

41. The Korean Decision

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Glenn D. Paige is Professor of Political Science at the University of Hawaii. A leading specialist on the politics of the Far East and particularly of Korea, Professor Paige has also been in the vanguard of those who have sought to render political analysis more scientific. Among his many writings is *The Korean Decision* (1968), which combines his substantive and methodological concerns and from which this selection has been taken. Based on an explicit attempt to apply the decision-making approach (see Selection 19) to the process whereby the United States became involved in the Korean War in late June of 1950, this work is one of the very few case studies that goes beyond a mere narration and interpretation of events. Its concluding chapter, from which the following is excerpted, consists of a series of hypotheses that are derived from the account of the Korean episode in the previous chapters, but that are cast in such general terms that they can be applied to other foreign policy situations. Although Professor Paige's focus is thus confined to one historical sequence of events, his concluding chapter demonstrates that case studies can serve as a method of scientific inquiry. [Reprinted from Glenn D. Paige, *The Korean Decision* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), pp. 273-95, by permission of the author and the publisher. Copyright 1968 by The Free Press, A Division of The Macmillan Company.]

The main objective of this chapter is to present some empirical propositions about foreign policy decision making that have been derived from the narrative of the Korean decision. . . . These propositions link the variables of the decision-making frame of reference and provide an *a priori* set of hypotheses that can be applied in future case studies or in simulation exercises¹ designed to improve understanding of international politics.

Several points about this analytical effort need to be made clear at the outset. First, since there can be an infinite number of analytical aspects for any social

¹ Consult Harold Guetzkow, et al., *Simulation in International Relations* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963).

object, this attempt at analysis cannot exhaust the possibilities for the insightful positing of theoretical linkages between elements of the single case that has been presented. Thus [the present analysis is to be considered not as the last but only as one effort to analyze the Korean decision. In general, the wider the range of theoretical insights that are brought to bear on the case materials, the greater the number of explanatory hypotheses they may be expected to yield. Therefore each reader is urged to exercise his own creative skills on the data that have been presented.]

[Second, the basic intellectual strategy that has been employed in the present proposition-building effort has been that which might be termed *guided*

retroduction.² It neither brings to bear a deductive set of hypotheses from the behavioral sciences that would predict the behaviors found in this case³ nor seeks solely to induce propositions from the repeated occurrence of related events. Rather, with the decision-making framework as a guide, it approaches elements of the case as factors that can function as referents of correlated dependent or independent variables. Thus the analyst asks, "Given the basic conceptual framework, what might have been the antecedents or consequences of this element of observed behavior?"

A third consideration is that while the following propositions are empirically grounded in the present case, they cannot be accorded a high degree of empirical confirmation. Thus the occasional skeptical query, "I don't know how far you can generalize on the basis of a single case," is met with complete agreement. We cannot know until we can make general statements on the basis of some evidence and then test them against some more evidence.

A fourth characteristic of the present analytical effort is that no attempt has been made to integrate the propositions derived from the Korean decision with a supplementary body of invented propositions into a comprehensive theory of decision making. Neither has a systematic attempt been made to build propositions by speculating about alternative states of affairs. Both exercises, however, would be useful.

² This concept has been suggested by N. R. Hanson's discussions of "abductive" or "retroductive" reasoning in *Patterns of Discovery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), pp. 85 ff.

³ It is hoped however that the case materials can be used in this way. For example, the behavior of President Truman and Secretary Acheson in the Korean crisis might be cited as illustrations of the performance of "emotional effect" and "task" leadership roles that would be predicted on the basis of small group research. As a further illustration Professor Joseph de Rivera has suggested that the way in which Counselor Kennan's skills were utilized without bringing him directly into the Blair House Conferences seems to follow a pattern for handling "deviant members" that has been discovered in small group research. It has been pointed out that Mr. Kennan could have been summoned to the first meeting by friends or by local police; a side table could have been set for him if there was no place for him at the main dining table at Blair House or he could have been asked to join the group after dinner. Whether correct or not, these things illustrate new perspectives on the case, that can be obtained by invoking external social psychological theory. See de Rivera's *The Psychological Dimension of Foreign Policy* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, Inc., 1968).

Hopefully the present effort is a step toward increasing the fruitfulness of such endeavors.]

The Korean Decision as a Crisis Decision

The decision-making frame of reference originally did not specify a typology of decisions. It may be left an open question whether typologies, themselves capable of infinite invention and based on *a priori* assumptions about crucial variables, will be helpful in building a variable-oriented theory of foreign policy decision making. The same set of parsimonious variables eventually may be found to be differentially loaded but not qualitatively different in the various "types" of decision situations. For the present, however, it may be found helpful to follow the customary experimental practice of stating a set of relevant antecedent conditions under which the theoretical propositions advanced in a study are anticipated to hold.

The Korean decision thus might be classified as a *crisis decision* with the following principal empirical characteristics: *occasion for decision*—thrust upon the decision makers from outside their organization and from outside the territory and population over which they exercise official control; *decision-making organization*—a large complex organization composed of an executive headquarters and a number of subordinate functional departments the heads of which may be called upon by the chief executive for advice; *internal setting relationships*—characterized by the presence of other organizations that can challenge the legitimacy of the decisions taken, influence the kinds of social resources made available to the decision makers, and eventually perhaps bring about their replacement; and *external setting relationships*—characterized by the presence of allies and enemies over whom the decision makers cannot exercise arbitrary control.

A *crisis* is defined after Hermann as "a situation that (1) threatened high priority goals of the decisional unit, (2) restricted the amount of time in which a response could be made, and (3) was unexpected or unanticipated by the members of the decision making unit."⁴ A crisis decision is thus taken to be a

⁴ Charles F. Hermann, *Crises in Foreign Policy Making: A Simulation of International Politics* (China Lake, California: Project Michelson Report, U.S. Naval Ordnance Test Station, April 1965), p. 29.

response to a high threat to values, either immediate or long range, where there is little time for decision under conditions of surprise.]

Crisis Decision Stages

Although not specified in the original decision-making framework (but implied to some extent by the attention given to feedback processes), the Korean decision suggests that it may be useful to think about developmental stages in a decision-making process. Thus analytical attention is drawn to the possibility that there may be similarities and differences among behaviors characteristic of stages within and among decision types. It may be found that decisional sequences are characterized by progressive activation of necessary conditions that in combination serve as sufficient to produce a given decisional outcome.⁵

The Korean decision suggests four stages for a crisis decision as shown in Table 1.

Almost all of the participants in the Korean decision that were interviewed have reported that they experienced a sense of entering into new phases of the situation at the various points of decision during the last week of June 1950. Some variation was noted in their interpretation of the significance of the various stages but this was not completely idiosyncratic; there was greater agreement than disagreement. For example, the majority of participants interviewed thought that the decision to use force taken during the second Blair House conference on Monday constituted a "point of no return" in the decisional sequence from which the decision to use ground troops logically followed. At least two of the decision makers, including the President, however, thought that the determination displayed during the Sunday Blair House conference was the logical precondition from which flowed the subsequent decisions of the week; others agreed that the Sunday conference was marked by such a sense of determination. At least one of the decision makers did not seem to experience a sense of full and complete response to the aggression until the Friday commitment of ground forces; others seemed to experience an earlier sense of complete involvement but agreed

⁵ This is suggested in part by Neil J. Smelser's remarks on the "value-added process" in social action in *Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: Free Press, 1962), pp. 13 ff.

TABLE 1

Crisis Decision Stages

Stage	Korean decision example
I. Stimulus categorization and establishment of general framework of response.	Identification of invasion as "aggression" and decision to make "collective security" response through the United Nations (June 24).
II. Determination of shared willingness to make a positive response and of capabilities to act.	Consensus of the Blair House conference that there should be "no appeasement." President's military questions (June 25).
III. Articulation of a specific positive response and decision to commit new, limited resources.	Decision to provide air-sea support for ROK forces (June 26).
IV. Progressive expansion of the amount and kind of committed resources.	Decision to employ combat troops in the Pusan area (June 29), one RCT in the combat area (early June 30) and to give General MacArthur unlimited authority to use his ground forces (mid-morning, June 30).

that the decision to send in infantry represented a significant new stage. Thus [despite some variation there does seem to have been a consensus that the decision did have certain stages as well as upon what those stages were. . . .]

The Korean Decision as a Single Decision and as a Sequence of Decisions

Analytically the Korean decision may be viewed either as a single decision or as a sequence of decisions. It may be regarded either as the American decision to resist armed aggression in Korea through military counteraction, or as the set of decisions taken by the United States Government during the period June 24-30, 1950. Both analytical postures will be adopted in the following analysis.

[The concept of a sequence of decisions that contributes to a stage-like progression toward an analytically defined outcome calls attention to the possibility that positive or negative reinforcement of the behaviors of officials between occasions for

decision may affect their responses during subsequent formal deliberations.⁶ The concept of reinforcement can now be added to the concept of feedback along the path of action contained in the original statement of the decision making framework.⁷

A simplified reinforcement pattern for the Korean decision is suggested in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Sequential Reinforcement of the Korean Decision

Decisions	Reinforcement
1. To call for a Security Council meeting (June 24).	Prompt supporting UN action (June 25).
2. To adopt a strong posture of resistance (June 25).	Coinciding editorial opinion (June 26).
3. To commit air-sea forces; to keep conflict limited; and to avoid direct confrontation with the USSR (June 26).	Overwhelmingly favorable Congressional, domestic, and international approval (June 27-28); temperate Soviet response (June 29).
4. To extend operations into North Korea and to employ combat troops as evacuation cover (June 29).	Unfavorable response from General MacArthur as being inadequate (June 30).
5. To commit one RCT to combat (June 30).	Agreement of full meeting of presidential advisers (June 30).
6. To commit necessary ground forces (June 30).	Congressional and press acceptance as "virtually inevitable" (June 30).

It will be noted that primarily positive reinforcement occurred throughout the week of decision and that the reinforcing agent varied from domestic and foreign actors to nonconsulted decision makers themselves.

[The reinforcement pattern of the Korean decision suggests the proposition that *the greater*

⁶ A stimulating summary of contemporary theory about reinforcement is contained in Albert Bandura and Richard K. Walters, *Social Learning and Personality Development* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1963).

⁷ Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin, *Foreign Policy Decision Making*, pp. 75 ff., 132.

consistency of positive reinforcement, the less the conflict among decision makers about making progressively more costly responses to threat]. Thus one way to elicit or to inhibit progressively more costly responses to crisis, where high costs are not immediately acceptable, may be to vary the reinforcement given to the initial low cost commitments that decision makers have approved. This suggests that the analysis of reinforcement patterns may be a fruitful approach to what might be called potentiality analysis in political science, i.e., to the analysis of the possible alternative states of affairs that might have existed other than that which is empirically verifiable.

Conceptualizing the Korean decision as a sequence of subdecisions also suggests that it may be found helpful to entertain a typology of the predominant characteristics of decision-making conferences. Thus [it might be found that crisis decisions tend to be made by a sequence of conferences that can be characterized primarily as *stimulus-evaluating* and *response framework-setting* (June 24), *resolution-probing* (June 25), *response-articulating and selecting* (June 26), *response-evaluating* (June 28 and 29), and *response deepening* (June 30)]. Although any concrete decisional conference may be characterized by a number of processes, it may be found fruitful for the decision-making analyst to entertain the possibility that such conferences tend to serve one or more (or at least limited) functions in a complex sequential decision.

[The Korean case also includes another kind of meeting that can serve as a positive or negative reinforcer but which is not in itself strictly a decisional meeting. This is what might be called a *response-legitimizing* conference]. Here the decision makers communicate their decisions to selected influential leaders in the internal and external political settings. Examples are the meeting of the direct participants in the Korean decision with members of the Congress on June 27 and June 30, and the briefings held by State Department spokesmen for NATO and OAS representatives on June 27. It will be noted that official spokesmen at such meetings not only communicate the content of the decisions that have been taken but also defend their appropriateness and legitimacy.

Against the background of these preliminary considerations the Korean decision will now be examined for the purpose of developing a set of

empirically grounded propositions that tie together the variables of the decision-making frame of reference and, hopefully, contribute to more explicit understanding of foreign policy decision processes.

[The analysis will first attempt to show the impact of crisis upon the main variables of the decision-making framework (organizational roles and relationships, communications and information, and motivation and values), and upon the relationships of the decision makers with their internal and external settings. For this part of the analysis, the decision will be viewed both as a single crisis decision and as a set of subdecisions. Secondly, the analysis will return to the idea of a crisis decision sequence in an attempt to show how the variables identified in the previous analysis interacted to produce the sequence of decisional outcomes observed in the present case. Finally, an attempt will be made to begin to relate properties of decisions to their subsequent execution or administration.]

Crisis and Decision-Making Variables

Crisis and Organizational Variables

The effect of crisis upon some organizational variables is summarized in Figure 1. Here crisis is conceptualized as an independent variable, while changes in organizational behavior are regarded as referents of associated dependent variables.

[The first proposition to be considered is PROPOSITION 1.1: *Crisis decisions tend to be reached by ad hoc decisional units.*] This can be appreciated by reviewing the principal decisional units that were active during June 24-30 as shown in Table 3. It

will be noted that all of the decisional units except Unit 4, a meeting of the National Security Council, are *ad hoc* units, specially convened to deal with problems arising out of the Korean crisis. The National Security Council, although in its initial stages of development, might have become a focus for decision during the week but it did not in fact become so. The Cabinet was not employed as a decision-making body for purposes of determining the American response to the North Korean aggression.

[There appear to be two main reasons for the formation of *ad hoc* decisional units under crisis conditions. The first is a result of formal role expectations plus chance; e.g., Units 1 and 5. Whereas the fact that the news of the North Korean invasion would be channeled to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (given his availability in Washington) can be attributed to the expectations that surrounded his organizational role, the fortuitous presence of the Secretary of the Army at the Alsops' dinner party and the important liaison role he played with the Department of Defense throughout Saturday night has a strong element of chance. So also did the absence from Washington in a telephoneless form of one of the Administration's principal analysts of Soviet affairs, Counselor George F. Kennan, Jr. Thus chance can operate inclusively or exclusively with respect to the membership of decisional units. [A second contribution to *ad hoc* decisional units is the combination of formal role expectations and leader's preference; e.g., Units 2, 3, and 6. Here the President generally seems to have specified those persons whom he wished to have advise him, while allowing his advisers an occasion

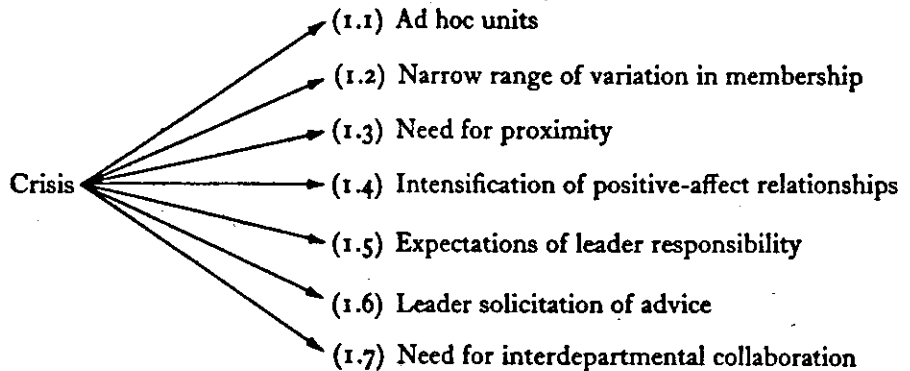


Figure 1. Crisis and organizational variables

TABLE 3
Sequence of Decisional Units

<i>Decisions</i>	<i>Decisional unit</i>
1. To call for a Security Council meeting (June 24).	1. President Secretary of State Secretary of the Army Assistant Secretary for UN Affairs Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs Ambassador-at-large
2. To adopt a strong posture of resistance (June 25).	2. President Secretary of State Secretary of Defense Service Secretaries Joint Chiefs of Staff Under Secretary of State Assistant Secretary for UN Affairs Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs Ambassador-at-large
3. To commit air-sea forces; to keep conflict limited (June 26).	3. Same as (2) minus Secretary of the Navy and Under Secretary of State.
4. To extend operations into North Korea and to employ combat troops as evacuation cover (June 29).	4. President Secretary of State Secretary of Defense Service Secretaries Joint Chiefs of Staff Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs Special Ambassadors—2 Chairman, NSRB Executive Secretary, NSC
5. To commit one RCT to combat (June 30).	5. President Secretary of the Army Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chief of Staff of the Army General of the Army
6. To commit necessary ground forces (June 30).	6. President Secretary of State Secretary of Defense Service Secretaries Joint Chiefs of Staff Special Ambassador

to supplement his desired list. Among them, of course, are officials such as the Secretaries of State and Defense who might be expected to participate on the basis of their role responsibilities. On the other hand, there are other participants whose activity, though reasonable, is not so easily explainable solely in terms of formal role expectations; e.g., the participation of the Under Secretary of State in Unit 2 but his absence in Unit 3, the presence of a special ambassador but the absence of the Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs in Unit 6.

But what is the significance for decision of *ad hoc* units in crisis situations? The significance of the nature of the decisional unit immediately becomes a focus of attention because of the fundamental assumption of decision-making analysis that decisions tend to vary with the composition of the decisional unit. Thus it is of interest that although the threatening stimulus launched by the North Koreans was from the beginning a military action, the initial American response was primarily a diplomatic one based on legal considerations that sought to bring to

bear in response the resources of international law and organization. The probability that this response was influenced by the composition of the group that initially articulated it as an alternative is suggested by the fact that this group included (1) the State Department official charged with primary responsibility for United Nations affairs (Assistant Secretary Hickerson), (2) a State Department official who had been the first incumbent in the same post in 1949 and who was known for his strong support of the United Nations (Assistant Secretary Rusk) and (3) a world-renowned specialist in international law (Ambassador Jessup). Confidence in this probability is increased, although to an indeterminate degree, by the conviction of one of Secretary Acheson's principal advisers that if he had been able to reach the State Department on Saturday night, he could have persuaded the Secretary of State not to limit the freedom of United States action by involving the United Nations in the American response to the Korean invasion. The Secretary of State's known preference for realistic power strategies rather than the unrealistic pursuit of principles in international affairs further increased the credibility of this official's conviction that he could have persuaded the Secretary of State to make a response to the Korean crisis that would be unencumbered by the United Nations involvement. Whether the President's great respect for Secretary Acheson's professional judgment would in turn, have led him to accept a recommendation for an initial unilateral American response to the aggression is, of course, speculative but not entirely implausible. The Truman Doctrine had been enunciated without a major role specified for the United Nations in 1947 and the decision to intervene in Formosa that was associated with the Korean decision in 1950 was taken with complete acceptance that it would not and could not be a United Nations action. If the need for direct military intervention in Korea had been clearer on Saturday night the argument for circumventing the United Nations might have been even more acceptable. Nevertheless, the point here is that an experienced decision maker appreciated at the time that it did make a difference who decided what the initial American response to the Korean crisis might be and that there is some evidence tending to support such a view in this case.

A review of the sequence of decisional units presented above suggests a cluster of propositions

centering around considerations of size and composition of the decisional units that cope with crisis. [Thus PROPOSITION 1.2: *Crisis decisions tend to be made by decisional units that vary within rather narrow limits of size and composition.*] Our study has shown that the size of the key decisional units tended to vary between five and fourteen members as indicated in Table 3A.

TABLE 3A
Size of Decisional Units

<i>Decision</i>	<i>Size of decisional unit</i>
1	6
2	14
3	12
4	15
5	5
6	12

[It will be noted that four of the six major sets of decisions were made by units having twelve to fourteen members. Two were made by five- and six-man groups. It is suggested that the larger groups can be accounted for partly by PROPOSITION 1.21: *The more costly the commitment anticipated, the larger the unit up to a psychologically and physically acceptable limit.*] This is most clearly illustrated by the differences between Units 1 and 2 and between Units 5 and 6. The upper limits on decisional units seem to be influenced by felt need for secrecy and a sense of adequate representation of interests within the executive branch for the matter at hand. It has also been stated by one official who was not invited to the first Blair House conference that he was not invited but would have been except for the seating capacity of the Blair House dining room (said to be fourteen). Whether the capacity of customary facilities for high level face-to-face national decision making is a factor here, or whether it is a sense of adequate representation of interest, or of an upper level in group size in which meaningful participation in discussion can take place, it nevertheless seems possible to suggest that *the principal national crisis decision-making group will tend to vary in size from twelve to fifteen officials.* This possibility is made more intriguing by the fact that the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union tends to have from eleven to fifteen members and that the core group that

President Kennedy involved in the Cuban decision in the fall of 1962 apparently constituted about fifteen officials. Are there organizational qualities of crisis decision in the modern world that transcend size of polity, issue, technological capability, historical background, and cultural context?

It is suggested that the smaller decisional units (1 and 5) can be accounted for by PROPOSITION 1.22: *The more the felt need for immediate action and (a) the less costly the commitment, or (b) the greater the revocability of a costly commitment, or (c) the greater the anticipated acceptance of a costly commitment, the smaller the decisional unit.* In the first case, the decision to call a meeting of the United Nations Security Council was viewed as being a limited commitment that would not foreclose other alternatives. The President's decision to approve the movement of one RCT into combat on Friday combined considerations (b) and (c). The decisional units of the week seemed to vary but little in membership as well as in size. Note that the President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Civilian Secretaries, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff served as a kind of core decision-making group (Decisions 2, 3, 4, and 6). But it will also be noticed that, taking the week as a whole, there took place a gradual decrease in the number of participating State Department roles, except for Unit 4 which was not an *ad hoc* unit but rather an augmented National Security Council. The declining role of the Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs is apparent. Excluding the President, the relative proportions of State and Defense Department officials in the various decisional units is shown in Table 3B.

TABLE 3B

*Relative Preponderance
of State and Defense
Roles in Decisional Units
(Excluding the President)*

	<i>Per cent State</i>	<i>Per cent Defense</i>
1	80	20
2	38	62
3	36	64
4	29	57
5	0	100
6	18	82

[This pattern suggests PROPOSITION 1.23: *The more technical the problems of decision implementation, the greater the role of the appropriate specialists in the decisional unit.*] Thus, in the Korean decision, as the problems thrust upon the decision makers more and more came to center around military problems of how to carry out the basic decision to resist the North Korean aggression, the representatives of the military establishment came to play a greater role in the deliberations. This is further supported by Secretary Johnson's later recollection that by the end of the week the center of working-level initiative in dealing with the Korean crisis seemed to have gravitated to his own office.

It was tempting to view the independent variable of Proposition 1.23 as the technical nature of crisis information and to hypothesize that it would be correlated with the composition of the official group that would react to it. However, the striking contrast between the purely military content of Ambassador Muccio's first report (on the Korean fighting) and the nonmilitary composition of Unit 1 for all practical purposes suggest that factors other than the content of information were crucial determinants of the composition of the decision-making group. The factors might have included the shared sense of required speed of action among the State Department officials, the lack of habits of intimate collaboration at high levels between State and Defense Department officials, the Secretary of State's misunderstanding that the Defense Secretary had not yet returned from the Far East, and other chance elements that seem to lead to an initial *ad hoc* assemblage of officials faced with a crisis. But in the implementation phases of crisis response more systematic factors seem to be at work, including official designation as a determinant of the composition of decision-making groups and a comparative decline in the importance of chance and self-selection in decisional participation. Thus it is suggested that the variables that intervene between the technical content of information and the composition of the decision-making group as expressed in Proposition 1.23 are a more regularized mode of designating decision makers and important control over channels of incoming information. For example, whereas military information from Ambassador Muccio that had been received through State Department channels was acted upon primarily by State Department officials (Unit 1), military

information from General MacArthur that had been received through Army channels served as the basis for decision by an almost purely Army group (Unit 5).

[PROPOSITION 1.3: *The greater the crisis, the greater the felt need for face-to-face proximity among decision makers.*] This proposition is suggested by the President's desire to return to Washington on Saturday night and by the whole series of face-to-face deliberations among his advisers that were suggested to him during the week. Thus crisis situations apparently intensify the need for the direct full sharing of information and views among organizational members. Do they also intensify a need to reinforce individual security feelings through group reassurance?

[PROPOSITION 1.4: *The greater the crisis, the greater the accentuation of positive affect relationships among decision makers.*] The warm personal relationship that existed between the President and the Secretary of State is demonstrated repeatedly during the events of the week by their harmony of views, frequent interaction, and the predominant role of the latter in articulating courses of action for presidential approval. Negative affect relationships, however, seemed not to have been affected in just the same way. Though the coolness at the secretarial level between the Departments of State and Defense may have inhibited somewhat the fullness of departmental collaboration that might otherwise have been accomplished, there is no evidence that these relations worsened. On the contrary, the public praise of the Secretary of State by the Secretary of Defense on Wednesday perhaps illustrates the facilitating effect of crisis, at least in moderate degree, upon group cohesiveness.

[PROPOSITION 1.5: *The greater the crisis, the greater the acceptance of responsibility for action by the leader and the more the follower expectation and acceptance of the leader's responsibility.*] The President's behavior during the Korean decision and the understanding and respect for his responsibilities shown by his advisers then and afterward enhances the appreciation of leadership behavior as a pattern of interaction between leaders and followers. There is no doubt that the President's own definition of his role as a strong president contributed to his decision to respond to crisis without formal Congressional approval. But it is also likely that he was influenced

by the expectations of his advisers that he should act independently and responsibly. Two pieces of evidence suggest support for this interpretation. Apparently only one adviser suggested a discussion of domestic politics during the Blair House conferences and apparently none raised any question about the appropriateness of presidential action. More directly, Secretary Acheson explicitly advised the President after the Monday evening decision not to seek a Congressional mandate for it and this advice was accepted. Both leader and follower definitions of his responsibility for taking positive action in response to crisis are undoubtedly conditioned by past social learning experiences. Thus for those who had observed the President under previous crisis conditions, such as in the Berlin crisis of 1948 when he had been inclined to favor a more drastic response than the airlift that was finally decided upon, his determination to resist the North Korean aggression could be anticipated. Participants in the Korean decision seem agreed that a less strong president might not have responded to the Korean aggression in the firm and timely way in which Mr. Truman did. This, in turn, suggests PROPOSITION 1.51: [*The greater the crisis, and the greater the past record of nonavoidant response to crisis by the leader, the greater the propensity to make a positive response.*] Thus the intensification of mutual responsibility expectations and the enhancement of the importance of behavior during past crises can be anticipated under crisis conditions.

PROPOSITION 1.6: [*The greater the crisis, the more the leader's solicitation of subordinate advice.*] This is illustrated in the Korean decision by the way in which President Truman invited each of his advisers to comment upon the situation during both of the Blair House conferences. Although the President was known to have a permissive leadership style, the Korean crisis probably accentuated that pattern. The President's past behavior suggested that the more important the problem, the more likely he was to seek the advice of his advisers in reaching a decision about it.

For this reason, it would have been surprising if he had not demonstrated such a leadership style during the Korean decision. It will be interesting to examine this proposition further in cases where the leader is not habitually permissive in his relationships with advisers.

[PROPOSITION 1.7: *The greater the crisis, the greater the interdepartmental collaboration.*] The crisis in Korea seemed to draw the Departments of State and Defense into collaboration closer than that which they had experienced for many months. It will be recalled that at one time Secretary Johnson had ordered all interactions should cease except those that were channeled through his own office. But during the crisis, officials at this "working level" appear to have been in especially close collaboration. There was both joint action and intermingling of officials in the field in Korea and in Washington. The need for interdepartmental collaboration that was expressed in practice at lower levels, however, seems not to have overcome the obstacles to cooperation at the secretarial level except for formal confrontations

under presidential supervision. This seemed particularly evident in the period between the receipt of the news of the fighting on Saturday and the decision to intervene on Monday.

Crisis and Informational Variables

The main informational bases of the sequence of decisions that made up the Korean decision are summarized in Table 4.

Figure 2 summarizes some effects of crisis upon informational variables.

[PROPOSITION 2.1: *The greater the crisis, the greater the felt need for information.*] From the State Department duty officer's first efforts to obtain confirmation of the United Press report on the North

TABLE 4
Sequence of Information

<i>Decisions</i>	<i>Information</i>
1. To call for a Security Council meeting (June 24).	Cable from Ambassador Muccio Press reports
2. To adopt a strong posture of resistance (June 25).	MacArthur memo on Formosa Confirming reports on all-out invasion Favorable Security Council action ROK Army might hold Soviet Union backed North Korean action US held military superiority over USSR US had Far Eastern military capability Invasion was like pre-WW II aggressions Acheson recommendations Direct appreciation of mutual attitudes
3. To commit air-sea forces (June 26).	MacArthur report on imminent ROK collapse Acheson recommendations Air-sea support would probably be decisive Soviets would probably not intervene Gross report on strong UN sanction support Shared determination not to appease
4. To extend operations into North Korea and to use combat troops as evacuation cover (June 29).	Reports on military difficulties Johnson recommendations Temperate Soviet response Overwhelmingly favorable domestic and foreign response
5. To commit one RCT to combat (June 30).	ROK Army incapable of more than delaying action MacArthur recommendation
6. To commit necessary ground combat forces (June 30).	Same as (5). Further Soviet aggression not imminent Two divisions probably adequate

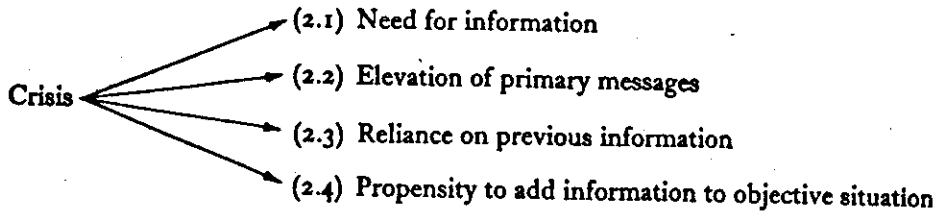


Figure 2. Crisis and Informational variables

Korean attack through the President's repeated requests for more information about Soviet intentions in other troublesome areas, the record of the Korean decision illustrated a strong demand for information under crisis. This need for information leads to the directed scanning of the organizational environment. The Sunday decision to ask General MacArthur to send a survey party to Korea is an excellent example of a decision-making group seeking to improve its information about the external setting in a crisis situation. Although the emphasis during the Korean decision seems to have been on scanning the external setting, noteworthy efforts were also made to obtain information about significant aspects of the internal setting—especially information needed to estimate capabilities for action. Thus the President's questions on Sunday night about the size, disposition, and mobility of American military forces in the Far East, as well as relative Soviet strengths, not only exemplify a need for information but also show how information variables can link capabilities analysis and foreign policy decision making.

PROPOSITION 2.11: *The more limited the information, the greater the emphasis placed upon the reliability of its source.* This is suggested by the fact that decision makers at the Department of State on Saturday evening placed great weight upon Ambassador Muccio's estimate of the attack as an "invasion" since he had a reputation for careful and cautious reporting.

PROPOSITION 2.12: *The more varied the organizational sources and channels of communication of similar information, the greater the confidence in its validity.* This may be illustrated by the remark of Senator Connally just prior to the Korean crisis that military, diplomatic, and private reports seemed to indicate a general lessening of international tension. Immediately after the attack the cumulative effect of

multiple sources of information on the accepted seriousness of the invasion could be seen as the result of the process of comparing information, especially among Army and Air Force officers in Tokyo and Army and State Department officials in Washington.

PROPOSITION 2.13: *The more prolonged the crisis, the greater the sense of adequacy of the information about it.* In the initial stages of a surprise threat, there are acute feelings of inadequacy of information about it, but as efforts are made to obtain further information, as actions are taken and responses to such actions are observed, and as additional information is thrust upon the decision makers from their environment, the sense of inadequacy begins to diminish. Thus in the early stages of the Korean decision, the Washington officials felt inadequately informed about the progress of fighting in Korea, the relative strengths of the opposing forces, the intentions of Soviet leaders, and other matters. By the end of the week, they felt more adequately informed. Here the eruption of a crisis is unanticipated and the initial feelings of inadequacy are intensified by the lack of contingency planning that would have led to continuous prior monitoring of information deemed necessary for response determination. Although information was viewed as becoming generally more adequate as the situation unfolded, there were some matters on which doubt was high (such as the ultimate costs of repelling the aggression and the possible role of the Chinese Communists) and only a very few things about which information was felt to be more than adequate (such as the domestic American acceptance of the Korean involvement).

PROPOSITION 2.2: *The greater the crisis, the greater the tendency for primary messages to be elevated to the top of the organizational hierarchy.* An example of this is the fact that the duty officer at General Headquarters in Tokyo did not attempt to bring the

first fragmentary reports of the Korean fighting to the attention of General MacArthur in the early morning of June 25 until the extreme seriousness of the attack had become clear. In Washington throughout the week, there were a number of primary messages that were communicated directly to the President; e.g., the Muccio report, the Dulles-Allison cable, and the MacArthur recommendations. This pattern of information flow seems correlated both with the need for information at higher organizational levels and with subordinate need for high-level decisions in fast-moving crisis situations. This pattern incidentally suggests qualities required in order to gain top-level organizational attention.

PROPOSITION 2.3: (*The greater the crisis, the greater the reliance upon the central themes in previously existing information.*) This is illustrated throughout the Korean decision by the persistent tendency to rely upon information about the relative capabilities of the North and South Korean armies that underestimated the capacities of the former and overestimated the abilities of the latter. This lack of appreciation of the actual relative capabilities of the two opposing military organizations was rooted, of course, in the estimate that they were approximately equal in weight. Thus the central, or predominant, theme in this matter was that the Republic of Korea Army could probably contain an invasion unless the North Korean People's Army was reinforced from outside. This theme, however, did not represent the total range of information about the opposing forces that was objectively available in Washington files. It will be recalled that the State Department had released to the press on June 9, 1950, a statement by Ambassador Muccio who asserted that "the undeniable material superiority of the North Korean forces would provide North Korea with the margin of victory in the event of a full-scale invasion of the Republic."⁸ Thus the estimates discussed during the Blair House conferences represented selective

recall of the main trend of earlier estimates rather than a rather full exploration of the range of objectively available information. Although this tendency did not prevent timely support of the South Korean forces, it undoubtedly delayed appreciation of its necessity and required scope. One way to compensate for the tendency for crisis comprehension to be narrowed through selective recall of predominant themes in existing information might be to initiate immediate scanning of past records for contrary themes, or to maintain continuing awareness of subdominant interpretations.

PROPOSITION 2.31: (*The greater the confidence in existing information, the greater the amount of contrary evidence and the greater the authority of the sources required to bring about a change in interpretation.*) It will be recalled that major revisions in previous estimates of South Korean capabilities were made twice during the Korean decision—on Monday just prior to the air-sea commitment and on Friday immediately before the decision to employ infantry. Both of these revisions, it will be noted, were made on the authority of information from General MacArthur, not upon reports emanating from the Korean Military Advisory Group.

PROPOSITION 2.4: (*The greater the crisis, the greater the propensity for decision makers to supplement information about the objective state of affairs with information drawn from their own past experience.*) This proposition, originally suggested by Richard C. Snyder, is illustrated by the categorization by the decision makers of the North Korean attack as an act of "aggression" similar to German, Japanese, and Italian actions that preceded World War II. Since a crisis involves a threat to values it is likely that the information selectively added from memory by the decision makers will be value-connected as "aggression" is associated with the values of "war" and "peace." Once again the importance of past social learning for response to crisis is suggested, furthermore, the briefer the opportunity for new learning under crisis conditions, the greater its probable importance. . . .

⁸ John J. Muccio, "Military Aid to Korean Security Forces," *Department of State Bulletin*, XXII, No. 573 (June 26, 1950) p. 1049.