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# THE PATHOLOGY OF FOREIGN POLICY: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

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## **Abstract**

One of the most important concerns in the field of public policy in general and foreign policy, in particular, is the issue of wrong decisions. That is, decisions that are unlikely to lead to the desired goals in the implementation or even if the results are negative in terms of goals. Although due to the feedback aspects as well as the involvement of other actors whose actions and reactions may not be possible to determine, there is no definite guarantee for a rational or correct decision. However, by recognizing the areas that lead to the decision that is more likely to fail, it is possible to reduce the likelihood of a wrong decision and also avoid the continuation of losses due to feedback. The purpose of this article is to show what factors can lead to inappropriate decision-making and policy-making after presenting a model of optimal rational decision-making, relying on theoretical achievements in the field of international relations and foreign policy. The argument of the article is that despite the multiplicity of factors involved, it is ultimately the cognitive factors that have a decisive influence on decision making.

**Key words:** policy making, foreign policy, decision-making, pathology.

## **Introduction**

One of the most important concerns in the field of public policy in general and foreign policy, in particular, is the issue of wrong decisions or falling into the decision-making pitfalls, that is, a decision that is unlikely to lead to the desired goals in the implementation, or even the results in terms of negative goals, or some kind of destructive negative effects for the actor. Historical studies in international relations give many examples of wrong decisions. Napoleon's decision to invade Russia and Hitler's decision to invade the Soviet Union are the most obvious examples. On the contrary, the United States and the Soviet Union's deal on the Cuban Missile Crisis or the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe was considered the right decision. In the case of wrong decisions, the emphasis is usually on their irrationality, given the circumstances, and the right decisions are actually judged on the basis that they have been in the best interest of the actor. Of course, looking back, 'that is when the information is complete and the decision in foreign policy has led to a clear failure', is easy to judge, and it is not taken into account that the good result of a decision may be the result of a completely irrational decision-making process.

However, if we were to make decisions for these people and their teams at the same time and with the same information and perceptions, would we necessarily make better decisions? Were the alternative decisions, which are counterfactual, we considered right and rational and assumed to change the course of history, correct and rational, given the information available at the time? Is judging a decision rationally based on the information available at the time of the decision or on the outcome 'of its failure or success in practice?' Is a completely rational decision possible in principle? What does it mean? Although these are typically questions that have occupied the minds of

theorists and researchers in the field of foreign policy for decades, there is always a kind of rationality and limited decision-making and policy-making is assumed. At the same time, it is emphasized that there are many wrongs and 'irrational' decisions. Although factors such as limited information or misinformation, uncertainty in the international environment, and the impossibility of definitively predicting the other side's reaction, as well as unintended consequences, may not always be remedied, there are also factors that self-conscious attention can certainly reduce the range of wrong decisions and, consequently, failure in foreign policy.

The main question in this paper is whether, from the perspective of theories of international relations and foreign policy, what factors hinder appropriate and rational decision-making and policy-making? When we talk about rational decision-making, we are dealing with what is called strategic logic, which involves paying attention to goals and tools and the fit between them, and paying attention to the decision-making environment, which is a kind of similarity between political decision-making and economic decision-making. Some form of planning is also considered since foreign policy decision-making is not usually one-sided. Consequently, in the rational policy model, we must pay attention to these two dimensions. The purpose of this article is to provide an ideal example of the requirements of rational decision-making and policy-making to show what, from the point of view of international relations theories, are factors other than the lack of sufficient information that in practice prevent the realization of this example. These factors include a range of material, semantic, and cognitive elements that can be achieved by relying on theories of international relations and foreign policy. "We can make mistakes, and we can be aware that we are wrong, but we cannot do both", (221), Herman quotes Katherine Schultz. So, before we make a decision, it's important to figure out how we might make a policy mistake and reduce the likelihood of making a mistake. Theoretical discussions can help us in this regard to some extent. In the following, after reviewing the effects of decision-making pathology in foreign policy, a model of optimal policy-making within the framework of the path analysis model is presented, and then related theoretical perspectives, including realistic attitude, organizational-court attitude, and cognitive attitude, will be reviewed, and finally, a summary and conclusion will be presented.

**Browse the Literature.** It can be said that many works written in the field of foreign policy analysis, both from an empirical and theoretical point of view, have some kind of practical concern. Some analyses of states' foreign policies are written from a pathological perspective. For example, in the case of Israel, factors such as the dominance of the short-term perspective, severe politicization of the decision-making process, the uncertainty of the main person or institution responsible for decision-making, insufficient institutionalization of decision-making, and the dominance of military institutions in the decision-making process have been proposed as the main pathologies (Freilich, 2006).

Many writings on decision-making in different approaches ultimately focus on identifying pathologies. In the field of bureaucratic politics, for example, Allison (2000), shows how the specific interests of different institutions affect their attitudes and the choices they make when a collective decision is to be made by the representatives of these various institutions. Instead of overcoming a rational view, the decision is the result of negotiation, bargaining, and the trade-offs that take place between them (Janis, 1972). The concept of group thinking seeks to show that the dynamics of small groups can hinder rational decision-making and that ways must be sought to reduce its impact. Alexander George's (1972) concept of 'multiple advocacies' seeks to show that problems arising from the realm of bureaucratic politics and group thinking are controlled by the proper functioning of presidents as key decision-makers and that the quality of decision-making is improved (George 1970; George and Stern, 2002). Suedfeld and Rank (1976) seek to illustrate the risks involved by emphasizing the role of decision-makers' simplifications in conflicting decisions (Suedfeld and Rank, 1976). Focusing on cognitive shortcuts not only enhances our understanding of decision-making but

can also focus on optimal decision-making and policy-making because it shows how self-awareness of shortcuts can reduce their negative impact.

Among the cognitive approaches to decision-making, Axelrod's (1976), 'Decision Structure: Cognitive Maps of Political Elites', is primarily concerned with policy improvement. In this work, Alexander believes that by drawing the decision maker's cognitive map, his mistakes can be realized. In fact, a cognitive map is a diagram that shows the causal relationships that one assumes exist between phenomena and events. The set of points includes phenomena, and the arrows drawn between them show the causal effect and the tip of the arrow the causal direction. Axelrod's goal is for elites to understand how what they choose may or may not be related to the cause-and-effect relationships they have in mind and the impact they anticipate. Among the few other works on foreign policy improvement is 'The World in Their Minds: Information Processing, Perception, and Perception in Foreign Policy Decision-Making' by Vertzberger (1990), in which the author argues for a comprehensive explanatory theory of processing. It provides information in the field of foreign policy and explains the sources of error in decision-making. The author argues that the main problem is the huge amount of information that decision-makers receive and try to use cognitive shortcuts and analytical rules. He deals specifically with five categories of variables that are the sources of policy and decision-making errors: the nature of the information received, the decision-maker, the social decision-making environment, the culture, and the use of history-based deductive reasoning.

If Vertzberger focuses on information processing, Hermann (1993) deals with another dimension of the decision-making problem, and that is the management of choices, which has also been the focus of group thinking theory as well as the approach of bureaucratic politics. The fact that an option may be insisted on and chosen, or that a decision can be made with a very large number of options, and how to deal with it can also form a pathological dimension of foreign policy because conditions are created that there is no accurate and rational evaluation of options, and it is the pressure of group thinking or the power of the bureaucrats in bargaining that leads to irrational decisions. Herman also believes that identifying the variables involved in the decision-making process can lead to an improved decision-making process. There are three models for managing options: avoiding inter-group conflict 'which is group thinking'; resolving group conflicts and reaching a consensus 'which is the model of bureaucratic politics' and finally accepting these conflicts and disputes 'resolving pluralism by accepting the majority opinion'. All three can have their own pathologies, but at the same time, factors such as the presence of a determining leader, the existence of norms about the careful consideration of options, etc. can control pathologies. Herman's main argument, then, is that group structures do not automatically lead to pathology and that some variables, such as the role of the leader, the presence of a mediator, and the nature of the minority in the group, shape the final outcome. In fact, seeing the group as bound by rational decision-making conditions, such as defining the problem based on all available information or evaluating all options, ultimately results in a remarkable result.

The collection of articles in the book 'The Foreign Policy and Insistence on Error' (Herman, 2013) also shows a pathological view of the field of foreign policy. Of course, as the title suggests, there is a particular issue at stake here, and that is why do policymakers, despite realizing that the policies they have laid down have not led them to the desired result, continue to do so, with the belief that the paper will eventually turn in their favor, show resilience, and, on the contrary, under what circumstances they may change their policies and what factors determine the type of change that has taken place.

As Herman (2013) says, in the first place, it must be understood whether a policy is fundamentally wrong or not. This article tries to show what can be the sources of error in foreign policy from the point of view of theories of international relations and foreign policy, some of which

we have discussed above. But before that, we need to see under what circumstances we can have a high percentage of confidence in making the best decision. The answer can be found in the analytical model of the trace, which we refer to below.

## **Result**

### **1. Rational Foreign Policy: An Optimal Model of Strategic Planning**

If we accept that states in world politics pursue goals and take into account calculations, in interpreting their actions, we use the 'wise actor model' or the 'rational actor model' (Allison, 2000). In which the state is considered integrated and its policies and decisions are based on having specific goals, certain priorities, sufficient information, recognizing the options to achieve the goals, the probability of success, and calculating the profit and loss of each option are formed (Walt, 1999). The first problem that arises here is that the state is not really the decision-maker, but it is the people who make rational or irrational decisions. But it is said that if we consider the structure of political power in the states as the principle of politics, this structure will be more important than anything else. Here 'rationality of official role' dominates the actors: they all seek to maintain the power of a single political entity, consider its interests in its entirety, and make rational choices based on their official role. As a result, their behaviors, preferences, and decisions, both individual and collective, are shaped by what is defined in their role as members of the state (See Freedman 1976: 437-438) on the role of formality in rationality.

Rationality and rational decision-making is a process in which people are expected to make choices. The decision-maker must think and act systematically and logically. He must have certain goals and preferences, so that he knows that if he prefers A to B and B to C, then he must also prefer A to C. For example, A prefers peace, B prefers full-blown war, and C prefers limited war, that is, peace over full-blown war, and full-blown war prefers war over limited war; therefore, peace will take precedence over limited war (Stein, 2012).

The decision-maker must know the alternative ways to realize each of these preferences, the costs and benefits of each alternative, and the probability of success in each. The important issue here is information (Ibid). That is, we must have a wealth of information to be able to make rational decisions. Do we need to know if there is a possibility for peace or not? How much does it cost? What are the benefits? What is the reaction of others to the preference for peace? And yet... this means that the foreign policy decision-maker must have some kind of mental estimate of the consequences of different options.

In the analysis of rationality in foreign policy, the interpretation of action as behavior that reflects 'purpose and intention' is done, that is, what purpose is intended and whether a reasonable choice has been made according to that purpose or not (Allison, 2000). Usually, in theories and models of rational foreign policy decision-making, they stop the discussion of rationality to the same extent. But you can also be more careful. We know that the state can be considered an organization or institution that has goals and has the tools and resources to achieve those goals. In any decision-making situation, the state or state decision-makers must have a correct understanding of their position in the international system and against their counterparts in foreign policy and in their competitive position. This is where making the best rational decision can be based on identifying strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Therefore, models of strategic planning can be used to draw this optimal model.

Any decision-making or policy-making situation, if we assume the 'project' of statesmen and policymakers, can be analyzed through one of the tools of strategic planning, what is known in management as SWOT. Swat stands for four components that are considered in optimal and rational decision-making: strength, weakness, (opportunity, and threat. In other words, a rational decision-maker in a situation can achieve the best option by considering these four elements (for more on

Swat, (see Houben, Lenie and Vanhoof 1999, Dix and Lee 2002, Dyson 2004, Hill and Westbrook, 1997). It is true that this concept has entered the knowledge of management for many years, but although it can be applied in policy-making and strategic decisions, and foreign policy, it seems that no attention has been paid to it in the field of foreign policy. As in companies and economic units, considering these four elements is partly based on information and partly based on 'judgment'. Just as in companies, an individual or a group may be responsible for determining the final judgment in determining them. The same situation is seen in the field of foreign policy decision-making.

National power can be seen as the equivalent of strength in SWAT analysis. First, as in SWOT analysis for companies, this power is not limited to material factors. Here both material factors, such as the elements of national power in realism and semantic elements that are somewhat considered in classical and neoclassical realism can be considered (see Morgenthau, 1978, Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro 2009). But the information about it must be honest and objective. Weaknesses can include a range of limitations – strengths in practice. These include positions in international alliances, the ability to convey one's views and positively influence others in the international system, weaknesses in public diplomacy, or impairments in national capabilities. It may also be possible to use the neoclassical realists' discussion of the power of application to the existing power here and to regard this distance as a weakness.

If strengths and weaknesses are variables related to the organization/state, threats and opportunities can also be said to include environmental variables considered in planning and decision making (Dyson, 2004). Threats in international politics usually refer to foreign threats from other states, but it seems that with the growth of international terrorism and also the deteriorating of many issues that have traditionally been in the field of soft politics 'such as environmental and economic issues, etc'. A broader definition of threats can also be considered (see Buzan and Wæver, 2003). International Opportunities in Foreign Policy Situations such as finding common and complementary interests with others or the existence of a common threat 'even in the case of activists who are presumed to be rivals or enemies' and general conditions that allow others to consolidate their power or open Such as the power vacuum or weakness of the central government in a country to facilitate the promotion of their goals and interests are among the conceivable opportunities in international politics (Pickton and Wright, 1998). Although Swat is also said to be somewhat simplistic and should be supplemented by complementary methods, it can also be considered a good starting point in completing the rational actor model considered in foreign policy. From the point of view of theories of international relations and foreign policy, what factors can undermine this rational model?

### **1.1 Realism and the Limitations of Rational Policy-Making**

There is disagreement about the extent to which realist theory, as a theory of international politics, explains foreign policy. Most analysts, of course, argue that classical and neoclassical realism undoubtedly have room for foreign policy analysis, and although Kenneth Waltz (1979) denies a place for explaining foreign policy within the framework of his theory, some argue that his theory can also be the basis for foreign policy explanation (Elman, 1996). Some opponents of realism, such as Jack Donnelly (2013), see it as essentially a 'prescriptive theory of foreign policy'. In this latter sense, one can undoubtedly expect realism to have a say in foreign policy. What is seen in both classical realism and Neo-realism is a strong emphasis on the assumption of the rationality of state actors. At the same time, Morgenthau (1978) repeatedly warns against deviating from this rationality, and it is interesting that even the Neo-realist Waltz (1979), whose more or less deterministic structural model is based on the assumption of rationality, acknowledges that in practice, states sometimes disobey structural implications but pay the price. In general, it can be said that Morgentha (1978) considers the following factors detrimental to a rational foreign policy that is defined based on national interests:

First, misjudgment of the extent and impact of elements of power and others 'geography, natural resources, industrial power, population, territory, national character, national spirit, military readiness, quality of state, and diplomacy' can seriously undermine policies in practice. Second, defining national interests disproportionate to national power means that the government defines its foreign policy goals more than its sources of power allow. Of course, defining interests more narrowly than those commensurate with national power can also have adverse regional and international consequences. Third, the ideological nation of foreign policy means the transformation of a moral or value ideal as a guide to foreign policy instead of the concept of national interest, which itself can affect the first factor mentioned above. Fourth, is the transformation of public opinion into a foreign policy leader instead of national interests, which can have dire consequences due to the sentimentality of ordinary people and the lack of sufficient information on sometimes secret issues in foreign policy. Of course, Morgenthau emphasizes that the state should be able to mobilize public opinion in support of its policies, but it should not be enslaved (Robinson, 1999). As can be seen, in fact, Morgenthau warns against the entry of factors that disturb the pattern of rational foreign policy based on feelings or beliefs and perceptions. Therefore, it can be said that these factors should be sought at the level of the state, which we will see in the two main approaches to foreign policy, namely the approach to the field of bureaucracy and the cognitive approach, which have been seriously considered.

### **1.2 The Bureaucratic Politics and the Limitation of Rationality**

Since foreign policy decisions are not usually made individually, the issue of the influence of groups and the bureaucratic process in decision-making is discussed (Allison, 2000). In the bureaucratic approach to foreign policy, it is emphasized that policy-making is not the result of a decision based on rational calculations and the assumption of an actor integrated with agreed goals and objectives, but rather the result of trade and competition between different components of the government that operate according to different assumptions and different goals. What makes this policy area 'political' is that participants in the decision-making process differ on policy goals and tools, can influence policy to various degrees, and ultimately, through 'negotiation, bargaining, and compromise' they reach a consensus. The problem is that the choice of policy is not based on the fact that it is possible to achieve an agreed value most efficiently, but on the fact that more people involved in the decision-making process have endorsed it (Art, 1973). In other words, the field of bureaucratic politics prevents the existence of some necessary conditions for rationality, such as having fixed and clear goals and priorities and weighing options based on their efficiency in achieving those goals. As a result, in such circumstances, there will inevitably be no single perception of strengths and weaknesses (as emphasized by Morgenthau) or opportunities and threats as a result of differing perceptions of goals and priorities or, as Morgenthau puts it, national interests.

What helps solve the problems of bureaucratic politics here is the multi-pronged approach we mentioned earlier. Alexander George (1972) believes that in a situation where the decision-maker is faced with a range of options that different organizations, institutions, and consultants offer with different approaches and sometimes different interests, he can achieve a better option by applying management. As the highest executive in a structured environment, he listens to the various arguments, each of which seeks to best support a particular option. The assumption is that, if properly managed, the existence of conflicting views is not only a weakness but can also be useful because it shows different views on an issue. At the same time, there are three conditions under which the multiple advocacy system can work best: First, there is a proper distribution among the various actors in the field of these resources: power, weight, influence, and competence in matters of policy information on policy problems, analytical resources, and skills in bargaining and persuasion. Second, participate at the presidential level in organizational policy to oversee and

regulate the function of multiple advocacies, and third, provide adequate time for debate and bargaining (Ibid).

In fact, the role of the chief executive is very important here, even in providing the first and third conditions. He provides the conditions for healthy competition between different organizations and institutions, and then, by evaluating the fairness from that perspective, he can arrive at the appropriate option. With the help of his advisers (for example, at the level of the National Security Council), he should be able to analyze the various options and evaluate them. In addition, he should be able to force the representatives of various judicial bodies to have a broader perspective on the issue in a situation where they have narrow views (George, 1972). This can be achieved in a non-institutional setting, for example, by forming a special committee to look into the matter and by encouraging members to look beyond their specific organizational attitudes and teachings. In addition, continuous monitoring of the implementation process of decisions at the institutional level in the form of 'preventive intervention' by the president in this model is necessary to create greater efficiency. It should be added, however, that all of this is provided that the chief executive or senior decision-maker is not influenced by problematic cognitive variables in defining the situation or assessing options.

There is no doubt that bureaucratic politics alone is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for incoherence in decision-making, and the source of this incoherence can be traced to other factors, which are mainly cognitive factors (Freedman, 1976). In one of the attempts to combine the bureaucracy discussion with the cognitive approach, the concept of group thinking has been introduced. In the discussion of group thinking, Janis (1972) deals with the effects within the group on rationality in its various dimensions: the effect on information acquisition, information interpretation, not seeing the goals under the influence of the selected option, not calculating the profit and loss of each alternative, and ... In fact, it can be said that group thinking causes a lack of understanding of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. His solution to this problem, with reference to two successful foreign policy cases, namely the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Europe after World War II, involves free intra-group discussions and critical examination and hearing different views on options, benefits, and costs, and the probability of their success and failure. Tetlock (1979) also shows how dependence and group identities influence decision-making in the context of group thinking.

The solution to the problem of group thinking also lies in factors such as the role of the president, the structure of the decision-making group, and the decision-making process. Findings from one study show that shaping the right structure before making a decision is of particular importance in forming an informed, experienced, yet heterogeneous team that values pluralism and follows a specific decision-making process. The president, as the leader of the group, must also have a non-partisan position. In the field of information processing, all information must be the solution to the problem of group thinking, which also lies in factors such as the role of the president, the structure of the decision-making group, and how the decision-making process (Schafer and Crichlow, 2002).

## **2. Perceptions and Limitations in Rational Policy-Making**

As Joseph de Rivera (1968) puts it, we usually take our mental perceptions for granted: what we see exists 'or because we can see it actually exists' while everything can be seen in different forms. Our perceptions of a situation, event, behavior, person, etc. are perceptions that require a minimum of change or reorganization in our other ideas. In fact, our beliefs lead to our misinterpretations. The interpretation of the action of the 'other' is based on the beliefs of 'us', and for this reason, sometimes our perception is completely wrong. The perceptual error occurs when one has the least expectation of them, 'because they do not realize the impact of their beliefs on their perceptions. So there needs to be a way to identify misconceptions about reality.

The efforts of many theorists and researchers, who formulate foreign policy based on psychological theories, especially cognitive theories, as well as theories related to motivation and personality, can actually help to optimize decision-making because of the factors that can lead to a biased rather than a realistic view. Here we take a look at some of the theoretical and research achievements in this field that can provide the most important contribution to optimal decision making. Image theory shows us how countries' judgments about the actions of other states in their foreign policy and, consequently, the reaction of one state to them are a function of the image they have of that state. For example, if an enemy state is assumed to react to its action, it is different from reacting to a similar action by a friendly state, and if it is perceived as weak or strong, a different reaction is formed against it. In this case, the meaning of a single action can be different and different motives can be attributed to the opposite actor. However, there may not be hostile motives behind the behavior of a state that is considered an enemy, and vice versa (For a discussion on image theory, see Cottam 1977, 1985; Herrmann 1984, 1986, 1988). The main problem is that the image of the other becomes a stereotype that can lead to stereotyped reactions, and sometimes these reactions can be contrary to the interests, goals, and preferences of states.

The patterns in the thinking of high-ranking officials that can have a particular impact on their political behavior are analyzed in the context of operational codes, and, more specifically, the relationship between the causal beliefs of decision-makers in the cognitive map theory above. It is noted that there are attempts to show the impact of beliefs on decisions (Leits 1951, Holsti 1977, George, 1979). To the extent that these beliefs prevent us from seeing the facts or are inconsistent with reality, they can be considered factors that prevent a realistic decision. In other words, the belief system of decision-makers can sometimes be the main source of what Robert Jervis (1976) calls misunderstanding.

Some of the conceptualizations in the cognitive approach focus on the study of the shortcuts through which human beings make decisions. Human beings in general and foreign policymakers, in particular, are trying to find a shortcut and an easy way to make decisions faster. Cognitive theories are largely formed by assuming and sometimes explaining these cognitive processes. There are several shortcuts, some of which are mentioned here: the Fundamental Attribute Error of learning from history, the avoidance of trade-offs between different values, and the commitment to freeze policies.

Fundamental Attribute Error is very common in social cognitive. Individuals systematically emphasize the importance of other actors' internal causes or tendencies in explaining the actions of others, rather than looking at the importance of external causes or the particular situation that led to the action. This method is the easiest and most accessible explanation from a cognitive point of view. It is assumed that there is a correspondence between disposition and behavior. For example, it is assumed that aggressive people will behave aggressively. In foreign policy, the same judgment applies to other states. Senior officials often see other states as 'more focused, planned, and coordinated' than they really are, and, as a result, ignore the fact that sometimes unplanned national policies are the product of internal strife resulting from malpractice (Tetlock and McGuire, 1986), our calculations and ... and not necessarily deceptive intentions. Negative stereotypes about others also help others to cite general characteristics (Hardstveit and Bonham 1986).

Learning from history is another shortcut to cognitive learning that is based on allegorical reasoning. This means that cognition is transferred from one situation to another, and incomplete correspondences are usually established between the two categories of information. In this way, humans can solve unknown problems based on known problems; but in some cases, this can be very misleading and the learning can be very simplistic and superficial. There is usually a greater tendency for conflict and inflexibility, and history is treated selectively, so because a 'solution' is found based on this analogy, the problem becomes even greater. Avoiding trade-offs between values means that

decision-makers prefer not to give up one value for another. Foreign policy, on the other hand, requires choices that are perfectly good or bad, but in positive and negative dimensions (Tetlock and McGuire, 1986, Jervis, 1976). Nevertheless, decision-makers do not see this, and as a result, if a policy has a positive value in one dimension, they understand it as if it has a positive value in all dimensions, and vice versa (Jervi, 1976, Tetlock and McGuire, 1986).

The impact of commitment on policy freezing makes it difficult for politicians who commit to one or a series of actions to change the course of action and abandon that initial commitment, especially if that commitment has been made public. In this case, the initial commitment and persuasive efforts to redirect more intense resistance are made against its critics. On the one hand, beliefs in their various forms, including general beliefs about the nature of the international system, the reliability or non-trustworthiness of human beings, the possibility of changing and influencing the human will, or partial beliefs about the nature of another actor or his power. The cause of a particular event and how a particular action affects others, and the situation can cause reality to not be seen as it is and judgments to be made about events, actions, consequences, etc. that do not correspond to reality. On the other hand, the human mind, which is either in a situation where it does not have enough information or cannot process a huge amount of information, resorts to shortcuts that can speed up decisions and, at the same time, can lead to misinterpretation of facts. But there is no doubt that being aware of these effects can help control them.

It is said that people who have higher conceptual complexity, i.e. do not see the world in black and white and do not react stereotyped or hastily, are more inclined to appropriate and rational actions and reactions. Such decision-makers try to resolve issues without conflict in the first place, but may even resort to war, when necessary, but consider war as an option for rational reasons (Foster and Keller, 2014). Although it was once assumed that conceptual complexity was a matter of personality and more or less constant, the results of studies indicate a change in the conceptual complexity of individuals (See Young and Schafer 1998). Thus, self-awareness about avoiding conceptual simplicity can help optimize decisions.

## **Conclusions**

From the perspective of the most important theories of international relations and foreign policy, the aim was to find out which factors hinder appropriate/rational decision-making and policy-making in the foreign relations of states. Relying on discussions of rational foreign policy decision-making, we have seen that in existing approaches, despite the emphasis on maximizing desirability and looking at alternatives, less attention has been paid to the question of how and within what context a more specific pattern can be used to make optimal decisions. Using the SWOT model, which is considered in strategic management, it is said that for an optimal decision, it is necessary to have a proper understanding of strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats. In foreign policy, paying attention to these factors can lead decision-makers to the right decision.

Nevertheless, the point of this article was to identify the factors that stand in the way. Although this issue 'which is considered to be the pathology of foreign policy' has been addressed less directly in theories of international relations and foreign policy, a number of factors can be identified from the existing discussions. We first addressed this issue from the perspective of realist theory as an approach that assumes the rationality of actors and consequently finds deviation from it pathologically, and we saw that Morgenthau, in particular, as classical realism, is a set of perceptual factors. The 'emotional pressure' of public opinion is seen as a factor that hinders realism in foreign policy-as the rational pursuit of national interests within the framework of national power. So, it can be said that he sees the sources of deviation from rationality in the entry of mental elements.

We have seen that in the attitude of bureaucratic politics in explaining foreign policy, deviation from rationality as a result of the existence of heterogeneous attitudes and different perceptions of interests among different institutions involved in foreign policy decision-making is considered. It is assumed that, with multiple advocates, the chief executive can achieve a realistic and appropriate understanding of alternative interests and options by looking free from institutional narrow-mindedness and encouraging others to get rid of biased organizational and institutional assumptions. In this way, the negative consequences of organizational competition can be overcome. As can be seen here, the role of the chief executive is to guide or correct unfamiliar perceptions, which can be accompanied by misconceptions and, consequently, wrong choices.

In another branch of bureaucratic politics, where the dynamics of small groups and the formation of the pathological phenomenon of group thinking are discussed, perceptions are still at stake, but this time perceptions are influenced by the group atmosphere and the emotions of being in a group, which has the negative impact of leading to irrational decisions. The solution is in the form of appropriate intervention by the chief executive and the highest decision-making authority, the selection of group members from among individuals with special cognitive and personality traits, or encouraging discussion and pluralism, in the service of preventing the adverse consequences of collective perceptions and beliefs.

Thus, it can be said that the cognitive approach can be more useful than other approaches in resolving the pathology of foreign policy decision-making. What we have discussed above shows that from the perspective of this approach, on the one hand, there are a set of beliefs that can lead to the introduction of elements in the attitude toward foreign policy issues that bring with them biases and assumptions and can be realistic. On the other hand, there are sets of cognitive shortcuts that the human mind subconsciously uses to arrive at a decision more easily. It is self-awareness of both factors that can prevent wrong decisions. As Robert Jervis (1977) argues, decision-makers can make better decisions if they think thoroughly about the basics of their decisions. They can make better decisions. However, due to the uncertainty in the international environment, the impossibility of having all the necessary information, the impossibility of processing all the information, and the impossibility of accurately predicting the actions of others, as well as the involvement of factors such as unexpected events or even chance, there can never be full assurance. But there is no doubt that being aware of mental functions and assumptions and putting aside assumptions that can hinder rational decision-making will help make optimal decisions.

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The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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