold in the Americas (Cuba not withstanding), the Sandinistas were voted out of power. One would have to wonder whether the irony of these events crosses the minds of some of the principals in the Iran-Contra Affair as they prepare for yet another courtroom ordeal.

As Retired Admiral John Poindexter is being tried, charged with making false statements to Congress and obstructing Congressional inquiries, he could take some comfort in the fact that despite the expenditure of some $18 million dollars and the retention of a slough of attorneys and staff, "no one, not even Iran-Contra's private contractors Richard Secord and Albert Hakim and the celebrated Lt. Colonel Oliver North, has served time."1 It

- 1 -
is a foregone conclusion that Poindexter, despite earlier protestations that the "buck stopped with me," will attempt to show that he was working under the auspices of the President. North had used that line of reasoning, that he was acting on order of his superiors, in his trial which netted convictions on three counts (currently under appeal) and a $150,000 fine. President Ronald Reagan, in video-taped testimony, "unsurprisingly insisted that he never authorized any illegal acts by subordinates, including Mr. Poindexter." No matter what the outcome of the Poindexter trial, the true mystery of the Iran-Contra Affair will be what President Reagan knew and when. The answers to those questions are vital not only to President Reagan's place in history but also to serious students of the U. S. foreign policy formulation process.

Should it turn out that Reagan was unaware of his subordinates actions, it could have great import for some of the currently held theories of foreign policy formulation. Was it possible that a small informal group of non-elected functionaries could formulate and implement (for a period of almost 2 years) an actual foreign policy that was in direct opposition to the stated policy of the President of the United States? If in fact such an occurrence was possible, was it a mere aberration, a glitch in the system so to speak, or did it reveal a new direction in future foreign policy possibilities? Under what circumstances would it be
possible, given that this is the age of rapid, accurate, and comprehensive informational data gathering, for agents acting in the name of the United States, to conceal their actions from the highest officials of the land? Such were the type and import of the questions which caused my interest and subsequent investigation into some possible answers. This thesis contains the results of that investigation, and it is hoped that the reader will come away with a better understanding of the Iran-Contra Affair and why it may have occurred.

There already exist a number of different theoretical approaches to the field of foreign policy formulation. As J. David Singer says,

We [political scientists] have, in our texts and elsewhere, roamed up and down the ladder of organizational complexity with remarkable abandon, focusing upon the total system, international organizations, regions, coalitions, extranational associations, nations, domestic pressure groups, social classes, elites and individuals as the needs of the moment required. These foci of analysis are each, in their own way, appropriate to a given situation. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses. For instance, in the international system, nations are forced into positions they normally might not wish to adopt but which are necessary for their survival. With the prospect of war always present, each nation, by utilizing shifting alliances, seeks to establish as much self-sufficiency and control as possible. Such a system might serve to explain long term goals, but it
is less useful as an explanation of individual decisions. "The international system can be brought to bear in explaining almost all foreign policy." Although it "posits constraints and imperatives on actors, it does not provide the basis for predicting specific outcomes." On the other hand,

Theories that are lodged at the decision-making level rely on variables that tend to come and go with individuals themselves; patterns and regularities in foreign policy will be tied closely to sets of intervening conditions. At the same time decision-making theories may be able to capture more of the richness and critical detail of foreign policy.

If one chooses to explore foreign policy analysis from a perspective of a national or international setting, then one would seem to overlook the actors (the decision makers themselves). These formulations should remain the same no matter which individuals are inserted into the setting. Foreign affairs, like history, become more complex when individuals are included. To omit people in an exposition on foreign policy formulations seems to be a deficiency that misses a chance for a greater depth of understanding. Based upon that belief, I find it credible, and indeed mandatory, to consider the Iran-Contra Affair from the decision-making level.

Having settled on an analytical level, there remains the problem of direction. Directional focus, too, leaves a series of choices. "One group of theories focuses on the manner in which government bureaucracy shapes the content of
policy." We should note that "The decision-making level has also been approached by other scholars who focus on the beliefs and cognition of top leaders." With regard to the bureaucracy, it would seem that, as G. John Ikenberry says, "The seminal statement of this approach is provided by Graham Allison," who authored a book on the decision-making process during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. While I do not believe that his entire theory is applicable to the Iran-Contra Affair, I believe we can adapt at least a portion of his ideas in an attempt to find an explanation.

With regard to the cognition and beliefs of the top leaders, I believe we will run into a little more difficulty. First, we must delve into the literature and select an approach which best fits our needs. Robert Jervis and his investigation of the effect of an actor's misperception on subsequent decisions holds promise.

In determining how he will behave, an actor must try to predict how others will act and how their actions will affect his values. The actor must therefore develop an image of others and their intentions. This image may, however, turn out to be an inaccurate one; the actor may for a number of reasons misperceive both others' actions and their intentions.

Perhaps the information of the Iran-Contra Affair was somehow misinterpreted or adapted to the actor's view and, therefore, would be of some help in defining an explanation. The weakness here is that very little information reached the top actors. Likewise, Irving Janis and his "groupthink" hypothesis would seem to be ruled out on the basis of this
lack of information at the top levels of the executive branch and, therefore, a less than ideal situation for the principles of "groupthink" to be applied.

Irving Janis presents a different approach to misperception in foreign policy making by focusing on dynamics of group decision. Most important decisions in American foreign policy are made within a group setting. Within such a setting, Janis argues, pressure for conformity consistently appears. When one member of the group appears to deviate from the group's norms, efforts are made to tone down or change the view of the dissident. If this fails, the ideas of the deviant member tend to be ignored. . . . Misperception occurs when the "members' striving for unanimity overrides their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action."11

The pressures were not there because the information and the group meetings were not there.

A further restriction, it would seem, as to our options regarding belief and cognition is the dearth of information, at this point, concerning those beliefs and thought processes. The Cuban Missile Crisis is well documented as to the principals and their thought processes. The Iran-Contra Affair, at this time, has not the wealth of concurrent revelations. Still, using facts gained about some of the principals in the Affair, and relying on theoretical help from James David Barber's work on presidential types, I believe it possible to form a relatively accurate portrayal of the operative belief and cognition systems. The conjoining of aspects from Allison and Barber will, I believe, allow us to draw some sound conclusions about what happened in the Iran-Contra Affair.
and why. As we set to the task of exploring these ideas we "may have to live with the fact that our answers to these questions will not be definitive." But if nothing else, it should offer at least a base upon which to build.
CHAPTER 2

THE IRAN-CONTRA AFFAIR: A RESULT, NOT A CHOICE

Although that most recent American foreign policy debacle, the Iran-Contra Affair, occurred in the 1980's, its ideological underpinnings had their inception in the 1940's. Two events occurred in that era which were to prove significant to the Iran-Contra Affair. The United States and the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics entered into a process that would become known as the Cold War. It has served as a foundation for American thinking on foreign policy problems from Greece in the late 1940's to Iran and Nicaragua in the 1980's. The brush with nuclear war in the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis led to a thawing of relations that lasted through Nixon's first term and the Salt I agreements. By late 1979, however, Soviet interventionist policies had fostered a cooling of relations which turned outright frigid with their invasion of Afghanistan in 1980.

The second event of significance was the creation of the National Security Council (NSC) in 1947, with its mandate "to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic foreign and military policies relating to the national security." Originally conceived of and generally considered a purely advisory body, it
became dependent upon each President and his personal preferences as to the amount and frequency of usage it received. While utilized as a principal forum for national security advice from Richard Nixon on, "Each President has kept the burden of decision for himself, in accordance with his constitutional responsibilities."² We shall see there was a breakdown of such traditions in the Iran-Contra Affair.

There has been a great deal of skepticism, particularly by those well acquainted with the military and its procedures, that a mere Lt. Colonel could exercise as much power as Marine Lt. Colonel Oliver North. It is my contention that given the renewal of the Cold War, the perversion of the NSC mandate (possibly brought about by the Presidential character), and the political maneuvering of the principals involved, the Ollie North phenomenon is actually quite credulous. I believe the events of the Iran-Contra Affair can be clarified by the idea that

The decisions and actions of governments are intranational political resultants: resultants in the sense that what happens is not chosen as a solution to a problem but rather results from compromise, conflict and confusion of officials with diverse interests and unequal influence. . . .³

The idea of resultants is particularly salient, I believe, because the Iran-Contra Affair seems to represent not so much a policy of chosen course as it does action as a result of a series of circumstances and events. Those circumstances and events would include the background
previously mentioned, the apparent Communist threat in Iran as well as Nicaragua, the personalities of the main players (which in turn had an effect on their actions or their lack of same), and the conflicts, compromises and confusion of those same players.

On January 20, 1981, Ronald Reagan was sworn in as President of the United States. He had soundly defeated Jimmy Carter in the 1980 election primarily because of an overall perception that Jimmy Carter was a weak President. The seizure of the American Embassy in Tehran and the subsequent hostage drama had merely served to reinforce that perception. When Iran seized the U. S. Embassy in retaliation for the Shah's admittance to the United States, the U. S. quickly tied up the transfer of any Iranian property, froze its assets, and placed an embargo on all trade, particularly of arms promised to the Shah. When the hostages were released in 1981 many of these sanctions were lifted as part of the release agreement, but the arms embargo remained, mostly in support of the professed neutrality of the U. S. in the Iran-Iraq War which broke out in 1980. The Reagan administration had also, from the first, adopted a tough, non-concessionary stand against terrorism. As a result of numerous bombings and assassinations, promulgated at least in part by terrorist groups receiving support from Iran, "the Secretary of State designated Iran a sponsor of international terrorism."4
Subsequently, the U. S. "actively pressured its allies not to ship arms to Iran." This occurred in early 1984.

Pro-Iran terrorist groups in Lebanon seized seven American hostages between March 1984 and June 1985, one of whom was William Buckley, the CIA Chief of Station. The leader of Iran, the Ayatollah Khomeini, was in his eighties and was rumored to be seriously ill. The Soviets had invaded Afghanistan in early 1980, ostensibly at the request of the Soviet-sponsored regime ruling there, and apparently had settled in for a prolonged stay.

Few in the U. S. government doubted Iran's strategic importance or the risk of Soviet meddling in the succession crisis that might follow the death of Khomeini.

These facts when considered by U. S. policy analysts in 1984 led to one inescapable conclusion. There were major dislocations possible in the entire Mid-East area and the U.S. was in a poor position to exert any influence whatsoever. As a result of an NSC interagency study requested in early 1984 by Robert McFarlane, President Reagan's National Security Advisor, and others on the NSC staff, it was determined both by the State Department and the CIA that the U. S. had "no influential contacts," "a limited ability to influence events," and could "do [little] to establish such contacts." No new ideas or policy approaches to Iran were forthcoming and the U. S. continued to discourage arms sales to Iran.
There existed a small group of NSC staffers led by Howard Teicher and Donald Fortier who were dissatisfied with the interagency study results and alarmed by CIA beliefs that fractional infighting in Iran could break out before Khomeini died. As a result, because they "placed a high priority on fashioning a strategy for acquiring influence and checking the Soviets in Iran," they worked with the CIA to update an intelligence estimate which suggested that while the U. S. was in a poor position to influence Iran, some U. S. allies were not. It was suggested in a draft Presidential document that those allies be encouraged "to help Iran meet its import requirements...includ[ing] provision of selected military equipment." McFarlane, at the request of Teicher and Fortier, circulated the draft to three of the principals of the NSC, George Shultz, Secretary of State, Casper Weinberger, Secretary of Defense, and CIA Director William Casey. The draft was soundly rejected by Shultz and Weinberger but strongly endorsed by Casey. McFarlane, as a result of the objections, told Teicher and Fortier to "stand down" on the effort and the President was never informed of the proposal. This marked the end of formal interagency policy processes to affect a change in U. S. policy towards Iran.

During this same time period, events on the other side of the world were unfolding that would eventually enmesh the U. S., Iran and Nicaragua in a bizarre scenario
of covert operations, high profit arms deals and governmental cover up. The Sandinistas in Nicaragua overthrew the Somoza regime in July of 1979 and slowly consolidated their grip on the country from then until 1981. As part of that consolidation, the Sandinistas forged closer ties with Cuba and other East bloc governments in exchange for arms, advisors and assistance. As a result, [then] "Candidate Ronald Reagan stated his firm opposition to any further support for the Sandinistas."\textsuperscript{10} During this same period a rather eclectic group, based both in Nicaragua and in surrounding countries, rose up in opposition to the Sandinista regime and became known as the Contras. In 1981 the Contras looked to the U. S. to supply their movement and found a willing ally in [by now] President Ronald Reagan.

In late 1981 President Reagan authorized the CIA to undertake covert paramilitary actions against the Sandinistas. "Sponsoring the CIA's new covert program in Central America was the Director of Central Intelligence, William J. Casey."\textsuperscript{11} In mid-1982, without the benefit of a broader Presidential authorization, CIA activities were stepped up to include training and arming the Contras. When news of this reached the press in late 1982, an extended debate over aid ensued in Congress. The dispute centered around whether the aid was to stop the Sandinistas from spreading their revolution to other Central American
countries or whether it was to overthrow the Sandinista government.

There followed a year of wrangling in which finally in 1983 the U. S. House of Representatives agreed to provide funds to help stop arms flow from the Sandinistas to Salvadorian rebels but no funding for the Contras. The Republican-controlled Senate, after the President authorized a covert program that was designed to pressure the Sandinistas to accept free elections, agreed to fund covert aid. A House/Senate compromise was agreed to and a $24 million dollar cap was set. Realizing that funds were about to run out, the CIA stepped up its operations, and as a part of that process Lt. Col. Oliver North was made liaison between the NSC and the CIA. Also as a part of the CIA effort the harbors of Nicaragua were mined and the resultant uproar in Congress dimmed the prospects of future aid agreements; indeed, in 1984 Congress cut off all funding for the Contras. Although this move was specifically aimed at the CIA, Congress understood it to mean the U. S. Government was to stop funding the Contras. The Administration, however, was determined to, as McFarlane paraphrased the President, "keep the Contras together body and soul."

Oliver North was assigned this responsibility:

Between 1984 and 1986, Lt. Col. North, with the acquiescence of the National Security Advisor, performed activities the CIA was unable to undertake itself, including the facilitation of outside fundraising efforts and the oversight of a private network to supply lethal equipment to the Contras.
What follows reads much like a Tom Clancy novel and would take as long, at least, to relate in any sort of detail. The events are so complex that it is difficult within the scope of this paper to render them comprehensible. In essence what occurred was the formation of a group, outside the normal channels of government, unchecked by either Congressional oversight or fiscal control, that formulated and implemented programs that directly affected (and generally ran contrary to the stated goals of) U. S. foreign policy. The group was comprised of McFarlane, his deputy (and later National Security Advisor), Adm. John Poindexter, North, and Casey for certain. It definitely had to involve other functionaries from CIA, Department of Defense (DOD) and the FBI, although to what extent is unknown. This group solicited donations from third countries and private donors, funneled the funds through a private organization called "The Enterprise" and supported the Contras.

At the suggestion of Director Casey, North recruited Richard V. Secord, a retired Air Force Major General with experience in special operations. Secord and his associate, Albert Hakim, created what they called "The Enterprise," a private organization designed to engage in covert activities on behalf of the United States.  

Thus this group managed to effectively arm and maintain the Contras in Nicaragua throughout 1984, 1985 and 1986. Finally,

On June 25, 1986 the House approved the Administration's request for $100 million in Contra aid. Although the
bill would not become law for another 3 months, the vote ensured passage of the Contra aid legislation. . . . The $100 million aid package marked the first time in more than 2 years that the House had voted to provide lethal assistance to the Contras. [italics mine]

At about the same time that a proposal by NSC staff to use U. S. allies to help Iran with its "import" problems was being rejected by most of the principals of the NSC, a TWA flight going from Athens to Rome was hijacked and forced to Beirut. News of the passengers' ordeal and the flight's odyssey around the Mid-East dominated the news for two weeks before the passengers of the flight were released--not, however, before one American serviceman was brutally murdered. The events highlighted America's impotence in the whole Mid-East area. This occurred in June of 1985. In July McFarlane was approached by Mr. Kimche, Director of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, and

He recalled Mr. Kimche as saying these Iranian officials had conveyed to Israel their interest in a discourse with the United States. Contact was to be handled through an intermediary (later disclosed to be Mr. Ghorbanifor) who was represented as having good connections to Iranian officials. [italics mine]

This was not the first time Ghorbanifor's name had popped up in government dealings. For about a year prior to this he had been talking to various people about a ransom of money and possibly other items for the hostages in Beirut. The CIA had had contacts with him but had discounted him as unreliable. Israel also inquired as to the possibility of U. S. replenishment of Israeli military wares should they be depleted by sales to Iran.
The Israelis indicated that Iran had posed the exchange of the seven American hostages held in Lebanon for 100 TOW (Tube-launched, Optically Tracked, Wire Guided) missiles. Ninety-six were delivered in August and 408 more in September, and one of the hostages, Benjamin Weir, was released. The actual circumstances under which such a decision was made are, as the Tower Report stated, "quite murky." McFarlane testified that he discussed the swap with the President and he acquiesced. The President first said he did, then that he didn't, then that he didn't remember. Shultz and Weinberger testified that they argued against the swap and that the President agreed with them. Donald Regan, President Reagan's Chief of Staff, "stated that the President was 'upset' at the news [of the sale] and that Mr. McFarlane explained that the Israelis had simply taken it upon themselves to do this."17 As a result of the failure to get all of the hostages released, a second deal was set up between Israel and Iran and the NSC group in which an exchange of HAWK (anti-aircraft) missiles and the hostages would be made. McFarlane informed the President as he was about to leave for a summit meeting with the Russians in Geneva. "Regan, who was present, said it was: Just a momentary conversation, which was not a detailed briefing to the President, that there [is] something up between Israel and Iran."18 McFarlane, busy in Geneva at the summit, put North in charge of the second deal. North brought in Secord
as well as the CIA and ultimately 18 Hawks were delivered, but the Iranians were dissatisfied. No hostages were released.

It was from this point on that the NSC took over operational control of the dealings with Iran. The principals involved all have different memories of the various events. There is disagreement as to whether the President signed a November authorization for arms shipments to Iran. The President said he did not. McFarlane said he did, Poindexter said he did, but later he (Poindexter) destroyed it. On the day after the supposed authorization, "North remarked during a meeting with Israeli officials that the United States wanted to use profits from the upcoming arms sales to Iran to fund U. S. activity in Nicaragua." Thus the pattern was set. The NSC would sell arms to Iran in the vain hope that the hostages would be freed. The Iranians would be overcharged and the money was siphoned off, ostensibly to support the Contras in Nicaragua. This even led McFarlane and North to a secret flight to Tehran. All of it came to an end on October 6, 1986. On that day a C-123 was shot down over Nicaragua and the sole survivor, one Eugene Hasenfus, an American citizen, was captured. The plane was loaded with arms and ammunition. The plane was traced to a former CIA proprietary airline. North tried to stall the inevitable investigations by the FBI, but the Department of Customs and the House also started
investigations. As more and more of the story started to come out, the NSC staff prepared a fake set of chronologies, and North, and presumably Casey, destroyed incriminating documents. In general, all of the principals appear to have obfuscated facts, lied or stonewalled.

In its summary of the Iran-Contra Affair, the Congressional Committees found that "Arms-for-hostages and profits-for-Contra-support were conflicting goals that would not be reconciled" and that as a result "too many drivers--and never the right ones--steering in too many different directions took the Iran initiative down the road to failures." Such a pronouncement certainly bears resemblance to "compromise, conflict and confusion of officials with diverse interests and unequal influence."
CHAPTER 3
IN SEARCH OF EXPLANATIONS

The Allison Paradigms Explored

The development of an understanding of the "why" of the Iran-Contra Affair is contingent upon the formation of some sort of theoretical model. I have already suggested the idea that such a model could possibly be based on the works of Barber and Allison. It is to this end that we now must turn. In 1971 Graham T. Allison put forth a work entitled Essence of Decision, in which he attempted to offer some explanation as to the "why" of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. In this work he offered three paradigms, as he called them, or more simply, models of decision-making processes which might be applied to the events of that crisis. While it could be argued that the stakes of the Iran-Contra Affair are in no way comparable to the stakes of the Cuban Missile Crisis (nuclear annihilation), I nonetheless believe these models may be useful in formulating the answers to our "why". Allison's models are not restricted to crisis situations but are applicable to all decision-making.

Allison has done an admirable job in his book of explaining the theoretical underpinnings and subsequent
derivations of his three models and thus I shall not embark upon that same journey here. I would advise and urge the inquisitive reader to take up Allison's opus. Here I hope only to sketch the broad outline of the models so that the reader can follow the reasoning and conclusions to be advanced later. Allison labelled his three paradigms: the Rational Actor, the Organizational Process, and the Governmental Politics Process. In using these models he proposed possible explanations as to why the U.S.S.R. placed missiles in Cuba in the first place, why the U.S. reacted with a blockade and the threat of direct military intervention, and why the U.S.S.R. ultimately acquiesced to the removal of the missiles. As it is in most cases, things are never as entirely simple as they may seem.

In the first model, the Rational Actor model, "Governments select the action that will maximize strategic goals and objectives."¹ In this model the government is seen as one unitary actor faced with some sort of problem. "Threats and opportunities arising in the international strategic 'marketplace' move the nation to act."² The solution to any given problem requires that the government, the actor, look at the problem, determine what the aims or objectives of the actor are with reference to the problem, determine what options are available to the actor in line with those aims or objectives, determine the costs and the benefits assumed by the actor with each option, and then
select an option. That selection is predicated on the idea that

Rational choice is value-maximizing. The rational agent selects the alternative whose consequences rank highest in terms of his goals and objectives.  

The explanatory properties of such a model should be readily obvious anytime a governmental action is observed and one is searching for an explanation as to why that government performed that action. One only has to seek the end for which the action is the maximizing means. According to Allison, for example, the U.S.S.R. saw itself at a serious disadvantage with regard to missile parity. The implantation of Russian missiles on its ally's soil solved that problem in the quickest, most cost effective way possible. Such action was, therefore, the only possible rational choice. Allison argues that while this model is certainly plausible, it does not explain all of the anomalies of the Russian actions in placing the missiles.

The second model, the Organizational Process Paradigm, involves a more complex perception of governmental action.

Activity according to standard operating procedures and programs does not constitute far sighted, flexible adaptation to "the issue" (as it is concerned by the analyst). Detail and nuance of actions by organizations are determined chiefly by organizational routines, not governmental leaders' directions.

Decision making in this mode renders action not decided upon but arrived at, and thus it has a flavor of automaticity.
guided by rigid rules and procedures that govern their behavior. Alterations in those standard ways of operating are necessarily slow in coming and are incremental in scope. Any sense of flexibility or adaptability to change is negated.

Existing organizational orientations and routines are not impervious to directed change. Careful targeting of major factors that support routines—such as personnel, rewards, information, and budgets—can effect major changes over time. But the terms and conditions of most political leadership jobs—short tenure and responsiveness to hot issues—make effective, directed change uncommon.

For Allison the Organizational Process model serves to explain some of the gaps left by Model I (the Rational Actor). If the Soviets were attempting to close the missile gap, a rational choice would have been to conceal, as cleverly as possible, any such movement. The Soviets failed to implement fully their anti-aircraft missile protection system before they started work on the Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM) and Medium Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBM) emplacements. This would have precluded discovery of the sites by U. S. U-2's. The configuration of the anti-aircraft missile sites and the offensive missile sites themselves were in the same configuration as in the Soviet Union. The Soviets failed to implement their defensive radar system beforehand. These "facts," for Allison, point to standard operating procedures (S.O.P's), devised and implemented by an implacable bureaucratic organizational process that lacked the flexibility to adapt
to new areas of concentration and new operational constraints. Further, the decision to implement missiles in Cuba was itself beleaguered by the organizational process.

Having discovered the limits of the power of the Presidium to effect major changes in the established orientation of the Soviet Ground Forces, the leadership took on a new task. On January 14, 1960, Khrushchev announced before the Supreme Soviet a strategic "new look".

Frustrated by the Soviet Ground Forces' sluggishness in deploying rockets, Khrushchev announced the creation of the Strategic Rocket Forces which would assume the mission.

Khrushchev simply did not recognize the great amount of organizational inertia he faced and as a result,

The success of this effort was again limited by organizational resistance. The New Strategic Rocket Forces did establish some new organizational goals and routines. But since most of its men, and especially its leadership, simply changed offices and insignia, its orientation and procedures differed less markedly from those of the artillery section of the Ground Forces than the Soviet leaders had hoped.

Thus, even if it were possible that Soviet leaders were attempting to make rational choices, the incrementalism of the Soviet organizational processes derailed their intent. In this model, then, the overall actions of a government have to be deciphered by an analysis of the organizations carrying out those actions and the standard operating procedures that govern those organizations' actions.

Allison went on to argue that Models I and II go a long way towards offering explanations for governmental actions (even if the two often have to be used in conjunction with one another), but he also argued, quite
persuasively, that a third model, the Governmental Politics Model, had to be added or at least considered.

Politics Model sees no unitary actor but rather many actors as players--players who focus not on a single strategic issue but on many diverse intra-national problems as well; players who act in terms of no consistent set of strategic objectives but rather according to various conceptions of national, organizational and personal goals; . . .

In terms of this model, governmental action can best be understood as the result of a series of conflicts, bargains, maneuvers, deals and agreements made by an entire series of players that are motivated by a variety of factors. Those factors are indicative of the particular power, position, perceptions, and stakes of each player and what sort of time frames he/she has to deal with. The old adage "You can't tell the players without a program" becomes turned around to the point that you cannot tell the program (the action) without the players. Governmental action is seen, then, as the outcome of a type of game. The game is conducted like all games. A player's power and skill, the rules of play, and, often, the ability to utilize, stretch or bend (or at times even break) those rules without incurring a penalty is important. Even the confines of the playing area (action channels in Allison's parlance) has an affect. All are germane to the ultimate outcome.

Government decisions are made and government actions are taken, neither as the simple choice of a unified group, nor as a formal summary of leader's preferences. Rather, the context of shared power but separate judgments about important choices means that politics is the mechanism of choice. Each player pulls and hauls
with the power at his discretion for outcomes that will advance his conception of national, organization, group and personal interests.  

The concept of players motivated by a variety of conflicting interests is a particularly potent one for the subject under consideration and will play a central role in the formulation of a possible explanation of the events.

By virtue of the fact that less was known about the "players" on the Russian side of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Allison was not able to focus this paradigm's application on that aspect of the crisis to the extent that he did in the previous two models. His example of the Government Politics Model, centered on the players involved on the U. S. side in the decision to impose a blockade, was a more plausible exercise due to the tremendous amount of coverage the event received, particularly in the accounts of those most closely involved. It was relatively easy for Allison to sort through the various personalities and stances involved and to trace the results of their interaction. His opening comments, in this paradigmatic section, concerning the group that John F. Kennedy had massed to advise him in the crisis (the ExCom), are particularly telling. First Allison quoted Robert Kennedy:

The fourteen people involved [in the ExCom] were very significant—bright, able, dedicated people, all of whom had the greatest affection for the U. S. . . . . If six of them had been President of the U. S., I think that the world might have been blown up.
Then Allison went on to add,

But--as Robert Kennedy's remarks remind us--in the Cuban missile crisis the preferences of the leaders of the U.S. government covered a spectrum from "doing nothing" to "launching a surprise military invasion of Cuba." An understanding of why, on October 24, 1962, the United States was blockading (rather than invading or ignoring) Cuba thus requires careful attention not only to the arguments for that course of action but also to the essentially political process by which the blockade merged as the American government's choice.

It should be obvious from Allison's comments that almost any explanation of the "why" of a governmental action should necessarily take into account the players and how and why they play. Although each of these models takes a different approach to and accents a different aspect of attempts to explain governmental action, there is no reason to believe that they cannot be combined in some sort of format to allow each to make up for the deficiencies of the other. Indeed, Allison himself acknowledges this to be possible.

But models that mix characteristics of the three are clearly possible. One of the more interesting and promising is a cross between Model I and Model III, focusing in the case of the United States, on the President as the rational actor whose purposes nevertheless include more than mere strategic values and whose activities require sneakers as well as boots.

Now, having laid out the propositions of Allison, there remains yet the task of linking Barber's propositions to the subject at hand. His varieties of Presidential character and what they indicate about Presidential performance will be important to our understanding of President Reagan's role in the Iran-Contra Affair.
principles from Allison and Barber are combined, the confusion surrounding the Affair should start to dissipate. Barber's Presidential Typologies

It would seem to be reasonable that if we are going to postulate foreign policy as some sort of resultant arrived at through the interaction of various players, our task would be simplified if there were some sort of theory presented as to how these players are motivated to act. While it would be difficult to discover a work or works that would give us insight to all players, there is a very interesting work on one of the major players. It is, of course, Barber's work, The Presidential Character. Since the President is presumably instrumental in selecting his advisors and staff, and since, again presumably, he will be central to foreign policy decisions, any insight into his personality would conceivably offer some insight into how or why the rest of the players (whom the President has chosen) might act also. Granted, it can be argued that it might only offer a hint as to action and motivation, but I believe it will be helpful nonetheless.

Barber, too, seems to value the importance of the individual in decisions:

Finally, to the grand theorists of social movements and the engineers of systems and structures--some of whom see human choice as determined by forces beyond the control of human beings--I can only express puzzlement. Shuffle the system as you will, there is still at its center the person and it is his initiative and responses that steer the ship.
Consequently, the level of analysis of this paper would seem to be accurate, at least from Barber's point of view.

Barber states that each President has a patterned personality (formed in early life) that is composed of character, world view and style, and that that personality interacts with the national expectations and power situation to form the dynamic of that particular Presidency. Basically, what Barber argues, and it intuitively makes sense, is that if we look at how a President sees himself, his job and those around him, (indeed how he sees all humanity), when coupled with the mood of the country as a whole and from whence he draws his support, we will have a fair indication as to the type of Presidential reign he will probably produce. Barber further argues that in order to get past all the posturing that occurs during the campaign one should look to the early life of the candidate where those attributes previously mentioned are formed and solidified. This is not to say that humans do not change, but substantive changes probably do not occur as often as some would have us think.

Based upon these premises Barber then developed four types of Presidential character: Active-Positive, Active-Negative, Passive-Positive and Passive-Negative.

The first baseline in defining Presidential types is activity-passivity. How much energy does the man invest in his Presidency? . . . The second baseline is positive-negative affect toward one's activity--that is, how he feels about what he does.
The Passive-Positive is of particular interest to us. Barber's second edition was published in 1977 and thus contained no references to Reagan. After reading the second edition, and based on my research here and on media accounts of Presidential words and actions, I had typed President Reagan as a Passive-Positive and, indeed, upon reading the third edition, I discovered that my conclusion agreed with the Barber conclusion. Thus, the Passive-Positive:

This is the receptive, compliant, other-directed character whose life is a search for affection as a reward for being agreeable and cooperative rather than personally assertive. The contradiction is between low self-esteem (on grounds of being unlovable, unattractive) and a superficial optimism. A hopeful attitude helps dispel doubt and elicits encouragement from others. Passive-positive types help soften the harsh edges of politics. But their dependence and the fragility of their hopes and enjoyment make disappointments in politics likely.

Now it seems, on the face of it, difficult to think of President Reagan being deficient in self-esteem. However, Reagan's own childhood, spent in several small towns in rural northern Illinois, also diverged from his much touted image of the wholesome American family. He was the younger of two sons of an alcoholic Irish-Catholic father, who had trouble keeping a job. . . . Reagan painfully recalls the day he came home from school and found his father passed out, drunk, on the front porch.

There is currently much work being done in the field of alcoholic family relationships. It has become generally recognized that in families with an alcoholic member, all members of the family suffer. The term describing this is co-dependency.
Co-dependents are insecure and have such low self esteem that they must depend on others to prove their worth. Their main goal in life is to try to figure out what others want and then deliver that to them, for co-dependents are people pleasers.

Barber argues along the same lines. His point of view is that President Reagan has been guided throughout his ideological and political lifetime by those around him.

To put it plainly: Reagan's conservatism has been circumstantial, not visceral. What has remained consistent in his life history is his desire to please the very rich mentors who picked him up and brought him to where he is today. The desire to please is rooted in the passive-positive's personality. That desire is focused in the course of experiences, as the personality seeking an external orientation, fastens on others to give it the guidance and direction it needs. [italics mine]

Barber's views on the whole seem somewhat extreme as far as his application of them to Reagan's ideology. The record would seem to indicate that while Reagan did go from New Deal Democrat to Conservative Republican, it was done in a slow process over time. Ronald Reagan is not the first politician to change his ideological label. There can be some question as to the strength of that conservatism and as to how much of the strength was a political expedient. His anti-communist stance, for instance, despite Barber's inferences, seems to have remained very strong over some 40 years. Reagan's meetings with the Russians are hardly to be construed as changing views given the realities of the tasks of office. Some of the fiscal conservatism, on the other hand, could be construed as sometimes being a political expedient.
Barber's demand that the national mood and power situation also be considered makes it necessary to address these issues. Again, Barber seems to go a little too far in discounting Reagan's power. In 1981 Reagan won 51% of the vote to Carter's 41%. He carried 489 electoral votes to Carter's 49. In 1984 he gained 59% of the popular vote and 525 electoral votes. The Democrats controlled the House and each time the Republicans had a slight majority in the Senate. Barber claimed "Reagan's power situation would be fragile." As to the climate of expectations it would be "dominated by the tide of reaction against too long and hard a time of troubles, too much worry, too much tension and anxiety." Thus, Barber, when all this was put together, saw in Reagan "his type's tendency to drift, particularly with forces in the close-up environment. The danger is confusion, delay and then impulsiveness."

Given the personality-type of President Reagan, it would seem that if those around him, that is his Cabinet, advisors and staff, were strong willed, determined, forceful types, then possibly they could subsume some or all of the responsibilities of the President and, indeed, it seems possible that that is exactly what occurred. That set of circumstances would also have ramifications when Allison's model was applied.
In the beginnings of Chapter 2, I alluded to the Cold War as a foundation of American thinking that was revived in the 80's. In fact, it probably exists even today, in the minds of some, despite the world shaking events of late. The concept of the Cold War is familiar enough. It revolves almost entirely around a theme of competition between East and West, in everything from chess to ice hockey to space to weapons to countries acquisitions. The idea that Communism was some huge monolith intent on consuming country after country, and the U. S. (as the leader of the free world) must check that intent, has such a familiarity to it that it is almost taken for granted.

There has existed a sort of competition whereby the U. S. and the U.S.S.R. were thought to be tallying up countries as "democratic" or "communist." Often the "democracies" were some of the most right wing, repressive dictatorships in the world. Vocal anticommunism was considered indicative of being satisfactorily "democratic." By the same token, if the leaders of a country even hinted that they would like to socialize or nationalize even a part of their economy, then just as obviously they must go into the communist column.
With the Cold War as a foundation, then, the whole world formed the arena for a game of acquisition and the various countries formed the tally points.

It is interesting to note that in this acquisition game there developed a tendency to equate the leaders of the participatory countries with their countries. It is almost as if the nation-as-actor portion of the rational actor model (for that is what game theory is all about) has been turned to actor-as-nation. Perhaps because the government leader is generally the most visible focus of a given nation, there is a tendency to make that connection. Americans, for instance, have the tendency to typify a period, i.e. the Nixon Era, the Reagan Legacy. Speak of Uganda and the mind immediately focuses on Idi Amin. Speak today of Russian domestic policy and it is automatically Gorbachev's domestic policy. This seems to occur automatically, no matter what the reality of the leadership configuration. This was especially useful during the Cold War because it served two purposes.

First, it simplified one's thinking about world situations, and second, it was extremely useful in propaganda and rhetoric. Thus, Fidel Castro was a Communist, therefore, Cuba was Communist. The people of Cuba yearned, however, for democracy. On the other hand, Lyndon B. Johnson was a war monger, therefore, America was an aggressive, capitalist, imperialist nation. The people,
however, were the oppressed proletariat. In the construct of this "game" the communists are out to take over the world, to enslave the peoples of the world, and the U. S. is the last bastion of freedom. It is dedicated to stopping the "red peril" everywhere it finds it. When Reagan became President of the U. S., he and the country became one (given the identification process), and thus, he must be the rational actor on the side of democracy. By the same token, Castro in Cuba, Ortega in Nicaragua, Brezhnev (and Andropov and Chernenko) in Russia, and Karmel in Afghanistan became the rational actors, at least as far as this game is concerned, on the Communist side. Thus we had two groups, both containing rational actors in which leaders and countries become synonymous (again the identification process) and, therefore, interchangeable, and we had the scenario of an acquisitive game with countries as tallies.

With the renewed Cold War in 1979 the Communist side was seen as making moves and, more importantly, making gains. In 1980 the U.S.S.R. had invaded Afghanistan and had stationed a considerable number of troops there. Right next door was Iran, clearly a troubled nation. Khomeini took power in 1979 and in 1980 went to war with Iraq. Iran was a divided country with a strong Communist party (the Tudeh) and it was led by a man who was eighty plus years and ailing. Iran looked to be ripe for the next Communist power grab. From a strategic standpoint Iran had warm water
ports, always thought to be a prime attraction for the U.S.S.R., and was in an important geographical position to influence control over the oil flow out of the Mid-East. If one looked at things as a rational actor, there seemed to be a lot of value maximizing reasons why the U.S.S.R. would look to get its hands on Iran next, and it also looked as if its potential for success was rather high. After all, with the ouster of the Shah and the seizure of the U. S. Embassy, that "Great Satan," the prime mover and shaker of the democratic forces, had little chance of getting Iran (here read Khomeini), at least in its present state, into the democratic column. The logical choice in this move, counter-move sort of situation would be to attempt to either replace the present ruler (not particularly easy) or to develop relations with what one hoped would be the Khomeini successor. The idea was to achieve some means of stopping possible Soviet gains. The possibility of the second of the two options seemed to present itself and was, therefore, the preferred choice.

Keeping the "game" in mind, now let us move to the other side of the world where in 1979 the Sandinistas took control of Nicaragua. As far back as 1961 the Sandinistas (The National Liberation Front) had received funding from Fidel Castro. It should be noted that America, almost since he first rose to power, had suspected Castro of exporting revolution. Cuba's admission that it supplied troops to the
Angolan Civil War was often cited as proof of such. By 1980,

The Carter Administration accepted the fact that the United States was in "competition" with Cuba to win over the Nicaraguan Government, but it hoped that friendly relations could yet be maintained.

As I noted earlier, Nicaragua signed agreements with the Soviet Union and other Eastern-bloc governments and started to receive advisers and military assistance, as well as supplies. Again, from the rational actor point of view, there was a leftist government in power in Central America. It had developed friendships with the Soviets and had long been tied to Cuba. It looked as if Communism, in its attempt to score in this sector of the world, had a foothold in Nicaragua. We have the domino theory all over again, only this time it is right at our back door. The value maximizing move for the U. S. would seem to be, to defeat this threat before it has a chance to solidify its base and spawn its revolution all over the Americas. From the rational actor standpoint it was necessary to: view the problem (Communist gains), view the options (befriend or replace the leaders), weigh the costs and the benefits, and then choose the best option.

There can be little doubt what President Reagan felt was the best option, at least in a general sort of way. He was going to try to negate Communist gains. In the first case (Iran) he would try befriending, in the second (Nicaragua) he looked to replace. The difference in
approach might be explained by the fact that Nicaragua's leaders were seen as communists, Iran's were not. Despite Barber's contention, there seems little doubt as to the longevity or the strength of the Reagan conviction.

Ronald Reagan, who grew up as a New Deal Democrat, began to change his political beliefs in the late 1940's and early 1950's. His conviction that Communist infiltration was undercutting the nation's institutions helped to bring to fruition a radical shift in his philosophy.

In a 1964 speech to raise funds for Barry Goldwater's presidential campaign (a speech that started Reagan on his own political career), he related this anecdote,

Not too long ago two friends of mine were talking to a Cuban refugee, a businessman who had escaped from Castro, and in the midst of his story one of my friends turned to the other and said, "We don't know how lucky we are." And the Cuban stopped and said, "How lucky you are! I had someplace to escape to." In that sentence he told us the entire story. If we lose freedom here, there is no place to escape to. This is the last stand on earth.

Reagan firmly believed that the U.S. was the last powerful bastion of freedom and that it must do all in its power to stop the spread of communism.

The advisors in his first administration, especially his foreign policy team, "were for the most part, unreconstructed cold warriors who looked upon Russia as an 'evil empire', as the President himself described the Soviet system in one of his more memorable speeches." In 1981 he authorized a covert action program to support the Contras. Congress moved to stop the program. When Congress refused to authorize the Administration's pleas for Contra aid in
1985, while at the same time Ortega was visiting Moscow, Reagan warned Congress:

And whatever way they may want to frame it, the opponents in the Congress of ours, who have opposed our trying to continue helping those people, they really are voting to have a totalitarian Marxist-Leninist government here in the Americas, and there is no way for them to disguise it. So, we're not going to give up.

It would be belaboring the obvious to say that Ronald Reagan was convinced that communism posed a dire threat and needed to be stopped. He thought so in the early 50's, he thought so in the early 80's, and he may still think so in the early 90's.

Therefore, Ronald Reagan, as the U. S. rational actor, saw his opposition taking steps to assure their victory and he looked to his options. The "goal" of this particular "game" was to stop the communists. There are two points that would appear to be salient at this juncture. First, Congress itself apparently saw some merit in this argument. In the executive summary of the joint House and Senate committee report, a key point is made almost inadvertently:

Congress cast a skeptical eye upon each rationale proffered by the Administration. It suspected that the Administration's true purpose was identical to that of the Contras--the overthrow of the Sandinista regime itself. Ultimately Congress yielded to domestic political pressures to discontinue assistance to the Contras, but Congress was unwilling to bear responsibility for the loss of Central America to communist military and political forces. [italics mine]
The pervasiveness of the argument that this was a contest of acquisition and that communists were rationally moving on Central America is indicated by the fact that these same fears were held even by at least some of the President's opposition. Second, it was, and is, generally accepted that President Reagan's style was one of setting broad policy goals and then letting his staff take it from there.

Judging from his first few weeks in the White House, Reagan also brought with him the decision-making process that he used in Sacramento. The Reagan state house, like the presidential campaign, was known for a "collegial" working environment in which Reagan listened to a variety of opinions culminating in a round table discussion with his top advisors. Then he made the broad policy judgments and relied on his aides to carry out the details on their own.

The President's management style is to put the principal responsibility for policy review and implementation on the shoulders of his advisors.

It is difficult to grasp, given the awe with which the Presidency is often viewed, just how detached Ronald Reagan really was. His own staff at first found it difficult to grasp, but eventually the surprising became common place.

It was during those first weeks of the transition that Baker's [Reagan's Chief of Staff] people realized that Reagan himself could not always be counted on to provide guidance for his administration. Reagan did espouse strongly held conservative views, but it would often be their responsibility not only to determine how to translate those views into policy, but to determine which views were to be acted upon.

As a result,

After some months in office, people in the Reagan White House were presuming to know what the President wanted
with such regularity that it became easy to forget who was supposed to be in charge. 10

This was a marked and much commented on trait of the Reagan Presidency in the first Administration. The White House insiders learned very quickly to work under those circumstances. The public seemed to admire Reagan's laid-back style of management. It seemed to reassure them. It was a pattern that was not to change and would have serious ramifications in the second term.

Given the "game" theory of East-West confrontation and the resurgence of the Cold War, it would seem credible that a player, a rational actor, could view the circumstances in rational terms. The rational actor, Reagan, would then make known, in broad terms, his views as to what the general course of the U. S. moves should be, and then allow staff to figure out how to follow through. This can become problematic on two counts. In the first place, if the President is to make rational choices under the rational actor model, he must have information. If Reagan were to formulate a broad policy outline on, say, Iran or Nicaragua in line with his already broad goal of stopping communism, he would need good, solid, factual information. Secondly, if he relied on his staff members to carry out policy, he would have to assume that they were reporting back accurately and openly to him. In actual point of fact, Ronald Reagan, the President of the U. S., was misled, deceived, and in many instances, totally cut off from the
information sources. If he were operating on the basis of less than factual information, then it was not possible for him to make a rational choice in the true sense of the word. In other words, the rational actor model will be at a serious disadvantage as an explanation due to faulty application of the model. Misinformation was rife!

A small group of senior officials believed that they alone knew what was right. They viewed knowledge of their actions by others in the Government as a threat to their objectives. . . . They testified they even withheld key facts from the President. 11

The President's NSC staff secretly diverted millions of dollars in profits from the Iran arms sales to the Contras, but the President said he did not know about it and Poindexter claimed he did not tell him. 12

Casey chose to give the President a distorted picture of the attitudes of the Central American presidents effectively reinforcing his own view of what U. S. policy should be. Misrepresentation of intelligence also occurred in the Iran initiative. In memorandums recommending the January Findings, Poindexter told the President that Iran was in danger of losing the war with Iraq. . . . Casey agreed with this assessment. Yet, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and Clair George all testified that the intelligence community was of the opposite view—that Iran had the upper hand in the war. 13

It would seem that Reagan initiated a rational actor approach to a renewed Cold War. His aides, by failing to sufficiently inform the President, suborned that process. It is not possible to make rational choices without all of the pertinent facts. Even bounded rationality is constrained by the need for accurate, factual information. Possibly the only decision to which the Rational Actor Model could be said to apply was the initial one which saw the
apparent gains of Communism. After that, misinformation would seem to cause the process to lose validity. When the NSC at first became a non-factual advisory arm and when it subsequently became an independent operational rather than an advisory arm, it compromised the "unitary actor" idea of the Rational Actor Model and thus seriously crippled it as an explanatory model in the case under consideration.

Allison's second model, the Organizational Process, characterized as it is by standard operating procedures (SOP's) and organizational routines, is generally thought of in terms "of large organizations, among which primary responsibility for particular tasks is divided. Each organization attends to a special set of problems." As such, the model would seem ill suited to offer satisfactory explanations as to why Iran-Contra was possible. First, it would seem that in several instances the concept of SOP's is non-applicable to the actions undertaken. It was standard operating procedure that the NSC was an advisory board; it certainly was an operational adjunct during Iran-Contra. An SOP would be a "requirement in the law that Congress be notified of all covert actions in a timely fashion." Instead, the exact opposite tack was taken and every effort was made to disavow any such action before Congress. North admitted that he had lied to the Intelligence Committee. The Secretaries of State and Defense were purposefully kept in the dark about dealings and events that occurred in their
areas of responsibilities. Normal channels of communications and chains of command were intentionally and habitually bypassed or superseded during the entire Iran-Contra Affair. That would hardly seem to designate decision-making as a product of organizational procedure and SOP's.

Furthermore, there was no large group of organizations but primarily a small group of officials (McFarlane, Poindexter, North, Secord, Casey and Regan) who operated on an opportunistically pragmatic basis. Initially, for instance, the goal of the Iran initiative had been to establish communications with the moderates, then it turned to hostages for barter, and then it became a source of funding for the Contra operation. This would hardly be cited as an example of the incremental change that is supposedly characteristic of the organizational process. In fact, in recent administrations the NSC has risen in stature to rival the State Department as a source of foreign policy advice. The reason for this rise is that

The NSC . . . is less constrained by the existence of operational responsibilities, by distance between it and the President, or by the communications complications typical of large hierarchically structured organizations."

It hardly seems necessary to continue to delineate the many ways in which the Iran-Contra Affair diverges from the Organizational Process Model. There seems to be little example of rigidity and automaticity to either the planning
(there was almost no long range planning) or the operational aspects.

It seems, therefore, that two out of three of the Allison models fail as an explanatory model of the Iran-Contra Affair. Model I is inadequate and Model II seems inappropriate. Model I, the Rational Actor Model, is useful as a starting point, but by itself is incomplete. The last model, the Governmental Politics Model, with an accent on personal preferences as one of its main motivational aspects, gives an added dimension to the explanatory process. The addition of the Barber theories should add considerable clarity, and complete that process.
CHAPTER 5
 FROM OUT OF THE CONFUSION

The Government Politics Model gives substance to what most of us sense on an intuitive level. Few, if any, actions are taken on a truly impersonal basis. As a result, government policy is not necessarily, indeed, probably not usually, a cohesive, unified process. There are a multitude of pushes and pulls, generated by a variety of motivational factors, that urge the inclusion of this or that viewpoint. We saw earlier that "players act according to various conceptions of national, organizational and personal goals,"¹ and, as such, the decision-making process could be a particularly fragmented procedure. The policy process in the Iran-Contra Affair was probably more fragmented than most. It will not be possible, due to the lack of adequate firsthand information at this point in time, to enumerate all of the varied directional tugs, personal fixations and institutional preferences that were instrumental in the decision-making process and the subsequent policy implementation. We certainly ought to be able to amass enough pertinent facts from the information we do have to assemble a relatively accurate assessment.
We have seen that as an overall rational actor in the East-West game theory, Ronald Reagan wished to halt the gains it appeared the East stood to make. Again, from a rational view, given his ideological bent, Reagan saw dialogue in Iran and a Contra war in Nicaragua as the value-maximizing options. We also have seen, however, that

The uncoupling of the President from White House decision-making became a startling fact of life among his advisors. A former aide said that the President, facing a policy question, "will not go far into it because he is not really looking to make a decision." The decision-making fell, by default, to his aides. The aides, however, were just as prone to the pulling and tugging as any group.

The National Security Council is composed of department or agency heads who act as advisors to the President on issues that directly affect the security of the U.S. The NSC is normally constituted with the President as the head of the NSC and the Vice President (in this case, George Bush) and the Secretaries of State and Defense (in this case Shultz and Weinberger). From time to time others have been included; in this case the Director of the CIA (William Casey) was included. The National Security Advisor (somewhat of a misnomer) was actually filled by several people during the Reagan administration, but we are interested in only two, Robert McFarlane and his successor, Adm. John Poindexter. The NSC Advisor is seen as

An "honest broker" for the NSC process. He assures that issues are clearly presented to the President; that all
reasonable options, together with an analysis of their disadvantages and risks, are brought to his attention; and that the views of the President's other principal advisors are accurately conveyed.

The NSC is provided with a staff the size of which has varied from President to President. Howard Teicher, Donald Fortier and Oliver North were the important members, for present purposes, on the NSC staff. Each, in his own way, and for his own reasons, tendered his own particular viewpoint as to what needed to be accomplished during the Reagan administration. The NSC also used consultants (in this case Michael Ledeen), foreign governments and their representatives (in this case Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia), arms dealers (in this case Manucher Ghorbanifor) and private citizens (in this case Albert Hakim and Richard Secord) in its Iran-Contra Affair machinations. Each of these people, added to the faceless functionaries of organizations involved in an ancillary sort of way, exerted some sort of influence on the resultant foreign policy as implemented. There is no way of knowing if they would have been as influential or would have been presented with such an opportunity given a different Presidential character. It does seem reasonable to believe that their influence was facilitated and enhanced by the Presidential character they did deal with. A brief listing of some of the motivational influences might be illustrative of this point.
In 1985, Michael Ledeen was an NSC consultant on both terrorism and Iran. He was sent on a European trip to discover what he could about Iran.

In this connection, Rear Admiral Poindexter, McFarlane's deputy, wrote a letter of introduction saying Ledeen "has the complete confidence of Bud McFarlane and myself." (Poindexter to Schurer, 1/4/85)

It is interesting to note that Poindexter followed McFarlane as NSC advisor and that the Special Review Board found that Poindexter had failed in his duties and had tried to exclude NSC principals from knowledge. It is also interesting to note that Michael Ledeen was co-author of a book, *Debacle: The American Failure in Iran*, in 1981 in which he stated,

But when the United States is faced with a choice between a productive alliance with a dictator, or loss of security by destabilizing another government, it should be mature enough to accept temporarily the former, with all its obvious discomfort.

Clearly, Mr. Ledeen, and there were others like him, considered ends more important than means. Just as clearly, Poindexter appreciated a person with that viewpoint. This would have a definite effect on the policy pursued and the way it was pursued.

Howard Teicher and Donald Fortier, two other NSC staff members, drafted a National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) in 1985 in which they noted that

It [the NSDD] basically calls for a vigorous policy designed to block Soviet advances in the short term while building our leverage in Iran and trying to restore the U. S. position which existed under the Shah over the longer term. This would require a sharp departure from ongoing . . . measures, most notably the supply of Western military hardware. . . .
Obviously, Fortier and Teicher held a position that was contrary to existing stated policy. They pushed for the same, insofar as their positions allowed.

The three countries that have been mentioned all served as implements which enabled Iran-Contra to be initiated and maintained. The original overtures for arms for Iran came through Israel. "In Jerusalem, officials were eager for better relations with Iran for two very pragmatic reasons: commercial and diplomatic." On the other hand, Tehran wanted modern tanks and high-technology anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles to counter Iraq's Soviet-made fighter planes and modern tanks. It needed spare parts to maintain the arsenal of weapons that the Shah had purchased from the United States.

The Saudis, after the Congressional funds were cut off, agreed to be a third party funding source for the Contras.

For the oil-rich Saudis, that was a relatively painless way to win the gratitude of the Reagan administration, especially at a time when Fahd's government was in the middle of negotiations to purchase Stinger anti-aircraft missiles from the United States.

The three entrepreneurs of the Affair are relatively easy to classify as far as motivation, both from a personal and an organizational level. "Since fleeing Iran in 1979, Ghorbanifor had sought to make a career as a broker through whom Western governments could develop contact with Iran." Secord and Hakim were businessmen, also, with a specific type of client.

Since his retirement from the Air Force in 1983, he and his partner, an Iranian exile named Albert Hakim, had been running a small equipment trading firm that
specialized in selling military parts and security devices to Third World governments.\textsuperscript{11}

These men were mercenaries pure and simple. Their business depended on events such as the Iran-Contra Affair, and it would be a relatively safe notion to assume that the profit motive ranked high in motivational drive. Ghorbanifar, in particular, kept reactivating events when it seemed as if no further progress in negotiations between the U. S. and Iran was possible.

The NSC principals seem to have more complex motivational drives by virtue of their multiple responsibilities and are thus more difficult to attribute a specific operational stance to. Presumably, Shultz, Weinberger, and Casey were directed by the interests of the departments for which they were responsible. In addition to being friends of long standing to the President, they also differed in approach as to their tasks and position.

"Shultz did become a formidable presence within the top command, but he was a quiet man by nature and, unlike Weinberger, seldom flaunted his power."\textsuperscript{12}

When Teicher and Fortier formulated their above mentioned NSDD, the two "because of the political and bureaucratic sensitivities,"\textsuperscript{13} thought it best to show it only to Shultz and Weinberger. When Weinberger and Shultz were given the NSDD, both were aghast. Shultz stated,

The draft NSDD appears to exaggerate current anti-regime sentiment and Soviet advantages over us in gaining influence. . . . The inherent limits on the
Iranian-Soviet relationship are underplayed in the NSDD draft. Iranians have a deep historical trust of the U.S.S.R. Weinberger's "initial reaction was to write 'absurd' in the margin" and then he went on to list what he thought a new policy towards Iran should include. He favored improving intelligence on Iran and using that intelligence to reestablish some sort of contact with elements in Iran deemed to be receptive to such overtures. He stressed:

Under no circumstance, however, should we now ease our restriction on arms sales to Iran. Attempting to cut off arms while remaining neutral on sales to either belligerent is one of the few ways we have to protect our long range interests in both Iran and Iraq.

To further becloud the picture it should be noted that CIA Director Casey said:

I strongly endorse the thrust of the draft NSDD on "U.S. Policy Toward Iran," particularly its emphasis on the need to take concrete and timely steps to enhance U. S. leverage in order to insure that the U.S.S.R. is not the primary beneficiary of change and turmoil in this critical country.

These were the initial positions taken with regard to the Iran Affair. It is important to understand that those opposing viewpoints changed very little over the course of the affair. Shultz and Weinberger argued against these arms transfers consistently, and the result was that they were cut out of the information process, which to some extent might have been on their own initiative. The Special Review Board found that

Given the importance of the issue and the sharp policy divergences involved, however, Secretary Shultz and Secretary Weinberger in particular distanced themselves
from the march of events. Secretary Schultz specifically requested to be informed only as necessary to perform his job.18

James Baker, Reagan's first term Chief of Staff, felt that "Casey had the rare ability to play to Reagan's 'dark side',"19 and he had attempted to make sure that Casey never got to see Reagan without Baker knowing about it. On the whole, CIA Director Casey's position in the entire affair is a murky puzzle. His name crops up repeatedly during the Special Review Board's investigation and in the combined Senate-House Iran-Contra hearings. There are all sorts of allegations made as to what he knew, what he did, and what he did not do.

Director Casey appears to have been informed in considerable detail about the specifics of the Iranian operation. He appears to have acquiesced in and to have encouraged North's exercise of direct operational control over the operation. Congressional Committees noted that "Casey was a firm believer in the value of covert operations, and took an activist, aggressive approach to his craft,"21 and further that his Deputy Director, Clair George, described him as the "last great buccaneer from OSS."22 The final irony was that William Casey died, on May of 1987, after suffering seizures from a brain tumor the previous December. His death was an assurance that the full extent of CIA involvement in the Iran-Contra Affair will never be known.

It should also be noted that William Buckley was one of the CIA's own and presumably Casey would have had more
than a casual interest in any affair dealing with the hostages. It should be obvious, however, that the NSC principals were not a unified lot. It should also be obvious that each was pursuing goals that were more in tune with their own personal and organizational needs than they were in advising the President. They in effect failed the President. Donald Regan (Reagan's second term Chief of Staff) bears the same sort of blame.

More than almost any Chief of Staff of recent memory, he asserted personal control over the White House staff and sought to extend his control to the National Security Advisor. . . . He as much as anyone, should have insisted that an orderly process be observed.23

Regan was preoccupied with his position in the Administration hierarchy. He viewed his job as Chief of Staff "as the equivalent of a CEO in a large corporation, and it meant that he outranked everyone else in the administration except the chairman of the board."24 As a result, he started to co-opt the NSC Advisor (McFarlane) on foreign policy matters.

Even worse, Regan began taking steps to block McFarlane's own access to the President. This was especially evident during the period in July when Reagan was in the hospital recuperating from his cancer surgery.25

This is a significant aspect of the Affair in that it is during this same period that information on the Israeli arms dealings with Iran was supposed to have been brought up to the President. Herein lies one possible explanation for the
confusion over whether President Reagan was aware and okayed the sales before or after the fact.

McFarlane, supposedly the "honest broker" for the NSC process and the one to have the President of the U. S. as his only constituent, had one other client, himself. McFarlane brought both anxieties (he wondered if he were up to the job) and aspirations (he admired Henry Kissinger and hoped to leave as firm an imprint) to the job.26 Initially put off by Reagan's hands off style, and cautious in his approach to the circumstances such a style created, he had nonetheless changed by 1984. "If the stalemate in foreign policy were ever going to be broken, then he, Bud McFarlane, would have to break it himself."27 [italics mine] Given the leadership style of Reagan, this would appear to be a most revealing commentary, particularly when, in reference to his (McFarlane's) attempted suicide in 1987, "He then referred to a 'tradition in the Far East that when a public official fails to do his duty, he has an obligation to the state to sacrifice his life, and I thought I had failed the country."28

The central actor in the entire cast, Oliver North, is probably the most enigmatic of all. Oliver North was a central actor in each and every part of the Iran-Contra Affair. He was so deeply involved and yet he is so terribly difficult to pigeonhole. Oliver North was a tried and tested war hero, having earned a bronze and a silver star,
two purple hearts and the Navy Commendation Medal, all in Vietnam. He was an ardent Cold Warrior whose "anticommunism burned for everyone to see." He was also the ultimate "can do" type marine. He won the unfailing loyalty of his troops despite his gung-ho performances. One true believer said, "I'd follow him anywhere. If he wanted to go to hell, I think we could make it back. . . . Ollie's all guns, guts and glory." 

North took his duties very seriously and in 1984 he was given the duty by McFarlane to keep the Contras together in "body and soul."

The body-and-soul charge from the President, via McFarlane, was pivotal--perhaps the most significant commitment to be made during North's tenure at NSC, since it formed the basis for most of the actions he would undertake on behalf of the Contras over the next two and a half years. . . . To carry out the mission, he would essentially be allowed to fill in the operational details as he saw fit. [italics mine]

Richard Carlson, one of North's teachers at the War College, said of him, "When you have a man with that much initiative, you as his boss have to understand you have a tiger by the tail. . . . He was not the kind of guy who was just going to sit around the NSC." His co-workers were aware of his skills and his drive, but some were concerned about how far that drive seemed to take him. Major Lance Zellers, who worked with North in the Navy Annex near the Pentagon, said, It was obvious to me that Ollie was quite capable of getting things done in the name of the commandant of the Marine Corps without the commandant necessarily having approved the details. Ollie was not adverse to dropping names saying "Gentlemen, the commandant would like..."
He spoke in the name of the commandant. For all practical purposes he had four stars. (italics mine)

In the end, Oliver North participated in and directed illegal arms deals, covert military operations in Central America, and a diversion of funds from U. S. arms sales to covert operations (possibly into the pockets of some or all of the diverters). Furthermore, he deliberately lied to Congress, falsified records in an attempt to cover up the dealings, and destroyed many of those that couldn't be falsified.

It would seem that the foreign policy process, both at the conceptual level and at the implementation level, was, in the absence of strong leadership on the part of the President, formulated by a very diverse group of actors. All of these actors certainly were able to influence events in a more or less direct manner based upon the varying powers at their disposal and their positions relevant to the process. While many of the motivational aspects of the actors discussed here have been the personal interests and conceptions of their roles, those are certainly determinants of the players' stands and thus fit Allison's Model III. Those personal interests, nurtured by a "passive-positive" President, fostered the Governmental Politics Model's explanatory effectiveness. It would seem that good arguments for Model III, in conjunction with a specific Barber type as an explanation for the Iran-Contra Affair, have been made.
CHAPTER 6
THE HUMAN ELEMENT

In the absence of the sudden appearance of some reliable omniscient source, it is highly unlikely that the "truth" will ever be known as far as the Iran-Contra Affair is concerned. Such an occurrence is severely constrained by men and events. Key characters have since died and their knowledge died with them. Other key characters have faulty memories, intentional or not. It would appear, judged solely by the disparity of accounts, that some of the key characters have lied. They probably will continue to do so. The problems enumerated thus far are further compounded by the fact that Iran-Contra was a terribly fragmented affair, and those fragments, in many respects, were so compartmentalized that it becomes extremely difficult to assemble them into a completed picture. Those that are discernible, however, seem to form a pattern from which some conclusions can be drawn. Their relevance for the future remains to be seen.

Iran-Contra was an event conceived and nurtured amidst fear and suspicion. For 40 years U. S. foreign policy, with some variations, had been predicated on mitigation of the threat presented by the Red Menace. That
appeared to be a rational goal. The value maximizing option, in a number of cases (Vietnam immediately comes to mind), turned out to be less than value-maximizing when applied. Much the same judgment might be rendered against Iran-Contra. Defining the problem may have had a rational aspect to it, defining the solution did not. The Red Menace of the future may arise from the struggle for a percentage of the world's markets rather than for a percentage of controllable land masses. Given that scenario, the events of Iran-Contra may appear inane from some future vantage point. That will not, however, alter the sense of urgency with which many viewed the events in Iran and Nicaragua in the 1980's. There can be no dispute as to the particular bias the Cold War instilled in some of the actors involved. The lesson here is that any decision-making process must necessarily take into account the perceptual bent of the actors involved. Barber's schema of world view and power can be just as applicable to the levels of command below the Presidency, provided those lower levels have the opportunity to play. The measurement of power would have to be revised, but the principle is applicable.

It would also seem that the Governmental Politics Model, in the somewhat alternately focused application we have used (more emphasis on personal motivation rather than organizational or national), can have relevance for future situations. It is imperative that decision makers, and
those who study them, recognize the human element in explanations of the decision-making process. Despite a desire for strictly rational decision-making (and its implied predictability), such an ideal would appear to be largely unattainable. Humans are not totally rational beings. To expect that they can somehow disassociate from their inner drives when making decisions is not itself a rational notion. Explanations of events that fail to take into account the human element (Model I & II) would seem to be doomed to remain incomplete. The variety of preferences exhibited by the rather small number of players in the Iran-Contra Affair would seem to offer insight into the number of variations of power and position combinations possible in a much larger group. If this seems to argue for little predictability, it is because such is the case. It can be argued that given the same set of circumstances and a different mix of players, events would have been entirely different. That is also arguably so, but only to a point.

The key to the explanatory strength of the Governmental Politics Process in the Iran-Contra Affair was the President himself. If Barber is to be accepted as accurate, Reagan makes only the third passive-positive President in this century. That is probably fortunate. The Presidency as an institution has steadily gained in power and complexity. World events are marked by a rapidity of pace that threatens to overrun the individual's abilities to
control those events. Should a passive-positive abdicate responsibility in a more critical affair (and this is not an attempt to downplay the events of Iran-Contra), the lack of predictability in the subsequent decision-making process could have much more serious ramifications. It is problematic enough to assess the capabilities of the office seeker, let alone those who will serve him.

The key then to preventing another Iran-Contra would seem to lie with the choice of primary leader. Failure to correctly choose at this juncture, or more properly, to understand what is being chosen would seem to be the foundation on which the Governmental Politics Process is built. To insure that the President is of a character that enables him to be first among equals would be the ideal. That could mitigate the downside effects of that Process. Time and again President Reagan, in reference to his style of governance, was compared to a salesman. This paper's conclusions are not to say that that is necessarily bad; they merely indicate that before making a purchase one needs to evaluate the product and the salesman. It is said that nature abhors a vacuum, and the power vacuum that results when a passive-positive President is elected is necessarily filled by those closest to the President that truly desire power (who then engage in Governmental Politics Processes without his overriding control). In each of the three passive-positive cases mentioned in Barber, i.e. Taft,
Harding and Reagan, the President was let down and ill
served by those that assumed the power he abrogated. As a
result Taft lost an election, Harding lost his reputation
and honor, and history has yet to decide how much Reagan
will lose. In each case the country lost.

In the final analysis this paper has opened up many
more questions than it ever attempted to resolve. This
paper purports to present no definitive answers. Future
revelations could considerably alter the facts so as to make
the premise of this paper ill-considered. Based on what we
do know, however, I feel it raises valid questions about
some of the presumptions about past policy analysis,
particularly with respect to the laxity of a consideration
of the Governmental Politics Process Model. The Model
itself is basically predicated on the idea of give and take,
of conflict and compromise. That would seem to be endemic
to everyone's daily life. It seems foolish, and perhaps
even dangerous, to believe that political actors are somehow
"different." To do so would be to actively court the
possibility of another Iran-Contra, and next time it could
have far greater ramifications.


5. Ibid., 9.

6. Ibid., 10.

7. Ibid., 7.

8. Ibid., 7.

9. Ibid., 7.


CHAPTER 2


5. Ibid., III-3.
6. Ibid., III-2.
7. Ibid., III-3.
8. Ibid., III-3.
9. Ibid., III-4.


11. Ibid., 32.
12. Ibid., 37.
15. Ibid., 74.
17. Ibid., III-7.
18. Iran-Contra Affair, 176.
19. Ibid., 197.
20. Ibid., 280.

21. Allison, 162.

CHAPTER 3


2. Ibid., 33.

3. Ibid., 33.

4. Ibid., 91.

5. Ibid., 95.

6. Ibid., 115.

7. Ibid., 115.

8. Ibid., 116.

9. Ibid., 144.

10. Ibid., 171.


13. Ibid., 276f.


15. Ibid., 4.

16. Ibid., 8.

17. Ibid., 9f.


20. Barber, 472.

21. Ibid., 463.

22. Ibid., 463.

23. Ibid., 463.

CHAPTER 4

1. *Iran-Contra Affair*, 27.


10. Ibid., 92.


12. Ibid., 16.

13. Ibid., 383.


CHAPTER 5

1. Allison, 144.
2. Barber, 495f.
7. *Iran-Contra Affair*, 163.
8. *Iran-Contra Affair*, 163.
10. *Iran-Contra Affair*, 163.
12. Ibid., 148.
15. Ibid., B-9.
16. Ibid., B-10.
17. Ibid., B-10.
18. Ibid., IV-11.
22. Ibid., 32.


25. Ibid., 239.

26. Ibid., 218.

27. Ibid., 223.

28. Ibid., 294.


30. Ibid., 94.

31. Ibid., 192.

32. Ibid., 119.

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