

India's Military Conflicts and Diplomacy: An Inside View of Decision-making, by General V.P. Malik, Noida: Harper Collins Publishers, 2013, pp. 300, INR 699

*Gautam Sen**

The essence of ultimate decision remains impenetrable to the observer—often, indeed, to the decider himself.

— John F. Kennedy

The book is a good example of chorological tabulation through a method of historical narrative of events of significant strategic decision making in the military history of post-independent India. General V.P. Malik had a ringside view as a person who participated in those events—from his early career when he was posted as a general staff officer Grade 1 in the military wing of the Cabinet Secretariat¹ to his subsequent role as the Chief of the Army Staff (CoAS) from 1 October 1997 to 30 September 2000, during which he was also the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (CoSC) for two years.²

The author has quoted³ Michel Eyquem de Montaigne⁴ in his preface. In the present context, another of de Montaigne's quotes⁵ is also relevant. Therefore, I wish to add a word of caution right in the beginning for the benefit of countless young officers of the Indian Army who will specifically read this book to deduce their own conclusion about writing authentic history, and also by some who would have participated in one

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or more of the military operations narrated in the book and have already become part of the history of those events. Readers will find Ved Malik's book to be a path-breaking as well as first-of-its-kind attempt to decipher "decision making" in the context of Indian strategic thinking.

It is unusual for a reviewer to write three consecutive review essays⁶ within a period of eight months on the works of three eminent and distinguished persons whom the reviewer has had the privilege of knowing as colleagues, professionally, and as fellow academics for over 40 years. Yet, I have not spared any effort to pen down my critical views about each of the three writings. The present review essay on Ved Malik's book completes a trilogy with R.K. Nanavatty, *Internal Armed Conflict in India: Forging a Joint Civil–Military Approach* (2013) and Stephen P. Cohen, *Shooting for a Century: The India–Pakistan Conundrum* (2013). Primarily, all three works are deeply focused on the key issues related to the subcontinent, covering security, governance and volatility of relationship between the two nuclear nation states of southern Asia.

Ved Malik has rendered a singular service to the nation by giving a first-person account of events in which he was the principle participant as the CoAS for three years. As mentioned earlier, he was also Chairman CoSC for two years. The narration of his participation in the period before 1 October 1997 ranges from having held the staff officer position at various ranks, from that of a general staff officer Grade 1 to that of a three-star general. Technically, by default, he was groomed to be a part of the decision-making processes as well as being an observer to how management of higher directions of war was accomplished by his seniors. It is for the readers to take this amongst many other accounts—some available and some yet to come—so as to arrive at a wholesome evaluation of the contemporary time. The book under review cannot be compared with the classic literatures of Second World War history⁷ that enshrine the events, decision making and public policy formulations based on theoretical framework of temporal history methodology, which naturally overcame the shortcomings of subaltern history writings merely from a participatory point of view.

INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING (OPERATION PAWAN AND OPERATION CACTUS)

Operation Pawan is the fulcrum to understanding the strategic decision-making process in the post-1971 period in India, and more importantly till September 2000 when Ved Malik demitted office as the CoAS, and

hence the exclusive treatment to the same in this review. Operation Cactus represents India's capacity to carry out a successful surgical strike by a tri-services force and is therefore important.

It is also interesting to note that in the absence of any published history of the 1962 Sino-India War, the 1965 Indo-Pak War and 1971 Bangladesh War, Ved Malik has perhaps taken the most innovative step to write about all the subsequent events related to war and diplomacy in which the Indian Army participated and in which strategic thinking was implied. In a canvas which has covered the role of the Indian Army to operate overseas at the behest of the host governments, as an international organization for peacekeeping, furthering military–diplomatic relationship and the Army's peripheral participation at the time of Pokhran nuclear tests have all been encapsulated in a single study. Malik's keen sense of perception as well as an understanding of military matters has enabled him to record every detail concerning the employment and deployment of the Indian Army in various operations when he was not only the CoAS but also a senior general staff officer at the military operation directorate at the Army Headquarters. His involvement in the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) operation was when he was posted in the military operations directorate after attending National Defence College course. He joined in March 1987 and his 'staff responsibility involved the India–China border...'⁸

The narrative history of Operation Pawan shows that every senior staff officer at the military operation directorate got involved in one way or the other in the IPKF operations. There is no way to discern from the narrative whether Ved Malik was given any specific task of overseeing any of the operations of the IPKF, yet the indications are that he was a member of the planning staff and operational requirement. From the narrative, it is clear that all political decisions were strictly kept in the domain of political/bureaucratic decision making and the army was ordered to implement plans to undertake actions to achieve political objectives. Even intelligence sharing was sketchy as is evident from the assertion: 'On 20th July, without any political information sharing, we were told there could be a violent situation and a possible coup in Srilanka...life of President Jayewardene at risk. We were asked to work out a plan to rescue him in such a contingency.'⁹ However, there are indications that the service chiefs were, to a certain extent, aware of the ongoing political decisions which may not have percolated down to the staff level, except when it became necessary to draw operational plans for executing military actions.

The narrative of Operation Pawan has an important component. The author has penned down every detail of the entire operation from the day it started till the de-induction of the IPKF from Sri Lanka. He has certainly provided base information of a category which is authentic, and hence can be followed up by any diligent researcher attempting to write an interpretive history of the Sri Lankan operation, known as Operation Pawan, from start to finish. The narrative provides all the events and their chronological history which would otherwise be very difficult to unearth given the way civilian–bureaucratic mind fix operates within a fixed mindset for ensuring political control on all matters military. Ved Malik has also tabulated specific questions related to the Indian intervention in Sri Lanka. He questions the primacy of the political and intelligence orientation.¹⁰ What comes out is the total indifference of the political system to even show basic courtesy to the returning troops of the IPKF on their return to their homeland and de-induction. There are reasons to infer that lack of politico-military consultations and coordination also affected the tactical ground-level operations of the IPKF. This review is not to go into the details of what ailed or impeded tactical military operations. However, if the military would have been able to assess the tactical requirements of the ground forces, both in terms of weapons and equipment, and heeded the directions of the field commanders on these matters, there would have been fewer casualties and more of our soldiers would have come back home.

Also, the IPKF operations have brought to the forefront the urgent need of professional and political interface of the civil–military cooperation. The constant attitude of the political masters to keep the military leadership outside the loop of strategic decision making, and yet using military power, continues till today. The historical narrative by Ved Malik on the IPKF's deployment and methods of employment will now be available to future strategic analysts. Even the present trust deficit between the civil and the military leadership can be eradicated to a large extent if the lessons learnt during the IPKF operations are addressed seriously by the political leadership in India.

The future of India breaking into the league of major power nations depends directly on how the trust deficit between the political class and the military is resolved in favour of upholding national interests. What began with the 1962 Sino-Indian War has continued even today, and it has failed to lift the cloud of insecurity from the minds of the political class about the honour, patriotism and integrity of the Indian soldiers,

who have remained unwaveringly loyal to the Indian Constitution and in their acceptance of the civilian supremacy. Ved Malik has done a commendable job by documenting the entire IPKF operation to point towards the urgent need to reform the civil–military relationship. Further, the role of the bureaucracy, including intelligence organizations, needs to be aligned to national interests so as to avoid an embarrassing situation for the government, as has been a point of debate for the past two years and has again surfaced.¹¹ At one point in the narration of Operation Pawan, he hints at the misgiving on the part of General K. Sunderji about the capability of the IPKF to wind up the operation in Sri Lanka, which was contrary to the apprehensions voiced by the operational staff about the duration and required involvement of IPKF for a successful fruition of the goals and objectives.¹²

In the case of Maldives—Operation Cactus¹³—Malik was involved from the time go till the end. From the narrative, it is clear that a military operational commitment was undertaken by the Indian government in response to an appeal by then Maldivian President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom to foil a coup d'état attempt by rebel forces. Operation Cactus was planned and executed on 3–4 November 1988, 15 months after India had inducted the IPKF in Sri Lanka. Hence, India became involved in projecting military power in two different segments in the Indian Ocean simultaneously. That the Government of India, led by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, could take the decision to undertake and commit the Indian armed forces to a tri-services military operation when nearly 80,000 of its troops were committed in the IPKF operation in Sri Lanka can be considered to be a testimony of India's military capability and projection of power beyond her territorial limits.

The speed with which the operation was planned and executed with total success was very gratifying. It is not often that a serving ambassador of any country participates during the induction of a military force for conducting military operation. In Operation Cactus, the then Indian High Commissioner in the Maldives, Arun Kumar Banerjee, also participated by flying with Commander of the Para Brigade, Brigadier F.F.C. Bulsara.¹⁴ Operation Cactus was a surgical operation lasting merely 48 hours. What started on 3 November 1988 was fully over with the pull out of the Headquarters Para Brigade and the remaining two companies of 6 Para from Maldives on 16 November 1988. Ronen Sen from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), accompanied by Kuldip Sahdev of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), also helped by visiting Maldives on

14 November 1988, and reviewed the situation before the de-induction started. It is apparent from the narration that Ved Malik had initiated for himself the role of participating in military/operational decision-making process at tri-services level as well as participating at operational level. Operation Cactus also brought into focus the competence of the Indian armed forces to project at least its limited power overseas—a fact which was recorded as an interesting story by Malik in August 2006, long after he had demitted office of the CoAS, but nonetheless important.¹⁵

OVERVIEW OF DECISION MAKING AS CoAS (1 OCTOBER 1997–30 SEPTEMBER 2000)

Two major events took place after Malik took over as the CoAS. First, within seven months of his assuming office, India conducted the nuclear tests in Pokhran on 11 and 13 May 1998. Second, the Kargil War was fought between May–July 1999. The Pokhran test was codenamed Operation Shakti while the Kargil War was codenamed Operation Vijay.

In Operation Shakti, the Indian Army was in the support role of providing logistical support to maintain the shafts used for the nuclear devices for carrying out the tests. Around five engineer regiments of the Indian Army provided logistics arrangements one by one in the test site¹⁶ under the operational command of the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO). The Indian service chiefs were not in the loop of decision making for nuclear tests and they were called at the residence of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee only a few days prior to the test. Brijesh Mishra and Secretary DRDO, Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, briefed the service chiefs in the presence of the Prime Minister. Dr Kalam gave further instructions to place adequate transport to move the residents of Khetolai village, with a population of 1,200, located 5 km from the test site to an alternative location.¹⁷

The narrative on Operation Shakti is simply an essay on the conduct of Indian nuclear tests and is an exposition on the part of the author as to how he views credible minimum deterrent and doubts and the weakness that need to be addressed. There seems to be a sense of disappointment when he writes: 'A major reason, I feel, is that the military, the end user, is not consulted adequately or given political directions and resources to make progress on the multiple issues for an assured and effective operationalization of nuclear capability.'¹⁸ He further advocates the

necessity to keep the military leadership in the security/strategic decision-making loop and have 'a direct politico-military interface'.¹⁹

Operation Vijay and its conduct have been dealt in great detail. Being the CoAS, Ved Malik had not only a ringside view of events but also guided the destiny of the entire operation. He states at the very outset: 'Operation Vijay, as India's counteraction was codenamed, was a blend of strong and determined political, military and diplomatic actions which enabled us to transform an adverse situation into political, military and diplomatic victory'.²⁰ While writing the exhaustive narrative on the Kargil War, Malik asserts that his aim is to 'highlight the strategic-level decision making', yet the recording of the operation indicates each and every aspect of military operation has been dealt with in great detail. He has spared no means to prove how Pakistan indulged in the most secret way to plan a strategic and tactical surprise over India by pulling off a 'pre-emption or occupation of tactically important heights' before India came to know what was happening. He attributes Pakistan's success due to the 'failure of Indian intelligence at strategic and tactical levels'. He candidly accepts the army's inability to identify the intruders for a considerable period of time. He records that when Lieutenant General (Lt Gen) Nirmal Vij, then Director General Military Operations (DGMO), visited Leh and Kargil in the first week of May 1999, he did not get any inkling of the intrusion from the local commanders or even from the Northern Army Commander who, too, had visited the Headquarters 15 Corps on 8 May 1999.²¹ He further attributes the 'failure to anticipate and identify military action of this nature on the border as a reflection of major weakness in India's intelligence system.'

Ved Malik justifies his going on an official visit to Poland and Czech Republic as the Indian intelligence organizations failed to provide timely and correct assessment of Pakistan's military intrusion into the Indian territory. He extends his argument further by stating that had intelligence failure not occurred, Prime Minister Vajpayee would not have visited Lahore in February 1999, and that he would not have been permitted to go on an official visit abroad.²²

However, after the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) meeting on 24 May 1999, Ved Malik had the full support of the CCS and the support of the air force and the navy. There was clear directive and direction given by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee that the forces will not cross Line of Control (LoC) or the international border. The author has dealt in detail with the issues of political restraints, operational planning, the

support of the Indian Navy of moving selected units of the Eastern Naval Fleet to supplement the Western Naval Fleet and the approval by the CCS to employ air power on the Indian side of the border for close-support air strikes. The CCS thereafter met on an almost daily basis till the second week of July 1999. The politico-military interface during the Kargil War has been enumerated in great detail ‘to achieve complete synergy and consensus among the various organs of the government—from political direction and execution in the field to proactive diplomacy.’

To sum up, the expositions made by the author on Operation Vijay are authoritative, factual and free from any distortion. It is hoped that the future generation of researchers will immensely benefit from the factual narration and precise information that is contained in this book. The narration of events between 11 July and 25 July 1999, when the last three Pakistani-held pockets on Indian side of the LoC were cleared, has been done clearly. On 26 July, Nirmal Vij, along with his colleagues from the air force and the navy, held a press conference and announced the eradication of all Pakistani intrusion in India saying that ‘With this, the mission assigned to the Armed Forces by the Government has been accomplished’.²³ There is almost an epitaph scripted by Ved Malik at the end of the narration of Kargil War. It is hoped the political decision makers and the bureaucracy pays particular attention for posterity and not compromise national interests or national security.²⁴

OVERVIEW OF PEACE KEEPING TO HIGHER MANAGEMENT OF DEFENCE: PERCEPTIONS AND REFLECTIONS

The author has covered in Chapters 5-9, a plethora of issues related to Peace Keeping Operations, Diplomacy in Uniform, Rebuilding Ties with Myanmar, Military Diplomacy with Nepal and Higher Management of Defence in India. India provided a composite force to work in the UN Peace Keeping Force in Sierra Leone in December 1999, which remained there till July 2003. It launched Operation Khukri on 13 July 2000, to free 223 men of the 5/8 Gorkha Rifles kept as hostage by the rebel forces. On 16 July, assisted by Mi-8 helicopters of the Indian Air Force and Army Aviation units, the operation was completed successfully with one fatal casualty and seven personnel who received splinter injuries. Operation Khukri was an example of joint planning between Indian Army, Indian Air Force, UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) forces and British detachment. The narration makes an interesting reading as to

how multinational forces can act together and assist each other in crisis situation.

Diplomacy in uniform, rebuilding ties with Myanmar and diplomacy with Nepal are similar in nature. As CoAS, Ved Malik undertook visits to various countries to increase goodwill and build bridges of understanding at military-to-military level. The author has brought to bear his untiring efforts while visiting foreign countries to forge better bilateral relationships in the area of international relations. He has recorded his impressions, and future researchers will find them useful.

In an all-inclusive essay, the author has put his thoughts and recommendations on higher management of defence in India. They are thought provoking as he critically examines existing functional problems, issues related to organizational and attitudinal weaknesses in India's higher defence management system and India's weak strategic culture. He provides a set of recommendations to remove glaring anomalies in the decision-making system.

CRITICAL OVERVIEW AND NEED FOR THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT

At the very outset, I wish to recapitulate what I had observed and penned down in the very first pages of this book review: 'Ved Malik has rendered a singular service to the nation by giving a first-person account of events in which he was the principle participant as the CoAS for three years. As mentioned earlier, he was also Chairman CoSC for two years. The narration of his participation in the period before 1 October 1997 ranges from his having held the staff officer position at various ranks, from that of a general staff officer Grade 1 to that of a three-star general.'

Having said this, it is essential to evaluate the worth of the book as a contribution to the growth of knowledge in the realm of public policy making in the domain of strategic decisions to augment the securitization of a nation-state, its sovereignty, integrity, and the safeguarding of its cultural and civilizational preconditions. All through the presentations in his book, the author very strongly indicates the existence of fractured decision-making process. However, in the midst of all his inferences, the author, in every case, has indicated as to how the military, in general and particularly, has been kept out of all decision-making processes at the highest levels. While he does not make accusations, but reading between the lines clearly indicates that he hints towards the role of bureaucracy in influencing the strategic decision-making process by influencing the

political class. The second aspect that comes out of a serious reading of the book is the amount of effort to place the centrality of the author in trying to influence national strategic decision makings in the area of employment of military force to achieve objectives and goals, be it military, political or issues related to the larger dimensions of international security having potential to affect global perceptions on conflict and conflict resolution.

For a book of this nature, it is essential to put the material in a theoretical framework of analysis. Ved Malik was the man on the spot and has given a comprehensive narrative of how things happened. It is for trained theorists, historians and political scientists to suggest ways in which things could have been done better at politico-strategic levels. It is for them to draw the right lessons and suggest changes for the future. While he considers that the experience and judgement of having been a professional soldier should give him an edge over the political and bureaucratic class, yet he finds to his utter frustration that in every critical point of decision making the military has been kept in the dark and out of the loop. He is almost at a loss to offer any remedial measures to neutralize this anomaly. He tries very hard and thinks that the larger reason for success in Operation Vijay was due to the fact that the military was able to act as the prime actor and that he himself, as the CoAS, could impress the CCS, the bureaucracy and last but not the least, the Prime Minister, the ultimate political decision maker, to give him the opportunity to dictate the destiny of the Kargil War. He even casts a doubt at a particular point of time whether the Indian Prime Minister and his counterpart had secretly conferred with each other to pressurize the CoAS to accept an immediate ceasefire with Pakistan at a time when the tide of military operations was clearly in favour of the Indian Army in the Kargil War.²⁵ The result orientation of this book would have been enriched by the incorporation of some such conclusions as arrived at by Graham T. Allison in *Essence of Decision: The Cuban Missile Crisis*, which articulates three models of decision making in the event of a crisis faced by a nation and her government. For the readers of this review, I have abridged the narrative of Allison's book²⁶ to add a method for the future generation of scholars trying to decipher decision making. The observations in the foot note are quite in conformity to the innumerable reviews essays written over nearly three decades and needs to be read too in that spirit.

CONCLUSION

Ved Malik's book is a pioneering work to tabulate the history of occurrences in military affairs in the post-1971 period. Its intrinsic and fundamental value lies in the integrity of the facts of events. There are places where he may have unintentionally overlooked the interpretations of actions or the role of actors in decision-making process. However, such observations are very few and need not be a starting point to decrease the value of the work. It is hoped that future generations of researchers will use this work as a starting point of primary reference to enrich their own research endeavours. It must be noted that this subaltern history of 'India's Military Conflicts' is a primary source material, which in the hands of a trained social scientist will definitely be incorporated in any form of other original research to be undertaken to enrich our understanding of 'decision making' related to Indian military and strategic issues.

NOTES

1. Malik, V.P., General, *India's Military Conflicts and Diplomacy: An Inside View of Decision-making*, Noida: Harper Collins, 2013, p. 87, note 6. Also see review essay articles by Gautam Sen of the following titles: R.K. Nanavatty, *Internal Armed Conflict in India: Forging a Joint Civil Military Approach* and Stephen P. Cohen, *Shooting for a Century: The India Pakistan Conundrum* published in *CLAWS Journal*, Summer 2013 and Winter 2013 issues.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 300.
3. *Ibid.*, p. xi. The quote is as follows: 'The only good histories are those that have written by the persons themselves who commanded in the affairs whereof they write; the rest is hearsay.'
4. Michel Eyquem de Montaigne was one of the most influential writers of the French Renaissance. He is commonly thought of as the father of modern scepticism and is also known for popularizing the essay as a literary genre—his massive volume, *Essais* (translated literally as 'Attempts' or 'Trials'), contains some of the most widely influential essays ever written. Montaigne is said to have had a direct influence on writers all over the world, including René Descartes, Blaise Pascal, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Albert Hirschman, William Hazlitt, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Friedrich Nietzsche, Isaac Asimov, among others.
5. 'I love those historians that are either very simple or most excellent. Such as are between both (which is the most common fashion), it is they that spoil all; they will needs chew our meat for us and take upon them a law to

judge, and by consequence to square and incline the story according to their fantasy' (de Montaigne).

6. See review essay articles by Gautam Sen of the following titles: R.K. Nanavatty, *Internal Armed Conflict in India: Forging a Joint Civil Military Approach* and Stephen P. Cohen, *Shooting for a Century: The India Pakistan Conundrum* published in *CLAWS Journal*, Summer 2013 and Winter 2013 issues.
7. Winston S. Churchill's *History of the Second World War*, despite having been awarded the Nobel Prize, attracted justified criticism because of interpretations of events as he saw and acted on. Fisher's *History of World War II*, as a historian, can be seen to document the entire work based on classical historical methodology of historiography and interpretation based on available data and evidences devoid of personal observations—something which Churchill could indulge in being a political leader who led Britain successfully in war. Churchill's earlier work on World War I drew even sharper criticism to the extent of being dubbed as having created a 'world crisis' in history.
8. Malik, *India's Military Conflicts and Diplomacy*, p. 4. Also, note that by 30 July, Brigadier V.R. Raghavan had taken over the major responsibility for Operation Pawan (ibid., p. 20).
9. Ibid., p. 13. Similarly, the decision to airdrop food supplies over Jaffna by the Indian Air Force was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) (p. 12). Even the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord finalization was not known to Ved Malik as late as 25 July 1987.
10. Ibid., p. 41.
11. See *The Indian Express*, 'Top General Speaks: Def Secy Summoned Me Late Night, Said Highest Seat of Power was Worried, Troops Must Go Back Quickly', 22 February 2014.
12. Malik, *India's Military Conflicts and Diplomacy*, p. 45. See the assertion that 'It seems that the personal staff, bureaucrats and military advisors never questioned the prime minister. They meekly concurred with whatever plan was indicated by him'; and further, 'The then Chief of Army Staff, Gen. K. Sunderji, told Rajiv: "This should not be a matter of concern. The Indian armed forces can neutralize the LTTE in a fortnight or three to four weeks."'
13. Ibid., pp. 53–54.
14. Ibid., p. 64. Banerjee must be the first Indian High Commissioner to have seen active service with the Indian armed forces. Whether he got a commendation for the same or not has not been recorded.
15. Ibid., p. 80. The story goes that 'The US Marine Security Detachment along with a P-3 Orion and C-141 had been put on alert for deployment in Maldives. The commanding officer got very concerned when he learnt about

the swift operation conducted by the Indian forces. He thought that if the Indians were able to take over the Maldives so rapidly, they could also take over Diego Garcia and so started basic marine infantry training for all his personnel.'

16. Ibid., p. 83.
17. Ibid., p. 85. It is interesting to note that the Secretary DRDO assigned the task of moving local residents from the test site to the CoAS. The narrative does not indicate if any service chief was ever kept in the loop of nuclear decision making, nor is there any indication of service chiefs being part of the drafting of India's Nuclear Doctrine.
18. Ibid., p. 93.
19. Ibid., p. 96.
20. Ibid., p. 100.
21. Ibid., p. 114.
22. Ibid., p. 121.
23. Ibid., p. 146.
24. Ibid., p. 156. It states, 'Our political leaders and other foreign policy makers tend to be proactive in resolving border disputes peacefully. More often than not, Pakistan takes undue advantage. There is no quid pro quo. The most important lesson of Kargil War was that sound defence makes sound foreign policy.'
25. Ibid., p. 141 (see footnote 28), in which Ved Malik considers that the Pakistan prime minister had accepted the fact that the Pakistani intruders were Pakistani soldiers and not Kashmiri mujahideen. He infers that Pakistan realized that the mujahideen façade was over.
26. In his book, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Graham T. Allison analyses the crisis to understand the impact of future studies on governmental decision making. Allison provides three different ways/models by which a research analyst can examine the events: 'The Rational Actor Model', 'Organizational Behaviour Model' and the 'Governmental Politics Model'. To explain each model Allison asks three fundamental questions:
 - Why did the Soviet Union place offensive nuclear missiles in Cuba?
 - Why did the United States respond by putting a blockade?
 - What made the Soviet Union withdraw the missiles from Cuba?

In the Rational Actor Model, Allison considers the government as the main actor, in which the government examines the goals, their utility and possible political pay-offs. In the Organizational Process Model, he considers that in the situation of a crisis the government leaders break the crisis down and assign the tasks according to pre-established organizational lines. Leaders are hence effectively limited to pre-existing action plans. In the Government

Politics Model, Allison postulates that a nation's policy options are dictated and arrived at by processes of negotiations and politicking by the top leaders. He also indicates that a top leader's entourage often has a large effect on final decision making. However, Allison considers that political leaders, despite having personality, skills of persuasion, etc., will always seek for approval from their advisors to achieve consensus.