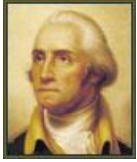


GENESIS OF A CHAIN OF THOUGHT

Location:
The George Washington University
Mt. Vernon Campus
2100 Foxhall Road
Washington, DC



Henry C. Alberts
Adjunct Professor University of Maryland, University College
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In 1995, six years of study of a complex process; “The Process Used By The U. S. Government in its Acquisition of Materiel”, was completed. I began the study in 1989 examining the problems experienced by the Department of Defense in procuring (developing new and advanced state of the art weapons, or simply purchasing existing equipment) needed materiel. The study was sponsored by the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense, Acquisition through the Defense Systems Management College (DSMC) where, at that time, I was Professor of Engineering Management. During the course of the study, staff members of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee requested DSMC support for their efforts in re-codifying applicable acquisition law and DSMC’s Commandant complied by establishing a research project and assigning me as Principal Investigator.

During the period between then and now, I have reviewed all of the lessons learned from that and other projects in the U.S. and abroad to try and construct a train of thinking that incorporates what I have learned. The learning has been detailed in three papers presented at the annual meetings of the International Society for the System Sciences (ISSS) that will be discussed and made available during this meeting. The basic points in the argument are:

1. There may be limits to the degree of complexity that can be treated in existing analytical processes
2. The process of analysis and synthesis of ideas may be bounded by the language used in the process
3. The individual capacities of those involved in examining complex issues may play a role in determining how well the results achieved fit the purpose of the work.

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