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THE QUESTION OF POLITICAL
FEASIBILITY:

APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF
POLICY SPACE

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Abstract

Stimulating opportunities for employment and enterprise development may require changes in the structures created by trade, credit, interest rate, tax, and wage policies in developing countries. Policy analysts concerned about the introduction of such policy reforms need to consider the political feasibility of the changes they recommend. Political feasibility can be assessed through the analysis of the "policy space" available for the introduction and pursuit of any given reformist initiative. The policy space for reform in developing countries is affected by a number of conditions in decision making and implementation processes: 1) the predominance of executive centered policy making; 2) the importance of informal processes of influence; 3) the extensive influence of technocrats and foreign advisors; 4) the limited nature of pressure group activity; 5) the importance of concern about maintaining political stability; 6) and the extensive political pressures brought to bear on the policy implementation process. These characteristics of the policy process in developing countries provide guidance about what must be studied in assessing the policy space available for reformist initiatives.

To carry out such an assessment, three important questions need to be answered. Each question focuses on a different aspect of the policy process: How do decision makers perceive an issue? What political dynamics determine the outcome of decision making? and, How can the policy space for a particular reform be broadened? Each question suggests the need for distinct tools of analysis. A variety of approaches and methodologies are available for answering these questions. The paper considers a number of approaches and methodologies and assesses their appropriateness for studying the political feasibility of reformist initiatives in developing countries. A research agenda utilizing several such approaches is suggested in the conclusion to the paper.

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I.

Introduction

The question of political feasibility is central to the adoption and pursuit of policies to encourage employment and enterprise development. Clearly, few would speak out against creating productive sources of employment in developing countries. But the creation of productive employment is a goal, not a policy; to achieve that goal requires the adoption and pursuit of a variety of policies that have significant impact on the lives and livelihood of large numbers of people in developing countries. In any given country, stimulating the creation of employment may require changes in the structures created by long-standing trade, credit, interest rate, tax, and wage policies. Policy reforms may be needed that alter the distribution of power between the private and public sectors or that correct biases in favor of specific groups and interests. Such reforms will impinge upon concrete

economic and bureaucratic interests and will change the distribution of resources in a society and access to the benefits of public policy. Political resistance and conflict will almost certainly emerge over their introduction; policy analysts are therefore well advised to be concerned about the political feasibility of the reforms they propose.¹

In fact, of course, policy analysts working within government agencies or acting as advisors to decision makers often deal with issues of political feasibility as they frame recommendations for initiating or altering policies. They may be provided with broad guidelines about politically acceptable options by their political masters or they may operate with implicit notions of what is acceptable and what is politically "off limits" for specific policy arenas. In either case, these policy analysts are not confined to making strictly technical assessments of optimal economic solutions, but can be active participants in politically sensitive dialogues with policy makers. Reformist initiatives clearly have a greater chance for successful introduction and pursuit when, through such a process, they are designed to be both economically and politically feasible. But policy makers cannot always count on the political astuteness of their technical advisors nor are their own perceptions always correct; the extensive legacy of reformist failures attest to inadequate political forecasting. An important question, then, is whether methods exist to aid policy analysts in assessing the feasibility of the reforms they recommend. These methods should not be considered an alternative to the guidance offered by policy makers or to the political sensibilities of analysts who are part of the

policy making process. Rather, they should be considered potential tools for increasing the effective pursuit of reform.

Currently, most discussions of political feasibility take the form of post-mortems on the failures of the past. Analysts often decry the lack of "political will" of a government that does not successfully implement needed changes (see, for example, Williams, forthcoming). "Vested interests" or "incompetence" are also given as reasons for the failure to adopt or pursue particular development policies. In spite of the conventional wisdom of such assertions, however, a policy analyst concerned about whether or not a particular policy recommendation is politically feasible would be hard pressed to operationalize and measure such vague concepts as "political will," "vested interests," or "incompetence" (see Haggard, 1984; Hewitt, 1982; Nelson, 1984a, 1984b). At the other extreme are discussions that focus on the particularities and ideosyncracies of specific policy histories in individual countries. While such studies are often interesting, generalized frameworks and tools of analysis do not emerge from them.

Do means exist to assess the political feasibility of proposed reforms in specific contexts? Although there is a large policy-relevant literature in the fields of political science, public administration, organizational analysis, decision making, and policy science, this question is rarely addressed. Indeed, the lack of evident tools for political analysis may be part of the reason that policy analysts and advisors are often marginalized from influence over policymaking; the

reforms they suggest often lack a political rationale (see Wilson, 1981; Killick, 1976). In an effort to fill the analytic gap that makes it difficult to assess questions of political feasibility, this chapter evaluates a number of possible approaches to its study that can be utilized by policy analysts.

For our purposes, a useful approach should help the policy analyst assess political feasibility in a way that is more specific than overly simplified explanations resting on "political will," "vested interests," or "incompetence" and more systematized and reliable than the sui generis approach to each situation of policy reform. In addition, the approach should itself be feasible to pursue within developing countries. For example, an approach relying on intensive documentary analysis would not be possible where such documents do not exist; likewise, methods requiring analysis of voting records of legislators would not be appropriate where legislatures are peripheral to policy making. Moreover, the approach must be timely in the sense that it should allow the analyst to generate results in relatively short periods--months rather than years. This criterion is applied to enhance the utility of political analysis to policy analysis. Finally, the approach should be capable of generating specific insights about the adoption and pursuit of specific policies. The purpose of this discussion is not to generate overarching "laws" of politics that apply to policy reform initiatives; rather, the chapter involves a search for appropriate general approaches and tools of analysis that can be utilized in a wide variety of particular contexts.² The concept that is central to this search is

that of a "policy space" relevant to the introduction and pursuit of economic reform policies.

Policy Space: The Concept

In any given political system, a space exists for the formulation and implementation of any particular policy reform. This policy space is defined by the capacity of a regime (and its political leadership) to introduce and pursue the reformist measure without precipitating a regime change or major upheaval and violence in the society, or without being forced to abandon the initiative.³ The space may be narrow or wide, depending on the type and timing of the reform being initiated, the nature of regime stability and political opposition in the country in question, the resources of skill and legitimacy available to political leadership, and the legacy of prior and coterminously pursued policies. Understanding a particular policy space is therefore a matter of assessing what is adoptable and what is implementable in any given political context (see Meltsner, 1972: 860; Cohen, Grindle, and Walker, 1985).

Clearly, then, political feasibility cannot be abstracted from the arena in which policy is made and implemented nor from the political actors who are making policy decisions (see Hewitt, 1982). Each policy initiative and each country will generate its own political scenario and the actors involved will differ as will their skills and strategies for acquiring influence in the policy process. Political structures,

historical patterns, and organizational forms will add unique characteristics to each case. Sites for confrontation and compromise will also differ depending on the issue and country in question. Policies themselves will generate their own political responses (see Lowi, 1964).⁴

Policy Context: The Strategic Environment

Given these sources of complexity, a myriad of factors can be pointed to that an analyst should consider in assessing the policy space available for the introduction and pursuit of any specific reform. This implies a vast knowledge of politics and political actors in any given policy context, a requirement beyond the reach of most policy analysts. Nevertheless, a series of generalizations about the policy process in developing countries--the context for research on policy space--is a useful way to begin simplifying this daunting task.⁵ A number of characteristics of policy formulation and implementation have important implications for how an analyst can most usefully explore questions of decision making, political response, and the dynamics and parameters of policy space. Several of these general characteristics are described in the following paragraphs, along with the implications they have for the study of policy space.

Executive-Centered Policy Making. In contrast to the policy making process in the United States, which tends to be an extremely open and highly visible public pulling and hauling among and within legislatures and executive offices, policy making in developing countries tends to be

more closed, less visible, and more centered in the political executive.⁶ In general, high level administrators and political leaders dominate the policy making process and are the targets of the activities of those who would influence the decision making process. This characteristic does not mean that policy makers operate unfettered by political and economic constraints, but only that the site of policy discussion and processes of negotiation is relatively narrow and specific. Much decision making occurs in the halls of bureaucratic entities, planning ministries, the executive mansion, or political party headquarters. Thus, leadership, not just structural constraints, is an important factor to consider in assessing policy space issues because the perceptions, activities, and skills of a small number of people will probably have considerable impact on what decisions are made. (see Ascher, 1984; Bunce, 1981). For the policy analyst attempting to sort out the complex interactions of politics in a given country, the executive-centeredness of policy making is useful in designating where to begin in the process of assessing policy space. It also means that policy analysts must have access to the decision making apparatus if they are to explore the issue of policy space.

Informal Processes of Influence. A relatively closed decision making process and elite-centered politics leaves wide scope for pressures to be exerted on the policy making process through informal and non-public channels. Political "understandings" with the military about the changes that will be tolerated in development policies or budgetary allocations, unspoken recognition of the disruptive capacities of

organized groups or economic interests, the implicit power of foreign interests, and private "deals" struck in informal encounters with political leaders often loom large in explaining the political rationale for particular policy choices. For the policy analyst, this characteristic of policy making in developing countries is problematic, because information on such informal processes is difficult to collect and even more difficult to assess in terms of its actual impact on decision making. It suggests that formal structures for the representation of interests, formal rules, and formal organizations only tell part of the story. In addition, the importance of informal political processes indicates that an analyst needs considerable knowledge of the political system being considered and the varieties of ways in which influence--often of a subtle nature--is exerted within it.

Technocrats and Foreign Advisors. In many developing countries, technocratic elites, including foreign advisors from a variety of international agencies, consulting firms, universities, and governments play important roles in policy making (see Cepeda Ulloa and Mitchell, 1980; Coleman and Quiros Varela 1981; Gordenker, 1976; Wynia, 1972). In many cases, they are the ones who initiate policy recommendations and place an issue on the policy agenda. A good example of this kind of influence on the policy process is the role of the International Monetary Fund, other international agencies, and domestic technocrats in stabilization negotiations and agreements, efforts that exclude large numbers of politically-relevant actors and that result in the adoption of major policy reforms. Technocratic language and justifications used by

these actors in policy recommendations can give a false impression of political neutrality; in reality, the recommendations have important political ramifications in terms of the distribution of power and resources in a society. The apparent influence of technocrats in the policy making process can thus lead to a misperception of the political nature of the decisions actually taken or of the interests being served through them (see Hirschman, 1981). For the policy analyst, it is important to read behind technocratic rationality to understand the way influence is exerted and the interests that are affected by the decisions made.

Pressure Group Activity. In contrast to the active and influential nature of informal and technocratic pressures, large-scale organized interest group activity is often elusive in developing countries. Large portions of the population--peasants and low-skilled workers, for instance--are generally not organized for sustained political activity. Many authoritarian regimes in the third world discourage active representation of societal interests through formally constituted interest groups. In some cases, elite organizations--the ubiquitous national chamber of manufacturers or the national agricultural society, for instance--may be well organized and vociferous but wield their real political influence behind the scenes in informal interactions with political leaders. In other cases, the most important economic interests in a society may not even be formally organized. The power of some societal interests over particular policy choices may be more implicit than explicit. In other cases, organizations will lack access to policy

makers or even the capacity to control their followings or exert pressure on the decision making process. Often, organized groups may actually be clientele organizations of bureaucratic agencies or particular political leaders. For the policy analyst, then, cataloguing the organized interests that are affected by a particular policy reform--a standard procedure in much Western policy analysis--may be an unproductive exercise unless there is concomitant appreciation of the real capacity to exert influence and the real impact of informal processes of power in a given country. A wide variety of forms of political activity must be considered and assessed for the impact they actually have on decision making.

Regime Maintenance Goals. Policy makers are always concerned about the popularity and acceptability of the decisions they make. In developing countries, however, political feasibility assumes even greater salience because of the frequent lack of basic consensus about the legitimacy of the regime in power or the appropriate nature of governmental authority (see Wynia, 1972: 4; Anderson, 1967; Huntington, 1968). Regime vulnerability is therefore an important concern of political elites regarding the acceptability of the policies they introduce--acceptability to the military, foreign economic interests, industrialists, exporters, organized workers, and others. As a consequence, many policy decisions are reached because of their symbolic importance for maintaining the regime in power--nationalist and national security measures are good examples--while other policies are adopted because they enhance the capacity of the government to provide tangible

benefits to important groups and interests. Similarly, many policies are not adopted because they threaten major confrontations or the overthrow of a fragile regime, or because they imply time horizons that are unacceptable to politicians who are primarily concerned about the shorter term goals of maintaining power or regime stability. The policy analyst must remain sensitive to the fact that the maintenance of social peace can be an overarching concern in reaching any decision. Decisions become part of a "balancing act rather than a search for optima; a process of conflict resolution in which social tranquility and the maintenance of power are basic concerns rather than the maximization of the rate of growth or some such" (Killick, 1976: 176). Some policy reforms will be "off-limits" because of this concern and others, even if adopted, will not be vigorously pursued because they raise too great a specter of dissent, opposition, instability, or uncertainty for political and policy elites.

Policy Implementation. Because policy making tends to be a closed and executive-centered activity, large portions of the population are excluded from influencing the making of laws, decrees, and policies that often have direct impact on their lives. In contrast, during policy implementation, they may have much greater capacity to reach the bureaucrats charged with pursuing the policy and to bring pressure to bear on these officials (see Grindle, 1980). Bending the rules, seeking exceptions to generalized prescriptions, proffering bribes for special consideration, having a friend in city hall--these are immensely important aspects of political participation in the third world and often

become more important the more closed the policy making process is. Moreover, political elites and policy makers often recognize, at least implicitly, the importance of the policy implementation process because of the vulnerability of the regimes they serve. Policies may have implicit goals--provide payoffs to those who can strengthen regime stability--as well as explicit goals--achieve the stated goals of the policy. Similarly, clientelism often serves to hold a tenuous political regime together, a regime that must continue to provide specific benefits where it is not accorded widespread legitimacy (see, for example, Bratton, 1980; Grindle, 1977). Thus, the slippage that occurs between what is stated as policy and what is actually implemented--the slippage that results from the myriad times rules are bent and particular understandings are reached--may be more than haphazard, accidental, or simply venal. It may be a direct result of the need to provide tangible benefits or immunity from policy to individuals throughout a social hierarchy. For the policy analyst, this means that what is legislated, decreed, or decided upon is not necessarily what is implemented; concern about political response must include attention to the politics of policy implementation.

These broad characteristics of the policy process in developing countries provide some guidance about what must be studied in responding to the questions posed about assessing policy space. They suggest that the policy process in developing countries is complex and multifaceted and frequently pursued in a context of considerable risk and uncertainty.⁷ These characteristics, however, do not indicate how to

carry out research on the issue of political feasibility nor do they provide tools of analysis such as appropriate methodologies and analytic frameworks. Section II of this chapter deals directly with these problems.

II.

Approaches to the Study of Policy Space

One useful way of conceptualizing the policy space available for reform initiatives is to consider three important questions that focus on different aspects of the policy process: How do decision makers perceive an issue? What political dynamics determine the outcome of decision making? and, How can the policy space for a particular reform be broadened? Each question suggests the need for distinct tools of analysis. Each of these issues--decision making, political response, and the dynamics of change--should be addressed by the policy analyst interested in the study of political feasibility.

How Do Decision Makers Perceive an Issue?

Structural approaches to the study of politics do not focus on the political decision maker but rather on the way in which socioeconomic factors determine the outcome of state interventions in society. Thus, leadership skill and initiative are not considered important variables in explaining policy and its impact; instead, they merely serve to facilitate the maintenance of the hegemony of a given socioeconomic

system of domination and subordination (see, for example, Evans, 1979). Pluralist approaches also argue that policy is an outcome of conflicting organized interests in society and that decisional outcomes reflect the preferences of the coalitions and alliances that compete for influence in determining policy (see, for example, Bates, 1981; and Nordlinger, 1981 for a discussion). In contrast, other approaches tend to emphasize the importance of political leadership and policy elites in shaping the course of state action. They frequently focus on the role played by particular "political entrepreneurs" in defining policies and marshalling political support for them (see Malloy, 1979; see Bunce, 1981 for a discussion). In this literature, political leaders are considered to have some autonomy to manage the political process and to introduce new initiatives in policy.

This theoretical debate points to a problem that must be addressed by the policy analyst: how much of the policy process can be considered an outcome of the structures of a given socioeconomic system and how much autonomy can be ascribed to elite decision makers? If policy is a reflection of the underlying structures of social and economic power in a society or of an international political economy, then a policy analyst need be concerned only with describing these structures. Class analysis, for example, would be an appropriate approach to use in such an exercise (see, for example, Mills, 1951; Hamilton, 1982). If, on the other hand, policy reflects primarily the personality, ideology, preferences, and skills of elite decision makers, then the policy analyst would be well advised to use approaches that focus on the perspectives and actions of

these individuals.

The perspective adopted here is that the analyst needs to be concerned with both structural constraints on policy initiatives and the actions and activities of policy makers. Policy is a result of their interaction. This perspective asserts that policy makers and leaders have some discretion in what decisions are made, how policy problems are framed, and what strategies are adopted in their pursuit. Policy makers are not simply pawns of a given socioeconomic structure but have some potential to shape the content and impact of public policy. If policy makers have some autonomous capacity to raise policy issues, make decisions, and manage the process of political support building, then their perspectives are important for assessing the policy space available for reform initiatives. Their perceptions may be accurate or inaccurate, informed or misinformed, realistic or unrealistic; the important point is that decisions will reflect what decision makers think they can accomplish as well as their own ideas about how a particular policy problem is best resolved (see especially Snyder, 1958; Rosenau, 1967; Grindle, 1985; Putnam, 1973). The study of policy space must necessarily involve concern for what decision makers think about the constraints and opportunities available to them and how they assess their chances for success if they proceed in particular directions. Several research approaches and methodologies are available to the analyst for assessing this issue.

Rational Actor Models

Much of the discussion of policy decision making has revolved around the question of the extent to which policy makers can be considered rational actors who accumulate information, assess alternative courses of action, and choose among them on the basis of their potential to achieve the decision makers' preferences (see Frolich, 1979; Killick, 1976; Robinson and Majak, 1967, for discussions). Initially, rational actor models were derived from classic economic theory in which an actor is presumed to be able to assess all possible alternatives on the basis of full information, and then establish priorities among them in terms of an optimal way to reach a stated goal or preference. With such a model, the analyst would attempt to duplicate the process of information gathering, assessment, and choice, discover the decision maker's preferences or utilities, and predict the best choice, given the alternatives and preferences. To the extent that the analyst was asked to improve decision making, the task would be to make information systems more effective, attempt to assure that all alternatives were explored, and work to clarify the preferences of decision makers.

Much of decision making theory has involved subsequent modification of the perfectly rational actor model by introducing concepts such as "bounded rationality," "satisficing," and "incrementalism" (see Kinder and Weiss, 1978). Thus, March and Simon (1958: 140-141) argue that because of the complexity of perfectly rational choice, and its costs in

terms of time and attention, decision makers (whether individuals or organizations) do not usually attempt to achieve optimal solutions to problems, but only to find ones that satisfy their basic criteria for an acceptable alternative or ones that meet satisfactory standards. That is, decisions are never based on a full assessment of all possible alternatives. March and Simon go on to argue that individuals and organizations operate on the basis of "bounded rationality," a concept suggesting that information collection is costly and always incomplete; organizations develop means of dealing with recurrent problems in ways that obviate the need to assess separately each issue that requires a decision (March and Simon, 1958: 169-171). Individuals and organizations therefore make decisions on the basis of a limited set of alternatives "learned" in prior experience with similar problems. Decisions conform to "bounded rationality" because of the stable, structured way in which individuals and organizations attempt to simplify decision making processes.

Lindblom and others have added to the literature on rational decision making by introducing the concept of incrementalism (see Braybrooke and Lindblom, 1963). The incremental model asserts that decision makers, when confronted with the need to change policy, attempt to reduce uncertainty, conflict, and complexity by making incremental or marginal changes over time. Thus, for example, budgets are not completely reassessed each year but are adjusted incrementally or decrementally on the basis of the previous budget (Caiden and Wildavsky, 1980; Wildavsky, 1964); welfare policy is never completely scrapped in an

effort to design a new approach but is instead tinkered with to produce small adjustments and changes. According to the model, the more uncertainty exists in a given decision situation, the more will incremental strategies be adopted. Currently, the incremental model of rational action is the predominant view held by students of policy; it has been demonstrated to be a useful predictor of what choices decision makers will take and what policy changes are likely to occur over a limited time span (see Kinder and Weiss, 1978: 708; Stokey and Zeckhauser, 1978).

Rational actor models, especially the modification of the pure theory of rational action, establish a set of assumptions about the conditions under which decisions are made and they focus usefully on the options and strategies available to policy makers. These models underscore the importance of the perspectives of decision makers in determining choices. While rational actor models tend to focus on the individual in the decision making process or on organizations acting as rational individuals, they are also useful in exploring how organizational contexts simplify the decision process, minimize the amount of conflict engendered through policy change, and constrain the choices available (see Frohock, 1979: 59). Routines, problem-solving repertoires, and individual preferences can all be accommodated within such an approach. The models have been particularly useful in developing concepts such as "satisficing" and "incrementalism" that point to similar decision strategies in a wide variety of circumstances.⁸ Such concepts provide perspectives on the process through which decisions are reached

and make it possible to view discrete decisions as part of an overall decision making system with characteristics that can be described and that shape decisional outcomes (see Frohock, 1979; Killick, 1976). They can also form a basis for developing techniques for improving rational decision making (Stokey and Zeckhauser, 1978).

Indeed, it makes little sense to reject the notion of some sort of rationality underlying most decision making processes. In particular, the incremental and satisficing models can be useful in explaining why reformist measures are not adopted more frequently. However, they are less useful in explaining the conditions under which reformist initiatives--innovation, not incrementalism--are likely to be adopted (see Bunce, 1981). For example, overreliance on rational actor assumptions can also lead to a misperception of how policy change comes about. An astute observer of development policies and politics, Albert Hirschman, thus comments,

The reforms which take place in Latin America today are anything but manifestations of sweet reasonableness. Nor are they accurately described as resulting from a "recognition by the ruling class that it has to give up something in order not to lose everything," as the cliché would have it. Rather they are extraordinary feats of contriving in the course of which some of the hostile power groups are won over, others are neutralized and outwitted, and the remaining diehards often barely overcome by a coalition of highly heterogeneous forces (Hirschman, 1973: 272).

Moreover, most rational actor models tell us little about how to go about studying the decision process, other than to look for the regularities and constraints decision makers operate under. Nevertheless, most decision making approaches are rooted in rational actor models; some of them, such as game theory and cognitive mapping, are more explicit about data gathering and analytic techniques.

Game Theoretic Approaches

Rational actor models underlie game theoretic approaches that use mathematical formulations to simulate decision making contexts in which "two or more individuals have choices to make, preferences regarding the outcomes, and some knowledge of the choices available to each other and each other's preferences. The outcome depends on the choices that both of them make, or all of them if there are more than two. There is no independently "best" choice that one can make--it depends on what others do" (Schelling, 1967: 213; see also Shubik, 1964; 1967). This description of a hypothetical situation adequately reflects the situation of the decision maker in developing countries: choices must be made, information is imperfect, and the actions of others will partially determine the outcome. The literature on game theory and decision making is large and a variety of alternative simulation methodologies are available, many of them elegant in their conceptualization (see Kahneman and Tversky, 1979; Leiserson, 1970; Robinson and Majak, 1967; Schelling, 1967; Shubik, 1964). To apply a game theoretic approach, an analyst

would need to explore the dimensions of the problem a policy maker confronted and simulate various decisional outcomes based on predictions of actions by the decision maker and other players. Such a simulation would provide approximations of anticipated results should decision makers make particular choices based on what they expected other actors to do.

While game theoretic approaches may appear quite appropriate to the study of what decisions will be made, two characteristics limit their utility for policy analysis in developing countries. First, game theory is predicated on the assumption that players are agreed about the rules of the game and that a basic understanding of them underlies expectations of conflict and cooperation and individual choices. In many developing country contexts, however, there may be little agreement on the rules of the game for political competition and influence (see Anderson, 1967). Thus, the predictions possible through the use of simulation techniques may be seriously flawed when one or several actors are playing by divergent rules and where it is virtually impossible to quantify "gains" and "losses." A second problem with game theoretic approaches is more serious. To date, while simulation techniques have developed substantially in terms of theoretical elegance, they have done so by abstracting more and more from actual decision making contexts, and by simplifying the motives of actors, the alternatives available, and the number and diversity of actors involved. Thus, theoretical clarity has come at the expense of a full appreciation of the complexity, ambiguity, and interconnectedness of the decisions actually faced and made.

Importantly, game theoretic approaches do not allow the analyst much insight into the ideological, personality, and contextual factors that significantly affect decision makers, their capacity to learn from prior experience, and the policy and historical legacies within which they make choices. Game theory is therefore probably overly abstract to add constructively to detailed studies of policy space.

Cognitive Mapping

Cognitive mapping provides a methodological response to an intellectual tradition affirming that the perceptions, beliefs, values, and norms of decision makers have an important impact on the choices that are made (see Welsh, 1979; Krasner, 1972; Quick, 1930; Wynia, 1972; Meltsner, 1972; Snyder, 1958; Jervis, 1976; Putnam, 1973).⁹ It attempts to lay bare the logic of decision makers by understanding how they perceive cause and effect relationships. Cognitive mapping has been used with some success as a way of exploring the belief systems of politicians; it provides a methodology for modeling cognitive process (see Axelrod, 1976b, 1976c; Holsti, 1976). According to Axelrod, "What cognitive mapping offers is a systematic way to proceed in our search for understanding how others will act. Its real strength (especially as compared to other formal approaches to decision making) is that it is able to employ the concepts of the decision maker who is being predicted, rather than the concepts of the person who is doing the predicting" (Axelrod, 1976e: 223).

Cognitive maps have been developed by using content analysis of documents of historical events, when these have been recorded in detail by major participants, and by open-ended elite interviewing techniques (see Axelrod, 1976d). Data is coded and mapped using mathematical techniques to establish the cause and effect relationships that are implicit or explicit in the decision maker's statements, as in Figure 1. In most third world countries, the kind of documentary evidence necessary for content analysis is probably not available. For some political leaders, of course (Nyerere of Tanzania, for example), speeches and books can provide valuable insight into belief systems, but less into perceptions about the policy space for particular reforms. Moreover, many decision makers are not top political leaders but high level bureaucratic and political officials whose public statements are not always recorded. Elite interviewing is therefore the technique that is most appropriate for developing cognitive maps in developing country contexts.

FIGURE ONE ABOUT HERE

Cognitive mapping can be a useful approach for modeling the policy space of particular policy issues as viewed by the decision maker. Indeed, the ability to tap a subjective reality that may differ from an operational political reality is an important aspect of policy space research. Cognitive maps can provide insight into what information decision makers have, how they process that information, and what strategies they use for dealing with risk and uncertainty. The results of cognitive mapping exercises indicate that policy makers do have policy space maps for particular issues. Axelrod (1976e: 244) reports that "[t]he picture of a decision maker that emerged from the analysis of

cognitive maps is of one who has more beliefs than he can handle, who employs a simplified image of the policy environment that is structurally easy to operate with, and who then acts rationally within the context of his simplified image." Similarly, "[i]n their construction of stable, internally consistent belief systems, decision makers fashion pictures of the world that are much more regular and orderly than is reality itself. The common effect is to leave decision makers more confident that they understand the problem and more satisfied that their policies will achieve the predicted ends than the evidence really justifies" (Kinder and Weiss, 1978: 723). Cognitive mapping may be particularly appropriate for understanding non-routine kinds of decisions, such as reformist initiatives, where satisficing or incremental models do not provide much insight into policy innovation. Cognitive mapping exercises can also be useful to the policy analyst in suggesting areas where new information might open up the policy space perceived by particular decision makers, and where each sees the real stumbling blocks to making particular decisions. Through such analyses, the perspectives developed can become relevant to the pursuit of policy dialogue (AID, 1982).

Nevertheless, cognitive mapping exercises pose some problems for the policy analyst. First, cognitive mapping through open-ended interviews may require access to high level decision makers. Such access is not always possible and in its absence, the approach is of limited utility in the study of high level decision making. Second, cognitive mapping requires a large amount of information about the thought processes of decision makers and is a time consuming research approach

(Axelrod, 1976f: 20). If it were to be adopted for policy space research, it would have to be simplified in terms of the relationships sought and the depth of analysis required. Of course, focusing on a particular policy issue goes some way in simplifying the informational and analytic tasks: the analyst does not need to probe the decision maker's entire belief system, only into his/her perception of a particular policy space. Third, the more individuals who are involved in making a decision, the less useful cognitive mapping becomes because of problems of access, the need for information, and the complexity of interaction and data management. Finally, cognitive mapping provides insight into a decision makers' perceptions, but only into that. Organizational and bureaucratic processes that shape alternatives, the actions of others, the skills of political leaders, or the impact of new information and time in changing perceptions are not accounted for (see Axelrod, 1976f; Kinder and Weiss, 1978: 728). Thus, cognitive mapping is a useful means of dealing relatively rigorously with interview materials, but it is not an approach that should be used in isolation from other methods of assessing policy space issues.

Leadership Studies

Leadership studies are not really separable from other approaches but constitute a body of literature worth mentioning here because they focus on the personality and skills of political leaders and on their capacity to channel and mold political events. Thus, such studies go beyond concern about the perceptions of elite decision makers to explore

their actions and to link their skills and actions to the context within which they operate. In these studies, political leaders are engaged in a competitive situation with others who oppose their particular policy preferences. Leaders have political skills that they use to deploy resources of power and influence. They attempt to outmaneuver opponents, form alliances, and actively determine policy outcomes. When political leaders are successful in shaping decisional outcomes, they are called political entrepreneurs (Bunce, 1981) or reform mongers (Hirschman, 1973) and they are often credited with bringing about major changes in society. For example, a study of the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas in Mexico in the 1930s states that,

In Mexico under Cárdenas, the "skill factor" is all-pervasive, a key determinant not only of coalition formation but of demand and resource creation as well. Cárdenas entered the presidency of Mexico while the reins of power were still firmly in the hands of conservative elites almost diametrically opposed to him in issue preferences. He succeeded in freeing himself of their tutelage, mobilizing the latent demands and supportive power of peasants and workers, restructuring the rules of political competition, disengaging the military from an active role in top-level political decision making, and effecting the transfer of power to a hand-picked successor by using political machinery of his own creation....Such a performance cannot be understood or explained except by reference to the leadership and problem-solving propensities of the man primarily responsible for structuring the

dynamics of conflict and development in Mexico during this period (Cornelius, 1973: 395).

Studies of political leaders and the skills and resources used by them are important for demonstrating the impact particular individuals have on policy choices. Such studies have also been important in describing the connection between the activities of political leaders and the opportunities and constraints introduced by the political context in which they are carried out. For example, Bunce (1981) is able to demonstrate the correspondence between periods of policy innovation (reformism) with the initiation of new administrations (and presumably with the initiation of new regimes) which are then followed by periods of policy incrementalism. Thus, she finds that leadership matters, but it matters most when policy space is widest or most ambiguous (see also Welsh, 1979; Wynia, 1972; Paige, 1972; Ascher, 1984). Leadership studies rely primarily on historical documentation, descriptive studies, and similar sources for data and as a result tend to explore what leaders did rather than what they might (or can) do. For policy analysis that is concerned with the question of political feasibility, a retrospective analysis is important to the extent that it illuminates the importance of particular variables or indicates the dynamics of recurrent patterns. However, other approaches to decision making are also needed and may in fact generate more insights than leadership studies.

Organizational Analysis

Organizational analyses also deal with what decisions are likely to be made, but they focus not on the individual decision makers but rather on the way complex organizations channel and process information in the determination of particular outcomes. Perhaps the most well-known of such analyses is the organizational process model developed by Graham Allison in his discussion of the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 (see Allison, 1971). In his Model II, Allison points to the impact that standard operating procedures have on who has access to what information, how that information is analyzed, and what impact the availability of information has on the decisions made. Organizations have stable sets of repertoires for dealing with recurrent decisions and a set of perceptions and priorities and goals they seek to achieve (such as growth or autonomy) that limit the choices available to them. These organizational processes constrain the information and options available to decision makers and therefore determine decisional outcomes. Similarly, organizational processes have a determining impact on how policies are carried out.

Organizational analysis owes much to the research and analysis of complex organizations associated with James March and Herbert Simon. Michel Crozier (see Crozier and Friedberg, 1980) has also been concerned with the ways in which organizational structures and routines shape the behavior of those who work within them. At times, this behavior may be

counterproductive in achieving the organization's stated goals (see, for example, Tandler, 1975). Donald Warwick extends his analysis to a discussion of how the environment of a given organization influences its activities and decisions reached by its personnel (see Warwick, 1975). Allison's Model III, which he terms a bureaucratic politics approach, focuses on the interaction between organizational position and the perspectives, goals, resources, and strategies pursued by those who hold decision making positions in government (see Allison, 1971). In this model, formal decisions and actions are viewed as outcomes of games in which bureaucratic players use organizational resources to compete with other bureaucratic players over outcomes.

As with the rational actor models more generally, organizational analysis is pursued through a variety of data gathering techniques, the most common of which are elite interviews, both highly structured and open-ended, the review of documents, and the mapping of routine procedures for organizational problem-solving and decision making. And as with rational actor models more generally, organizational analysis is most useful in explaining routine and incremental styles of decision making; it is less helpful in explaining innovative decision making and behavior or in accounting for the impact of particular individuals, ideologies, or historical moments in determining decisional outcomes. Nevertheless, organizational analysis can be an important component of research on policy space because it focusses on critical constraints introduced into decision making and because it provides insight into the administrative feasibility of proposed reforms.

What Political Dynamics Determine the Outcome of Decision Making?

Decision makers are not omniscient nor are their perceptions of the conflictual political environment they face always accurate. After all, prime ministers, presidents, and planners are frequently overthrown or dismissed because they make politically ill-advised decisions. In addition to being able to appreciate the world from the perspective of the decision makers, then, a policy analyst needs to have an appreciation of the political landscape in any given country. An analyst must have tools that allow for the more or less accurate description of the policy arena that is relevant to the specific policy being considered. What actors will be involved? What resources of power and influence do they have available to them? How serious are they about affecting the course of a particular reformist initiative? What strategies and tactics will they adopt? What institutional contexts will shape their actions? As implied by these questions, the description of an objective political situation is critical for assessing the policy space available for economic reform measures. As with decision making, several tools of analysis are available to help the analyst develop a policy-relevant picture of likely political responses to particular policy initiatives.

Political Risk Assessment

The field of political risk assessment has developed over the past decade in response to perceptions of increasing risk involved in

international business in developing countries. Political risk assessment is not a single approach to political analysis; it is a set of approaches and techniques, some more rigorous than others, for predicting political and policy environments. Because the emphasis is on predictive methodologies, political risk assessment approaches are considered together for the contributions they might make to policy space research. The purpose of risk assessments is to help businesses weigh factors such as political and economic stability, the likelihood of nationalist takeovers of foreign firms, and investment climate in their planning. Most analysts would agree that political risk assessment is as much an art as a science and that predictive capacities, especially for major political upheavals such as revolutions, remains low (Moran, 1981: 1-2; see also Thornblade, 1984).¹⁰ Nevertheless, the field has generated some interesting approaches to the analysis of political dynamics and policy regimes.

Often, political risk assessment means little more than assigning individuals within business firms to monitor political events and policy developments in a particular country or set of countries (see Business International Corporation, 1981; Kobrin, 1982; Time, May 25, 1981: 69). But elaborate monitoring schemes have also been worked out by major business consulting firms that provide periodic country risk assessments to clients, either individually or as part of periodic newsletters to subscribers. In these cases, the methodologies employed are interesting for our purposes because they are comprehensive and thorough at the same time that they are efficient in the time and expense required to generate

information about a political environment. They can also be used with a high degree of inter-country comparability.

Most political risk forecasting methods involve the use of panels of experts who are asked periodically to assess a series of politically relevant factors for specific countries. The responses of expert panelists to standardized questionnaires are used to develop indices of political stability and instability and to rate the potential risk for different kinds of business activities. For example, the International Country Risk Guide (ICRG) provides assessments of the risks of investing, operating, or lending in specific countries based on a political, financial, and economic assessment. Risks are presented in composite and disaggregated scores. For political factors, risk indicators fall into thirteen categories, each of which is weighted in terms of its predicted overall importance to political stability. The overall score for political risk is rated twice as important as financial and economic scores in the composite measure. The indicators used and the points assigned are the following:

a.	Economic expectations vs. reality	12 points
b.	Economic planning failures	12 points
c.	Political leadership	12 points
d.	External conflict risk	10 points
e.	Corruption in government	6 points
f.	Military in politics	6 points
g.	Organized religion in politics	6 points
h.	Law and order tradition	6 points
i.	Racial and nationality tensions	6 points
j.	Political terrorism	6 points
k.	Civil war risks	6 points
l.	Political party development	6 points
m.	Quality of the bureaucracy	6 points
		<u>100 points</u>

In addition to using a variety of published sources, ICRG holds periodic meetings with a group of about twenty experts who have particular knowledge of events in major regions of the world. At the meetings, conditions in 130 different countries are discussed and scores assigned for the various factors thought to affect political events relative to business ventures. While the list of factors is somewhat arbitrary and the method of soliciting expert opinion far from rigorous, analyses of the reliability of scores for predicting the political condition of the business climate in a large number of countries has given ICRG considerable confidence in the indicators it has selected (see International Reports, Inc., 1984).

Frost and Sullivan, a major business consulting firm, publishes a monthly survey of 85 countries in which probabilities are assessed about the government most likely to be in power eighteen months hence and the regime most likely to emerge in the next five years and its probability of acquiring power. In addition, the consulting firm assesses the risk of turmoil in individual countries and assigns scores of low, moderate, high, and very high for the predicted level of this eventuality. Grades ranging from A+ (low risk) to D- (great risk) are also assigned for three specific economic activities--financial transfers, direct investment, and exports. The Frost and Sullivan ratings are based on an expert panel methodology developed by William Coplin and Michael O'Leary of the Maxwell School at Syracuse University. The firm selects a team of three to seven country specialists from academic, government, consultancy, and

business fields and asked them to respond to a detailed questionnaire. In evaluating the results, Frost and Sullivan analysts eschew the utility of statistical models and aggregate indicators. Rather, they attempt to weigh the information from each country specialist and to highlight areas of consensus and disagreement. The results are presented in a format that allows clients to assess not only the information and opinions of the experts but also their level of confidence in the predictions they make. Like ICRG, Frost and Sullivan relies on a longitudinal track record of its predictions in verifying the utility of its methodology.

Expert panel assessments are used in fairly rigorous fashion by Risk Insights, a consulting firm that originated in the political risk assessment division of the Chase Manhattan Bank (see Pearson, 1981). The methodology specifies the formation of a panel of eight to ten experts for each country being assessed. The consulting firm has developed guidelines about what kind of experts should compose the panel (balanced by discipline, nationality, ideology, and geographic location) and how their responses to a questionnaire should be integrated into final qualitative and quantitative assessments of risks and opportunities in nine categories that affect business activities through an extensive interview and written portions. The questionnaire, which includes extensive interview and written portions, is generally specific to the needs of a particular client and requires the expert panel to judge the potential scenarios for a wide variety of events. While many expert panel methodologies are seriously flawed because they do not probe the basis of the opinions held by panelists and because of bias in the

composition of the panel, the Risk Insights methodology appears to have addressed these problems of rigor. In particular, the questionnaires force panelists to indicate why they make particular assertions about political events and panel selection is given considerable emphasis. The effort to tailor the risk assessment for specific issues, while maintaining inter-country comparability is another aspect of this expert panel approach that could be useful for policy space research.

Some political risk assessments are based on less elaborate methodologies and risk assessors are less confident of the value of developing general indicators that can be used across countries. Stephen Blank (see Blank, 1981), for example, argues for using a case specific strategic elite, "those people who influence the making of policy as it affects the foreign investment community. In other words, you can have a different set of strategic elites in different policy areas." (Blank, 1981: 40). On-site interviews using flexible and open-ended questions are held with government officials, business leaders, and others who form the strategic elite identified for each policy area. Eschewing coding procedures, public opinion surveys ("In our view, in most countries public opinion is an output of the policy process, not an input into it"), and objective data ("We don't think there is such a thing as objective data"), interview results are recorded, discussed, and analyzed qualitatively by consultants experienced in the art of political risk assessment. Results are then tailored to the concerns of individual clients (see Blank, 1981: 40).

The methodologies that have been developed for political risk assessment can be useful to the policy analyst interested in questions of policy space. Some generate comparative findings based on fairly rigorous data gathering techniques. They offer the possibility of repeated application so that, even though the analysis itself provides only a static snapshot of political events at a given point, some of the dynamics of changing political realities can be captured over time. Political risk assessment also points to the possibility of uncovering broad categories of factors that regularly impinge upon political actions and reactions. In reviewing the experience of political risk assessment in recent years, for example, Moran (1981: 2) asserts that,

...recent upheavals, including the one in Iran, have in fact helped to confirm the importance of key variables and relationships identified in the literature on political change in developing countries. The key variables include the pattern of income distribution, unemployment, land distribution, small farmer earnings, internal migration, services available to the urban poor, and ethnic and racial cleavages. The key relationships include the ratio of political participation to political institutionalization, and the ratio of the current level of economic activity to the trend line for economic activity. While there are contrasting theories among analysts about how to weigh and model these factors, these do appear to provide useful indicators of a rising potential for, and probability of, fundamental social instability. Thus, although political risk analysis must set a goal for itself

substantially lower than the precise prediction of coups and revolutions, it can be highly useful as an aid to the investment decision-making process for companies that are tied to a medium to long payback period (Moran, 1981: 2).

This kind of overarching assessment of the potential for political change has resulted in some efforts at statistical modeling. For example, Adelman and Hihn (1984) have developed a mathematical model that predicts the potential for stability and instability resulting from economic development. They offer their model, which formulates and estimates probabilities for political change emerging from socioeconomic development, as a contribution to political risk assessment. Their results lead them to state that, "The predicted dynamics are remarkably consistent with the subsequent political histories of the countries in the sample. We therefore feel that the model, though quite simple, may offer a vehicle for country-risk analysis and for mathematicizing some aspects of comparative politics" (Adelman and Hihn, 1984: 20). Political stability and instability are clearly central to considerations of policy reform and political feasibility. However, policy space research requires considerably more specificity and contextual analysis than is provided by the Adelman and Hihn model. In fact, system-wide indicators of stability may have little to do with what occurs with specific policy initiatives. While the model appears to have predictive power, it is too general to contribute to policy space research.

Similarly, many of the methodologies for political risk assessment, particularly those that attempt to assign probabilities to the likelihood of particular scenarios, tend to obscure the dynamics and interrelations of politics that are essential to questions of policy space. Thus, issues of coalition formation, bargaining, negotiation, specific mechanisms for coopting or ameliorating dissent, leadership, and other factors may be lost through efforts to develop a composite score or set of scores for a particular country. Similarly, just as some business firms have found that general indicators of political risk are much less useful than insights generated about specific policy changes that might result from specific government actions and have an impact on the particular activities of a particular firm, so such methodologies may generate insights that are too general for useful analysis of the political dynamics likely to be put in motion by particular policy reforms. To the extent that the methodologies for political risk assessment make it possible to go beyond categorical scores and generalizations, however, they can be useful for policy space research.

Reconnaissance Approaches

At the other extreme from the cross-country aggregate indicator approach frequently utilized in political risk assessment are reconnaissance approaches that attempt to produce rapid political and organizational assessments to be used in policy, program, and project design and management (see Honadle, 1982). The emphasis in reconnaissance approaches is on rapid collection of information about situationally

specific factors that can then be applied in the planning for and management of specific problems. Thus, for Honadle (1982: 664), "sensitivity to contextual nuance is not its major weakness, but rather a source of strength," for the rapid reconnaissance approach. The strategic elite method discussed earlier is one way to carry out rapid reconnaissance. More generally, those who advocate this approach attempt to define common and often unobtrusive indicators that the investigator uses in making a rapid assessment of a new situation or organizational context. The approach is attractive for its timely ability to generate important and situationally specific insights. Its success, however, depends greatly on the skill and experience of the analyst in observing and drawing conclusions from a variety of observations. It is not an approach that is easily replicable nor is the data generated easily verifiable. It is an approach that is perhaps most useful for short-term technical assistance efforts rather than for more in-depth description of complex policy space issues.

Political Mapping

Lindenberg and Crosby (1981) have developed an approach that enables them to map political groups in a society in terms of their preferences and likely reaction to particular policy initiatives. The approach has been developed for managers of development projects, programs, and policies. The mapping exercise begins when a particular manager specifies a problem and the goals and objectives for resolving that problem. To follow the Lindenberg and Crosby methodology, the

manager must then catalogue all relevant actors and the resources they have available to them for affecting the outcome of a particular decision or activity. These actors are next arrayed on a chart divided in terms of whether they will oppose, support, or remain neutral to the policy process (see Tables 1 and 2).¹¹ After mapping these groups and their degree of support and opposition, a policy network map is devised by focusing on the actors who are most relevant to the policy process for a particular initiative (see Figure 2). This map is then used by the manager for thinking strategically about what needs to be done to enlist support, form alliances, accommodate differing interests, and coopt potential opposition. At this stage it becomes possible to sort out formal linkages among actors from the more informal kinds of pressures and relationships that influence policy. Lindenberg and Crosby then show how strategies and preferential outcomes can be rated in terms of their probable influence on the policy process.

TABLES 1 AND 2 ABOUT HERE

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

The political mapping approach can provide a set of tools for the rational, goal-seeking policy maker, reformist, or political entrepreneur. It can also be useful for the policy analyst because it can result in a policy-specific description of a political environment that includes the resources of power and influence available to the various actors and the salience of the issue area for them. This last aspect makes it possible to assess how likely each actor is to become involved in actually attempting to influence the policy process. Similarly, political mapping can provide insights into what policy

activists are likely to do. It is a generalizable technique that can be used for any policy area and for any political context. Lindenberg and Crosby say little about data gathering techniques, presumably because they address themselves to the public sector managers who are expected to have a feel for political groups, resources, and alliances in their own policy areas and their own country. For many countries, however, relevant maps can be put together on the basis of descriptive political studies, current political commentary in periodicals and newspapers, and interviews with local political experts, such as the strategic elites suggested by Blank. It would be particularly important that interviews be conducted with the leadership of the groups and individuals who figure in the political map.

Lindenberg and Crosby's political map tends to produce a static picture of the political environment, although the policy network map is more concerned with process variables. Thus, in using the approach, analysts would need to be concerned about how the actors interact and what impact new information or changes in contextual factors--a rapid decline or improvement in the economy, approaching elections, and such--would have. The approach is a useful way of assessing likely political responses to reformist initiatives, but it only weakly accounts for issues such as policy legacy, linkages among policies and groups, and the particular institutional context of decision making.

Creating Scenarios

Creating scenarios is a similar approach suggested by Meltsner (1972) for assessing the question of political feasibility. In this approach, the analyst must define a relevant policy issue area based on knowledge of the actors that have become involved in prior political interaction over similar policy issues and an assessment of possible changes that will occur with the policy issue under consideration. Meltsner thus assumes that some political mapping will have been done. The policy analyst must include in the specification of the issue area such characteristics as the frequency with which the issue is considered and how visible it is politically at any given time. Understanding the issue area enables the analyst to specify the political environment relevant to the policy issue--the actors, their resources, and their goals--that will in all likelihood characterize the policy process. The next step in the approach is to develop scenarios of likely actions by specific actors, a process that requires a skilled and experienced analyst.¹² For each actor likely to become involved in the policy process, the analyst must determine: (1) motivations for becoming involved; (2) beliefs about the way a particular policy problem should be addressed and what constitutes a desirable end in terms of public policy; (3) the resources available for influencing the outcome of the decision; (4) the site where the resources are likely to be utilized; (5) and the exchanges the actor will be willing to make with other actors in order to achieve part or all of his/her policy preferences (Meltsner, 1972: 861-863).

Concern over motivation includes assessing how strongly an actor feels about particular outcomes, although Meltsner cautions that actors often attempt to mask their preferences in order to increase their bargaining power. Resources are divided into generic (i.e., material resources) and specific categories (i.e., the provision of a job) in an effort to limit the wide range of potential resources that can come into play in any political interaction. The site at which a particular actor will attempt to influence the policy process says much about that actor's comparative advantage, access to political decision makers, and power relative to other sectors. In developing country contexts, this makes it possible to include some of the more informal aspects of political influence and also the importance of the policy implementation process for affecting the course of policy. The design of scenarios includes concern for the interactions of the various actors and the potential for alliance and coalition formation and for the possibility of cooptation, exclusion, or accommodations in the policy process. Each site requires the analyst to develop a political map of the positions of relevant actors. A set of such maps then enables the analyst to assess probable interactions and outcomes and possible areas of conflict and consensus.

Like the Lindenberg and Crosby approach to political mapping, this approach can be used to advantage by the analyst. The data gathering techniques would be the same as those appropriate for Lindenberg and Crosby--that is, review of descriptive political studies and current political commentary, and extensive elite interviewing. The scenario

approach can be used not only to map the political environment for a particular issue but also to develop strategies for policy reformers. Like the Lindenberg and Crosby technique it assumes considerable skill and country-specific knowledge on the part of the analyst.

Coalition Analysis

Coalition analysis is a more methodologically rigorous effort to model the likely formation of alliances in politics and to predict their stability (see Hinchley, 1981 for a discussion). When applied to the policy process, coalition analysis can assist in the development of a dynamic appreciation of the bargaining, negotiation, and games that occur in the development of consensus and conflict over policy decisions. To use the approach, contenders for influence must be identified and their resources specified, much as in the political mapping and scenario approaches. Then the object of study becomes the way in which contenders attempt to manipulate their resources to influence the preferences of other actors in the achievement of their own goals. Rational choice and game theoretic models are generally used by political scientists in assessing preferences and the possibilities for coalition formation. These techniques seek to develop "logically possible coalition outcomes ordered in the probability of their occurrence" (Flanagan, 1973: 56).

Coalition analysis includes the important assessment of bargaining and negotiation, side payments, and political support building that are important aspects of dynamic political interactions. Often, however, it

suffers from the problems of contextual isolation and abstraction that are characteristic of statistical modeling. Thus, some analyses are theoretically elegant but only applicable to very specific cases of coalition formation, such as voting in legislatures, where the rules of the game are clear, consistent, simple, and agreed upon (see Riker, 1962). As we have argued, the conditions of policy making and implementation in third world countries are both fluid and complex, making the more rigorous mathematical approaches to coalition behavior of marginal interest.

However, in an adaptation of coalition analysis to crisis situations in developmental contexts, Flanagan (1973) and others have attempted to overcome some of these problems. They identify three types of resources (incumbency, influence, and coercion) and the "decision making arena" appropriate to each.

Incumbency resources accrue to a contender from occupying a position within the authoritative governmental structure-- legislative, bureaucratic, and judicial....Such coercive resources as street demonstrations, strikes, mobs, military, and paramilitary formations can nullify decisions arrived at in the incumbency arena or can force the compliance of dissident groups challenging the authority of those decisions. Influential resources are also external to the central decision arena, but they affect decision outcomes via bargaining and persuasion rather than force (Flanagan, 1973: 75-76).

Actors attempt to concentrate the political debate in the arena where they have comparative advantage and they attempt to form coalitions with those who have preferences similar to their own. Flanagan indicates the importance of coalition analysis for bringing a reliable technique to bear on the comparative exploration of complex political interactions. But he cautions that overreliance on rational actor assumptions can lead to overlooking the importance of such influences as those involving culture and personality, leadership skills, risk-taking propensities, ideological commitments, prior history of coalition experience, uncertainty, and timing (Flanagan, 1973: 98-99). Thus, Flanagan recommends a rational choice model of coalition analysis that is then supplemented with "a less rigorous analysis of leadership and cultural perspectives" (1973: 57). With these caveats in mind, coalition analysis can be a useful technique for developing in greater detail the kinds of scenarios recommended by Meltsner.

How Can the Policy Space Be Broadened?

The pursuit of reformist initiatives frequently requires the broadening of a given policy space in order to encourage consensus building or accommodation among policy makers. Within the dynamic process of decision making, there may be considerable opportunity for introducing new options or for tailoring alternatives so that they become more politically acceptable to particular interests. This is possible because the perceptions of decision makers and the responses of political actors

do not operate in isolation from each other. Rather, they interact in the formation of alliances, the process of negotiation, and the give and take of policy implementation. Moreover, a policy can change over time as can the context within which it is pursued. Such factors may also be central for assessing the ways in which policy space can be broadened or made more appropriate for the introduction of any given reform. Thus, in addition to tools that allow for the analysis of decision making and political response, the policy analyst requires tools to assess the dynamic aspects of the policy process and how they affect the space available for reformist initiatives. Approaches that increase the capacity to consider how policy space might be altered to enhance receptiveness to economic reforms should be considered an important aspect of the question of political feasibility.

Several of the approaches considered under the issues of decision making and political dynamics can be useful in responding to questions about the possibilities for broadening political space. For example, decision making approaches that focus on the perspectives of elite policy makers provide clues about how they assess the possibilities for maneuver, some sense of the political style of leaders, an appreciation of who they consider to be potential coalition partners, and where they anticipate likely sources of support. In addition, political mapping and scenario design as well as coalition analysis provide insights into realistic possibilities for how support for particular policies might be engendered, where opposition is likely to come from, and what resources are likely to be useful in winning friends or coopting or neutralizing

opponents. In addition, these same tools can provide clues about how strategies for introducing and pursuing policy change can be designed and followed. Thus, in attempting through policy analysis to answer the first two questions, an analyst should be able to assess the third and critical question about whether and how policy innovation can occur. In addition, the literature on politics and policy can provide more generalized insights about the opportuneness of reform.

Empirical Political Studies

Empirical political studies have brought to light a number of factors that are important in assessing the potential to broaden the policy space for any given initiative. None of these studies constitutes a coherent approach to policy analysis, although all use methodologies for comparative research across countries and issue areas. Many seek self-consciously to explore general characteristics of politics that influence the potential for successfully adopting and pursuing policy initiatives (see, for example, Hughes and Mijeski, 1984; Heidenheimer, Heclo, and Adams, 1975; Seigel and Weinberg, 1977; Smith, 1975; Warwick, 1982). Review of research findings of specific policy studies, for example, can suggest a set of factors that tend to narrow policy space in general. The proximity of elections is an example of the kind of political variable that has been found to make policy makers more likely to be incremental than innovative in the policies they support (see, for example, Bunce, 1981). Similarly, a divided ruling coalition, extreme party polarization, a coup-prone military, and even economic prosperity

are conditions that have been related to the failure of reformist efforts (see, for example, Valenzuela, 1978; Stepan, 1971; Fitch, 1977; Hirschman, 1981).¹³ Comparative analysis of prior policy studies also illuminates a series of factors that tend to be associated with greater potential for policy reform. A new administration, a disorganized or weakly mobilized opposition, considerable governmental legitimacy, leadership skill and charisma, and the existence of an economic crisis are among such factors (see, for example, Bunce, 1981; Cornelius, 1973; Hamilton, 1982).

A review of the comparative policy literature can also generate important insights about the tactics available to governments in managing the political tensions attendant upon the introduction of policy reforms (see, for example, Montgomery, Lasswell, and Migdal, 1979; Ilchman, Lasswell, Montgomery, and Weiner, 1975; Nelson, 1984b; Rondinelli, 1976: 594). In addition, a sizable policy-relevant literature uses comparative research to assess the factors that lead to the success or failure of reformist initiatives. In a review of a number of stabilization efforts, for example, Joan Nelson finds that "the strength of commitment to the program on the part of the country's leadership; the government's ability to implement the program and manage political responses; and the political response that the program evokes from influential groups" directly determine success or failure of the initiative (Nelson, 1984a: 101-102). Haggard, in assessing why International Monetary Fund programs tend to fail comes up with a somewhat similar set of categories of factors: "the posture of the political leadership toward stabilization

and adjustment; macro-economic constraints on policy implementation; and administrative, or micro-political constraints on policy implementation" (Haggard, 1984: 7).

These studies can only signal the types of factors that condition the extent to which policy space is broad or narrow for the introduction of reformist initiatives. It should be expected that these factors will have greater or lesser impact on the outcome of reform depending upon what the reform is and what interests are affected by it. To deal with these issues, the policy analyst needs to return to the analytic approaches discussed earlier. Presumably, then, empirical political studies can be consulted to augment case specific assessments with insights about timing and environmental conditions appropriate to reform.

Assessing Administrative Capacity

Implicit in much of the foregoing discussion is concern over the pursuit of policy reform, not just its introduction. The policy space available for carrying out reforms is affected by the political reactions of groups and individuals who may wish to obstruct or benefit from the initiative. It is also affected by bureaucratic behavior, organizational interests, and administrative capacities charged with overseeing the pursuit of economic policy reforms. Indeed, among the most frequently cited villains in studies of failures of reformist initiatives are weak administrative structures and inappropriate bureaucratic behavior. Searching for means to broaden policy space implies concern for how

administrative constraints might be overcome, organizational systems recast to stimulate compliance, and procedures introduced to facilitate reform.

A vast literature addressing administrative and organizational issues in developed and developing country contexts exists; it provides guidance on approaches to analyzing organizational structures, incentive systems, and management forms (see Moris, 1984 for a discussion). Most analyses in this literature depend primarily on interview and documentary data-gathering techniques and many studies use rational actor models to understand organizational behavior. Among the most relevant studies are those that seek to explain organizational and bureaucratic behavior within the context of specific political or social systems (see, for example, Leonard 1977; Heginbotham, 1975; Grindle, 1977). In general, the literature is rich in insights about organizations as systems whose functioning frequently has little to do with achieving policy goals and may even be antithetical to it. Understanding such factors is an essential component of making reformist initiatives more implementable and less subject to slippage as they are being pursued. In particular, internal incentive systems for promotion and career maintenance--and how they can be altered, need to be understood by the policy analyst. Familiarity with how and why administrative systems work as they do should be the first step in exploring how they might function more effectively in the pursuit of reform (see Cohen, Grindle, and Walker, 1985).

III.

An Experimental Research Design

It should be clear that a variety of approaches and methodologies can be used to evaluate the issue of political feasibility for the introduction and pursuit of policy reform in specific contexts. The approaches and methodologies attempt to measure as fully as possible the policy space available for reformist initiatives. As we have seen, some of them offer more insights than others and some are more feasible than others as research tools appropriate for work in developing countries. Policy space has been separated into three analytic questions, each of which suggests the usefulness of specific tools of analysis:

How do decision makers perceive an issue?

Rational actor models, game theoretic approaches, cognitive mapping, leadership studies, organizational analysis

What political dynamics determine the outcome of decision making?

Political risk assessment, reconnaissance approaches, political mapping, political scenarios, coalition analysis

How can policy space be broadened?

Empirical political studies, assessing administrative capacity, organizational analysis, rational actor models, political mapping, political scenarios, coalition analysis

None of the approaches or methodologies used alone will result in a full picture of the availability or flexibility of political space.

Based on the foregoing review of these approaches, however, a reasonable

research design can be developed using a combination of several approaches or variations of them. The following design, based on a combination of a simplified version of cognitive mapping, organizational analysis, expert panel, and political mapping/scenario design, is suggested as a promising approach to research on policy space. It is suggested as a way to experiment with the potential to do timely, efficient, and parsimonious research on complex issues that have thus far eluded policy analysts. The results of such research would go far in exploring how useful or possible research on policy space can be.

The research design utilizes, in somewhat modified form, five approaches discussed in this chapter. The research can be carried out effectively only after a policy issue has been selected, of course. The policy should be one with clear implications for employment and enterprise development and its introduction and pursuit should imply significant change, not simply incremental adjustment. Thus, tariff, interest rate, wage, or tax reform would be appropriate policy initiatives to explore, given their political salience and their impact on employment and enterprise growth. As a test of the comparative utility of the research design, a similar policy reform issue should be investigated in three to four country contexts. The general political and economic conditions of these countries should vary significantly; one outcome of the research should be a discussion of how much such differences affect the political feasibility of reforms.

Modified Cognitive Mapping. Because of the importance of the perspectives of the decision makers in defining the issues and possibilities for introducing reforms, a simplified version of cognitive mapping will be the starting point for the research. Elite interviews with a limited number of important policy makers will include open-ended questions related to the decision maker's perceptions about: (1) what the problem requiring solution is; (2) what solutions to the problem exist; (3) what particular solutions would offer in terms of resolving the problem; (4) what likely outcomes would develop as a result of introducing specific reforms; (5) what would be the best method of introducing reforms; (6) where support and opposition would come from and how it would manifest itself; (7) what might be done to generate support and manage opposition. Interviews would be used to develop maps of the policy space available according to the perceptions of the decision makers. A composite of such cognitive policy space maps would result from a series of interviews; such a map, with the views of policy makers weighted in terms of their importance in the decision making process, would define what policy makers think about the possibilities for reform and the likely response that introducing reform will generate. In practice, a problem that is likely to emerge in developing such maps is that of accessibility. Perhaps inevitably, even the most persistent and diligent of researchers will have to have recourse to the perspectives of proxies for particular decision makers; the deputies or advisors to top level decision makers may have to be interviewed even though this will weaken the reliability of the information generated.

Organizational Analysis. A useful investigation of the issue of political feasibility should include an exploration of the institutional factors that influence the decision making process and that affect the actual pursuit of policy reform. Thus, a second aspect of the research will be to use decisional analysis as it is applied in organizational settings to derive a description of the policy making and implementation process in each research country as it is relevant to the selected policy issue. The objective of the research will be to highlight the site for decision making, the formal and informal characteristics of the organizations involved in policy making and implementation, the ways in which the distribution of power among and within organizations may affect decision making outcomes, and the impact of incentive systems and organizational structures on administrative capacity. This research will be carried out through interviews with officials within the organizations concerned with the particular policy under study and through a review of important organizational structures and procedures.

Expert Panel. A panel of four to five experts on a particular country, including at least one academic specialist from the research country, one academic specialist from outside the country, a political advisor or consultant with extensive experience in the country, and a specialist in the research policy issue with experience in the country will be selected. A questionnaire probing issues relevant to the policy space issue will be sent to each panel member for written response. After the responses have been returned, they will be circulated to other panel members for review. Then, a workshop will be convened to discuss

the questions posed. The workshop will probe issues of consensus and disagreement; results of the discussion will serve as a source of further data and insight into the policy space issue. The consensual view of the panel should highlight: (1) what decisions are likely to be made about a particular problem; (2) what political interactions and responses are likely to occur; (3) what possibilities exist for coalition formation, political leadership, and reform success; and (4) what conditions would change the scenarios foreseen by the expert panelists.

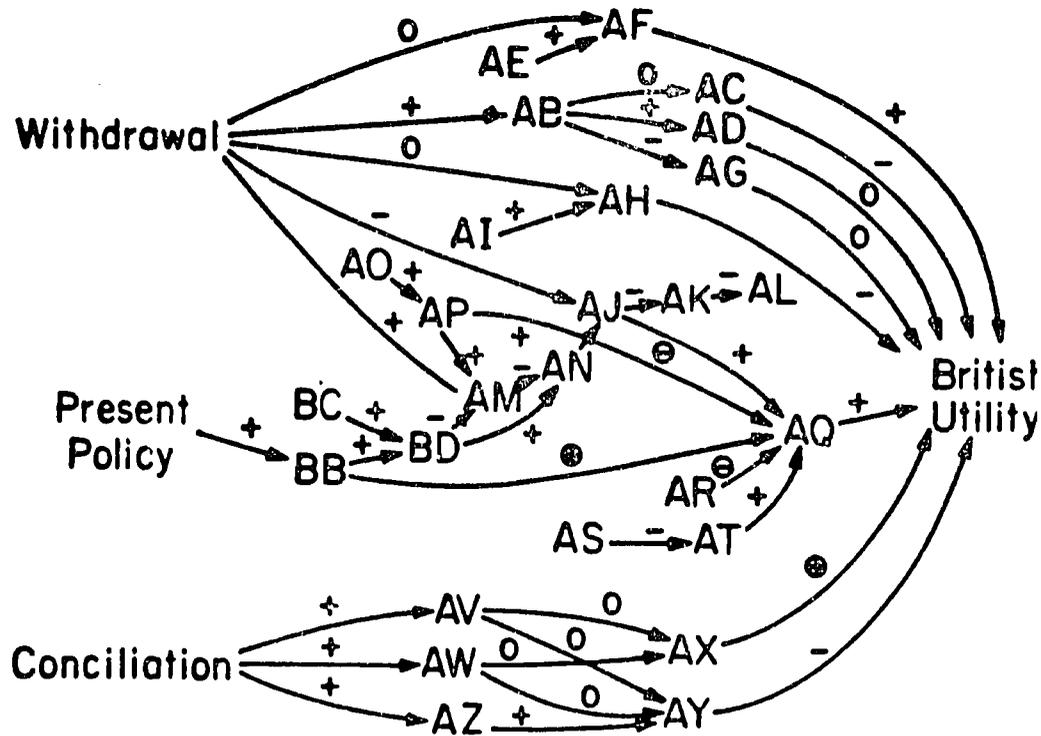
Political Mapping and Scenario Design. A variety of data gathering techniques, including documentary sources and interviews with politically relevant actors would be used to develop a political map such as that suggested by Lindenberg and Crosby. Once again, the map would be specific to the policy issue being assessed and would include important information about the resources available to various actors, the salience of the issue area for them, the ways in which they are likely to try to influence the policy process, and their propensities and preferences in forming alliances with other actors. This part of the research will be important for the insight it can provide about historical contexts of reform and the most important environmental constraints and opportunities that influence the potential for reform. The data derived from this assessment will form the basis for building and assessing alternative scenarios forecasting the outcome of reformist initiatives.

The data gathered through these approaches will result in a composite assessment of the political feasibility of a selected policy

issue. The research design utilizes approaches and methodologies that appear to be feasible in many developing countries and that should produce results in timely fashion. For each country, two researchers should be able to carry out the suggested research design in a matter of six months. The time frame would of course vary in terms of the size and diversity of the country's politically relevant population and the complexity of the policy issue. If the results of the research are useful, they should be able to provide concrete answers to the question of the political feasibility of particular policy recommendations and suggest strategies for bringing about policy reform, or at least suggest where such efforts are futile at a given historical moment.

Figure 1

Marling's Cognitive Map



The arrows represent causal assertions about how one concept variable affects another. The symbols indicate the type of relationship:

- + positive
- 0 zero
- negative
- ⊕ zero or positive
- ⊖ zero or negative

The three instrumental (or policy) variables are placed on the left and the utility variable on the right. The other concept variables are represented by two-letter symbols.

The map is derived from Marling's assertions about Persia made in the Eastern Committee on December 19, 1918.

Key to Figure 4-2

Concept Listing for Marling's Cognitive Map

AA	Policy of complete British withdrawal from Persia	AP	Lack of quality of the kind of Shah at present
AO	Establishment of Persian constitution	AQ	Ability of British to put pressure on Persia
AB	Withdrawal from NW districts	AR	Ability of Persian government to maintain order
AC	Probability of occurrence of serious disturbances in NW	AS	Absence of reformers in Persian parties (=no reformers)
AD	Amount of chaos in NW districts	AT	Amount of control of reformers by their friends
AE	Presence of Bakhtiari	AU	Strength of reformers
AF	Maintenance of status of Anglo-Persian Oil Company	AV	Policy of conciliation with Persia
AG	Maintenance of telegraph	AW	Abrogation of 1907 treaty with Russia
AH	Probability of invasion of Persia by Bolsheviks	AX	Revision of customs tariff
AI	Amount of feeling in Persia for Bolsheviks	AY	Conciliation of Persian public opinion
AJ	Amount of security in Persia	AZ	Amount of Persian desire to go their own way
AK	Amount of blackmail on trade caravans	BA	Amount of British interference with Persia
AL	Utility of Persian tribesmen	BB	Present policy of intervention in Persia
AM	Removal of better governors	BC	Allowing Persians to have continual small subsidy
AN	Strength of Persian governors	BD	Amount of Persian debt to British

TABLE 1

Societal Mapping Techniques Adapted from the Ichman and Uphoff Model*

Sector type	Unmobilized sectors	Violent opposition sectors	Legal opposition sectors	Support sectors	Central combination	Support sectors	Legal opposition sectors	Violent opposition sectors	Unmobilized sectors
External sector	Cuba U.S.S.R		World Bank USAID Germany USA						
Regime	Regime X								
Societal sectors	Rural and urban lower class	Part of the urban lower class	Part of the rural middle and lower class	Portions of the rural and urban middle and lower class	Portions of the rural and urban middle and upper class	Portions of the rural and urban lower class	Part of the urban middle class	Part of the rural and urban upper class	Rural and urban lower class
Political parties	Party I		Party D	Party A	Political Party A	Party A	Party B Party C		
Interest groups	Group H		Group I	Group A	Group C	Group D	Group I		

*The Ichman and Uphoff mapping technique and terminology has been altered based on what students and practitioners tell us is easier to use in practice. The following list contains first the Ichman terminology for each sector and then our own: core sectors = central combination, ideological bias sectors = support sectors, stability sectors = legal opposition sectors, extrastability sectors = violent opposition sectors, unmobilized sectors = unmobilized sectors.

Source: Lindenberg and Crosby, 1981:50

TABLE 2

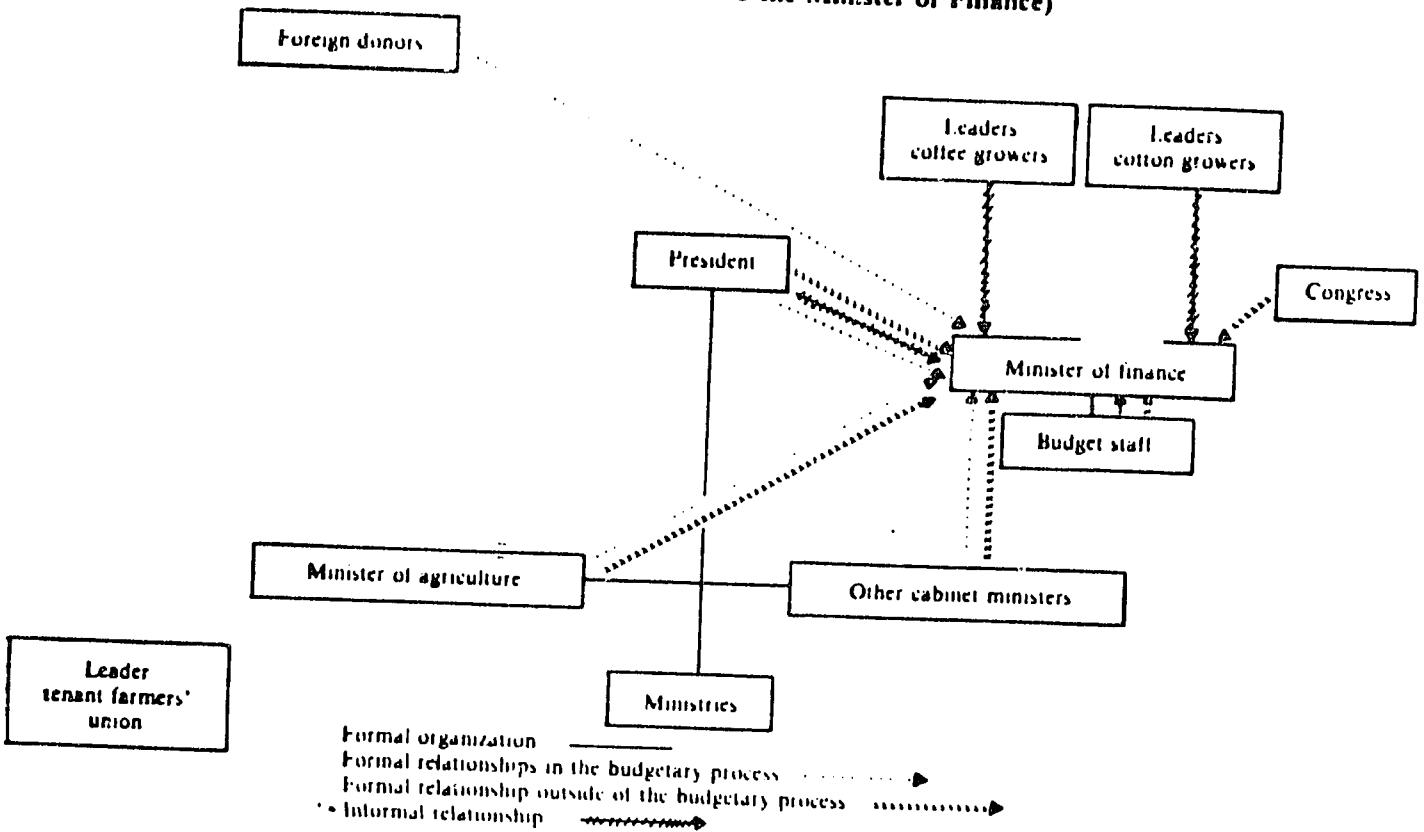
Example of Societal Map with Specific Country Data

Sector type	Unmobilized sectors	Violent opposition sectors	Legal opposition sectors	Support sectors	Central combination	Support sectors	Legal opposition sectors	Violent opposition sectors	Unmobilized sectors
External sector	World Bank USAID								
Regime	<pre> graph TD President[President] --- Agriculture[Minister of Agriculture] President --- Finance[Minister of Finance] </pre>								
Societal sectors	70% of population	Urban and rural lower class	Urban lower class Rural upper class	Urban and rural lower and middle class	← Portions of all social classes →		Urban and rural upper and middle classes	Rural upper class	70% of population
Political parties		Revolutionary party	Labor party	Social Dem party	← Liberal party →		Conservative party	Black Hand party	
Interest groups		Rural tenants' union	Metal workers' union	Textile workers' union		Coffee growers		Cotton growers	
			Construction workers' union		Council of Catholic bishops				

Source: Lindenberg and Crosby, 1981:52

Figure 2

**Policy Network Map of Institutional Relationships for the Minister of Agriculture
(Actors with Access to the Minister of Finance)**



Source: Lindenberg and Crosby, 1981:54

Notes

John D. Montgomery and John W. Thomas made useful comments on an earlier draft of this paper and their helpfulness is gratefully acknowledged.

1. On the question of political feasibility, see Gordenker (1976 11-12); Rondinelli (1983: 122); Cohen, Grindle, and Walker, (1985); Killick (1976). On reformist policies, see Ascher (1984); Nelson, (1984a); McClintock, 1980.
2. The chapter therefore entails a search for "generic processes of politics and policy making" that can both illuminate and be illuminated by specific policy issues. See Eulau (1977: 420).
3. One analyst discovered that "currency devaluation roughly triples the probability that the responsible finance minister will lose his job within the following year and roughly doubles the probability that the entire government will fall" (Killick and Sutton, 1982: 66, citing research by Cooper, 1971).
4. An interesting study of the particular political characteristics of large scale policies is found in Schulman (1980). Bates (1981) deals with the specific characteristics of agricultural policies. Cleaves (1980) and McClintock (1980) discuss the peculiarities of reformist policies. Haggard (1984) and Nelson (1984a; 1984b) consider the politics of stabilization.
5. The policy process includes both policy making and policy implementation. Policy making involves placing a particular problem on a political agenda, exploring alternative solutions to the problem, generating support, and legislating or decreeing a particular set of actions whose objective is to resolve or ameliorate the problem. Policy implementation refers to the complex process of decision making that occurs after a policy has been adopted and that links policy to what is actually achieved through public action. Implementation often generates feedback for subsequent policy making.
6. Executive-centered policy making can result from the power of authoritarian regimes to exclude legislative bodies or formally organized pressure groups from active involvement in policy discussions; it can result from extensive constitutional powers given to executive leadership or from the inability of highly factionalized legislatures or political parties to provide policy leadership. In some cases, it may reflect what Wynia (1972: 5) refers to as "[P]ersonalistic, and often charismatic, leadership juxtaposed with a lack of institutional, especially constitutional, legitimacy." Executive-centered decision making can also result from a political process in which large portions of the population are poorly mobilized to influence decision makers and where information about what occurs within government can be kept within narrow bounds by a weak, controlled, or co-opted media.

7. How are these characteristics likely to be reflected in how policy decisions are made? Some analysts have suggested that the conditions of risk and uncertainty surrounding policy making in developing countries and the need to be concerned about the political future will cause decision makers to be extremely cautious and tentative in initiating policy reforms. "Each step or policy change is a small one because of both the policy-maker's inability to predict its impact and his fear of adverse consequences" (Wynia, 1972: 6; see also Anderson, 1967). Alternatively, Albert Hirschman (1973) suggests that uncertainty can easily lead to unrealistic and overambitious policies that are adopted because of lack of information and/or inability to analyze either the causes or consequences of policy problems. Grindle (1977) indicates that considerable autonomy for decision makers can result from these same conditions of uncertainty.
8. Thus, it has been said that for policy makers, "nothing is better than an amendment" (Hewitt, 1982: 223).
9. This is important because "the decision maker's orientation to and interpretation of the political environment is mediated by his beliefs about social life. Thus, his psychological environment may only imperfectly correspond to the 'real' or operational political environment" (Holsti, 1976: 19).
10. See Caldwell (1983) on what analysts should look for; see Kobrin (1982) and Business International Corporation (1981) on how political risk assessment is used by firms.
11. Lindenberg and Crosby draw on a model developed by Ilchman and Uphoff (see Ilchman and Uphoff, 1969).
12. "Drafting a political scenario is more an art than a science. It is an act of speculation and conjecture" (Meltsner, 1972: 860-861).
13. Conditions of economic prosperity can result in what Hirschman refers to as a "coping state," a state overwhelmed by the demands made upon it and unable to manage the conflicting interests that converge upon it or the multiplicity of tasks it initiates as a result of prosperity. "In other words, the more firmly established the power of the state, the more its managers feel without power to affect the course of events as they just keep busy 'putting out fires'" (Hirschman, 1981: 148). In contrast, periods of crisis can often lead to greater initiatives in and tolerance for reform.

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