

CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES  
IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL SYSTEM

by

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To

My Dad

Whose quiet confidence gave me courage

Karen

Whose love and companionship made all things possible

and Amanda

For whom being done is the greatest reward

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## Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Abstract.....	vi

### Part 1

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Contextual Analysis.....	38
Chapter 3: Institutions and Behavior.....	80

### Part 2

Chapter 4: Institutional Roots.....	108
Chapter 5: Institutional Evolution.....	188
Chapter 6: Institutional Revolution.....	243
Chapter 7: Institutional Synthesis.....	287
Chapter 8: Summary.....	338
Sources Cited.....	377

### Figure

Figure 4.1 Chronology of Events Leading to the NSC.....	184
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### Abstract

This study explains the development of the National Security Council (NSC) system in institutional terms. The study contributes to the national security decision-making literature and to the developing theoretical perspective known as the New Institutionalism. Analysts are divided between two interpretations of NSC system development: One considers the president's decision-making style the key independent variable. The lesser held interpretation considers contextual variables more important. This study supports and develops the latter interpretation.

The study is designed in two parts. Part one introduces the NSC system and divides it into four separate components: the Council of principals and advisors, the supporting staff, the National Security Advisor, and the interdepartmental committee system. Part one further introduces the New Institutionalism and establishes a three-part framework for analyzing NSC system development.

The framework separates our approach to institutional influences into three levels of analysis: inter- and intra-institutional conflict, partisan conflict, and organizational activity. The first two levels of analysis emphasize the importance of

institutionalized conflict (between the president and Congress, among the departments and agencies of the executive branch, and between the political parties) in the development of organizational patterns. The third level of analysis considers the role of individuals below the president in shaping the development of the organizational structure within which they work. Historical circumstances frame the activity at each level.

Part two analyzes four case studies using the framework developed in part one. The first case focuses on the National Security Act of 1947 which established the NSC. The second case considers the factors influencing NSC system evolution from 1947 to 1960. The third case discusses how those same factors resulted in revolutionary reorganization of the NSC system in 1961. The final case considers the reinstitutionalization of the NSC system during the Nixon administration. Our analysis ends here because the broad outlines of NSC system organizational form have remained the same since that time.

The analytical framework proved useful in evaluating NSC system development, and supported an institutional interpretation of that development. Further research is required to determine the

framework's utility in the analysis of other  
institutions' development patterns.

## Chapter I

### I. Introduction

The National Security Council (NSC) has episodically captured the attention of journalists, academics, politicians, and the broader public. The Iran-Contra affair is perhaps the most recent and likely the most notorious instance, but it is by no means the only one. Government commissions have studied the NSC since the first Hoover commission;<sup>1</sup> candidates for president have made the NSC an election issue since Eisenhower; the Kennedy transition, influenced as it was by the Jackson Subcommittee, virtually ensured that the NSC would become the object of speculation at each transition;<sup>2</sup> and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (APNSA), generally referred to as the National Security

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<sup>1</sup>Former President Hoover led two comprehensive studies of executive branch organization. The first, conducted in the late 1940's, considered the NSC system in some detail. See chapter 5 for its relevance to this study.

<sup>2</sup>Senator Henry Jackson conducted hearings critical of Eisenhower's NSC system just prior to the 1960 presidential elections. His Subcommittee's reports influenced Kennedy's decisions concerning the NSC system. See chapter 6 for further discussion concerning the role of the Subcommittee.

Assistant (NSA), has become a newsworthy figure in his own right.<sup>3</sup>

While the NSC has been the object of a great deal of speculation, no one has attempted to situate the NSC in the larger theoretical literature on institutional development. Most of the literature on the NSC has been either descriptive, generally with the purpose of detailing frequent structural changes, or prescriptive in an effort to influence the next incumbent's organizational arrangements. Explanations accounting for institutional change have tended to focus on presidential style; Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy seemed to illustrate this thesis clearly (Falk, 1964; Johnson, 1974; Allison, 1976; George, 1980).

This study develops and illustrates an institutional explanation. Whereas presidential style has generally been considered the predominant independent variable concerning the development of organizational patterns in the NSC, the focus here is on the larger context within which presidents make

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<sup>3</sup>The Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (APNSA) is the official term for the member of the president's staff tasked with overseeing the NSC staff. The term National Security Assistant (NSA) has never been an official title, but was popularized by President Nixon. Because it is the term most commonly used, NSA will be used throughout this text regardless of the title common for the period in question.

decisions concerning organizational patterns. Incumbent style is not irrelevant, but its explanatory power has been overemphasized. This study builds on the work of analysts who have considered specific aspects of the NSC's development from an institutional perspective (Anderson, 1983; Brzezinski, 1987/88; Clarke, 1987; Rockman, 1981).

This chapter first introduces the analytical framework to be developed and applied in this dissertation and centers that framework within its theoretical context. The NSC system and its component parts are then defined. Next, the presidential-style explanation of the development of NSC organizational patterns is introduced and discussed, including a discussion of the weaknesses of that approach with respect to the NSC. Finally, the contributions of other authors in laying the groundwork for this study are addressed.

#### **A. An Analytical Framework**

A president's organizational decisions are bounded by contextual factors at three levels of analysis: (1) partisan conflict, (2) institutional conflict, and (3) organizational activity. These factors are considered for their effect on both the organizational structure of the NSC system, and the political behavior

associated with roles within that structure. The intent is to construct an analytical framework that is broadly suggestive of patterns and relationships, rather than to frame narrowly defined hypotheses to be empirically tested in a strict social scientific sense. As such the labels used are necessarily imprecise; considerable elaboration of the concepts associated with these labels is attempted in the following chapters.

Presidents act under considerable pressure from many quarters. As much as they would like to construct advisory systems ideally suited to their political styles, they are constrained by both their political and institutional requirements. The label "partisan conflict" subsumes (imperfectly) the requirements imposed on the president by political circumstances. Partisan conflict results in candidates, and parties more generally, taking stands on contested issues that later effectively delimit incumbent choices.<sup>4</sup> The term "institutional conflict" subsumes (also imperfectly) those requirements imposed on a president

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<sup>4</sup>One interesting observation of this study is that partisan conflict generates certain stances and styles of operation that adhere to parties long after the issues at the root of the conflict have ceased to be relevant. See Chapter 6 for further elaboration of this point.

by his need to compete with Congress and the various components of the executive bureaucracy for the right to make and control policy.

Finally, as big a man (figuratively speaking) as the president may be, he is only one among many within what has become a large and complex NSC system.<sup>5</sup> The president can and does establish certain patterns of interaction, particularly through his manner of seeking information and advice and his style of decision-making (his use or avoidance of collective forums), but these habits affect only a small aspect of the overall NSC system's structure and the roles associated with it. The label "organizational activity" refers to the activities, interactions, and motivations of the individuals who comprise the NSC system. The NSA has been the most important of these individuals, but others are considered when appropriate. Also operative at this level are the effects associated with stability and change within organizations.

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<sup>5</sup>Male pronouns are not used indiscriminately nor unreflectively in this study. During the period of time with which this analysis is concerned, men dominated the NSC system and the presidency in general. No woman served on the professional component of the NSC staff until late in the Nixon administration. Therefore, male pronouns are used merely for their descriptive accuracy.

The organizational structure of the NSC system is considered in terms of broad patterns. Is there a National Security Advisor? Is the staff administratively or substantively oriented, and does it tend toward complex divisions? Is the interdepartmental committee (IDC) system limited or extensive? Is it organized along simple or complex lines? Is control of the IDC system centralized or decentralized? If centralized, is it controlled from the White House or the State Department? In most cases, the distinction between these alternatives is one of degree. Structural decisions, therefore, are best characterized as "tending toward . . ." rather than being more strictly defined.

Roles and structure are related, but they must be considered separately. A role is defined as a set of behaviors. Generally, a role or set of roles can be associated with a position within a structure with some expectation that the relationship will remain stable over time. This generalization did not hold true during the early development of the NSC system. In some cases roles changed within a structure, and as the structure changed, the roles associated with positions in those structures changed dramatically. The behaviors associated with the NSA position, for

example, changed radically in 1961 even though the position and job description remained relatively constant. This study attempts to trace these role changes and relate them to the contextual factors described above. Before these relationships are developed, however, it is useful to introduce the theoretical context within which this study is situated and to clearly define what constitutes the National Security Council system.

#### **B. Theoretical Context**

This dissertation is grounded in the developing theoretical perspective known as the New Institutionalism. This perspective focuses on the patterns of behavior that are produced by various institutional arrangements (March and Olsen, 1989). This study serves also to document what Nelson Polsby has called the development of the "Presidential Branch" of government (Polsby, 1983: 20; 1992) within the literature concerned specifically with the presidency. Further, this study builds upon the efforts of those scholars concerned with decision-making in national security (Allison, 1971; 1976; Builder, 1989; Destler, 1977; George, 1972 & 1980; Halperin, 1974; Koh, 1990; etc.).

While a more thorough introduction is presented in chapter 3, the "newness" of an institutional approach to understanding the affairs of government requires some explanation. Students of government have been documenting institutional arrangements and processes for centuries. The new interest in institutions goes beyond formal organization charts and the description of processes, and extends to intensive empirical observation of processes as they actually work (March & Olsen, 1989). New institutional analyses of political behavior focus on the importance of institutional attributes in shaping the observed behavior. The new institutionalism seeks to blend "elements of an old institutionalism into the non-institutionalist styles of recent theories of politics [that portray institutions as arenas where behavior driven by more fundamental factors occurs]" (March & Olsen, 1984: 738). The present study approaches NSC system development from this perspective, and serves as a case study in the fast-expanding body of research supporting institutional theories.

The term presidential branch refers to the development of the collection of staff agencies that make up the Executive Office of the President, and that have served to institutionalize the operations of the

presidency (Hart, 1987: 4). Within the literature on the presidency, scholars have increasingly attended to the growth of the Executive Office of the President and its increasing separation from the Executive Branch (Cronin, [1973] 1980; Gilmore, 1975; Moe, 1985; Pfiffner, 1986; Burke, 1990; 1992). The present study considers the case of the NSC to be part and parcel of this phenomena.

In the specialized literature dealing with decision-making in national security, prescription is the dominant mode of analysis. Theoretical underpinnings of prescriptions are generally implicit, although there are notable exceptions (Allison, 1971; George 1972; 1980). To this area of the academic literature the present study contributes an explanation of the development of decision-making systems.

The National Security Council system provides a particularly good case for analysis. While numerous individuals have written about the NSC, few have systematically developed the lines of analysis considered here. There is, therefore, a great deal of publicly available, yet under-utilized, information detailing NSC organizational patterns. Furthermore, the dominant interpretation concerning the development of organizational patterns (reviewed below), which

considers the incumbent's personality and political style to be the predominant variables, is as underdeveloped as it is broadly accepted.

In summary, at one level this is a study of the NSC system describing the various means by which presidents have organized and utilized the NSC as a decision-making mechanism. At another level, this study is a theoretical discussion of the forces that move and limit presidents with respect to their organizational choices. At yet another level, this study contributes to the theoretical debates on the forces conditioning behavior in political systems. In each case the present study contributes to the broader literature on national security decision-making, the presidency, and the New Institutionalism.

### **C. The NSC Defined**

The NSC is a complex institution created by the National Security Act of 1947 "to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign and military policies relating to the national security so as to enable the services and the other Departments and Agencies of the Government to cooperate more effectively in matters involving the national security" (National Security Act, 1947: Section 101.a.). The NSC has become one of the preeminent institutions in

government, sometimes eclipsing the departments and agencies it was designed to coordinate.

The National Security Council is not a single unit that is easily identified by the term, and therefore, discussions of the NSC often suffer from a lack of clarity about which aspect of that organization is being considered. When Eisenhower referred to the National Security Council as the most important weekly meeting in government, he referred to a different aspect of the NSC than the NSC component referred to in the Iran-Contra affair. The former reference is to a group of cabinet-level officers and agency heads meeting together to work out policy alternatives assembled by interdepartmental committees with the assistance of an active, administratively oriented staff. The latter reference is concerned primarily with the operationally oriented staff with independent sources of information and analytic capability. Speculation during the Iran-Contra affair about the involvement of cabinet-level officers was largely limited to how much they knew and when they knew it, rather than about the involvement of their departments in policy implementation. In the first case, the Council itself occupies the predominant position; in the second, it is the staff that seems to have had the

initiative. Yet in both cases, the common terminology applied is simply the National Security Council.

To avoid such confusion, it is useful to divide the NSC system into four component parts, and employ standard terms when referencing a specific aspect. The term "NSC system" became popular during the Eisenhower administration (Cutler, 1955; 1956), and is used here to indicate the organization in its entirety. That system includes the statutory principals and advisors in council, the supporting staff, the National Security Advisor, and a web of interdepartmental committees.

#### **1. Statutory Principals and Advisors in Council**

The term National Security Council, properly understood, applies only to the statutory members and advisors in council. While each member of the Council has separate duties and responsibilities apart from his or her role as a Council member, the Council itself has a corporate role as an advisory body. It is the Council that is "to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign and military policies relating to the national security . . . ." (National Security Act, 1947). The Council always includes the president or his designated alternate.

Membership in the Council has changed over time with the creation and abolition of represented

agencies. The most fundamental change in its composition, however, occurred only two years after its inception. In a move intended to enhance the power of the Secretary of Defense at the expense of the Department's constituent service secretaries, the latter were removed from their positions on the Council. Otherwise, the basic form of the Council has remained constant since 1947. Its current membership includes four statutory principals: the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense; and four statutory advisors: the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), the Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), and the Director of the United States Information Agency (USIA). Presidents may also include other advisors as they see fit, and most have included their Treasury Secretary, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the National Security Advisor, and their Chief of Staff. All advisors are not necessarily invited to every meeting, and others are invited when the subject matter is conducive to expanded participation.

The relative importance of the Council's role has ebbed and flowed with incumbents and events, but, broadly speaking, its influence has diminished over

time. The Council suffers from many of the disadvantages inherent to the larger cabinet. Its smaller size and limited focus have not proven adequate to stem the movement toward more president-centered government.

## 2. Supporting staff

The National Security Council Staff, established in the 1947 legislation, has always been a separate entity from the Council. The 1947 act was vague about the purpose and composition of the staff, stipulating only that it be led by an Executive Secretary with a certain maximum compensation. The staff's original purpose, in the words of the first Assistant Executive Secretary, was to "assist the Council in obtaining and reconciling the views of the various Executive Departments and Agencies" (Lay, 1948: 7). Since then its emphasis has shifted from supporting the Council to supporting the president more directly (Bailey and Halper, 1986).

The composition of the NSC staff has changed over time to support its expanding responsibilities. Originally it was composed of career-oriented personnel whose professional roots lay in the departments and agencies they were intended to help coordinate (Lay, 1948). A qualitative shift occurred at the Eisenhower-

Kennedy transition (Johnson, 1969: 719). While some members of the Eisenhower staff were retained, and others were drawn from the bureaucracy, most had their roots in academics or politics.

The distribution of backgrounds represented by members of the staff has itself become a contentious subject. Brzezinski, for example, made special efforts to establish a balance among "professionals within the bureaucracy; forward-looking and more liberal foreign affairs experts from the non-executive part of the Washington political community; and some strategic thinkers from academia whose views closely corresponded with [his] own" (Brzezinski, 1983: 74-75). Lake (1985; 1989), Clinton's National Security Advisor, has argued that Brzezinski's staff was skewed in favor of liberal ideologues and that Reagan's NSA's skewed their staffs in favor of conservative ideologues. He insists that it is necessary to reassert the authority of experts drawn from the bureaucracy. Menges (1988), on the other hand, insists that the staff and the operating departments must be even further dominated by political appointees whose views mirror those of the president if he is to have any control over policy.

The size of the staff has also been a matter of contention. Large staffs have attracted criticism and

have resulted in efforts by subsequent administrations to reduce the number of professional staff members (Destler, 1977). Truman established a very small staff and expanded it gradually; Eisenhower inherited this staff and expanded it still further (Lay & Johnson, [1960] 1988). After attacking Eisenhower's staff's size and methods, the Democrats established a different, smaller organization. That staff grew through the administrations of Kennedy and Johnson (Smith, 1988), but did not rival in size the staff created by Nixon. Ford and Carter attempted to keep their staffs small in comparison to Nixon (Brzezinski, 1983), but their staffs remained large by earlier standards. Reagan let his staff grow very large, and subsequently Congress placed limits on the upper end of staff size.

The professional staff component has provided the basis for an independent analytical capability within the White House and is of special interest to this study. The distinction is not made with respect to the backgrounds or the capabilities of the staff members, but the tasks with which they were primarily occupied. The staff has always been comprised of exceedingly capable individuals due to the sensitive nature of its work, but when size is discussed here only those whose

primary function was to provide an analytical product independent of that prepared by members of the executive departments are considered. An additional caveat about the numbers of staff is necessary.

Because the NSC staff has drawn many of its members from the Departments for limited periods, and because the distinction between NSC staff and White House staff has sometimes been less than clear, the number of staff members has not been fixed nor stable in the same sense as other administrative units in government.

Nevertheless, it is useful to provide some numbers to give the reader a sense of proportion. Truman's NSC staff was small by any standard, with less than a dozen total members and no professional staff dedicated to independent analysis.<sup>6</sup> During the Eisenhower years the first component of this kind was established. Composed of three generalists and called the "Special Staff," its purpose was to provide the National Security Advisor with an analysis of the merits and faults of reports prepared by the departments and

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<sup>6</sup>Lay (1948), assistant executive secretary at the time, noted that one man was recruited with the intention of beginning and slowly expanding an analytical unit with the primary purpose of providing institutional memory within the NSC staff. Nonetheless, all Truman era NSC staff were primarily engaged in administrative activities to facilitate the process.

amended in interdepartmental committees. Kennedy transformed the NSC system. His staff was centered around eight to twelve professional staff members who provided independent analyses and interacted with the departments. Under Johnson this number expanded to just over fifteen. Nixon's group of professionals of this kind began at twenty-eight and expanded to over forty in the first year. By the end of his first term the number stood somewhere near sixty. Scowcroft decreased the number of staffers under Ford somewhat, and Carter took pains to keep his staff under forty. The number of professionals mushroomed under Reagan, partly due to the development of the Crisis Management Center and partly due to outside ideological pressures, to over 180 by some estimates.<sup>7</sup>

The development of the professional component of the NSC staff is a central concern of this study. The shift from a predominantly administrative conception of the staff's role, to a specialized extension of the president's personal staff, to that of an independent

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<sup>7</sup>The staff grew particularly large during McFarlane's tenure as National Security Advisor. He chose to shift the character of the staff from the extreme right, as it had been composed under Clark, to a more centrist orientation. In order to avoid criticism from right wing groups, however, he added moderates to the staff without removing those already there. Obviously, this process resulted in a much larger staff.

force in its own right indicates a larger pattern in the development of the presidency and presidential advisory processes, as well as in the development of the National Security Council system as an institution of government.

### 3. National Security Advisor

Unlike the above two components of the NSC system, the National Security Advisor (NSA) is nowhere referred to in the National Security Act of 1947 or in its major revision of 1949. The position was created by the Eisenhower Administration on March 18, 1953, in response to the recommendations of the first Hoover Commission in 1949 (Henderson, 1986: 28). The statutory head of the staff remained the executive secretary, but the National Security Advisor, as a member of the president's personal staff, gave the NSC staff the additional clout it needed to perform the more active role envisaged by the Hoover Commission and the new president who accepted its recommendations. The role of Eisenhower's National Security Advisors was not markedly different from that of the first two executive secretaries: role requirements differed more in degree than in type. Like the staff that the National Security Advisor heads, however, the NSA's role has been transformed from a predominantly

administrative one in support of the Council, to that of a personal advisor to the president (Bailey & Halper, 1986).

The role of the NSA has been a central concern of academics since the position was expanded by Kissinger, but particularly since Brzezinski reasserted Kissinger-like influence (George, 1972; 1980; Destler, 1977; 1980; 1980/81; 1981; Odeen, 1980; Franck, 1980; Cyr, 1982). Congress was moved to action in 1980 to limit the role of the NSA in response to the seeming pervasiveness of the conflict between the NSA and the Secretary of State (Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 1980).<sup>8</sup> The conflict over role definition for this position is illustrative of the nature of the limitations placed on idiosyncratic action by presidents (see Chapter 2).

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<sup>8</sup>No law was passed restricting the president's authority to employ the National Security Advisor. The Committee held hearings to consider several bills proposed to require confirmation of the NSA or to eliminate the position altogether. In the end it was decided that these alternatives were inappropriate--though not unconstitutional (Franck, 1980). Instead, the very fact that hearings were held constituted a demonstration of Congress's ability and desire to exercise some control over role definition in the case of the NSA. The topic of role development and the emergence of conventions regarding the limits of acceptable behavior are discussed in chapter 2.

#### 4. Interdepartmental Committee System

The largest but least well known component of the NSC system is the interdepartmental committee system. The interdepartmental committee system consists of a number of committees organized along regional and functional lines. These committees are comprised of representatives of the various concerned departments and agencies. This system has, perhaps, the longest history of any of the elements of the NSC system.

Interdepartmental committees to coordinate national security policy have existed on a haphazard basis since the Administration of Woodrow Wilson (May, [1955] 1988: 8). It is the tortured development of the concept of coordination (ably chronicled by May), and the bureaucratic conflict that underlie it that were the most tangible forces resulting in a National Security Council (see chapter 4). The distribution of committee control (in the form of chairmanship and meeting location), and the weight given to committee outputs in the development of policy are important indicators of the distribution of power among the various aspects within the bureaucracy, and between the bureaucracy and the president (see Chapter 5).

All presidents since 1947 have maintained some form of interdepartmental committee system, and most

studies cite involvement in the interdepartmental committee system and the resultant familiarization with the issues and players as a positive side effect of the NSC system (Bellinger, 1977; Reichart, 1979). There have been differences, however, in the focus and management of the interdepartmental committee system under different incumbents. Republican presidents have tended toward elaborate systems with formal control explicitly maintained in the White House, while Democratic presidents have tended toward less elaborate systems, and have leaned (formally if not in fact) toward State Department control. This broad generalization is, of course, not faithful to many particulars of the historical story, but it does best characterize the broad sweep of information in this area.

Together these components comprise what is collectively referred to as the National Security Council system. The story of the ebb and flow of influence among these elements is very much a case study in miniature of the larger picture painted by the forces inherent in the American system of government. The institutional development of the NSC system is part and parcel of the development of the institutions within which it is embedded.

### C. Why is the National Security Council System organized like it is?

The conventional wisdom views incumbent personality and political style the key variables determining the organizational attributes of the NSC system. Robert Cutler (1956: 443) initiated this line of reasoning when he stressed that "within the Act's broad, far-sighted bounds, each President may use the Council as he finds most suitable at a given time." The reports of the Jackson Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery (v. 3: 31) reinforced that line of thinking when they noted: "An important question facing the new President, therefore, is how he will use the Council to suit his own style of decision and action." Perhaps the most cited exposition of this point of view, however, was written by Stanley Falk (1964: 405):

Since the creation of the NSC, three strongly different individuals have occupied the White House. Each regarded the Council in his own way; each used it to satisfy his own needs and intentions. And in each administration, the organization of the NSC and its role in the formulation of national security policy have changed to meet the criteria imposed by the chief executive.

Other informed observers have supported this interpretation. Robert Johnson (1969: 720), a long-time NSC staff member during the Kennedy and Johnson

administrations, seemed inclined toward non-idiosyncratic explanations, but in the end concluded that "the factor that dominates everything else is the President's style of decision-making." Clark Clifford (1977) noted that presidential staff agencies have a "chameleon-like" character that conforms to the requirements of the president.

The underlying assumption has been that presidents have had tremendous latitude to organize the NSC, and that they have done so with the primary intention of ensuring a good "fit" with their decision-making styles. It became commonplace, therefore, for researchers to begin explanations of the organizational arrangements of each National Security Council system by introducing the political style of the incumbent in question (Saxon, 1971; Reichart, 1979; Hall, 1982).

The argument has often been extended to the organization of the larger part of the Executive Office of the President (EOP). Johnson (1974) classifies three organizational styles (competitive, collegial, and formalistic) and correlates each with the personality of incumbents from FDR to Nixon. George (1980) applies Johnson's framework to the National Security Council in what has become the standard academic reference on the topic.

## 1. Uncoupling Style and Organization

As noted above, the premise that style, decision-making, and organization are fundamentally related has been a popular notion in the national security decision-making literature. If the suppositions underlying the analytical framework based on the contextual factors introduced above are correct, then the nexus between style and organization is subject to question.

An effective challenge to this dominant interpretation must first establish the extent of that interpretation's limitations. Its main premise concerning NSC system organization considers style, decision-making, and organization to be directly related. One's style is a function of how one processes information for the purpose of making decisions, and one's organizational decisions are made with the intention of complementing one's style. George (1980: 147), for example, uses the term cognitive style to indicate an individual's "approach to processing and evaluating information," and states that "an individual's cognitive style plays an important role in his preference for one management

model as against others."<sup>9</sup> Allison (1976: 35) suggests that "the critical variable affecting which mechanisms [of centralized management] are used is the president: his personal preferences and style . . . ." George (1980: 148-159) goes on to associate Johnson's (1974) three organizational models (competitive, formalistic, and collegial) with presidents Franklin Roosevelt through Carter (less Johnson and Ford).<sup>10</sup>

Examination of the cases calls the basic premise into question. Instead of supporting an style-centered interpretation as the basis for determining organizational arrangements, the cases could as easily be used to support an institutional interpretation. While George attempts to illustrate how the reputed

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<sup>9</sup>George's concept is broader than cognitive style alone. It also includes a president's sense of efficacy and confidence and his orientation toward political conflict (1980: 147-149). The efficacy dimension determines the extent of a president's involvement, and the orientation dimension (defined in terms similar to Barber's (1985) positive--negative dichotomy) determines his relationship to his advisors and department heads. But George emphasizes cognitive style above the others in terms of organization selection criteria.

<sup>10</sup>Johnson (1974) goes into some detail in his description of the psychological development of presidents Franklin Roosevelt through Richard Nixon in the process of developing his link between personality, style, and organization. While Johnson's interest is in the broad spectrum of the EOP organization, George (1980) focuses more specifically on the national security decision-making process.

personality characteristics of successive presidents conformed to the organizational pattern each established, one could also demonstrate that each successive president tried to develop a system that would assist him in managing the increasing demands of the office based on the experience of his predecessors and advice from political and organizational experts. These attempts have resulted almost universally in the adoption of the formalistic approach. All but two of ten presidents (FDR and JFK) in the modern era have found formal administrative arrangements appropriate given the tasks of their office.<sup>11</sup>

A close consideration of the exceptions reveals considerable problems with the commonly accepted conclusions. FDR, generally considered the first modern president, has been the only president to use a competitive system. Certainly, FDR was a unique personality with an unorthodox means of collecting and organizing information with which to make decisions, but in terms of his management system one must consider

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<sup>11</sup>Johnson and Carter can be considered partial exceptions that illustrate the requirement for formalistic patterns of organization. Johnson attempted to use a competitive model, but reverted to more formal processes. Carter attempted to use a collegial-formal hybrid, but in the end resorted to a formalistic style.

the circumstances in which he operated. The presidency was not a complex institution when he assumed the office, and it mushroomed in an ad hoc manner as programs were established to cope with the depression and the war. He considered administration his greatest weakness rather than a political virtue, and he took steps to buttress and rationalize the administrative capacities of the presidency. He left the office fundamentally different from the way it was when he assumed it, and he left his successors with the problem of controlling what it had become.

Kennedy has been the only president to adopt the collegial approach.<sup>12</sup> He too was renowned for his distinctive personality and mode of operating, but, again, there were other considerations that influenced his selection of a management system. Lowi (1985: 9) suggests that professor Neustadt's theories had great impact on Kennedy, and that Neustadt's book Presidential Power (1980 [1960]) "became the bible of the Kennedy administration." Neustadt's book, Lowi suggests, captured the imagination of individuals in

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<sup>12</sup>Chapter 6 analyzes the Kennedy case in terms of the contextual framework introduced above and developed in Chapter 2.

government, academia, and journalism.<sup>13</sup> Neustadt not only wrote the leading book on the presidency, he was also involved as a special consultant to the Jackson Subcommittee that recommended the NSC system be "deinstitutionalized" and "humanized," and he was a special consultant to Kennedy's transition team and staff (Jackson Subcommittee, 1961: v. 3, 38).

It would be an overstatement to credit Neustadt with the development of Kennedy's staff system. It would be more appropriate to say that Neustadt well understood the mood of the time and that he offered a seemingly viable alternative. Neustadt captured that mood in a single sentence: "We are confronted by an evident necessity for government more energetic . . .

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<sup>13</sup>Neustadt believed that formal systems shielded a president from the political information essential to the process of political persuasion. A president should be his own chief of staff. He should be very much involved in reaching out for information, in delving below the levels of his top advisors, as a means to ensure that they would not be able to control him by virtue of their monopoly of relevant information. "To help himself he must reach out as widely as he can for every scrap of fact, opinion, gossip, bearing on his interests and relationships as President" (1980 [1960]: 113). Neustadt's model was FDR: "No President has been more conscious of [his power] needs or more adroit in meeting them than Franklin Roosevelt" (1980 [1960]: 115). The antithesis of his prescription was the model set by Eisenhower: "He became typically the last man in his office to know tangible details and the last to come to grips with acts of choice" (1980 [1960]: 117).

than we have been enjoying in the Fifties" (Neustadt, 1980 [1960]: 140). Lethargic government was associated with the formalistic management practices of President Eisenhower. Neustadt's alternative to the Eisenhower system placed the president at the center of an inherited set of presidential advisors (Neustadt, 1963: 861). There was no need to foster competition in the way FDR did since the existing jurisdictions of agency and department heads overlapped and thus were inherently competitive (Neustadt, 1980 [1960]: 118). Kennedy's problem, therefore, was to foster cooperation yet still remain active and involved in the search for information and alternatives. The competitive model was no longer a viable, or necessary, alternative by the time Kennedy assumed the presidency, yet the methods of his predecessor were associated with lethargic governance. The collegial system represented his attempt to avoid the latter, maximize his access to information and alternatives, and still meet the increasingly heavy demands of the office.<sup>14</sup>

Just as the competitive model was no longer practicable in 1960, by the 1970's (or perhaps before)

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<sup>14</sup>It is useful to note that neither FDR nor JFK adopted an existing management model labeled competitive or collegial. The labels were assigned post hoc to describe the systems they utilized.

the collegial model was no longer a viable alternative.<sup>15</sup> Carter attempted a hybrid collegial/formal system in reaction to the "imperial" example set by Nixon, but in the end abandoned it in favor of the more typical formal system. Kernell (1986) argues that the demands of the office virtually require that a formal system typified by a chief of staff be adopted.

Far from indicating that a president's staff system is directly related to his personality or cognitive style, the cases since Roosevelt seem to indicate that the presidency requires some form of the formalistic approach to organization. The Kennedy and Carter examples, rather than demonstrating the importance of personality, are indicative of efforts to react against discredited practices associated with their predecessors. In fact, in the case of Carter, the search for an organizational approach seemed to be a rational attempt to learn from the past rather than an effort to complement Carter's cognitive style.

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<sup>15</sup>Johnson (1974: ch. 6) notes that LBJ idolized FDR and attempted to implement his competitive staffing system. His system evolved into a formalistic one, according to Johnson, because LBJ did not have the personality characteristics to effectively implement the competitive or collegial models. The fact that the office and the demands upon it had changed did not receive much consideration in that analysis.

Although he draws a different conclusion, George (1980: 159) quotes Bonafede (1977: 1598) as saying that Carter's system "is an amalgamation selectively drawn from the experiences of his predecessors."

It is time to uncouple the association between personality and organizational arrangements. It is true that American presidents have not been ordinary individuals. They have had distinctive and frequently powerful personalities that have affected the way they do business, the way they interacted with people, and how much they interacted with people. It is also true that presidents' personalities have influenced their effectiveness and the effectiveness of the presidency more broadly defined. But it is incorrect to say that it is the incumbent's personality that determines the organization of the advisory systems surrounding the president.

It is time for a new explanation. While the use of the NSC system has varied with each incumbent, its fundamental organization has remained relatively consistent since the Nixon administration. Instead of four distinctly different systems following Nixon, the NSC has experienced only moderate organizational change. These changes have generally been limited to the number and names of committees, the formal

authority attached to the National Security Advisor role, and the names accorded to intra-governmental memoranda. The exception to this assertion is the development of crisis management capability within the NSC staff, but one would be hard pressed to demonstrate a direct link between the personality of President Reagan and that development.<sup>16</sup>

The flexibility afforded to incumbents in the organization of the NSC system has been overstated. Although there are few statutory restrictions limiting incumbents' organizational predilections regarding the NSC system, presidents are, in fact, restricted by the requirements of their office and by the existing political climate. No president would choose to continue practices for which his predecessor had been volubly criticized by the political and specialized national security communities unless he felt compelled for reasons more powerful than personal preference. Similarly, no president would choose to eliminate

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<sup>16</sup>The growth of technological capability within the National Security Council is considered an organizational level phenomena. Individuals within the system are driven to harness available technology to enhance their ability to do their job. Incumbents are involved to the extent that they encourage or discourage such attempts and as the final approval authority for the implementation of new capabilities.

practices that were highly regarded by those same communities.

Carter's example is instructive. His reaction to Brzezinski's NSC organization proposal was simply that it had "too many committees" (Brzezinski, 1983: 59). This was more a reaction to the negative connotations associated with Nixon's elaborate system (Mulcahy, 1988 [1986]: 123-124) than it was a statement about whether he was comfortable with bureaucratic methods of structuring advice, or the more freewheeling methods associated with the Kennedy administration. Brzezinski's later plan, which Carter accepted, was a largely cosmetic reorganization that resulted in functionally different committees sharing the same name.

The fact is that the NSC since Nixon has been structured to provide both logical alternatives for providing advice to presidents. The interdepartmental committee system is a highly bureaucratic means for coordinating the actions of the national security bureaucracy. The NSC staff is a specialized extension of the president's personal staff that provides the political and intellectual resources necessary for the president to initiate policy and to manage the interdepartmental committee system. Both are important

levers of power necessary to a president that desires to meet the expectations that have come to be associated with his office.

In the second place, the importance of the idiosyncratic dimension was overemphasized even when it seemed to be the primary causal variable. Thayer (1971: 553) questioned the relevance of the "style" variable upon reviewing the significant differences in Truman's interaction with the NSC. Greenstein (1982) and Henderson (1986; 1987) have persuasively refuted earlier assertions concerning Eisenhower's personality and his use of the NSC system. Kohl (1975) raised the same question upon identifying six decision-making systems within the Nixon NSC system. And Anderson (1983: 157) noted the extent to which advisory strategies and formal organizational structures can be unrelated. As these observers have noted, the development of an institution to "advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign and military policies relating to the National Security" (National Security Act, 1947) has to do with more than the political style of any particular incumbent.

## 2. The Alternative

Much has already been done to provide the building blocks of a theory that goes beyond the idiosyncratic dimension. Burke and Greenstein (1989a; 1989b) have isolated and explicated where idiosyncratic effects have impact in the process of making decisions in their comparative analyses of Eisenhower and Johnson. Anderson (1983) has developed a convincing explanation of why the same advisory system will be effective in one case and ineffective in another. Clarke (1987) has demonstrated institutional limitations within the State Department that have resulted in presidents' decisions to take leading roles in the development of policy. Rockman (1981) has "sketched" a general explanation for the development of coordination machinery in modern governments. And Nelson (1981; 1985) and Prados (1991) have detailed areas of both continuity and change between and within administrations.

What remains to be accomplished is the development of a framework that ties together the things we have learned about the organizational development of the NSC. That framework should provide the means to explain both continuity and change over the colorful history of the NSC, and it should give us some idea of what to expect in the future. This framework should

recognize that it is individuals that make decisions, but that a broad array of factors influences the decisions individuals make.

#### **D. Summary**

This chapter has outlined the basic questions to be addressed in the present study. The following chapters build upon these sketchy outlines. Chapter 2 explains and relates components of the analytical framework that forms the core of this study. Chapter 3 further grounds that framework within its theoretical context and provides the research design which has guided the selection and development of the case studies that follow in Chapters 4 through 7. Chapter 8 draws the study to a close by summarizing its most pertinent points, highlighting its limitations, and suggesting possibilities for future research.

## Chapter II

### I. A Framework for Contextual Analysis

#### A. Introduction

Chapter one questioned the link between style and organizational structures. In chapter two we review the relationship between events and the coordinating structures that emerge to deal with them. As before, we dismiss any simple relationship between stimulus and response. Alternatively, organizational growth and change are attributed to complex interactions among institutions vying for power. The greater part of this chapter focuses on the development of a framework to understand these institutional interactions.

#### B. Events, Institutions, and Coordinating Structures

It has often been said that if the National Security Council system did not exist, it would have to be created. America's interactions with the rest of the world have become ubiquitous and complex. The need to coordinate the many aspects of American foreign and defense policy has long been recognized. The days when the separate institutions involved with military, naval, and diplomatic activities could proceed independently, unaware of and unconcerned about the activities of the others, have passed. The complexity of international relations and the proliferation of

specialized agencies requires that some means be found to assure that these various extensions of the American government act in a consistent manner.

It is one thing to say that the need for coordination exists, and quite another, however, to say that the National Security Council is the necessary means by which this coordination should be accomplished. The implication is that there is a link between the demands associated with America's international position and the institutional response developed to respond to those demands. Some means to coordinate policy has been necessary, but demand does not stipulate form. It is more accurate to say that the rising level of awareness concerning the need for policy coordination has resulted in a struggle to define the means by which coordination would be accomplished. That struggle has been played out within a political and institutional context.

Rockman (1981) has suggested that the institutional arrangements of a government determine the demand for coordinating machinery. In the United States, he suggests, the separation of powers scheme established by the Constitution, along with the weak party system, have resulted in intense pressure to develop and maintain NSC-like institutions. Pfiffner

(1986) has discussed the counterpoising centrifugal and centripetal forces competing to either centralize or to prevent centralization of decision-making. The president has been the chief advocate and beneficiary of centralization. As the single politician with a nationwide constituency, the president has become the focus of electorate expectations concerning national problems. Moe (1985) has suggested that presidents' attempts to achieve increased centralization have been driven by their desire to decrease the gap between the expectations associated with the office and the institutional resources available to achieve the ends expected.<sup>1</sup>

Congress has generally opted for more decentralized decision-making processes. Incentives to members of Congress are structured in favor of achieving particular rather than public goods. While members are concerned with the general good and would like to be able to influence those decisions, Congress has shown little capacity to effectively provide general direction. Members of Congress, therefore, tend to favor a more decentralized decision structure from which they are more likely to be able to achieve

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<sup>1</sup>Moe (1985) calls this the "drive for congruence."

particular benefits for their more narrowly defined constituencies.

The bureaucracy, although part of the executive branch, is pushed and pulled by both the president and Congress.<sup>2</sup> Its position is fairly complex. The various components of the executive bureaucracy generally favor decentralization because that state increases the likelihood that they can operate autonomously with only sporadic intervention. Yet, Bellinger (1977) has found that when forced to coordinate with other departments and agencies, they prefer central direction from the White House over attempts at direction from other elements of the bureaucracy. In the final analysis, an agency's position on central direction is likely to be issue-dependent. Bureaucrats, and their appointed leaders, shamelessly appeal to both the president and Congress in attempts to influence decision-making in areas they cannot reserve to themselves.

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<sup>2</sup>The Constitution grants all powers to Congress, the president, the courts, or reserves them to the States or the people. Bureaucratic institutions established by the government wield power only to the degree it is delegated by these three empowered branches. The institutional insecurity stemming from this arrangement influences the self-protective behavior common to executive departments and agencies.

At the root of the conflict to define coordinating machinery has been the understanding that organizational arrangements affect the distribution of power. The establishment of the National Security Council system and changes in its form have resulted from attempts to modify (or to prevent modification of) the distribution of power.<sup>3</sup> Because power in the American context has been vested in the institutions established by the Constitution, attempts to shift the balance of power have been conflicts among individuals whose power stakes are institutionally defined.

The need for coordination has only provided the stimulus for a struggle to define how coordination would be accomplished. The contest has been waged among those who represent empowered institutions within the government in an attempt to safeguard or expand their power position. Evidence of continued change in institutional arrangements indicates the persistence of the struggle for the right to influence policy and the means by which it is made.

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<sup>3</sup>Seidman (1976) discusses the importance of organization to power in this way: "Organizational arrangements are not neutral. They are a way of expressing rational commitment, influencing program direction, ordering priorities. Organizational arrangements give some interests, some perspectives more access."

### C. A Framework for Contextual Analysis

The above discussion has identified the sources, participants, and motivations inherent in the struggle to define coordinating machinery within the United States government. The next task is to elaborate a systematic means to analyze the development of the NSC system within the outlines discussed in Chapter 1. The reader may recall that the argument was made to shift the analytical focus from the person of the president to the contextual factors governing presidential decisions respecting NSC system structure. While it has been frequently noted that the NSC system "is a peculiarly presidential instrument" (Jackson, 1961), the corollary assumption, that presidents have been free to shape this instrument to fit their personality and style, has come due for reexamination.

The contextual framework introduced in Chapter 1 considers the development of the National Security Council system at three levels. The first, and often overlooked, level is that characterized by partisan conflict. Regular elections contested by partisan organizations for the right to control the institutions of government establish the domestic environment within which power is exercised. The second level is characterized by the familiar inter- and intra-

institutional conflict between the president, the Congress and the bureaucratic institutions of the executive branch. The third is characterized by the effects within the organizational level of the National Security Council system.

### 1. Partisan Conflict

The regular bi- and quadrennial struggle for the right to wield power has probably been the most enduring characteristic of the American system of government. Partisan competition has defined our approach to democracy for almost as long as regular elections have symbolized our commitment to a republican form of government. The effect of this competition has been to subject those in positions of power to regular scrutiny, to highlight and publicize malfeasance, incompetence, or neglect, and to recommend alternative approaches to the exercise of power.

The result has been institutionalized reaction.<sup>4</sup> The "out" party reacts to the perceived weaknesses of

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<sup>4</sup>Brauer (1986: 258) suggests that presidents, while frequently failing to learn substantive lessons from their predecessors, do tend to "do things in reaction to some perceived error in his ways." He continues: "In reaction to Truman, Eisenhower was too anti-political. In reaction to Eisenhower, Kennedy was too anti-organizational. In reaction to Nixon, Carter was too 'anti-imperial.' In reaction to Carter, Reagan was too ideological."

the "in" party and attempts to use the problem to reduce the "in" party's support. The "out" party then tries to use its alternative to the perceived weakness as one of several proposals around which to build a coalition large enough to allow it to replace the "in" party at the next election. For its part, the "in" party either acknowledges the perceived weakness and makes changes in an attempt to nullify the "out" party's advantage on the issue, or argues that the "out" party's perception is invalid. Change results when the "in" party acknowledges the weakness and acts to nullify the "out" party's advantage, or when the "out" party wins the election and implements its alternative after assuming power.<sup>5</sup>

Change inspired by partisan conflict has been a regular occurrence in the National Security Council system. Partisan conflict was an instrumental motivation in changes occurring after the presidential elections of 1952, 1960, 1968, 1976, and 1980. Each of these elections resulted in turnover of control of the presidency to the "out" party, and resulted in some form of change within the NSC system. In each case

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<sup>5</sup>This discussion is by no means universally true, but it does indicate in a general sense a pattern that has sometimes been apparent in the development of the NSC.

there was the widely shared perception that something was not quite right with American national security policy. Perhaps indicative of the American penchant for "fixing" things, in each case some blame fell to the "machinery" which facilitated apparently poor decisions.<sup>6</sup>

The cases illustrate the point clearly.

Eisenhower pointed to the widely shared perception that the Democrats under FDR and Truman had developed a "mess in Washington." He campaigned on the promise he would clean it up. He trumpeted the Hoover Commission's assertion that the National Security Council was not effective, and he implemented its recommendations once in office.

Kennedy turned the tables on the Republicans by highlighting the Jackson Subcommittee hearings on the limitations of bureaucratic machinery for assembling and integrating policy recommendations, and he later carried out its recommendations to "humanize" and "deinstitutionalize" the National Security Council system (Jackson Subcommittee, 1961, v. 3: 38). It is no accident that a Republican Congress established the

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<sup>6</sup>Specific discussions on the rationale behind the distribution of blame are found in each of the case studies.

Hoover Commission and a Democratic Congress established the Jackson Subcommittee. In each case Congress initiated investigations of an executive branch controlled by the opposite party. Later Nixon campaigned on restoring deliberate methods to the consideration of national security policy. Carter intended to appear less "imperial" than Nixon's "palace guard" and bloated NSC staff. Reagan down-played the position of National Security Advisor after Brzezinski had raised concerns that the role inherently conflicted with the Secretary of State.

Some of these changes may have been abetted by the personality of the new incumbent, but the motivation underlying the charges and the changes they inspired was the pursuit of electoral gain by the "out" party. Eisenhower and Kennedy are the most frequently cited cases supporting the thesis that decision-making style affects organizational arrangements. The argument goes that Eisenhower was a general who was comfortable with bureaucratic arrangements, and had a penchant for completed staff work. Kennedy, on the other hand, was impatient with such arrangements and enjoyed freewheeling discussions with his advisors--often apart from aides or other advisors with an interest in the topic. While these characterizations may have been

true, in both cases the newly-elected presidents followed up on criticisms raised by others, and they implemented systems designed and recommended by organizational experts.

While the president's style has affected the interaction between the president and the NSC system, this concept has proven to be less useful in explaining change than the simple reaction proposition. The style match between later incumbents and their NSC system has been less clear. Nixon's penchant for limiting interaction to only a few advisors did not necessarily lead to the complex system and large personal staff developed during his term. Still less understandable in terms of style, although eminently explicable in terms of contextual factors, was the decision of the markedly different Ford to retain much of Nixon's system.

Reaction to perceived weakness does not limit change to inter-party transitions. The "in" party can always make changes in response to perceived organizational weaknesses in an attempt to head off opposition party criticism. This was the case in 1949, 1964, 1974, and 1988. Truman modified the organization and use of the NSC system in response to both internal and external surveys of its operation. Johnson reacted

to criticism that ad hoc task forces had failed to perform the tasks expected of an interdepartmental committee system. Ford required Kissinger to resign as National Security Advisor to limit the perception that Kissinger had accrued too much authority. Bush renamed and down-played the importance of the crisis management aspect of the NSC system. Except for Truman,<sup>7</sup> change was initiated in each case by the vice president to the previous incumbent (Johnson to Kennedy, Ford to Nixon, and Bush to Reagan). The new president's association with the existing NSC system, however, minimized the extent of change.

While one might expect that a president formerly associated with a given NSC system would be reluctant to significantly change a system with which he was intimately associated, the pattern has extended to parties more generally. Republicans have tended toward broadly managerial approaches to the presidency, while Democrats have tended toward a more political approach. Chapter 6 discusses how this pattern resulted from one partisan conflict. This close identification with a

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<sup>7</sup>In a sense, even Truman reacted to perceived weaknesses associated with his predecessor when he established the National Security Council (Neustadt, 1963: 860). See chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of Truman's motivations with respect to the establishment of the NSC.

particular style of presidential organization persisted for over two decades. While both parties had significant antecedent experiences leading them toward the position they took, it was the conflict that crystallized the two alternatives in the popular mind and resulted in the close adherence of each party to the opposite alternatives.

Partisan conflict has been instrumental to the development of the NSC system. Partisan conflict has stimulated the regular change that has made the NSC system dynamic. Every inter-party transition since 1947 (possibly excepting 1992) has resulted in greater NSC system change than the intra-party change that preceded it.

Institutions, however, hold power in the American scheme of government. While partisan conflict has stimulated change, only institutions can compel change.

## **2. Institutional Conflict**

Integral to the political system is a system of separate institutions sharing powers that markedly affects the development of subordinate institutions. Constitutional scholar Edward Corwin (1957: 171), claimed that the Constitution issued "an invitation to struggle" for the right to make policy. That struggle has been exhibited in its most fundamental form in

cases where the means by which national security policy is made has been subject to modification. As noted above, organizational relationships are indicative of the distribution of power. The ability to stipulate those relationships is one indication of power because power is manifest in the actions those organizational arrangements facilitate. While this discussion has the ring of pursuit of power for power's sake, the institutions involved have generally sought to increase their power position for the purpose of implementing preferred policy alternatives. Each institution has its priorities and sees a power deficit in terms of its ability to deliver on its mandate.

**a) Inter-Institutional Conflict**

The President and Congress are the primary contestants in the struggle to influence policy. They have each been imbued with the power to influence policy, and their functions overlap in many areas with respect to national security. The right to engage the nation in war is perhaps the most notable example. Congress has the authority to declare war, but the president in his role as Commander-in-Chief has the authority to take action to defend the interests of the United States. The distinction between defending American interests and instigating war has become

muddled; hence, the distribution of power between president and Congress has become less clear (Koh, 1990). Each has struggled to maximize its power position and to prevent encroachments by the other. The National Security Council system has played a central role in this conflict.

While the distribution of power between the president and Congress has ebbed and flowed over time, the effects of modernization and the United States' new role in world affairs have produced a tendency toward a shift of power from Congress to the presidency (Lowi, 1985; Skowronek, 1982). Diplomacy, military operations, and international trade lend themselves to executive control (Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, [1787], Federalist 70; Koh, 1990). The necessity of engaging in these activities has placed Congress in the untenable position of having to yield operational control of these activities to the executive while attempting to guard its ability to influence decisions in those areas. The result has been the growth of the executive branch concomitant with the development of the concept of congressional oversight.<sup>8</sup> Frequent

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<sup>8</sup>Lowi (1969) calls this phenomena "legicide." Congress gives away the power to make law by creating agencies with broad mandates. In its attempt to retain some control of policy, Congress structures the process by

investigations of executive activities have been the norm in inter-branch relations.

The National Security Council has been the object of these investigations on a few well-publicized occasions. Oftentimes investigations have reflected partisan as well as institutional interests. This was clearly the case with the Hoover Commission and the Jackson Subcommittee examples discussed above. Whatever the motivation underlying the investigation, the institutional manifestation of divided powers makes the activity possible.

Divided party control of Congress and the Presidency is not a prerequisite for one branch to assert its authority at the expense of the other. Congress and the president have competed for influence even when control of both branches was held by the same party. Perhaps the most notable case related to the National Security Council was the decision to establish it in the first place. Truman consistently opposed the establishment of any council that would structure his ability to receive advice and act as he saw fit. Yet a Democratic Congress consistently frustrated him in his attempts to forestall the development of a council and

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which policies are reached. Further control is exercised through irregular attempts at oversight.

control the larger unification issue of which it was a part.

The distribution of power between branches of government has been a source of contention no matter who controls the Congress and the Presidency.<sup>9</sup>

Instances of investigations of the NSC by a Congress controlled by the same party are less frequent partly because partisan motivations are missing, but also because divided control has been more common.<sup>10</sup>

Nonetheless, the Democratic Senate held hearings concerning the role of the National Security Advisor during President Carter's administration.

Paradoxically, as I detail in chapter four, the National Security Council was established to circumscribe presidential initiative in national security affairs by tying him to a council of

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<sup>9</sup>This is due, no doubt, to the fact that power is determined by the position one holds in government rather than the position one holds in the party, as is the case in parliamentary systems.

<sup>10</sup>Mayhew (1991) asserts that Congress is no less likely to exercise its institutional prerogatives in periods of one party control than in periods of divided government. His assertion does not appear to hold true in the case of the NSC. However, divided government has been the rule rather than the exception since the NSC was established in 1947 (28 of 46 years).

advisors.<sup>11</sup> These advisors were likely to limit a president by virtue of the fact that they had dual loyalties: although they were appointed by the president, they were required to be confirmed by the Senate. Confirmation provided one opportunity to influence the courses of action any particular advisor could recommend. What is more important, the ability to call the advisor before congressional committees or other hearings continued to hold each advisor accountable to the legislative branch of government. This check on presidential autonomy was circumvented through expansion of the National Security Council into a "system" which has facilitated independent presidential action. Congress has remained interested in the power to make national security policy; it has influenced policy through frequent investigations of the means by which policy is made, and by more specific actions intended to influence particular situations.

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<sup>11</sup>Fenno (1959: 12-14) describes the argument surrounding the use of advisory councils as it pertained to the establishment of a unitary executive. It was believed, Fenno notes, that a council would limit the "energy" and "unity" characteristic of a singular executive. These limits were apparently determined to be more worthwhile in 1947 than in 1787.

**b) Bureaucratic Conflict**

Congress and the President are not the only participants in the struggle to influence national security policy. They have created many departments and agencies that have their own views on policy matters and a vested interest in resolving policy disputes in their favor. Although departments and agencies within the executive bureaucracy formally exercise power only to the extent delegated by the President and Congress, they exercise authority in their policy area with a remarkable amount of independence. Their independence stems from the volume and complexity of the issues with which they must deal, from the perception that these organizations are the repository of specialized expertise, and from their institutional location between the president and Congress (Appleby, 1949: 29-30).

Although the bureaucracy is formally part of the "executive branch" along with the president, it is well known that the disparate elements of this "branch" have split loyalties. The Constitution established the basis for dual loyalty. It requires Congress make the laws defining departments' responsibilities, but allows the President to require written opinions of principal officials; and it requires the President and the Senate

share the power of appointment of those officials. A rivalry to control the bureaucratic institutions often results.

Members of these institutions recognize the advantages of having a two-headed master, and use the conflict between their political masters to their advantage. Departments seek support for preferred policy alternatives from both the White House and Congress. If either attempts action inimical to the interests of the department, it seeks succor from the other branch. In fact, since neither branch is monolithic, departmental leaders seek support from within both branches to maximize their department's interests.

Parochial behavior by organizations and their leaders is a natural consequence of our constitutional system (Long, 1949: 257). A department's or agency's size, roles, and budget-share are subject to re-definition at any moment. Failure to guard organizational prerogatives may result in the loss of any of these, or may even result in disestablishment. Lost are jobs, opportunities for advancement, prestige, and the ability to influence policy in an area important to the members of the slighted agency. Leaders, even political appointees, are likely to

become champions of their organization's interests, "captured" by the organization they are appointed to lead, for many reasons (Heclo, 1977). Their authority is based on their institutional position; they receive information and advice "filtered" by their organization's members; and their ability to influence those outside their organization is tied to organizational assets.

There is a large literature on bureaucratic behavior in the national security arena to corroborate the claim that American departments and agencies act with an impressive amount of autonomy (Halperin, 1974; Allison, 1971: model II; Knott and Miller, 1987). But what is particularly pertinent in the case of the National Security Council is the extent to which this independence has fostered the emergence of coordinating machinery. Rockman (1981: 913) has noted that "the more feeble the gravitational pull of directional authority in government, the more necessary it becomes to institutionalize coordinating functions . . . [and] in the case of the United States . . . the gravitational pull of political forces is exceedingly weak." The weakness of the "gravitational pull" is due to the division of political direction between the president and Congress, and the need for coordinating

functions stems from the independent behavior that division makes possible. Although the NSC is the most notable of the coordinating mechanisms, Rockman (1981: 913) has noted further that many coordinating mechanisms exist both within the Executive Office of the President and on Capitol Hill.

The independent departments of the executive branch have played a large role in forming and shaping the development of the National Security Council. Bureaucratic conflict provided not only the impetus for creating a council; one bureaucratic battle imposed the NSC on President Truman. Departments and agencies have remained interested in the development of the NSC system through regular involvement in its operation, and through efforts to persuade Congress and the president on its uses and limits.

It is interesting to note, for example, that the idea of a council for national security originated within the Navy Department, whose persistent independence from its Commander-in-Chief resulted in the formation of the National Security Council over the objection of the president it was designed to "assist" (see Chapter 4). Neustadt (1963: 860) has attributed the creation of the NSC, which he calls "Forrestal's Revenge," to a reaction by Washington "officialdom" to

Roosevelt's freewheeling mode of decision-making. He noted further that the executive departments need orderly procedures, clear policy statements, and timely responses--outputs the NSC was designed to provide. Consistent with this assessment are Bellinger's (1977) findings that department and agency representatives have been among the primary advocates of the interdepartmental committee system led by NSC staff members.

In short, the creation and subsequent development of the National Security Council system resulted from the dynamic interactions of the President, Congress, and the departments and agencies it was designed to coordinate. All these parties were in some part responsible for its inception, and all have influenced its development. Still to be integrated into this explanation are the effects stemming from the actions of members of the National Security Council system.

### 3. Organizational Activity

So far we have addressed the institutional environment within which the National Security Council operates. While that environment has clearly been a significant contributor to the form that the NSC system has assumed, it does not explain how members of that system have influenced its development through their

own actions and through interactions with the larger environment. The interaction of organization and environment is an important element to consider for at least two reasons: organizations learn and adapt while interacting with their environments, and the environment within which an organization operates is changed as a result of that interaction. Both effects are important in this analysis. The first, organizational learning and adaptation, is a fundamental contributor to organizational change, and is discussed immediately below. The second, environmental change, relates again to reaction, and is discussed in connection with the development of limits on change in the National Security Council system.

Organizational change is a normal and necessary part of the life of an organization. Change is necessary to cope with changes in the environment. Failure to learn and adapt can lead to the demise of the organization (Hedberg, 1981).<sup>12</sup> Most

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<sup>12</sup>Covington (1981) found the NSC less capable than other presidential staff agencies of transmitting learned information across presidential transitions due to the almost complete turnover of staff, and the limited turnover of documents. My concept of organizational learning is somewhat different. My focus is on organizational relationships and tasks performed (or role in the larger system) rather than on substantive policy issues. Organization and role are unclassified matters that are easily observed and

organizations, including governmental organizations, do not survive more than five years from their inception (Nystrom and Starbuck, 1981: xiv-xvi). The National Security Council is only one of four coordinating mechanisms established by the National Security Act of 1947. The other three have been folded into other organizations or disposed of altogether. Clearly there is more that has contributed to the durability of the National Security Council than the need for coordination, or it too would have suffered the same fate as the National Security Resources Board, the Munitions Board, or the Research and Development Board.

Change need not necessarily be in response to environmental shifts; it may be the cause of environmental change. It is difficult to sort out cause and effect in the case of the National Security Council system. At one level, the NSC system has responded to the growing demand on the president for action in international affairs. At another level, the NSC system has caused the shift in the distribution of power within the government by enabling the president

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widely known within the national security community, a fact that makes learning broader than the organization itself--extending to potential members of the organization. This type of learning has resulted in adaptation as well as some measure of continuity over time.

to perform roles that were not possible under earlier organizational structures. Whether one sees the change as an inevitable result of environmental pressures, or a political coup staged by a succession of presidents, or some combination of the two, a shift has occurred and the National Security Council system is at the center of it.<sup>13</sup>

**a) Accretion of Capability**

The primary reason for the survival of the National Security Council system has been its ability to continue to provide useful services over time. The NSC system has become more capable and diverse than it was originally conceived to be.<sup>14</sup> Organizations, Porter (1990) reminds us, must continually change if they are to survive within a changing environment.

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<sup>13</sup>Resolution of this question is not the purpose of this study. The environment poses a series of challenges that a governmental system must respond to. No deterministic relationship exists between the nature of the challenge and the response. The appropriateness of the response affects the future success or failure of the governmental system.

<sup>14</sup>It is difficult to pin down a single conception of what the many progenitors of the NSC had in mind because there was considerable disagreement about what the NSC should do, how it should be composed, and how it should operate. These ambiguities were not resolved by the legislation (see Chapter 4). It is safe to say, however, that none of the participants had foreseen the Council's vastly expanded form and role.

The National Security Council system has been uniquely positioned to make changes to assure its institutional survival and viability over time. Unlike many institutions it has not suffered from a lack of critical appraisals of its organizational patterns and modes of operation. It has been subject to many studies analyzing its function, organization, and success or failure. The government alone has conducted or commissioned over 60 such studies, and it is a favorite topic of ex-participants, think tank analysts, and academics more generally. Prescription has been the favorite mode of analysis of these studies, generating countless suggestions for possible implementation. (Brzezinski, 1983; Destler, 1980; George, 1980; Henderson, 1987; Odeen, 1980; Shoemaker, 1991).

The other institutional attribute that has facilitated change in the NSC system over time has been the institutionalized practice of changing staff personnel with each new administration.<sup>15</sup> While many organizations show little ability to adopt new

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<sup>15</sup>The practice was established by Kennedy in response to the Jackson subcommittee report on the National Security Council. Because the practice has, in effect, created several prestigious patronage positions, it is unlikely to be discontinued absent substantial pressure for reform.

practices and modes of operation (Biggart, 1977; Sofer, 1961),<sup>16</sup> regular and near complete turnover of personnel has contributed to the ability to develop new forms of organization and operating procedures. The concomitant drawback has been the limited ability to develop an institutional memory in substantive policy matters (Covington, 1981).

Organizational innovation has been the primary means by which the NSC system has adapted to provide the services that have made it a viable force in the national security policy-making environment. Had the system been limited to the Council itself it would likely have been relegated to the dustbin of history. The president does not need a group defined by law to meet with his Vice President and with his Secretaries of State and Defense, and Congress cannot force a president to meet with these advisors if he chooses otherwise. It was the development of the interdepartmental committee system, and not the Council per se, that has provided for coordination among the

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<sup>16</sup>Sofer (1961: 163-164) states: "The policies and procedures appropriate at one stage of an organization's history can become dramatically unsuited to another... Just as different procedures are appropriate to the different phases of an organization's affairs, so are different sorts of people."

disparate elements of the bureaucracy. It was the creation and development of the National Security Advisor position that has made it possible for the president to provide continuous, authoritative direction within the national security community, and it was the development of the NSC staff as a specialized extension of the White House staff that has allowed the president to be a policy initiator in this area.

Although presidents have been the primary consumers of these services, it does not necessarily follow that they have been personally responsible for the innovations. It has been customary for presidents to take credit (if not always the blame) for whatever happens during their term of office because they are accountable to the electorate. While this may be appropriate in terms of governance, it is not always appropriate to explain organizational development in terms of the personal characteristics or predilections of incumbents.

The fact is presidents have limited amounts of time, energy, and interest to invest in the development of organizational patterns and their operation. Presidents want products, or the outputs of the

organization.<sup>17</sup> It is up to their lieutenants to build whatever organization it takes to provide the required products. Even that may overstate a president's engagement because it assumes that a president knows what products he wants and can expect to receive. It is not unreasonable to assume that presidents expect their lieutenants to define for them the limits of what is possible to expect.<sup>18</sup> While a president can be expected to have requirements, and can even be demanding in his insistence on having those requirements met, it falls to those who work for him to transform requirements into product, and to inform a president what additional products it is possible to provide.

Given a president's limitations, it is the outlook of the National Security Advisor that molds the development of the National Security Council system. There is ample evidence to support this assertion.

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<sup>17</sup>The term products should not be construed narrowly. Symbolism is an important product of NSC structural arrangements. See Chapter 3 for further elaboration of this point.

<sup>18</sup>Obviously, the familiarity of each incumbent with the products he can expect to receive from the NSC system will vary. George Bush, a president with extensive experience in national security and the bureaucratic apparatus associated with it, was the exception rather than the rule.

Nelson (1985: 366-369) gives Souers, the first executive secretary, much of the credit for making the early National Security Council work, and for establishing the initial role of the staff in the Executive Office of the President. Clifford (1991: 163) even credits Souers with initiating the efforts to thwart the Defense department attempt to capture the Council and its staff. Johnson (1969: 716-716) suggests that Cutler, Eisenhower's first National Security Advisor, was as much responsible for the development of the bureaucratic machinery as Eisenhower was. Anderson (1968) suggests that Bundy's lust for power was instrumental in the development of the activist staff of the Kennedy administration. Andrianopoulos (1991) has shown convincingly the impact that both Kissinger and Brzezinski had on the form and use of the NSC systems they led.

Nor should credit or blame fall only upon the NSA. Others have been involved in the development of new capabilities for the NSC system. Richard Beal, for example, was largely responsible for the development of the Crisis Management Center during the Reagan Administration. He recognized the technological potential to develop a centralized location for database access in the White House. He sold this

proposition in combination with the idea of coordinated response control with satellite communications.

Reagan, through his National Security Advisor, approved the idea, and construction began on a vastly expanded capability for presidential control of operations through an active staff.

While the general tendency has been for organizational level activity to lead to innovation and accretion of capability, there remains that essential element of unpredictability associated with human interactions. The inability of key individuals to constructively relate to one another has occasionally affected the functioning of the system. Nelson (1985), for example, has reported a rupture of relations between Truman's Secretaries of State and Defense, Acheson and Johnson respectively, so severe that it hamstrung the NSC system's operations for months despite the president's repeated attempts to empower it. Prados (1991) has noted that the departure of Robert Osgood early in the Nixon administration virtually ended that staff's abortive efforts at long-term planning. Similarly, particularly good relations or effective efforts among individuals within the system have shifted the distribution of responsibility

and authority within the Council, the NSC staff, or inter-departmental committees.

Countless new ideas on organization and uses of the NSC system have been generated by the many studies conducted by the government, participants, think tanks, and academics more generally.<sup>19</sup> The role of the National Security Advisor has been to choose and implement the ideas that he believes will best meet the interests of the president (mixed, no doubt, with some measure of self-interest). Regular change of administrations has contributed to ability to effect organizational change at the NSC level. But does this process end, and if so, where?

#### **D. Limits on Change**

The same forces that have been responsible for change within the National Security Council system have also limited the extent of that change. Reactive change initiated by the electoral process and inter- and intra-branch conflict has diminished as the

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<sup>19</sup>It has been commonplace for groups and individuals to publish organizational recommendations for the "benefit" of the president-elect. A current example of this phenomena is the bipartisan commission co-sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Institute for International Economics. The commission's efforts resulted in a memorandum for the president-elect and were adapted for publication in Foreign Affairs prior to the Clinton inauguration (Carnegie Endowment, 1992).

organization has developed a niche for itself in the policy-making process.

### **1. Diminishing Change**

It makes sense that the point at which an organization is the most malleable is early in its life when any behavior is experimental. Organizations in their first years have no built up reservoir of experience of what works and what does not. They have not had limits placed on the bounds of acceptable behavior, or on the services they should or should not provide. In the case of the National Security Council system the mission statement delineated by the founding legislation was broad and vague, making possible many potential forms of organization and modes of operation.

Over time, however, limits on acceptable forms and modes are generally constructed. Limits may be codified into law or in executive orders, or they may become part of the collective consciousness regarding acceptable or unacceptable, useful or less useful, forms and behaviors. How these limits are set is discussed below. It is important to note at this point, however, that as limits are set organizational alternatives are foreclosed and others are validated.

A few examples help illustrate the point. Eisenhower developed an extensive array of

interlocking, hierarchically arranged interdepartmental committees known as "policy hill" (Cutler, 1956). This system was the focus of criticism toward the end of Eisenhower's second term both for what it did and did not do. Its detractors, given voice in the Jackson subcommittee, claimed that the system tended toward nondescript compromises, that it failed to provide energetic policy leadership, and that it limited the likelihood of policy innovation (Jackson Subcommittee, 1961). Based on these criticisms, the subcommittee recommended that much of it be scuttled. Kennedy took their advice. Although no law was passed proscribing this form of organization, a limit was established nonetheless. Eisenhower's system (and the resulting criticism) set the boundary limiting the extent to which bureaucratic mechanisms for policy development in the White House would be viewed as politically acceptable.

Kennedy's reaction set the limit on the opposite end of the spectrum. In his zeal to set up a "humanized" system he established a loose network of "task forces" in lieu of Eisenhower's more elaborate system. Ad hoc task force committees failed to meet the need for bureaucratic coordination, however, and even Johnson made efforts to revitalize the

coordinating component of the NSC system. In the process Kennedy had set the limit on the minimum acceptable level for bureaucratic coordination.

Similar limits have developed for the National Security Advisor. Souers and Lay, Truman's executive secretaries, were unable to provide the kind of assistance the president required in the area of national security policy-making. At first, Clifford filled this need, then Harriman was called in to help, but by the end of Truman's term the president's need for advice and energy in national security affairs was not met.<sup>20</sup> Eisenhower created two positions, National Security Advisor and the President's Staff Secretary, to fill the need, but it was Kennedy and Bundy who displayed the potential of the role of National Security Advisor. The activities of Kissinger and Brzezinski, however, raised concerns that the role had become too powerful and efforts were made to limit the influence a National Security Advisor could wield.

Similar limits have been placed on the size and functions of the NSC staff. The reaction to the events of the Iran-Contra scandal resulted in limits being

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<sup>20</sup>Clifford (1977) later claimed that he was the model upon which the National Security Advisor role was based.

placed on the size of the NSC staff and on its involvement in the carrying out of national security policy.

## 2. Setting Limits

Limits have been set through laws, executive orders, and through experience. Obviously, these limits have been set by acts of Congress, by actions of the president, and by actions of other participants. In each case, however, an understanding has developed that NSC activity was out of the bounds of acceptable activity.

Laws made by Congress and signed by the president are the most restrictive limit on NSC activity. Few limits of this sort have been enacted. The most obvious is the composition of the Council itself. Congress indicated its interest in controlling this aspect of the president's advisory process in 1947, and showed its intent to remain involved in later attempts to revise membership requirements. In the wake of Iran-Contra, Congress limited the maximum size of the staff through appropriations' legislation. Other laws deal more specifically with substantive policy activities.

Congressional influence has not been limited to passing laws, however. As noted above, Congress has

shown its disapproval through investigations or hearings. These tools have served to highlight behavior that Congress finds unacceptable, and has generally resulted in efforts to change the system. The Eisenhower to Kennedy shift is one example, and the attempt to place limits on the National Security Advisor is another. In the latter case, Congress held hearings on several draft bills that required confirmation of the National Security Advisor. No bill was enacted, but the message was received nonetheless, and Reagan moved to downgrade the position.

Executive orders are equally binding on the National Security Council system, but they are easier to change and are reviewed at each presidential transition. Each new president establishes new executive orders regarding the NSC system. The new executive orders generally include restatement of previous orders found to be useful and new ones considered appropriate. Organization is generally established through executive order as are procedures for its operation.

Executive orders are one means by which organizational experience is codified. Practices that work and are acceptable within the larger policy-making system are often formalized through executive orders.

Those practices are frequently renewed when a new administration takes office. Practices that have proven to be unacceptable or ineffective are less likely to be renewed.

Limits need not be codified in law or executive order. Limits may take the form of informal understandings among participants and potential participants about the purposes and means of an organization. There is no law nor executive order that has clearly delineated the boundaries of acceptable behavior for a National Security Assistant, yet standards have been established. Obviously, limits of this kind are the least binding, so there is always the possibility that a future National Security Advisor will overstep his or her uncodified bounds. In that case, however, the political system will again react, and, in effect, reestablish unwritten boundaries, or codify limits in executive orders or laws.

### 3. An End to Contention?

The National Security Council system has been a frequent source of political conflict since its inception in 1947. Truman opposed it, then ignored it. Efforts to control it abounded in those early years. Eisenhower made it a campaign issue. Kennedy did the same eight years later. Nixon did the same eight years

after that. Ford, Carter, Reagan, and Bush each felt compelled to right some wrong in the organization and operation of the NSC system. Is there an end in sight? I believe so.

Just as the magnitude of changes to the NSC system has diminished over time, the nature of the criticisms has changed as well. Criticism has shifted from focusing on the nature of the system to the effectiveness of the individuals charged with operating the system. The Iran-Contra affair offers the clearest example.

The Iran-Contra affair offered an opportunity to call into question presidential management of a large apparatus for controlling and coordinating the national security policy bureaucracy, or the appropriateness of a National Security Advisor accountable only to the president, or the legitimacy of a large specialized staff effectively operating as a personal staff to the president. The president's review board (the Tower Commission) and the congressional review committees brushed these questions aside in favor of explanations that focused on individual culpability. In their reports both insisted that the system was generally sound, but that it was used improperly. Two prominent Senators (Cohen and Mitchell, 1988) later coauthored a

book that placed the blame on "Men of Zeal." The fact that the criticism focused on the individuals involved rather than on the larger systemic questions suggests that the NSC system has established a legitimate position in the policy-making arena.

Another indication that the NSC system has established itself as a fixture of American government was the absence of criticism in the 1988 and 1992 presidential election campaigns. Dukakis ran on a personal competence theme rather than on the notion that he would change or clean up the system. Bush said little about the NSC in 1988, but moved quietly to downplay the Crisis Management Center. And although the Iran-Contra affair resurfaced as an election issue in 1992, Clinton did not question the legitimacy of the NSC system. In fact, he proposed expanding it to formally include a greater economic emphasis, and suggested he would pattern domestic policy machinery on the NSC model. Such rhetoric (even if not followed up with action) indicates broad acceptance of NSC organization and mode of operation.

The operation of the NSC system will continue to receive scrutiny because of its proximity to power and the political nature of its task. That scrutiny, however, will focus on the policies it has a hand in

establishing and on the individuals who comprise the system.

#### **E. Summary**

This chapter has presented and developed a framework for contextual analysis that focuses attention at three levels: partisan conflict, institutional conflict, and organizational activity. The dynamics at each level have been discussed and supported by illustrative examples. Partisan conflict has been discussed in terms of institutionalized reaction and with respect to organizational styles inherent in party approaches to the presidency. Institutional conflict has been reviewed, as it occurs between the president and Congress, and between the president and the constituent elements of the executive bureaucracy. Organizational activity has been discussed concerning the peculiar dynamics at work within the NSC system and the tendency toward accretion of capability through individual initiative. Finally, a framework for understanding diminishing change in the NSC has been presented and briefly developed. These abstractions will be more fully illustrated in the case studies of Chapters four through seven.

## Chapter III

### I. Conceptual Clarification and Research Design

#### A. Introduction

While this study's primary purpose is the elaboration and illustration of the analytical framework introduced and developed in the preceding chapters, a thorough understanding of the relationships developed in the case studies that follow requires further grounding in the underlying theoretical issues. The relationship of individuals to the institutions they people is of primary concern here. Since an analytical framework based on contextual factors may appear to reduce the individual's role to virtually meaningless proportions, special attention is paid to individual efficacy [or "human agency" in Smith's (1992) terms] within a contextual framework. The role of symbols and the symbolic importance attached to organizational forms are discussed with respect to individuals' desire to display efficacious activity.

The "New Institutionalism" is then further developed particularly with respect to the historical branch of which this study is a part. Within that area the work of those analysts concerned with the presidency receives the most attention. Next the role of ideas in an institutional context is discussed. How

is it that institutions establish patterns, choose policy positions, and present a united front in inter-institutional conflict? Why do those patterns and positions persist? How do popular ideas about an institution in the popular mind affect institutional development? Ideas seem to provide an answer. Propositions tying individuals and institutions together through ideas are briefly considered as they apply to the case studies that follow.

The appropriateness of mechanical metaphors to describe the NSC system is then considered from the perspective of an institutional analysis. The NSC system is frequently called decision-making "machinery" or "apparatus." These terms evoke images of interchangeable parts and precisely defined functions, working according to the command of an operator, along lines established by a knowledgeable designer. Such images seem to clash with the assumptions and propositions associated with institutional analyses.

Finally, the rationale underlying the selection and development of illustrative case studies is presented. Each of the subsequent chapters is discussed as a preview of the contributions of that particular case to the development of the themes of the study as a whole.

## B. The Importance of Individuals

Chapters 1 and 2 presented two different approaches toward understanding NSC system organizational patterns. These two alternatives place a different emphasis on the nature of individual discretion, on the importance of the institutional environment, and on the activities of individuals other than the president himself. Below we review the central propositions of these two approaches and analyze the role of the individual in each.

One approach considers the incumbent's political or decision-making style the pivotal factor in the development of organizational relationships (Barber, 1985). The logic of the argument proceeds in this manner: A president's political style is a product of his personality and means of responding to political pressures. This style is exhibited in the process he develops to help him in his task of decision-making. The decision-making process is implemented by using organizational structures that complement the incumbent's style.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>As noted in chapter one, Falk (1964; 1967) stated this proposition concerning NSC organizational relationships in what were primarily intended to be descriptive works on the organization and use of the NSC. It was not his intent to develop a thorough-going theory on organizational development. Falk, I believe, merely

The alternative approach presents a different view. Institutions, in this view, affect the behavior of individuals and, hence, the organizational development of the National Security Council system at three levels: (1) partisan, (2) institutional, and (3) organizational. The first level results in a reactive response to perceived problems; the second level results in a jockeying for relative advantage; and the third level results in an accretion of capability. Each of these effects is attenuated over time as conventions emerge regarding the limits of acceptable behavior, and role behaviors become better defined and generally accepted.

What is the role of the individual? In the first theory the individual is clearly efficacious. A president has the authority to use and mold the National Security Council system as he sees fit. Council membership is stipulated by Congress, but it is the President who controls attendance--including (or

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stated what was commonly assumed to be true at the time. George (1972; 1980) developed the proposition further, but not as an end in itself. Rather, George concerned himself with recommending a "multiple advocacy" approach to decision-making. As such, the style-organization relationship has been easily accepted, even though it has remained more an assumption than a well-developed, articulated theory. That situation is an indication of the non-theoretical nature of the literature in this area.

especially) his own--and chooses whether to make decisions in Council, in private, or with other advisors. He can choose to appoint a National Security Advisor, or choose not to. If he does appoint one, he decides who that person is to be and defines what role that person will play. He decides whether to operate an interdepartmental committee system, who will have effective control of that system, and how and when he will use its outputs. He can assemble a process-oriented staff or a staff with substantive policy expertise, or both. The staff can be large or small. Each of these decisions is made with the purpose of creating an advisory system that complements the incumbent's political style and means of decision-making.

In the second theory the role of the individual is less clear. It is recognized that there are no legal proscriptions delimiting a president's discretion regarding the decision items discussed above, yet it is suggested that there are several constraints beyond presidential style. This theory posits that limits on presidential action are not necessarily defined by statutory proscriptions. Presidents need not be constrained by law to be sharply limited concerning organizational decision-making. A president could

choose not to appoint a National Security Advisor, but in no case since the position was created has a president decided in that way--despite recommendations to that effect--and it is unlikely that any president opt to restrict himself in that way in the foreseeable future.<sup>2</sup> While both theories see change from incumbent to incumbent, one explains the change in terms of the individual characteristics of the president and the second suggests that other factors play a greater role.

#### 1. Human Agency

Defining and clarifying the nature of the limits on presidential action, as the second theory attempts to do, does not necessarily "explain away" the impact of the individual in the political arena. Rogers Smith (1992) describes the "fundamental tension" that seems

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<sup>2</sup>Destler (1980) recommended the abolishment of the position, George (1980) recommended it be limited to the role of a process specialist, and Congress (Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 1980) considered extending its control over the position. Each were persuasive in their arguments, but presidents have not heeded their recommendations. Despite protestations from the academic and political communities presidents find the services of an NSA useful in meeting their institutional needs with respect to inter- and intra-branch conflict and in meeting their substantive need for policy advice. The position and the role behaviors associated with it are unlikely to be abolished or significantly modified under these conditions.

to separate meaningful "human agency"<sup>3</sup> from theories that attempt to explain political behavior in terms of variables exogenous to the individuals making the decisions. The more we explain human behavior in terms external to the individuals involved, he suggests, the less important individuals seem to be.

This study does not intend to minimize the influence particular presidents have had in the development of the National Security Council system. It does not suggest that incumbents have been interchangeable cogs in a deterministic progression in the inexorable march of historical forces resulting in particular organizational relationships. Nor does it suggest that the future necessarily holds any particular set of organizational arrangements.

This study does explain presidential choices in terms other than political style. It suggests that incumbents take account of factors at different levels of analysis when deciding how to organize the National Security Council system. It suggests that other

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<sup>3</sup>Smith (1992: 5, note 10) uses the term agency ". . . not in the legal or economic sense, in which one person is an 'agent' working on behalf of another, but rather in the philosophical sense, in which 'agents' are viewed as causally potent, morally responsible actors guided by their own intentions, not external forces."

individuals, too, are interested in organizational relationships and have significant influence on organizational relationships. And it suggests a means to analyze likely future decisions affecting organizational development rather than suggesting a preferable or inevitable future path.

To say that exogenous factors explain to some extent decisions that a president makes does not remove the president from the decision-making process, or suggest that he is somehow irrelevant. In this study, exogenous factors limit the range of practicable choices and make certain choices more likely than others. The decision-maker remains important because each person brings a different set of considerations and limitations to the decision process. There are many exogenous factors that are nonetheless very personal to the individual who is president. A Democrat, for example, will face different limitations on any given decision than will a Republican faced with the same problem--no matter how similar their personalities or personal inclinations. A president's party affiliation, the coalition he has constructed to achieve electoral success, and the advisors with whom he has surrounded himself, for example, all limit his range of choices; they are all external to his

personality and style; but they are all personal in the sense that they define who he is as a president. It is possible, therefore, to consider the individual efficacious and to explain most aspects of political behavior in terms other than style.

## 2. A Place for Personality

An organization as large as the presidency has become, particularly one that has the pretense of managing the executive branch of the government, requires formal mechanisms for the purposes of information gathering, decision-making, and control. Organizational arrangements are planned before assuming office by teams of advisors with the purpose of developing a system that incorporates lessons from past systems and that will meet the escalating demands associated with the office.

How any system operates, however, depends upon the interactions of the individuals peopling it, and the issues under consideration. Politics is ultimately a very social enterprise. Power flows to those individuals within a system who demonstrate the ability to influence decisions. Decisions often bear upon the significance accorded to the advice and information the decision-maker receives. The significance accorded to information and advice is often proportionate to the

trust existing between those sharing it. Trust does not stem from one's position on a line diagram. It can ebb and flow with time and issues. While presidents do not choose advisory systems based on their personalities, the ways that presidents and their senior advisors interact with others very much affect the operation of whatever system is chosen.

Further elaboration of an example introduced in Chapter 1 illustrates the point. Nelson (1985: 371-372) chronicles attempts to make the NSC an important forum for advising President Truman. Truman decided to use it for receiving and integrating advice; the State Department made changes that affected its orientation to the NSC; and Congress passed amendments that made Council membership more amenable to Truman's interests. The intended empowerment of the NSC system, however, was undermined by the disintegrating relationship between the Secretaries of State and Defense, Acheson and Johnson respectively, and by the change of executive secretary from Souers to Lay. Despite the intentions of the president and other individuals, personality conflicts undermined the effectiveness of established structures.

### 3. Individual Focus

While the object of this study is the National Security Council system and how it has changed and developed over time, the focus is nonetheless upon the individuals who made up the system and made the decisions that resulted in its form. Institutions are viewed here in terms of how they influenced the decisions of the people working within them rather than as monolithic actors in their own right. It is, perhaps, unusual for an "institutional" analysis to focus at the individual level because it sets up a certain tension in the use of terminology and mode of thinking. This approach, however, most accurately reflects the role of institutions and the predicament of individuals in political life.

How individuals and institutions interact and affect each other is a large theoretical question by itself. It is not the purpose of this study to resolve the meta-theoretical issues associated with that debate; the purpose is, rather, to develop a single link in the chain of ideas associated with one element of that larger debate. While the role of ideas linking institutions and individuals is considered briefly below, resolution of the larger theoretical question is beyond the purpose and scope of this study.

#### 4. The Relationship between Symbols and Efficacy

Individuals driven to prove that their election has resulted in change have significant motivation to affect visible change early in their terms. It takes extraordinary effort to successfully win a presidential election; new incumbents, therefore, have an immense personal investment in displaying their efficacy. However, many problems candidates promise to solve during their campaigns are intractable or, at least, not conducive to quick resolution. Even where solutions seem readily apparent, quite frequently presidents share the authority to implement the solution with other political actors who, even if like-minded, may extract a price for their cooperation. It is more commonly true that the pressing problems of the day find no natural consensus, nor do they admit to clear solutions. The incentive, therefore, has been to show the ability to affect change in areas where the president has a relatively free hand. Consequently, presidents have frequently turned to the NSC system for early demonstrations of efficacy.

Organizational patterns in the NSC system, for reasons that will be made clear later, have been imbued with tremendous symbolic significance. Presidents have symbolized their intent to "clean up the mess in

Washington" as did Eisenhower (see Chapter 5); to "get the country moving again" as did Kennedy (see Chapter 6); or to "restore stability" as did Nixon (see Chapter 7) through their early decisions regarding NSC system organizational patterns. While it is a mistake to attribute organizational changes to straightforward attempts to improve the means by which decisions are made, it is also wrong to attribute change to "change for change's sake," as Osborne (1970: 27) did in his analysis of NSC system change early in the Nixon administration.

It is tempting to suggest that these efforts are cynical attempts to create the perception of change where nothing of significance has occurred. Such interpretations, however, overlook the real significance attached to those efforts by the individuals involved. March and Olsen (1989: 91) clearly express the relationship between efficacy and the symbolism inherent in organizational reform:

The preponderant evidence is that symbols of administrative reform are important to politicians, not only as ways to fool the voters but also as reflections of their own beliefs. Incoming administrations, like their supporters, believe in the possibility of making a difference; and the recurrence of major reorganization efforts is tied to that belief. Since progress through intentional action is an enduring part of the American secular religion and since sacred beliefs must

be exhibited by sacred institutions, the necessary logic of public life is efficacy.

This study identifies the source of the beliefs that motivate the direction and extent of the change associated with NSC system. The beliefs need to be widely enough held, even if the leader is out in front of others, to sustain concerted activity by many individuals toward a desired end (Burns, 1978). In short, the political and institutional context must establish conditions that suggest to individuals involved that the prescribed change is desirable.

### **C. Institutional Analyses**

The prefix "new" in connection with institutional analyses suggests a concentration on empirical observation of behavior within and among institutions in place of mere "formalism" and the descriptive emphasis that the former mode of analysis displayed. The new institutionalism, then, while rejecting both grand theories of political behavior and the descriptive formalism of an "old" institutionalism, seeks to combine a behavioralist's emphases on observation with the sense that political processes represent more than an efficient means of allocating values. March and Olsen, the leading exponents of the new institutionalism in political studies, sum it up in

this way (1989: 1): "[Institutional analyses] reflect an empirically based prejudice, an assertion that what we observe in the world is inconsistent with the ways in which contemporary theories ask us to think, that the organization of political life makes a difference."

Further clarification is required, however, because, as DiMaggio and Powell (1991: 1) point out "There are as many 'new institutionalisms' as there are social science disciplines."<sup>4</sup> Orren and Skowronek (1991: 2) make clear that even within political science:

The "new institutionalism" is a label associated with many different scholarly agendas, and while it lends the surface appearance of a concerted movement, one that has gained momentum in the wake of the discipline's recent disenchantment with behavioralism, its adherents contest among themselves for the heart and soul of political study.

The predominant branches of the new institutionalism within political science split on the emphases they assign to the role of rational competition (or choice) on the one hand and the importance of history or temporality on the other. The rational choice variant of the new institutionalism has its roots in the work

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<sup>4</sup>DiMaggio and Powell are particularly concerned with the new institutionalism associated with the organization theory branch of sociology.

of Riker (1962), and has tended toward formal modeling and game theory (Shepsle, 1989; Ordeshook, 1986).

The historical branch of the new institutionalism, of which this study is a part, considers rational choice conceptions overly reductionist in terms of the primary variable self-interest (Smith, 1992). This branch considers interpretive analyses an important means to illustrate and evaluate topics that yield limited number of cases for analysis, but that are nonetheless significant objects of study such as the presidency (Tulis, 1990).

This study is a part of the latter branch. It considers temporality, or the importance of timing in the conjunction of problems, decision-makers, and solutions, critical to an understanding of political behavior and, more particularly, to the development of the National Security Council system.<sup>5</sup> It attempts to build upon Skowronek's (1990) analysis of the three general dynamics shaping presidential history: the constitutional separation of powers, modernization and

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<sup>5</sup>March and Olson (1986) label temporality with the inelegant appellation "Garbage Can Models." The theory considers problems, solutions, and decision-makers, three separate "streams" passing through a system at any given time. The match of a problem with a solution, in their analysis, has as much to do with contemporaneous availability as it does with the fit of each to the other.

the attendant effects of nation building, and the concept of life cycles of governing coalitions or regimes. And it approaches NSC system development with the "whole-system dynamics" perspective that Orren and Skowronek (1991: 15) attribute to Moe's (1987) analysis of the National Labor Relations Board.

Presidential scholars are increasingly turning to institutional concepts and analyses to understand the operations of the presidency.<sup>6</sup> Gilmore (1975) made the first effort to adapt the institutional concepts and approaches to the study of the presidency by adapting the work of Huntington (1968) and Polsby (1968). And Burke (1990; 1992) further refined the approach and applied it with a distinctly historical emphasis. The present study continues efforts in the same direction by applying an institutionally-based analysis to the phenomena of change in a particular presidential staff agency.

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<sup>6</sup>The increased interest in studying the institutional aspects of the presidency (apart from the rest of the executive branch) began with the tremendous swelling of the office during FDR's administration. This line of thought developed considerably more emphasis during the Nixon administration when it became increasingly clear that the EOP and the White House were not only large and distinct from the executive branch, but were even on adversarial terms with the executive departments (Cronin, 1980).

## 1. Institutions and Ideas

The organizational history of the NSC system provides an interesting illustration of the conjunction of ideas and institutions. The existence of the NSC itself stems from an institutional conflict where each of the central participants of the conflict (Navy and War Departments) united behind a set of ideas that gave coherence and direction to their members' actions. The compromise resulting from that conflict served to embed within the NSC conflicting assumptions and expectations concerning its use, which stimulated ongoing conflict for years to come. Later conflict over NSC system organizational patterns crystallized competing conceptions concerning organizational style (managerial v. political) and resulted in their longstanding association with opposing political parties (Republican and Democratic, respectively). Of course, the ideas as expressed by institutional advocates frequently lacked internal consistency, and when implemented, were always mixed with the practices associated with the competing conception. The presidency, for example, could never be wholly managed or politicized (to use imperfectly descriptive labels); nonetheless, orientations exhibited by incumbents have tended toward one or the

other alternative consistent with the divisions associated with their parties.

It is not surprising from an institutional perspective that individuals come to hold the ideas associated with the institution of which they are a part. March and Olsen (1989: 39 - 52) consider the confluence of individuals, ideas, and institutions as part of a process that they call the "interpretation and institutionalization of meaning." This study considers the interactive means by which institutions come to adopt ideas that serve their interests. Institutions use ideas to relate their actions to purposes higher than institutional survival (i.e., the national interest), to interpret their past, and to shape their future. Conflict, according to Hedberg (1981) plays a key role in shaping institutional positions. Individuals caught up in institutional conflicts feel great pressure to conform to their institution's adopted position or to leave.

The tendency for stable associations between ideas and institutions over time is consistent with what is known about cognitive-consistency requirements in individuals and, by extension, in the institutions they

inhabit (Steinbruner, 1974).<sup>7</sup> One sees elements of this continuity in the actions of the separate armed services during the unification debate and subsequent debates on the role of the NSC. Continuity is also evident in the political parties' orientations to leadership styles.

Arnold (1993) adds another dimension to the relationship between ideas and institutions. He asserts that broadly held ideas about the purpose and functions of an institution shape the expectations held by incumbents and the public alike. Incumbents, Arnold adds, rightly expect to be measured with reference to these commonly held beliefs. Arnold's concern is with the progressive-era presidents. Taft, Arnold maintains, was forced to conform to the expectations generated by the more activist presidency of Theodore Roosevelt. It is not necessary to elaborate the details of that analysis to see the proposition's application to the period under review here. Eisenhower, for example, was roundly criticized for his failure to submit a comprehensive legislative program even though the practice had never been associated with

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<sup>7</sup>Steinbruner (1974) arrives at an institutionalist approach to decision-making by combining what he calls the cybernetic paradigm with cognitive processes.

Republican presidents in the past. Eisenhower had never intended to submit such a program, but he quickly succumbed to popular expectations.

The implication for the NSC system is immediately apparent, though the climate of expectations is restricted to a smaller community. Role behaviors for NSC system participants begin with the patterns associated with their predecessors, even if they were not aware of those behaviors. Participants learn the expectations associated with their role and are measured by their performance with respect to that standard. The motivation to expand roles is consistent with individuals' drive to succeed. The case studies that follow illustrate the confluence of institutions, ideas, and individuals as they have come together to shape NSC system organizational development. Before proceeding to an analysis of the cases, it is useful to emphasize one way in which a set of ideas has been associated with the NSC system through their common labels.

## **2. The NSC System and Mechanical Metaphors**

It is commonplace to refer to the NSC system as decision-making "machinery" or "apparatus." Osborne (1971) referred to the Nixon-era NSC system, for example, as "Henry's Wonderful Machine." As noted in

the introduction to this chapter, such characterizations evoke images of interchangeable parts performing precisely defined functions under the direction of a controlling operator and according to the design of a knowledgeable engineer. Such language and the images it evokes shape the way we look at the NSC system and reinforce the perception that organizational relationships can be designed for a well-defined purpose and can be expected to operate as intended. The "machine" can be disassembled and rebuilt at will, and whatever the shape of the finally determined design, it is naturally assumed that the product reflects the intentions of the designer and not those of its component parts. If the machinery turns out bad decisions, one can blame the design of the system or claim that a part malfunctioned.

This set of perceptions corresponds poorly with the history of NSC system organizational development, which would be more accurately characterized by evolutionary change marked by occasional abrupt mutations. Organizational patterns have varied in the complexity and explicitness of their design, but even the most explicit designs conformed to the object modeled in only rudimentary aspects. Organizations are sometimes amenable to direction, but are rarely

controllable in the strict sense suggested above. As for the relationship between design and designer (NSC system and the president), (reality is more closely modeled by) the designer who selects a line drawing of an unbuilt home and relies on multiple builders to fashion its separate rooms. Conflicts between the builders may result in one moving a wall constructed by another, with all the attendant structural risks.<sup>8</sup>

The search for an alternative metaphor, equally terse yet appropriately suggestive, has not yielded an acceptable term. Organism evokes a more accurate image, but can the reader imagine referring to the decision-making organism? It seems that the convention will stand. The point to be drawn from this discussion is that a discrepancy exists between what is commonly assumed about the NSC system and what can observed about it. The intention is to highlight that discrepancy to sensitize the reader to the importance of activity below the level of the president, and of factors outside his control.

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<sup>8</sup>Chapter 7 discusses one incident in which a participant actually had a wall moved to facilitate his purposes in a struggle for position.

#### D. Research Design

Part 1 of this study has introduced the NSC system and its component parts. The predominant approach to understanding NSC system organizational development was discussed, and its explanatory power was questioned. An alternative approach to understanding that development was then introduced and developed. Finally, central features of institutional analyses as they pertain to the present study were developed.

Part 2 is dedicated to illustrating the concepts and relationships introduced in Part 1. Four case studies have been selected to achieve this central purpose as well as additional, related goals. Subsequent chapters focus on specific instances of change in the fundamental structure of the NSC system. Each instance is explained in institutional terms. Together they illustrate a general pattern of organizational development and demonstrate the utility of the proposed analytical framework. In each case the historical context for turning-point decisions is traced to illustrate the confluence of events, ideas, and individuals and their place in the dynamics occurring at the three levels of partisan conflict, inter- and intra-institutional conflict, and organizational activity. Case studies are presented in

their historical sequence to acquaint the reader with the flow of events, the different approaches to decision-making in national security, and the ideas that have been associated with the NSC system across time. Comparison across case studies illustrates the relevance of the generalizations asserted in part 1 to the different periods assessed. Comparison is accomplished through extensive cross-referencing within and among the different cases.

Chapter 4 is a case study focusing on the conflict that resulted in the establishment of the National Security Council during the Truman administration. The NSC as it originated in the National Security Act of 1947 is traced with particular emphasis on the epic struggle to unify the armed services and the role of Congress and the president in that conflict. Chapter 4 serves primarily to illustrate the institutional forces endemic to the American structure of government. In doing so, this case study illustrates the importance institutional leaders attached to controlling the shape, purpose, and use of this Council. Chapter 4 also captures the contradictory images that different individuals attached to the Council and how institutional position affected the outcome of both the battle to institute the NSC, and the battle to control

it that immediately followed. The importance of competing conceptions of organizational relationships is highlighted here with respect to their roles in that institutional conflict.

While Chapter 4 primarily displays the institutional aspects of our framework, in Chapter 5 the importance of partisan conflict and individual activity at the organizational level become clear. Chapter 5 covers the early institutional development of the NSC under Truman and Eisenhower. Partisan conflict is discussed concerning the initiation and development of the first Hoover Commission and the subsequent use of its reports in the Eisenhower campaign. The role of organizational activity is demonstrated by reviewing the efforts of individuals who created a system from nothing, as well as the means by which others obstructed or shaped the use of the system as it came to exist. Partisan conflict and organizational activity were played out within an institutional context, but, except for the establishment of the Hoover Commission and limited bureaucratic rivalry, institutional conflict receded in importance. The role of ideas is played out through the competing conceptions inherent within the Hoover Commission. The temporary resolution of the intellectual conflict with

the apparent transcendence of managerial conceptions during the Eisenhower years set the stage for the coming organizational upheaval.

Chapter 6 focuses on the fundamental reinstitutionalization that occurred at the Eisenhower to Kennedy transition. This chapter details the events and ideas that resulted in the dramatic departure initiated by President Kennedy. The roles of the Jackson Subcommittee report, Professor Neustadt's recommendations, and other transition reports are considered for their impact on the decision to abandon established structures. This chapter highlights the importance of partisan conflict, and its place within the institutional setting of American government to initiate and highlight investigations leading to organizational change. Organizational level activity is a particularly important element in this analysis.

The final case study focuses on the Nixon decision to incorporate aspects of each of the preceding NSC systems into the basic form that has since been associated with the NSC. The legacy of the Kennedy and Johnson approaches is briefly sketched along with an analysis of the role of partisan conflict in the transition. The role of institutional conflict is discussed with an emphasis on the adaptation of

existing institutions to the emergence of institutionalized coordination from the NSC. This chapter also develops the concepts associated with organizational learning and development in the unique circumstances of a presidential staff agency.

Information for the preparation of these case studies has been drawn from multiple sources. Special emphasis was given to primary sources. Participant memoirs, oral histories, and personal papers were used extensively. Secondary literature in the area was drawn on to build upon existing research, or when applicable, to take issue with particular interpretations.

## Chapter IV

### I. Institutional Foundations: National Security Act of 1947

#### A. Introduction

Illustration of the analytical framework developed above begins with a discussion of the establishment of the National Security Council during the Truman Administration. Of three levels of analysis, this case focuses primarily on the effects associated with inter- and intra-institutional conflict. This focus makes sense because institutions were the visible participants to the struggle, the debate did not become politicized along party lines, and the NSC (still nonexistent) had no members to influence role development. The political struggle to establish the NSC was waged by institutions attempting to protect their prerogatives.

Analysis begins at this period because temporality (the order in which events take place) is important in institutional analyses (March and Olsen, 1984; 1986); it is impossible to fully understand later developments without the background sketched below. While there were antecedent events concerning the development of the NSC, they were all drawn together in the conflict surrounding the National Security Act of 1947. Once

the NSC was established, subsequent events in its development depended greatly on the nature and outcome of that debate.

This case emphasizes the ideas used to support institutional positions. These ideas and the rhetoric based on them were rooted in the institutional culture from which they came, and they justified the existence of the parent institution beyond supporting that institution's position with respect to the NSC debate. These conflicting ideas were merged and became embedded in the assumptions on which the NSC was based. Inherently conflicting assumptions could not remain buried; in fact, the struggle to resolve these conflicts followed immediately after the enactment of the National Security Act. Explanation of these struggles follows in later chapters.

While this chapter communicates extensive historical information, it is not a retelling of National Security Council history under Truman; Sander (1972), Nelson (1981; 1985), and Prados (1991, part I) tell that story well. Nor is it the story of unification of the military forces, though that conflict is central to this analysis; Hammond (1961b), Caraley (1966), Coletta (1981), and Keiser (1982) recount that story in its full context. The history

presented below serves the limited purpose of illustrating concepts central to the placement and evolution of the National Security Council that have continuing influence on its operation and development.

The story is complex, however, and it encompasses a significant amount of detail. Events are woven into the narrative that follows as they influence the unfolding story; it is not always possible to follow a strict chronological progression. Refer to Figure 4.1 for a summary of events in their historical sequence.

#### **B. Institutional Positions on the National Security Council**

The National Security Council was a by-product of a larger debate. That debate concerned whether, if so and how the War and Navy Departments should be unified into a single department reporting to the president and Congress. The finally approved National Security Act of 1947 was the first success in some 60 attempts to unify the armed services since 1921 (Senate Report 239, 1947: 3). The positions taken on the National Security Council cannot be separated from the positions on the larger debate concerning the unification of the armed services. Only the Navy Department approached the conflict with a general conception of organization consistent with the establishment of the NSC. Others

expanded their more focused conceptions to include wider interdepartmental coordination to coopt Navy support.

The following discussion traces each of the separate strands of the unification debate as it pertains to the ultimate development of the NSC. Each strand is the response of an established institution to the threat or opportunity of change in a changing political environment. Notice the relationships among the institutions' cultures, their interest in political survival, and their eventual positions with respect to the National Security Council. The organizational philosophy used to draw these strands together is introduced along with the institution most identified with it; later in this chapter, however, these ideas receive more exclusive attention.

#### **1. War Department**

The War Department initiated the debate on the unification of the armed services in 1943 with no idea that a National Security Council would be a product of the ensuing conflict. War Department officials had no interest in a National Security Council (Sander,

1972).<sup>1</sup> Such a council was inconsistent with their conception of organization generally, and with their intended relationship between the military and policy-making specifically (Hammond, 1961b: 67-71). They finally accepted the council in a bureaucratic ploy designed to move the Navy to accept elements of the Army proposal.

The War Department position on the unification issue was based on an understanding of the relationship between organizational relationships and funding in time of peace, and on conceptions of the relationship between civilian and military personnel in the control of the armed services. Funding was the most obvious source of the institutional conflict, but the clash of organizational traditions was also a source of contention, and that clash was more directly responsible for the development and shape of the NSC.

General Marshall, then Chief of Staff of the Army, initiated the debate when he presented a unification proposal to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in November of

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<sup>1</sup>Hammond (1961b: 67-71) suggests that the War Department had an entirely different perspective on the purpose and use of coordinative councils based on their different self-perception.

1943.<sup>2</sup> Reaction to the idea split along service lines: Admirals King and Leahy were against the proposal, and Generals Marshall and Arnold supported it. This was the opening salvo of an inter-service conflict that has remained salient to this day.<sup>3</sup>

Inter-service rivalry was not a new development. War and Navy Departments had competed for funding and influence throughout their long histories as separate departments. Their respective positions on unification, however, were new. The War Department had not always favored unification. In 1921 it had sided with the Navy Department against unification in an attempt to defend itself from members of Congress intent on achieving economy in the administration of the armed services (Hammond, 1961: Chapter 4). The War Department's shift in position reflected a new

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<sup>2</sup>General Marshall, in fact, merely approved a study that was one of three generated within the War Department. He did have strong feelings about unification and the Army's place in the national security scene (Sander, 1989: 201-202), but it was his proposal only to the extent that he approved it and allowed it to be forwarded to the JCS (Hammond, 1961b: 186-190). As such, it was indicative of a broad consensus that had developed over time in the War Department and not simply the vision of one high-minded soldier.

<sup>3</sup>Senator Nunn referred to this continuing conflict in his February, 1992, speech in which he advocated reopening the debate on the roles and missions of the separate armed services.

assessment of its institutional interests, due in large part to the emergence of the Air Corps and its de facto if not de jure independence.

The War Department had traditionally occupied an inferior position in the distribution of funding during times of peace, due to the difference between constitutional prescriptions regarding the Army and Navy: Congress shall "raise and support armies," but it shall "provide and maintain a navy." Armies would be provided for in times of war, but then largely disbanded at the cessation of hostilities-- "skeletonized" in the words of Admiral Halsey (Hammond, 1961b: 202 note 33). The Navy, on the other hand, would retain much of its force structure. With the rise in prominence and likely independence of the Air Force, the Army would be doubly pressed in its struggle for peacetime appropriations; it was no match for the glamour and technology associated with the other two services.

A single department, in the view of the War Department, would alter this traditional arrangement. It would be organized along functional lines: the single secretary would have undersecretaries for land, sea, and air warfare. Exactly how the details would flesh out the organization was a matter to be decided

after the merger, and to be left to executive discretion. The unstated implication was that the Army would control all elements of land warfare, including the Marine Corps, and the Air Force would control all elements of air warfare, including naval aviation.

Besides redistributing the balance of power among the services, the War Department's proposal had at its root the purpose of solidifying executive control. The Army extended the line of thought that it had applied at the turn of the century to wrest a decentralized system of autonomous bureaus from their congressional bases of support.<sup>4</sup> The Secretary of War observed that executive control was difficult to exercise in a decentralized system in which separate bureaus could appeal to Congress for support. What he developed in the place of the decentralized bureau system was a General Staff system where the Secretary of War and the military Chief of Staff formed an alliance that increased presidential control at the expense of

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<sup>4</sup>The distribution of benefits associated with military purchasing and location of bases was a familiar aspect of the Congress-military relationship even in the nineteenth century. Elihu Root, Secretary of War under Theodore Roosevelt, proposed and, by degrees, secured the General Staff administrative organization as a means of weakening that relationship (Hammond, 1961b: Chapter 2).

Congress. General Marshall intended to extend this principle to encompass all of the armed services.

The principle underlying this form of organization was that of unity of command with clearly defined lines of authority and accountability. It followed the classic model of bureaucracy and administrative control originally applied by the Prussian Army. As propounded by the War Department in their original unification proposals, it prescribed a small civilian component composed of a single secretary with a few under and assistant secretaries who would sit atop an authoritative military structure. Marshall's conception of a unified defense establishment depended heavily on a continued strengthening of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Joint Chiefs' organization had evolved largely during the Second World War, but it remained largely a group of peers; consensus was a necessary predicate to plan approval. Marshall's plan strengthened the organization by giving a single chief of staff with the power of decision and direct access to the president.

Such an organizational scheme would accomplish two purposes. It would provide a strong, centralized military organization that would enhance executive branch control at the expense of Congress, and it would

enhance the control of the professional military vis a vis its civilian superiors.

Each of these concepts came to dominate the perspectives of both the military members of the Army, and the civilian officials appointed to serve as their leadership. These concepts were inevitably to become the source of conflict between the War and Navy Departments, and eventually between the president and Congress.

## 2. Navy Department

While the War Department was the major protagonist in the promotion of a unified Defense Establishment, the Navy Department considered itself the primary victim, and found itself initially in the role of obstructionist. Navy officials perceived that the organization proposed by the Army threatened their control over naval aviation, the Marine Corps, and, more generally, their accustomed proportion of peace time appropriations. In addition, they recognized that under the proposed scheme they would be forced to conform to the General Staff mode of organization, radically altering prevailing centers of power within

the Navy.<sup>5</sup> Faced with these prospects, the Navy moved to postpone consideration of the matter, arguing that it would disrupt the war effort, and that such a radical proposal required further study. Essentially, Forrestal, then Secretary of the Navy, played for time to regroup and present an alternative proposal. When, under Forrestal's direction, the Navy provided its alternative, it recommended a National Security Council and other reforms along lines familiar to traditional Navy organization and conceptions of the relationship between naval personnel and civilians in the making of security policy.

Unity of command was not a foreign concept to the Navy, but one that had been developed quite differently from the way it had in the Army. The Navy Department operated with a decentralized bureau structure similar to the War Department's before the development of the General Staff. While obvious shortcomings during the Spanish-American War and in World War I promoted the consolidation of power in the General Staff, the apparent success of the Navy in that war augured for no change in naval administration. Without a

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<sup>5</sup>On 1 January 1993 the Navy Department finally adopted the General Staff form of organization. One result was a reduction in the number of flag officers.

demonstration of the inadequacy of existing arrangements, efforts by radical reformers to centralize administration along the lines of a General Staff in the Navy were repeatedly defeated in the early part of this century. Central direction was achieved, therefore, not through administrative centralization, but through reliance on the unifying force provided by conceptions of naval strategy and coordinate structures within the bureau system (Coletta, 1980: 217-218; Hammond, 1961b: Chapter 3).<sup>6</sup> Unity of command applied to the direction of fleets, but not to the direction of administration.

Reliance on strategy rather than administration for central direction of the Navy Department had two principal effects. First, it affected the Navy's relationship with the presidency and Congress. As noted above, the Army relied on an alliance between the

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<sup>6</sup>The unifying concept was provided by Alfred Thayer Mahan who, while president of the Naval War College, wrote books and articles relating sea power to diplomacy, a function as useful in peace as in war. The most well known of his writings was The Influence of Seapower on History (1890). The type of navy he proposed gained wide favor among naval officers. While many of these officers agitated for a General Staff arrangement, the most they could get was the office of the Chief of Naval Operations who had little administrative authority, but who could rely on the common conception of purpose to coordinate the Navy's separate bureaus.

Secretary and the Chief of Staff to ward off the decentralizing impact of congressional influence. The Navy, on the other hand, relied on a common conception of purpose and strategy to hold itself together (Hammond, 1961b: 62-64). The result of this difference was a closer relationship between the Navy and Congress, a relationship exploited by the Navy when it felt threatened by the specter of unification.

Second, because that strategy emphasized the relationship between sea power and diplomacy, it predisposed the Navy to consider itself a primary arm of American foreign policy. The relationship demonstrated itself in the Navy's actions well before the unification controversy of the mid-1940's. The Navy had proposed the concept of a policy-making council as early as 1911 (Hammond, 1961b: 64-71). It was intended to provide the means to affect their proposed coordination of foreign and naval policies, and, thereby, to extend the influence of the professional Navy within the executive branch. The Council would have provided the opportunity for the Navy to influence the making of that policy, a point considered necessary given the ignorance of politicians on naval matters--rather than to be a mere instrument of policy (Hammond, 1961b: 64-71). The Council of

National Defense failed, but the Navy continued to press for similar means to coordinate national security policy (May, 1990 [1955]).

The Navy's alternative to the War Department's unification proposal, therefore, placed a high value on the concept of a National Security Council. Such an emphasis was in keeping with the Navy's long reliance on internal coordinating structures and on strategy for central control and direction. It embodied the Navy's desire to form a council to prepare and authoritatively prescribe a national security strategy. It was consistent with multiple levels of coordinate structures that assured Navy access to both presidential and congressional bases of support. Finally, when combined with the other aspects of the Navy plan, it assured the Navy continued control of naval aviation and the Marine Corps.

### 3. Presidency

President Truman was intensely interested in the integrity and prerogatives of the institutional presidency (Sander, 1989: 64).<sup>7</sup> He made great strides

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<sup>7</sup>George Elsey, a Truman staff member, later recalled that Truman had the habit of separating himself from the Office of the President and asking what the president should do, rather than what Harry Truman should do (Elsey, 1974: 33).

toward the institutionalization of the many powers drawn to the presidency by Franklin Roosevelt, particularly in the area of foreign and military affairs (Theoharis, 1979). The creation of the National Security Council is often included among Truman's accomplishments in this regard, and he did take credit for it in his memoirs (Truman, 1956: 58-59); however, he was not a proponent of including it in the National Security Act, and he did not make much use of the Council before the Korean War (Falk, 1964; 1967; Sander, 1972; Nelson, 1981; 1985). Truman accepted the National Security Council as a means to mollify Navy supporters, and only after limiting its impact on his prerogatives (Sander, 1972: 378-382).

Truman advocated military unification along the lines of the War Department's proposal before he became president. He became aware of the inefficiencies and duplication inherent in the administration of the separate armed services while chairing the Senate Special Committee to "Investigate the National Defense Program" during the war. That committee, popularly called the Truman Committee, was highly regarded and was instrumental in his selection as Vice President (Riddle, 1964). Based on this experience, he later published the article "Our Armed Forces Must Be

Unified" in Colliers magazine (Truman, 1944). He maintained these convictions after assuming the presidency, and pressed his proposals in the face of strong opposition at the risk of damaging his prestige (Millis, 1951: 118).

Truman likely realized the impact on the balance of authority between the president and Congress that a unified defense establishment would have. Having served on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue, he surely knew the dynamics of the relationships among elements of the bureaucracy and their two-headed master. Although Roosevelt made a virtue of competition among his assistants (Schlesinger, 1959; Neustadt, 1980), that competition was less useful when competitors had an alternative base of support. Whether Truman understood the institutional dynamics or not, his actions centralized control within the executive branch on this and other matters.

Truman clearly recognized the implication of an executive council on his prerogatives. He resisted inclusion of a council in his original proposal, despite Clifford's urging him toward accepting this aspect of the Navy's proposal (Clifford, 1991: 162). Once he finally did accept the idea, Truman proposed only a cabinet level council along the lines of the

State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee that did not include the president. He maintained this position until the end, but was forced to either accept a president led council as a measure added by the Senate, or veto what was apparently the best bill he could get under the circumstances (Sander, 1972: 381-382). Under these terms he signed the bill and took steps to ensure his independence from the Council, and to ensure control of the staff was secure in the White House (Nelson, 1985).

Obviously, the presidency in the Truman era included more than Truman himself. Others acted as his eyes and ears and out of interest to the institution of the presidency. In the case of the National Security Council the actions of Clifford, Murphy, and Elsey are the most often noted. Each of these men has said that his conception of the role of a staff member included looking out for the needs of the presidency (Clifford, 1977: 181-182; Murphy, et al., 1980; Elsey, 1974: 46-47). Murphy was credited by Admiral Sherman, the Navy Department representative, as having altered the language of draft bill to coincide with Constitutional requirements. He caused Sherman and General Norstad, the War Department representative, to "avoid language which [they] had initially conceived, which would have

taken powers of the president and lodged them in the National Security Council . . . " (Senate Hearings, 1947: 161, 172). Clifford and Elsey assured that the language took a form that was nonbinding on the president. The actions of these men were particularly important, as Truman himself did not have the time to perform them, and as they effectively safeguarded the president's institutional prerogatives.

President Truman had a keen sense of his institutional interests, and with the aid of others who were sensitive to the needs of the presidency, he took actions to limit the effectiveness of the National Security Council and secure the staff as a servant of the president. Integral to these efforts were the efforts of members of the Budget Bureau, the president's institutional sentinel.

#### 4. Bureau of the Budget

The Bureau of the Budget was originally left out of the process of drafting the National Security Act. Budget Director James Webb "raised hell" with Clifford when he learned that the act was being drafted without his Bureau's involvement, and Webb took steps to safeguard the Bureau's and the president's interests (Murphy, et al., 1980: 24). Donald Stone, head of the Bureau's Administrative Management division, was

"particularly critical of the National Security Council provisions of the bill," and recommended several key changes that altered the nature of the Council and, perhaps more important in retrospect, its staff (Sander, 1972: 378-379).

The president and the Bureau of the Budget had complimentary interests. The Bureau performed many tasks that gave the president leverage with Congress and the various elements of the bureaucracy.<sup>8</sup> It was a source of expert staff support; it collected information and imposed limits on the executive departments; it assembled the disparate elements of the president's legislative program, and coordinated them for submission to Congress. These functions made the Bureau a formidable force in government, but the Bureau could perform these functions only because it acted in the president's name. The Bureau of the Budget was strong because its personnel made special efforts to

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<sup>8</sup>Although Truman came to the presidency with notions of a cabinet-centered approach to government, he came to realize the importance of staff and the institutional support provided by the Bureau of the Budget (Sander, 1989: Chapter 3). By 1945 the Budget Bureau had shifted from its Treasury Department roots to become the institutional arm of the presidency, and James Webb came to the Bureau under Truman with the intent of strengthening that relationship (Sander, 1989: 40, 129). To do this he placed himself and his staff at Truman's disposal (Murphy, et al, 1980: 30).

serve the president, and the president could exercise effective control only with the active support of the Bureau.<sup>9</sup>

The Budget Bureau had reason to be concerned about the National Security Council both for its own institutional prerogatives and as a watchdog of the president's institutional interests. As conceived by Eberstadt and his staff, the NSC would have supplanted the budgeting and coordination functions reserved to the Bureau. Hammond (1961b: 211-212) has pointed out that the Navy's proposal avoided the inherent elimination of the Bureau's role by stressing that the NSC would submit its proposals via Budget personnel, but that the Navy's original conception "carried over into the statute." Evidence of the appeal such a proposal had in Congress can be found in the comments of Senator Tydings during Senate Hearings who suggested that they could "leave the [Bureau of the] Budget completely out of [budgeting for national security]" (Caraley, 1966: 191). Sensitive to this, Bureau staff

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<sup>9</sup>This was particularly true in the early Truman period because he had come to office without the opportunity to assemble a staff. The gradual departure of Roosevelt's staff members resulted in a vacuum that needed to be filled. Clifford, Elsey and others became members of the president's staff more because they were interested and available than because they had any loyalty or ties to Truman.

members worked, before and after the enactment of the National Security Act, to minimize the impact of the Council.

#### 5. Congress

Congress played a significant part in the establishment of the National Security Council. Like the president and the armed services, unification was the issue of central interest to members of Congress. Its hearings provided an open forum for the airing of alternative proposals, and its members were intimately involved in both the substance and politics of the debate. Strictly speaking, the actions of two different Congresses were critical to the development of the National Security Council proposals. The differences between the 79th and 80th Congresses (elected in 1944 and 1946, respectively) contributed to the web of institutional forces that resulted in the final wording of the National Security Act. While it is difficult to ascribe a "position" to a collective body without authoritative structures prescribing positions, Congress did have an interest in the debate, and for the most part, exercised its prerogatives to safeguard its institutional position.

Congress had good reason to support the coordinate structure proposal forwarded by the Navy. As noted

above, Congress benefitted from the decentralized structure of the armed services in its ability to control their operations. The Army had instituted the General Staff system to wrest control of its constituent parts from members of Congress who placed local interests (bases, etc.) ahead of the Army's desire to concentrate its forces in division strength units (Hammond, 1961b: Chapter 2). The principle of centralized authority, especially concomitant with increased control of the professional military, strengthened the hand of the executive at the expense of the legislative branch, and that of the military vis-a-vis its political superiors in both branches.<sup>10</sup> Continued division under a coordinate structure arrangement appealed to the Congressional impulse to retain their traditional level of control.

The Navy's approach to unification was also more amenable to Congressional interests. The Navy Department demanded adamantly that the details of the

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<sup>10</sup>This issue was one of the primary concerns of members of Congress. Perhaps in an attempt to mitigate these concerns, Truman argued that the reverse would be the case: "Civilian control of the military establishment--one of the most fundamental of our democratic concepts--would be strengthened if the president and Congress had but one Cabinet member with clear and primary responsibility for the exercise of that control" (Truman, 1945: 554).

proposal be decided up front, whereas the War Department favored the "merge now, sort out the details later" approach to unification. Caraley (1966: 191-192) noted the importance of the difference:

The other major means of exercising congressional control over the subordinate parts of the executive branch is through the determination of their programs and organizational structure. All the departments and agencies in the executive branch are statutory creatures of Congress. The question of relative influence between the president and his chief subordinates, on the one hand, and Congress, on the other, has to do with the degree to which the statute prescribes organizational detail, the organizational level at which program authority is placed, and the methods of making subsequent changes in organizational structure and functions.

The Congressional position on the National Security Council as manifest in the statutory language followed naturally from that predisposition. Since the ability of Congress to influence decision-making is related to its ability to structure the process, it was in keeping with the congressional modus operandi to attempt to structure the president's apparatus. Admittedly, this contradicts normal congressional reluctance to encroach on the president's office; however, Congress did follow a similar encroachment in 1946 in the form of the Council of Economic Advisors.

The committee structure was also important. In the 79th Congress separate committees existed for both Naval and Military affairs. These committees acted as partisans for the service their committee was designed to oversee; Naval Affairs committees in the House and Senate either preferred no organizational reform or leaned toward the Navy's coordinate structure proposal; the Military Affairs committees tended toward support of the War Departments proposals (Caraley, 1966: 187-188). Armed Services Committees were formed in the House and Senate in December of 1946, thus eliminating an inherently supportive committee for each service.<sup>11</sup>

Six members of each of the former committees and a newly elected Senator composed the Senate Armed Services Committee. This combination resulted in a pro-Navy majority in the new committee (Caraley, 1966: Chapter 7 note 41). A strong Navy majority also formed in the new House Armed Services Committee, except for its chair, Walter Andrews, who favored unification along the lines of the War Department proposal. Andrews relinquished consideration of the National

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<sup>11</sup>This consolidation was part of the larger Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 that had as its main impetus a streamlining of the committee system.

Security Act to the House Expenditures Committee rather than allow his committee to prevent action on, or to impose its own form of unification. Although the Expenditures Committee was also not particularly favorable toward unification, conditions in that committee had some potential to result in some unification legislation (Caraley, 1966: 209-210). The result of committee reorganization in both houses of Congress was to enhance the influence of Navy supporters at the expense of those who supported the Army. This had clear repercussions on the development of a National Security Council.

#### 6. State Department

The State Department was largely uninvolved in the controversy concerning the creation of the National Security Council even though the Council would limit that Department's institutional autonomy. Sander found this limited involvement surprising, but attributed it to the perception that the "whole unification bill [was] an inter-service squabble which did not really concern them" (Sander, 1972: 380). In retrospect, the State Department's behavior was the least in accord with its institutional interests, yet paradoxically, was remarkably in accord with its institutional weaknesses as they relate to domestic politics (Clarke,

1987: 131). The State Department's actions were, for the most part, restricted to limiting the impact of the Council once instituted (see chapters 5 and 6).

These institutions together interactively wrote the National Security Act of 1947. Their separate institutional cultures and interests framed their individual positions and responses on the issue, but this great debate did not occur in a vacuum. The sweeping social, economic, and political changes associated with modernization, depression, and world war formed the context within which these institutions reached their positions. We review that context below to identify the forces pertinent to the National Security Council's development.

#### **D. Historical Context**

Although the institutions discussed above had intrinsic interests with respect to the National Security Council, its inclusion in the National Security Act and its purpose as defined there was hardly foreordained. The historical context was a critical element in the factors responsible for the initiation of the National Security Council. In fact, it is difficult to conceive of a time since 1947 when a similar proposition would have survived the legislative process. The first reason for this assertion is

related to the substantive problems and frame of mind existing at the time of the debate. These aspects are briefly developed below. The second reason has to do with the then existing balances within and among the institutions involved. The following section develops this aspect of the argument.

Organizing for national security during times of peace had hitherto been the preoccupation of the military departments, not the chief executive. Presidents, through Franklin Roosevelt, had limited resources with which to control the wide array of policy areas commonly included under the rubric of national security--and had little inclination or need to do so. Truman encountered fundamentally altered circumstances.

Roosevelt had coped with spiraling demands by creating several ad hoc administrative arrangements. Most observers considered this a product of his style and a direct result of his philosophy of leadership. Most also considered his Byzantine arrangements the cause of waste, delay, and considerable frustration. Efforts to change the existing system and, in effect, to bring our 18th century system up to date, meant changing the distribution of power within the government. In retrospect it is quite clear that the

president was the primary beneficiary of the power shift. At the time that the changes were being made, it was not so clear what the outcome would be. Nor was it clear what changes should be made.

#### 1. Zeitgeist: World War II

The individuals comprising the institutions discussed above did not choose to initiate an institutional battle in a vacuum. Among the most important requirements for the initiation of a serious debate on the merits of unification was a broadly based perception that some reform was required.<sup>12</sup> World War II was the galvanizing experience in this respect. Substantive problems made reorganization salient in 1943 and earlier. The attack on Pearl Harbor and the scramble to mobilize for war made these problems painfully clear.

The most common concern was that Pearl Harbor should not be repeated. This concern, of course, had implications ranging from intelligence collection and dissemination to military and political organization and responsibility (Truman, 1956: 46 & 56). Americans

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<sup>12</sup>Proposals for military reform frequently follow a war. War Department internal reorganization followed the Spanish-American War and the most serious attempts to unify the armed services followed on the heels of World War I. See Hammond's (1961b) treatment of the evolution of defense organization.

now realized that the expansive oceans separating them from Europe and Asia were no longer adequate protection; a higher degree of peacetime preparedness was apparently necessary (Senate Report No. 239, 1947: 3).

Most policy-makers recognized that the United States was ill prepared for the responsibility it assumed at the onset of the war. In the haste to gear up for those responsibilities boards and agencies and ad hoc advisory committees sprang up everywhere. Administrative relationships were chaotic (Sander, 1972: 369). Many senior military leaders in the field believed that administrative chaos resulted in the inability to get timely decisions out of Washington (Senate Committee on Armed Services, 1947).

Policy-makers in both the executive and legislative branches were impressed with the degree to which economic activity was interrelated, and with the totality of the effort required to prosecute the war.<sup>13</sup> They saw how recruitment for the armed services affected the labor pool for defense

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<sup>13</sup>The problems in this area were not only those of supply, demand, price, and product distribution, they also had to do with the very political questions associated with the allocation of contracts and distribution of government money.

industries; they saw how important the production of food, fuel, rubber, and a multitude of other items was to both the war effort and the home front; and they saw the inflationary impact on resource prices when government agencies competed for the same product.

Admiral Nimitz expressed the problem in this way:

Undoubtedly the biggest problems we faced in the past war were in the field of logistics. We entered the last war unfamiliar with the logistics problems involved in fighting on a global scale. We all remember the confusion that resulted; the setting of seemingly impossible production schedules, the critical shortages of certain basic materials, and the frantic efforts to gear ourselves for the task ahead. (Senate Committee on Armed Services, 1947: 131-132).

Policy-makers came to believe that war was not only a total enterprise, but that it was becoming increasingly destructive and more quickly prosecuted. They witnessed the development of new weapons, epitomized by the atomic bomb and strategic aircraft, which greatly reduced the warning time preceding potentially catastrophic destruction. They believed ". . . the world [was] entering an era in which war, if it comes, will be fought at speeds and accompanied by devastations that stagger the imagination" (Senate Report #239, 1947: 2).

Finally, just treatment of the men and women in the services was a great popular concern. Justice

seemed to demand similar treatment of similar cases. Personnel policies, including those for military decorations, differed widely among the services. At a time when brothers, sisters, cousins, and friends were all involved in the war effort, there was broad support for measures to reduce inequities.

The lessons of the war, in short, were lessons of total war fought on a global scale. The day to day struggle with the demands of war shaped the perceptions of the individuals central to the debate on the National Security Act and the National Security Council. World War II prepared the individuals involved in the unification struggle to think in terms of global war. It convinced them that preparedness was a matter of organization and national will. It convinced them (through the lesson of Munich in 1938) that preparedness and national will were as important for preventing war as for fighting war. The organizational lessons were the lessons of the last war.

## **2. Post-War Concerns**

As war gave way to peace, new sets of concerns gave impetus to the continuing struggle to define American security organization. While World War II illustrated the need to reform organizational

relationships, new issues ensured that the issue would remain on the legislative agenda.

Post-war developments were deeply contradictory. On the one hand, there was euphoria at the end of the long conflict and the accompanying rush to demobilize. Demobilization proceeded faster than the administrative capacity to demobilize effectively, and without any logical assessment of America's post-war military requirements. This was driven by the twin motivations associated with the politically popular urge to "bring the boys home," and to bring to military expenditures down such that the debt could be quickly retired. On the other hand, there was the emerging realization that the relationship with the Soviet Union was going to be less than amicable. These considerations spurred policy-makers to continue their efforts toward organizational reform.

Economy was a driving force underlying efforts to reorganize the armed services. There was substantial concern to avoid costly duplication of effort. The search for economy was not new; economy had been the foremost rhetorical rationale in most plans for administrative reorganization in government for years (Sander, 1989: 26). There was tremendous pressure to retire the large national debt incurred during the war,

and the military budget was an obvious source for spending reductions due to the publicity afforded to examples of wartime waste and duplication. Secretary Forrestal expressed this concern in his statement to the Armed Services Committee: "Perhaps foremost in the minds of the members of this committee is the question of economy" (Senate Committee on Armed Services, 1947: 26). Several Senators took issue with this statement at the time, but later questioning over the course of the hearings vindicated Forrestal's assessment. The committee report focused on the importance of "the maximum economy . . . compatible with military efficiency" (Senate Report No. 239, 1947: 3).

Economy kept the issue on the table and was a central point in the debate. War Department proponents extolled the economies achievable through the elimination of duplication and central direction of forces. Navy representatives denied that duplications existed, and minimized the likelihood of savings except those that would result in time of war from the efforts of proposed coordinating mechanisms. Admiral King pointed out, for example, that two adjacent airfields operated separately by War and Navy Departments were not duplicating efforts if both were fully used (Senate Committee on Armed Services, 1947). Forrestal noted

that efficiencies would only be realized when the requirements of war again forced military purchases on a grand scale (Senate Committee on Armed Services, 1947).

To a lesser extent, the National Security Council was a product of the developing conflict with the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup> The general conception underlying the NSC did not require or even anticipate that a single identifiable threat would emerge. As noted above, the concept underlying the NSC was developed before the Russian Revolution, as was its use as a bureaucratic tactic. The lines of conflict concerning the unification and the NSC had been drawn well before the Soviet threat became apparent. Soviet intransigence did increase the desire of participants in the struggle to agree on legislation of some form, but it was not instrumental in the development of the NSC as a statutory alternative.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Nelson has called the NSC "an organizational reflection of the cold war" (Nelson, 1981: 230). To the extent that this was true, it was so because it came to be that, not because it was originally intended for the purpose.

<sup>15</sup>Fully illustrating this proposition is beyond the scope of this study. It is a critical point, however. At stake theoretically is the relative importance of events at the domestic government level of analysis and the international level of analysis. I believe that the international level of analysis provided one

There was a correlation between the deterioration of the U.S.-Soviet relationship and the legislative development of the National Security Act (Leffler, 1992), but again, the coincidence demonstrated the will to reorganize more than it indicated a belief that a National Security Council was necessary in the coming conflict. The War Department supported the idea of a Council as early as April 1946, in the form proposed by the Thomas "Compromise" bill.<sup>16</sup> Truman officially supported a council for the first time in his June 15, 1946, letter accepting the compromise reached between the War and Navy Departments.<sup>17</sup> These events were compromises to bring the Navy to some agreement. They did not suggest an acceptance of the fundamental concept or that concept's validity or importance as it

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impetus for reform among many; the institutional dynamics at the domestic level resulted in the form that reform took.

<sup>16</sup>The Thomas bill was written by a subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee. It appended a Council of National Defense and a National Security Resources Board to the War Department's proposal. The Council in the Thomas bill did not include the president.

<sup>17</sup>The letter accepted a "Council of National Defense" that did not include the president and seven other agreed points, and resolved (supposedly authoritatively) four outstanding areas of disagreement. The Navy continued to fight, and won, the battle on those four points.

pertained to the developing conflict with the Soviet Union.

Finally, the sense of urgency involved with passing some reorganization legislation included the fact the military leaders most equipped to understand the lessons of the last war were passing from the scene. Senator Saltonstall expressed the concern held by many that action should be taken "while we have in the Army and Navy persons of authority, men who actually went through the experience in the war" (Senate Committee on Armed Services, 1947: 569-570). The committee report echoed his concern: ". . . the projection of this vast effort into almost every field of civil and governmental endeavor disclosed certain fundamental weaknesses in our security structure which should be remedied while their details are fresh in mind" (Senate Report No. 239, 1947: 2). Truman noted that although "improvements have been made since 1941 by the president in the organization of the War and Navy Departments, under the War Powers Act, unless the Congress acts before these power lapse, these Departments will revert to their prewar organizational status" (Truman, 1945: 550).

Public opinion favored some form of unification for the above cited reasons, but showed little concern

for the details of the plan. The New York Times reported favorably on virtually every major form of unification legislation, though these plans differed markedly in their prescriptions (Caraley, 1966: 241).

Reform of national security organization was necessary. Lessons from the last war had to be learned. War was now a global phenomena; economy had to be achieved; a new and potentially dangerous world had to be dealt with. The new organization should be fashioned by those who had the greatest experience with the arrangements of the last war, and they should ensure that our people in uniform were treated fairly. This much most people agreed with. These concerns kept the issue on the agenda, but they did not decide its form. Next we consider the ideas on which institutional leaders based their hopes for the future.

Prevailing ideas formed the common element joining interests, positions, and context. The central ideas were introduced above; however, they are viewed separately below as a means to better understand their role, and to highlight their importance. Ideas are important apart from their institutional and political context because they become embedded in founding legislation and shape the development of institutions while interacting with the evolving environment.

#### D. Competing Ideas

What emerges from the record concerning the development of the concept of a National Security Council is a complex interplay of ideas that can be usefully reduced to two competing conceptions. The first is associated with the War Department and is characterized by the unity of command concept. The second is associated with the Navy Department and is characterized by the concept of coordination of competing power centers. The ideas are interesting in and of themselves, but here we are concerned with (1) how they became associated so clearly with the institutions involved; (2) how they affected the struggle to define the national security structure; and (3) how the emerging dominant idea fit within the larger constitutional structure of the American government.

Essentially, each conception supported the institutional interests of one of the contending departments in the struggle to unify the armed services. That division facilitated the alignment of competing ideas coincident with institutional boundaries. In the end, the Navy's interest in retaining its aviation and Marine Corps assets was

greater than the Army's interest in its air and sea assets.<sup>18</sup>

### 1. Unity of Command

Unity-of-command advocates witnessed the confusion generated by competing organizations in the war and sought to establish an authoritative chain of command structure. Such a structure would clearly delineate command relationships by ensuring that at all levels, competing demands could be resolved by appealing to the next layer, or level, of command. At the top of this structure was a single military chief of staff and a single civilian department head. These two individuals were to be responsible to the president and Congress.

This philosophy was consistent with ideas then in vogue in public administration. The idea was to centralize authority and then delegate such that leaders could be held accountable at each successive level. Organization along these lines was considered rational and efficient. Administrative accountability was primarily to the president, who served as the chief

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<sup>18</sup>The reason for this stems from the increased autonomy of the Air Corps. In 1921 the Army opposed unification when the Air Corps lacked independent stature and influence. By the mid-1940's Air Corps autonomy seemed assured. The Army was in the position of needing to maximize its institutional position in the face of the virtually certain separation of its air arm.

administrator and manager. Unity of command as a principle was consistent with the trend toward a managerial presidency, but was proposed before the managerial presidency had been broadly accepted (Arnold, 1986).

The War Department adopted this philosophy of organization early in its history as related above. Consequently, unity of command under a General Staff arrangement was consistent with the Army's view of itself. The War Department naturally extended its principle of organization to the broader defense establishment. The fact that it suited their institutional objectives, however, was a more important factor. Traditional administrative arrangements had suited the Army just fine in 1921 when their control over the Air Corps was assured, but that position changed when Air Corps autonomy seemed likely.

The Navy was no stranger to the unity of command philosophy. It was accustomed to chain of command relationships at the ship and fleet level even though its administrative bureaus retained a great deal of autonomy. In fact, when asked by the Richardson Committee, a committee formed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to investigate the topic of unification, nearly 50 percent of ranking Naval Officers favored a single

Department of defense. Hammond (1961b: 198-200) points out, however, that these officers were unaware of events in Washington and the institutional interests at stake.

A National Security Council was inconsistent with the unity-of-command concept. Under unified arrangements, military advice would be provided by the Secretary of Defense and the Chief of Staff. The Commander-in-Chief would issue orders based on that advice, and the military would be responsible for seeing that those orders were faithfully carried out. Councils presumed a horizontal rather than pyramidal command structure, and unity of command clearly prescribed the latter. Coordination between military, economic, and foreign policy was the province of the president and, therefore, was extraneous to the task of organizing the military establishment.

A Council for the integration of policy was easily grafted to the unity-of-command concept, in the view of the War Department, because it was deemed irrelevant to its basic design. Council membership was a potential sticking point, but if there was an authoritative Secretary of Defense, subordinate secretaries would be of little concern.

The unity of command concept held particular appeal for the president. It eliminated the requirement of reconciling competing demands within the defense establishment (although he retained the authority to impose demands on any of its parts), and strengthened his hand vis a vis Congress. It was not as easy, however, for the president to reconcile a National Security Council with the unity of command concept. Unlike the Army, such a Council was not irrelevant to the basic concept. It proposed to structure the means by which the president reached decisions, and, implicitly, to tie him to the advice of a committee. Such a proposition was clearly not in the best interests of the presidency. Such a council could be tolerated by the president only if it could in no way be tied to him (by his membership on it), and if it held no authoritative functions.

## **2. Coordinate Structures**

Advocates of coordinate structures of competing power centers argued that democracy and unity of command were not compatible. Unified command placed too much power in the hands of a single secretary, and that secretary would be the pawn of the military chief of staff. Such a large organization, in their view, could never be understood and controlled by a political

appointee with short tenure. An ignorant secretary would necessarily result in weakened civilian control of the military (Senate Committee on Armed Services, 1947).

Careful to stress the positive aspects of coordinating structures in addition to the negative aspects of the alternative, these advocates argued that there was strength in diversity. They pointed out that the United States had been very successful under a two-department structure, that it generated more and better ideas on how and with what to fight wars, and that the separation placed both the president and Congress in the position of decision-maker (Senate Committee on Armed Services, 1947).

These arguments were primarily a defense of the status quo, but the underlying idea and the institutions it proposed to create (National Security Council and National Security Resources Board) went beyond defending old organizational relationships. Coordinating structures had corporatist roots: existing institutions would represent their interests and bargain with each other to decide the distribution of assets and responsibilities. The relationship would retain a measure of competition, but the negative effects of competition would be mitigated by the need

to cooperate to ensure the attainment of the shared national purpose (Dorwart, 1991: 4-7).

The idea was attractive to the Navy for several reasons. Decentralized structures justified Navy retention of its aviation and Marine Corps assets. They emphasized the utility of a common purpose (a national strategy) in bringing together administratively distinct units. A reliance on such structures projected the administrative organization of the Navy on to the larger defense and national security organization. It assured the Navy continued access to Congress (where it could end-run the president if necessary). And it assured the Navy access to the councils of the executive, where it could influence the making of national strategy along the lines of its maritime conceptions. All these reasons reinforced the Navy's embrace of coordinating structures.

### **3. Potential Impact**

Both sides argued that their proposal was a natural progression of organizational evolution. Unified command was a widely accepted military concept. Arrangements in the war provided for unity of command in each theater of war. The concept needed only to progress from its current ad hoc set of arrangements to more formal, automatic arrangements, and to extend from

theater-level command to strategic command in Washington. Coordinate structures, on the other hand, were widely used during the war (eg. Joint Chiefs of Staff, War Production Board, Army-Navy Munitions Board, State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, etc.). These organizations needed only to be adapted to meet peacetime needs, and to be expanded to include the newly independent air corps.<sup>19</sup>

Both positions were potentially radical alterations of existing institutional arrangements. Unity of command promised the elimination of duplication through organization based on the medium of warfare (ground, air, and sea). Under the single Secretary of Defense, assistant secretaries for ground, air, and sea forces would replace the traditional War and Navy Secretaries. This would have been a significant alteration of traditional arrangements since the new form would divide control based on forces assigned (eg. ships, land forces, etc.) rather than based on mission (eg. control of the sea, littoral warfare, continental warfare). Under the proposed arrangements, battles would be fought with the

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<sup>19</sup>The Navy was not especially interested in an autonomous Air Force, but it preferred incorporating an additional autonomous unit into its scheme to the War Department's alternative.

integrated support of each arm of the unified department rather than predominantly separate efforts of autonomous departments.<sup>20</sup> The coordinate structures proposal was also potentially radical, but in a different way. What it proposed to do was to retain the traditional division between the military departments<sup>21</sup> at the expense of the institutional division of authority between the president, the congress, and the bureaucracy. It was based on an Americanized corporatist concept (Dorwart, 1991: 4-7), which leaned heavily on the British cabinet model (Hammond, 1961a: 899-901). Its coordinating committees would reach decisions or compromises among the interested parties, and present them to the president and Congress for ratification as necessary (Hammond, 1961b: 210-213). The National Security Council would

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<sup>20</sup>Today that concept is called "jointness," and the still relatively autonomous services (particularly the Navy) continue to fight for independence of action (Builder, 1989).

<sup>21</sup>Under the traditional arrangements each service was mission-oriented. The Army was responsible for ground warfare, and controlled all the assets necessary for a land war, including tactical aircraft and a great deal of sea transport. The Navy was responsible for war at sea and the adjoining littoral areas, and controlled ships, submarines, naval aviation and the Marine Corps. Each service had its independent support organization for training enlisted and officer personnel, providing medical services, developing and purchasing weapons, and so on.

replace the Secretary of Defense and would coordinate military policy among the three services; it would coordinate foreign and military affairs through the inclusion of the Secretary of State; it would coordinate military policy with the industrial interests necessary to equip the armed services through the inclusion of the Chair of the National Security Resources Board. The Council's duties "would be formally described as advisory," but "the fact that the president himself heads the Council would for all practical purposes insure that the advice it offered would be accepted" (Eberstadt Report, 1945: 50, 55). Hammond (1961b: 212) explains that Congress would be coopted by "the participation of key Congressmen in the handling of national security matters in the executive branch, rather than by the more formal relations with Congressional committees."

In fact, much of the business of the war and post-war conversion was handled in authoritative committees; that was a testimony to the extraordinary nature of the times. To codify such a way of operating into law was quite another matter, however.

#### **4. Mixed Concepts**

Neither of these alternatives was adopted in its entirety. Instead, concepts associated with each were

incorporated into the legislation. On its face, the National Security Act resembled the coordinating structures approach, but this resemblance did not indicate acceptance of its underlying rationale. It was more an affirmation of the status quo with certain additions designed to appease both sides of the debate. The Navy got its National Security Council and the National Security Resources Board; it retained its aviation and Marine Corps components (including land-based air); and the separate department structure was retained to a point. The Army got its Secretary of Defense, but the authority of this position was severely proscribed. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were officially recognized in law, but they would not have the authority of a General Staff, and there would be no Chief of Staff. Since a consensus could not be reached, the idea was to capture the best elements of the national security structure as it had evolved in the war, and to provide a framework within which organizational structures could continue to evolve in the future. Schratz (1978: 2) captures the essence of what was done in a single sentence:

A transitional document, the Act was deliberately ambiguous, reflecting past and future uncertainties, a compromise calling for both integration and separation, for unified control but not merger, for unified

strategic direction but with no unified staff to make strategic planning possible.

#### **E. Institutional Effects on Initiation of the NSC**

The foregoing discussion sets the stage for an analysis of the institutional effects on the inception of the National Security Council. The conflict had its basis in real-world concerns. There were substantive problems resulting from the inability of executive departments to coordinate the immense number of details generated by involvement in global war. The conflict resulted from the different perceptions of those problems, and the alternatives the departments supported for legislative enactment. The problem was real, but it was perceived differently by individuals in different institutional settings; positions assumed by the leaders of the institutions concerned were shaped by their perception of the problem and by the institutional interests of the organizations they led. Why and how the NSC emerged from this conflict unfolds below.

By now it is clear that the National Security Council was only one element of an inter-service dispute that the military departments did not have the authority to resolve. The dispute became a central political issue because of the magnitude of the changes

proposed, and because resolution of the dispute required action by both the president and Congress. However, unification concerned the armed services most directly, and they were responsible for initiating the conflict. The means by which the War and Navy Departments conducted their efforts to secure their preferred alternative illustrates several pertinent aspects of our discussion: the independence and power positions of the departments, the limitations of executive authority, and the effect of separate institutions sharing powers.

#### **1. The Battle from which the NSC emerged**

The War Department started the ball rolling by proposing unification under a general staff to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1943. A split vote along service lines effectively killed further consideration of the proposition in that forum until the circle of conflict was expanded beyond the armed forces. Roosevelt was not interested in unification of the armed services, so in 1944 War Department leaders persuaded members of the House of Representatives to conduct hearings on the matter. The House Committee on Post-War Military Policy raised the issue, but encountered strong resistance from the Navy, and recommended further study by the Joint Chiefs of Staff

rather than upsetting wartime operations by precipitating the conflict.

Having returned to the fray, the Joint Chiefs of Staff handled the matter by appointing Admiral Richardson to head a committee investigating the position of several senior officers. The committee reported a compromise solution almost a year later that incorporated some concessions to the Navy, but too few even to enlist support of the committee chair. The committee's support of a single department structure resulted in Admiral Richardson's dissent, and the report died without further official action from the departments, Congress, or the president.

The study received little attention, but it proved to be a harbinger for events to come. It was in this report that the Council of National Defense first reappeared. The fact that the presence of a Council did not by itself win Navy approval suggested that a Council, while not without merit, was less important than the elimination of the single secretary it was meant to preclude. This pattern emerged repeatedly in later attempts at compromise as the Navy refused to be coopted by attempts to graft coordinating councils on a unified defense establishment. The fundamental purpose of the coordinate structures approach, despite contrary

assertions by Navy Department representatives, was first to coordinate among the services in a decentralized defense establishment, and only then between military and foreign policies.

Meanwhile, representatives from both the War and Navy Departments continued to consult with members of Congress, and to attempt to influence the new president. In the spring of 1945 Senator Walsh, Chair of the Senate Naval Affairs Committee, warned Forrestal that sentiment was turning in favor of War Department proposals. He suggested that Forrestal, in effect, should broaden the substantive scope of conflict by conducting a "thorough study exploring the broader dimensions of coordination" (Millis, 1951: 61). Forrestal agreed that the Navy was losing ground in its reliance on defense of the status quo, and decided as a result to commission Eberstadt to conduct the suggested study.<sup>22</sup>

Truman became president in the middle of the unification controversy (April 11, 1945). He indicated

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<sup>22</sup>Walsh provided much of the impetus for the Eberstadt report, but Haynes (1973: 95) suggests that it was Forrestal's June 13 meeting with Truman that provided the final push. Truman told Forrestal that he had specific ideas on unification and that he planned to have his staff draw up a legislative proposal (Millis, 1951: 62-63).

his interest in the matter as early as June, and forwarded the War Department's plan as his own in December of that year.<sup>23</sup> Truman's plan took the form of a special message to Congress rather than the more specific form of draft legislation. In his message Truman intimated that the decentralized organization of the armed forces in 1941 resulted in poor military performance at Pearl Harbor, and by implication, that unified command would have precluded that problem. "We did not have [unified] direction when we were attacked four years ago--and we paid a high price for it." He also suggested his acceptance of the War Department's method: "Once a unified department has been established, other steps necessary to the formulation of a comprehensive national security program can be taken with greater ease." He further demonstrated his preferred level for efforts at coordination when he said: "Much more than a beginning has already been made in achieving consistent political and military policy through the establishment of the State-War-Navy

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<sup>23</sup>Clifford (1991: 149) has remarked that Truman basically took the Army plan and put his name on it. Although Clifford was not primarily a Navy partisan, he did lobby the president and Judge Rosenman to include the NSC provisions in his proposal.

Coordinating Committee."<sup>24</sup> (Truman, 1945: 547, 559-560). This means of presentation made Truman's position clear, but left it up to Congress to decide the details.

Truman had been warned in November by Senate and House Naval Affairs Committee Chairmen, Senator Walsh and Congressman Vinson, that his preferred means of unification would not pass Congress. Carl Vinson added that such legislation would not pass "either this winter, next winter, or the winter after" (Millis, 1951: 115-6). Truman was warned again by his Postmaster General just before delivering his message. Forrestal recorded this note on the matter in his diary: "Hannegan said he felt that the president was inviting an unnecessary fight which he might lose, with the resultant loss of prestige. The president said he felt it was his duty to send the message because it represented his conviction . . ." (Millis, 1951: 118).

The Navy plan had been prepared by the early fall of 1945, before Truman made his statement. By choosing the War Department plan over that of the Navy, Truman had clearly taken sides, but he allowed members of the Navy Department to continue to express their

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<sup>24</sup>The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee was initiated in 1944.

opposition. Clifford instructed individuals called to testify to say: "it is the announced policy of the administration to favor such a proposal, but that [the] Commander-in-Chief has announced his willingness to have all witnesses express their personal views on the subject without restraint" (Millis, 1951: 119).

Forrestal and senior Navy personnel used that licence without remorse. We will never know whether they would have acted similarly under a gag order, but it is quite likely that Truman issued that guidance more to ensure that he could not be accused of choking off dissent than to empower the Navy.

In any case, Truman's plan was quickly defeated in Congress, and so were notable attempts at compromise by the Thomas subcommittee of the Military Affairs Committee.<sup>25</sup> As these events unfolded, Truman's staff attempted to persuade him that whatever the merits of his proposal, it was simply out of the bounds of possibility (Clifford, 1991: 150). Perhaps moved by these entreaties, Truman took a new approach to the problem.

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<sup>25</sup>The Thomas compromise grafted Eberstadt's coordinating councils on to a modified, but still unified, defense Department.

In May Truman called Forrestal and Patterson together to attempt to reach a compromise. Truman acceded on the single chief of staff, and instructed the service secretaries to reach agreement by the end of the month. On the 31st they sent Truman a joint letter that agreed on a Council of Common Defense and seven other points. They failed to reach agreement on the four points most central to the Navy: the single secretary proposal, the status of a separate Air Force, its relationship to naval aviation, and the Marine Corps. Truman tried to resolve these by compromising on each point, while shading his decisions in favor of his earlier proposals (Truman, 1946: 303-308). Truman submitted his compromise plan to Congress, but was forced to withdraw it in the face of continuing opposition. Truman had come a long way since his December message, but still the Navy opposed.

Frequent meetings among the various protagonists in the Departments, Congress, and the White House (including Truman) continued through the fall of 1946. Participants searched for means to bring the others closer to their preferred alternative. Finally, for

whatever reason,<sup>26</sup> Forrestal and Patterson made a commitment to resolve their differences after the Congressional elections in November, and they assigned Admiral Sherman and General Norstad to reach a mutually acceptable compromise.

This team reached a draft solution on January 16, 1947.<sup>27</sup> It included a National Security Council with the power of decision in several areas and a weak defense secretary who presided over a decentralized National Military Establishment (NME).<sup>28</sup> The service secretaries would remain on the Council and be would

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<sup>26</sup>All department secretaries have conflicting loyalties. There is the pressure to serve the president, the Congress, and the department. Some have suggested that Forrestal may have experienced tremendous inner conflict in trying to conform to the role requirements of all three.

<sup>27</sup>Forrestal asked Clifford not to announce the agreement immediately, but to wait until he could notify "the principal Navy friends in the House and Senate--Senators Robertson, Byrd, Tydings, Brooks, Russell and Austin, ex-Chairman Vinson of the Naval Affairs Committee, Cole, etc., in the House. [Forrestal] said this was desirable not merely from the standpoint of the Navy's obligation to these men, but also by way of enlisting their sympathetic cooperation in the future" (Millis, 1951: 230).

<sup>28</sup>The pertinent section of the draft read: "The function of the Council shall be to integrate our foreign and military policies. . . . Subject to the authority of the president, decisions of the Council shall establish the approved policy of the departments and agencies represented in the Council." (Caraley, 1966: 314).

joined by the Secretary of the NME. The president was not a member of the council at this point, but many of his powers of decision were nonetheless vested in the Council. The draft as it stood was unconstitutional in the view of White House staff member Charles Murphy (Senate Committee on Armed Services, 1947: 161, 172). It posed the threat of military domination of the policy process, in the view of Bureau of the Budget staffer Donald Stone (Sander, 1972: 378-379). Also, Secretary of State Marshall, previously General of the Army and partly responsible for initiating the controversy, believed that it made "fundamental changes in the entire question of foreign relations" (Nelson, 1981: 233). Caraley (1966: 314) quotes Marshall's Memorandum to the president: "the powers and functions which the bill would vest in this Council . . . would evidently by statute dissipate the constitutional responsibility of the president for the conduct of foreign affairs . . . and at the same time markedly . . . diminish the responsibility of the Secretary of State."

Truman's final proposal was a rewrite of this draft prepared by the War and Navy Departments' representatives and members of his staff, with some assistance by the Bureau of the Budget. The proposal

made the Council purely advisory and assured that the president was not included in its membership. This was hardly the Council that Forrestal and Eberstadt had originally envisaged, but it was accompanied by a very weak secretary presiding over a decentralized "establishment" rather than a department, and it resulted in substantial autonomy for the Navy. Forrestal and the Navy, by orchestrating defeat of the War Department's and the president's proposals in Congress, had gained the upper hand in executive branch negotiations. They did not get everything they wanted at first, but there was still another round of congressional hearings.

The Navy was not disappointed by the behavior of its friends in Congress. Members of both the House and Senate maneuvered to ensure further safeguards for naval aviation and the Marine Corps and limits on the secretary of national security. Although Congress exhibited little interest in the NSC portions of the bill (Nelson, 1985: 363 n. 9), it nevertheless made some fundamental changes. Key among these was the Senate Armed Services Committee's decision to add the president to the membership of the National Security Council. Sander (1972: 381-382) notes that this change was accompanied by another that would have had the

staff directed by the Secretary of National Security, but that the original wording concerning the staff was restored by the House. Sander notes further that committee members "were motivated by a desire to assure that the president was familiar with threats to the country." While this was no doubt true, both changes were consistent with Forrestal's conception of lodging decision-making in the Council.<sup>29</sup>

In the end the bill looked much more like the Navy plan than Truman's original proposal, but Truman signed the National Security Act on July 26, 1947, with the hope that he could strengthen it over time (Clifford, 1991: 157). The president later considered the Act and the NSC among his achievements (Truman, 1956: 58-59), but it is more correct to say that others achieved it with his acquiescence.

## 2. Analysis

The National Security Council was a bureaucratic device to ensure that the military departments would have access to executive decision-making. It was also a ploy to prevent the establishment of a unified defense department. The War Department had never been

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<sup>29</sup>A common perception at the time was that Truman was not up to the job, and that he should be held closely to the advice of his department and agency heads (Thompson, 1984: 93, quote from Staats).

as interested in the coordination of foreign and military policy as had the Navy, but it accepted the Council as an attempt to coopt the Navy into accepting unification on War Department terms. The Navy demonstrated the importance of both aspects of the NSC's purpose by refusing to accept coordinate structures grafted onto a unified department.

In the end the Navy largely had its way and the War Department was forced to accede to all but a shadow of its original plans. Both formed their positions independent of elected officials in the presidency and the Congress. Both developed plans intended to safeguard their institutional positions. Their appointed civilian secretaries acted primarily as advocates for the departments they headed, and spearheaded campaigns designed to further the interests

of those departments.<sup>30</sup> Each made efforts to secure support from the president and from Congress.

Neither department had the authority to resolve the matter on their own, but they did have considerable resources at their disposal. Both the War and Navy Departments conducted public relations campaigns to win support for their proposals (Caraley, 1966: 217-226). Both departments assigned officers to investigate the alternatives and to lobby Congress and the White House

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<sup>30</sup>Advocates of the theory of departmental "capture" of department heads could certainly grasp the examples of Secretaries Patterson and Forrestal, of the War and Navy Departments respectively, as illustrations of their point. Douglas Dillon later remarked that, while a junior reserve officer in the Navy working on the Eberstadt report, he became impressed with how "deeply committed to the Navy Forrestal had become" (Hoopes and Brinkley, 1992: 322). Forrestal was likewise impressed with the transformation of his counterpart at the War Department. In a May, 1946, diary entry Forrestal expressed astonishment at "the extent to which [Patterson's] mind had been pervaded by Army thinking" (Millis, 1951: 164). Forrestal recorded his motivations in a diary entry: My own conduct in this matter has been governed by three main considerations: (1) to try to keep the Navy intact as a Service as distinct from a merely subordinate branch of a vast department; (2) to obtain the improvements in our national defense organization which the war indicated should be made but without sacrificing the autonomy of the Navy; (3) to discharge my responsibilities to the president as a member of his Cabinet, which means that I must go as far as I can in accepting and promulgating his views, always having the alternative, when I can no longer do so honestly, of resigning . . . (Millis, 1951: 167).

on the merits of their preferred alternative. And the Navy commissioned a study by civilians.

Besides these tangible sources of influence, the public held senior military commanders in high esteem due to their contributions during the war. Hoopes and Brinkley (1992: 345) assert that the commanders' prestige was higher than has ever been seen in American history. This fact virtually assured that civilian policy-makers would be unable to impose reforms that met with strong and vocal resistance from the military, as its leaders had the intangible authority associated with expertise in their given fields. In the hearings on the final Act Senators expressed the difficulty of their position when it comes to questioning the judgment of military officers on matters of military policy.

The president was in a poor position to settle the dispute on his terms. He lacked the political clout that comes with electoral victory. He lacked the personal organization that comes with campaigning for that victory and establishing an administration with strong ties to him, and his personal popularity steadily diminished over the period that the legislation was being considered. He recognized the implications of the alternatives on his institutional

position and prerogatives, but he could not impose his preferred solution.

Truman tried to force his hand anyway. His strategy for controlling the outcome, if he had one, was not well suited to the circumstances. Throughout most of the conflict, he ceded to Congress the authority to craft the legislation. He insisted on forcing his predispositions in the face of opposition within the executive branch and in Congress. Only after suffering defeat of his position did Truman modify his strategy and try to solidify support within the executive branch, and even then his imposed compromises failed to achieve consensus. The president's input on the bill that finally passed was limited to protecting his institutional interests by tinkering around the edges of a compromise.

Truman's efforts, and those of his staff and the Budget Bureau, were effective in protecting the institutional interests of the presidency if not in securing his preferred alternative. As both Sanders (1972) and Nelson (1985) note, these men managed to deflect efforts to vest authority in the Council by limiting it to an advisory role, they limited its statutory responsibilities to very vague areas, and they avoided statutory specification of the placement

and control of the staff. These efforts were largely defensive measures to avoid explicit reduction of the roles and responsibilities of the president and his staff agencies.

It is impossible to know how the conflict would have turned out had Truman played his cards differently, but it is safe to say that he would still have been forced to compromise. The institutional position, interests, and strengths of the Navy required that Truman heed the demands of its leaders.

Congress played the critical role of empowering the opposition to the president by providing hearings to air alternative views. The House empowered the War Department by creating a Committee on Post-War Military Policy. The War department aired its views on unification in that committee at a time when Roosevelt showed no interest in the subject and Navy representatives bottled up consideration of the issue in the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Later the Naval Affairs Committees provided the same service to the Navy, even when the bills under consideration had been referred to other committees. Close personal contact between senior departmental representatives and members of Congress provided two-way information exchange that established good will, and developed new strategies

with which to thwart the president and bureaucratic rivals.<sup>31</sup>

Partisan affiliations did not markedly affect the behavior of Congress in its role of empowering opposition to the president. Members of Congress were willing to empower the Navy at the expense of the president regardless of their partisan affiliation. Most of the contentiousness in consideration of alternative proposals on unification occurred when Democrats had control of both Houses of Congress and the White House. Committees with Democrats as chairs and with Democratic majorities repeatedly gave succor to Navy proposals. In contrast, the National Security Act was finally passed by a Republican Congress, which made few changes to the president's final proposal.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Forrestal expressed his philosophy on dealing with Congress in a note to Representative John Taber on July 17, 1947: "It is my strong belief that intelligent cooperation between committees of the Congress and the Executive Departments of the government is best secured by free and continuous exchange of pertinent information between them . . ." (Millis, 1951: 292).

<sup>32</sup>Coincident with the Republican assumption of control in Congress was the move to the new committee structure mandated by the 1946 Legislative Reorganization Act. In a move that indicated Congress's awareness of the demands for a more coordinated approach to military policy, the two committees of Military and Naval Affairs were consolidated into the single Armed Services Committee in both houses. This move illustrated the strength of the commitment to coordination, and eliminated an institutional tool for

Furthermore, no evidence suggests that the composition of the bill or the changes made were related to attempts at garnering partisan advantages.<sup>33</sup>

The ability of Congress to oppose the president had limitations and necessary preconditions. Here the relationship between the Navy and Congress was symbiotic. Caraley notes that Congress relied on "expert" sources to disagree with the president's proposals to effectively exert counter pressure. Congress required opposition elements within the executive branch to legitimate their obstruction of presidential attempts to reorganize. Caraley (1966: 200) illustrated his point with a quotation from Senator Byrd:

I don't want to belabor [the point], except the only way we can make a fight, Mr. Kenney, is to show that the Secretary of the Navy did not agree with what is in this bill. We may as well be frank about it. That is the only way that those of us who are opposed to

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single service partisans to manipulate. It also obscures the effect of Republican control of Congress on the unification debate.

<sup>33</sup>This is not to say that partisanship played no role. Forrestal met with a Republican caucus on February 6, 1947, and recorded that he believed they were opposed to the idea of unification except where it promised economy, but that a good deal of their opposition "[was] based on the general desire to oppose any Democratic proposal" (Millis, 1951: 246-7). This predisposition, however, did not prevent the measure from passing.

unification can make a fight on the floor of Congress. . . . There has got to be a clear, unequivocal statement from the Navy Department in order that this fight be made effective.

Once Forrestal committed the Navy Department to the compromise bill in early 1947, congressional resistance shifted from attempts to block legislation to attempts to shape it at the margins.

Several important points are illustrated and explicated above. The most important is the independence exhibited by executive departments in the pursuit of their institutional interests. The division of authority between president and Congress over the departments makes possible their independent behavior, and limits the ability of the president to force agreements on his terms. In other words, departmental independence is made possible by the constitutional prescription creating separate institutions sharing powers. Department secretaries and agency heads have split loyalties as a result. No president can count on his appointees to approach decisions with his interests foremost in their minds.

Truman's recognition of these factors led him to oppose the establishment of the National Security Council. He viewed the Council as an instrument that had the potential of restricting his freedom of choice.

He accepted a council with the intention of limiting it to a statutory recognition of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee that had improved coordination but had not been binding on the president. Two factors were critical in limiting the function of the Council: limitation of the membership to the secretary level, and control of the staff. He failed to keep the president off the Council, but he did prevent control of the staff from being specified in the Act. How he handled the initial stages of the resulting reorganization was critical in securing presidential prerogatives. The battle to define the landmark legislation was over, but the struggle to shape the National Security Council had just begun.

#### **F. Institutional Position and Precedent for the Future**

There were two distinct phases in the early battle to define the National Security Council. The first phase culminated with the signing of the National Security Act on July 26, 1947. That law set the legal framework defining the National Security Council. The second phase began shortly thereafter when its participants took stock of the legal language and made efforts to set precedents reinforcing their interpretation of its use and position. This phase was

much shorter and less contentious because the institutional levers of power were much more clear.

Forrestal, an adept bureaucratic operator during the unification controversy and the primary advocate of the National Security Council, was appointed to be the first secretary of the defense establishment. He interpreted the legislative intent and the language of the Act along the lines he had advocated from the beginning. First he tried to capture control of the Council and its staff.

Forrestal was aware of the weakness of his institutional position. His circumscribed authority was due largely to his own efforts. It can be surmised that his intention was to use the NSC to offset the weakness of his position. He interpreted the Act's statement that the "Secretary of Defense shall be the principal assistant to the president in all matters relating to the national security" as implying that he would be the de facto if not de jure head of the Council, and that he would thereby gain authority not explicitly granted by the Act. Such a premise is consistent with Forrestal's conception of the Council. To do that, Forrestal planned to have the NSC report to him, to have his decisions binding on the executive secretary, to headquarter the staff in the Pentagon,

and to fill the staff primarily with military officers (Clifford, 1991: 163).

Sidney Souers, the first executive secretary of the NSC staff, recognized Forrestal's attempt to capture the staff and moved to prevent it. Souers recommended an alternative plan with the help of the White House staff and Bureau of the Budget personnel. His plan required the Secretary of State to preside in the president's absence; it allowed the Council no policy-making or supervisory role; it limited the Council's agenda to those items requiring the president's consideration; it precluded the Council from deciding interdepartmental issues; and it stipulated that the executive secretary report to the president.<sup>34</sup>

James Webb, director of the Bureau of the Budget, went even further than Souers. He and his staff urged Truman to consider the NSC staff a "further enlargement of the presidential staff," and urged him not to attend the "majority of Council meetings" (quoted in Nelson,

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<sup>34</sup>From "Memo to the Executive Secretary, National Security Council" in Papers of Clark Clifford, Subject File, Box 11, Folder National Military Establishment--Security Council, Truman Library, Independence, Mo. Clifford (1991: 163) indicates that Souers prepared the memo due to his concerns about Forrestal's designs, and asked Clifford to have the president sign it.

1985: 365). Nelson (1985: 366) notes that this view was consistent with Truman's "determination that the presidency never be weakened while he was in charge."

Such divergent views on the purpose and use of the NSC were bound to clash, and when they did, Forrestal found himself much less effective than he had been in the earlier struggle to define the legislation.

Forrestal held a "dry run" or practice session to prepare for the first meeting of the NSC (Nelson, 1985: 360). He hoped to establish a precedent of control by the Secretary of Defense through positive forehanded action. Souers and Clifford, however, foiled his plan. Forrestal wrote after the meeting: "It is apparent that there is going to be a difference between the Budget, some of the White House staff and ourselves on the National Security Council--its functions, its relationship to the president and myself" (Millis, 1951: 316).

More important than the conflict itself was its tangible results. In an attempt to thwart Forrestal's efforts, Clifford instructed Murphy immediately after the meeting to find room for the NSC staff in the Executive Office Building next to the White House--its primary home ever since (Clifford, 1991: 163-164). Its second tangible result was likely the solidification of

Truman's resolve to enervate the Council as an instrument of government. Truman chaired the first meeting of the NSC to announce his acceptance of Souers' and Webb's conception of the Council's purpose and use. Indeed, he did not attend another Council meeting for 10 months, and he did not use the NSC system for reaching decisions until the Korean War (Nelson, 1985: 360-361, note 2).<sup>35</sup>

Changed institutional circumstances markedly diminished Forrestal's effectiveness vis a vis Truman from his early efforts to establish the NSC to his later efforts to capture the NSC. In the former conflict Forrestal had the authority resident in an established department and, more significantly, he was empowered by the members of Congress who sought to exercise their authority over the formulation of policy. In the latter conflict Forrestal could not expand the circle of conflict beyond himself and the president. Congress could impose a Council by legislation, but it could not force a president to delegate his authority in the manner Forrestal envisaged.

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<sup>35</sup>Why Truman's view toward the use of the NSC system changed is discussed in chapter 5. Suffice it to say here that his political style did not account for that change in attitude.

Truman acted to safeguard the institutional interests of the presidency. He certainly understood that department and agency heads could never be entirely loyal to him or to any president. Collecting these individuals in a Council did not change that fact, and a Council presented the possibility that they would collectively act to constrict his authority and range of choices.

The loyalty of the staff, however, was a different story. It is impossible to say how that staff would have developed had Forrestal had his way, but clearly Truman's decision to make the staff his own set the precedent for those who followed. It is unlikely that Forrestal's conception of the use of the Council and the staff would have survived subsequent presidents even if Truman had accepted it. Such a conception of policy formation was, and remains, inconsistent with the American scheme of government.

#### **G. Summary**

The above discussion outlined the significant institutions and individuals involved in the conflict to establish the National Security Council. What began as a skirmish between the War and Navy Departments expanded to include Congress and the presidency in a major legislative battle spanning

several years. The relationships among an institution's organizational culture, its interests, and the position reached with respect to the National Security Council were also illustrated. Both the War and Navy Departments expanded their internal organizational philosophies to include the larger national security establishment. Not coincidentally, the preferred solution of each department safeguarded its own institutional interests at the expense of its counterpart department.

The pivotal role of organizational philosophy was highlighted, as an intra-departmental unifying influence, as a means to support institutional interests, and with regard to the influence each philosophical approach had on the design of the final legislation. Coordinating structures and unity of command are contradictory approaches to organizational design. Each approach held implications for the distribution and control of resources, both between the military departments and between Congress and the presidency. The final legislation included aspects of both philosophies, a marriage of convenience that sowed the seeds of later conflicts.

The interactive nature of the development process was also stressed. National security organization

would be very different today had any of the actors in this conflict been able to impose a solution. The division of authority between Congress and the presidency over the executive departments empowered the War and Navy Departments to struggle for their preferred solution. Since neither department, Congress, nor the president had the authority to impose their preferred alternative, each institution moved considerably from its initial position. The result was an inelegant compromise.

The rich complexity of historical events can sometimes be lost in the search for meaningful generalizations. It was impossible to fully develop the relationships discussed above and discuss each event in its proper historical sequence. Refer to figure 4.1 for a time-line of the most significant events in the process.

## Figure 4.1

## Chronology of Events Leading to the NSC

1911

The Navy Department proposed a Council of National Defense with War Department support. The proposal was defeated.

1943

November

General Marshall presented the concept of unification of the armed services as a proposal to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

1944

April 24

The House Select Committee on Post-War Military Policy opened hearings on a War Department plan for unification.

May 9

The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) initiated a study on the reorganization of the military for national defense based on the recommendations of the House Committee.

June 15

The House Select Committee on Post-War Military Policy published its report. It took the Navy Department Position that the time was not right for legislation, and urged the services to study the issue further.

August 24

Colliers magazine published Truman's article "Our Armed Forces Must be Unified".

1945

April 12

Truman is sworn in as President of the United States.

May 15

Senator Walsh, chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee, suggested Forrestal conduct a "thorough study" exploring the broader dimensions of coordination.

June 19

Forrestal commissioned Eberstadt to conduct a study on unification.

Sept. 25

Eberstadt Report is completed, delivered to Forrestal, and then to Truman.

Oct. 17

Senate Military Affairs Committee opened hearings on military unification as presented in S. 84 and S. 1482.

Dec. 13

Clifford recommended the National Security Council be incorporated into the War Department unification proposal. The suggestion is rejected.

Dec. 18

Postmaster General Hannegan warned Truman in a cabinet luncheon that sending down a message on unification was a mistake since "the chairman of the Senate Naval Affairs Committee was opposed to the measure and the chairmen of both the Military and Naval Affairs Committees of the House likewise. Hannegan said he felt that the President was inviting an unnecessary fight which he might lose, with the resultant loss of prestige. The President said he felt it was his

duty to send the message because it represented his conviction. . . ." (Millis, 1951: 118).

Dec. 19, 1945

President Truman proposed a military unification plan that did not include a National Security Council in a special message to Congress.

1946

April 9

The Thomas bill (S. 2044, prepared by the Thomas, Hill, and Austin subcommittee of the Senate Military Affairs Committee) is introduced as a "compromise" bill. It includes a "Council of Common Defense," but that council did not include the President as a member.

May 7

Clifford convinced Truman S. 2044 would not pass.

May 13

Truman met with Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy, and Patterson, Secretary of War, and demanded that they resolve their differences by May 31.

May 31

Forrestal and Patterson reported agreement on all but four critical areas. Both departments accepted a National Security Council.

June 15

Truman attempted to resolve remaining differences between War and Navy position's in a letter to the two Secretaries, and as a proposal to Congress. In it Truman accepted the concept of the National Security Council for the first time, but he did not include the President as a member. Continuing Navy opposition resulted in the President withdrawing the proposal.

Sep. 10, 1946

Truman demanded a compromise be worked out at a White House meeting of key participants, and demanded that the legislation be drafted in his office by Clifford and Leahy.

Nov. 7

Navy and War Departments' representatives came to an agreement at Forrestal's home. Admiral Sherman and General Norstad were tasked to work out the details over the next two months.

1947

Jan. 16

War and Navy departments accepted the Sherman and Norstad draft of the November 7, 1946, agreement on unification. The plan, which included a National Security Council, is presented to Truman.

Feb. 26

Truman forwarded his final draft of the National Security Act to Congress, after White House Aides and Bureau of the Budget personnel reworked the National Security Council provisions.

March 18

The Senate Committee on Armed Services commenced hearings on S. 758, the final unification bill, and completed on May 20.

April 2

The House committee commenced hearings on the House version of the final unification bill. Hearings concluded July 1.

July 26

Truman signed the National Security Act of 1947.

## Chapter V

### I. Institutional Evolution

#### A. Introduction

Chapter 5 continues to illustrate the institutional influences on the development of the National Security Council, but it also draws in the other aspects of the explanation introduced in chapter 2. While institutional forces remained important in the development of the NSC, events proved more complicated than what a simple institutional argument might suggest. Partisan conflict and organizational level innovation began to influence NSC system development shortly after the end of the legislative debate. All three aspects of our analytical framework are illustrated below.

#### 1. Institutional Conflict

The change of the institutional venue from the legislative arena to the executive arena altered the balance of forces among the parties struggling to define the NSC. Once the NSC had been established in statute, the role of the legislature changed significantly. Congress was no longer able to tinker directly with organizational details; its role was now indirect. Congress exercised influence indirectly by holding hearings and establishing investigations of

function and operation. These activities threatened presidents because they were accompanied by the implicit potential for reopening legislative debate and passing new legislation.

Removing Congress from direct confrontation with the president over the shape and use of the NSC altered the balance of forces within the executive branch as well. Agencies and departments were no longer able to draw meaningful political support from Congress in instances of conflict with the president. Without this source of power they were clearly subordinate to the president when it came to shaping the organization and operations of the NSC system. From the day the National Security Act was signed into law, therefore, the president became the dominant force in the development of the NSC, and the various elements of the executive bureaucracy struggled with the president to define the new organization and their roles within it.

Nonetheless, members of the executive bureaucracy made efforts to influence the nascent institution's development. Forrestal attempted to establish precedents in his favor by exercising the initiative (see the last section of chapter 4). Such a ploy would work, he reasoned, if the president and those acting in his name acquiesced. Forrestal, however, was not met

with a passive response. Clifford, the president's Special Counsel, Souers, the NSC's newly appointed executive secretary, and members of the Bureau of the Budget all acted to prevent Forrestal from dominating the Council, its staff, and the interdepartmental committee system (Clifford, 1991).

Other efforts to influence NSC system development were more passive. Truman's famous quotation about the frustrations Eisenhower would feel when his orders went unexecuted was borne of experience.<sup>1</sup> There are many ways to frustrate a president and block his intentions. Cabinet members sometimes responded slowly to the president's requests, and sometimes they simply ignored him. They frustrated the president's intentions by failing to cooperate among themselves, as happened with Dean Acheson and Louis Johnson, Secretaries of State and Defense respectively. They limited the effectiveness of Council discussion by arriving unprepared and relying on the support of a large coterie of their staff, as was frequently the case with Louis Johnson. They influenced the agenda by acceding only to requests for certain types of studies, as was

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<sup>1</sup>Neustadt (1980 [1960]: 9) quotes Truman as saying: "He'll sit here and he'll say, 'Do this! Do that!' And nothing will happen. Poor Ike--it won't be a bit like the Army. He'll find it very frustrating."

the case when Kennan led the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department. And they refused to come to agreement on how and when to carry out NSC approved policy, as in both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. Individuals used the tools at their disposal due to their institutional positions to influence policy and NSC system development.

By and large, however, the president had the upper hand in intra-executive branch conflict (even if he was not always effective). The president's strong institutional position is the basis for the thesis that the style of the incumbent drives the organizational development of the NSC system. As we shall illustrate, however, the president's efforts concerning the NSC are shaped by a host of factors and individuals. Both Truman's and Eisenhower's actions were developed in concert with other individuals for the purpose of serving their institutional and political interests. Partisan politics stimulated review and change of institutional patterns; individuals within the system presented each president with organizational innovations that required only presidential acceptance.

## **2. Partisan Conflict**

Partisan conflict stimulated the development of the NSC system. In this chapter we review how that

conflict stimulated evolutionary change, and in the next chapter we consider how partisan conflict initiated more radical change.

Parties, in theory, deflect the power struggles from between to within institutions. The doctrine of party responsibility accepts institutional arrangements and shifts the debate to the merits of competing policy alternatives.<sup>2</sup> Unified party control of the institutions of government minimizes (again, in theory) the need to differ over which institution has the right to make policy and allows democratically determined alternatives to be implemented by cooperating institutional arms of government.

Partisan conflict has not had this result in the American scheme of government. Instead of shifting the debate from institutional conflict to partisan conflict rooted in policy alternatives, partisan and institutional conflicts have often become intertwined. Individuals have seized upon institutional arrangements as issues of partisan contention. Through institutionally-based prerogatives or through campaigns for election, individuals have made institutional

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<sup>2</sup>See particularly (American Political Science Association. The Committee on Political Parties, 1950).

arrangements contested issues and thereby influenced their development.

Divided control of the institutions of government has exacerbated the tendency for partisan and institutional conflict to intersect. When one party controls the presidency and the other controls Congress, how those institutions are organized and managed becomes an issue of partisan contention. In the election campaign of 1992, for example, Republicans tied the management of the House Bank and Post Office and the scandals associated with them to the Democratic Party's leadership. The explicit solution was to elect enough Republicans to replace the failed Democratic leadership.

More frequently, however, the party in control of Congress criticizes the organization and operation of the executive branch. Lowi (1969) asserts that this is the natural result of Congressional delegation of authority to executive branch administrative agencies.<sup>3</sup> It has been in this light that the

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<sup>3</sup>Lowi (1969) developed the concept he called "legicide" to explain this phenomena. Congress, in his view, has increasingly delegated the authority to make law to executive agencies. In an attempt to retain some control over the law-making process, Congress has resorted to paying close attention to the organization and operations of agencies and departments through close attention to organizational details in

organization and operation of the National Security Council have frequently been objects of partisan scrutiny. Partisan conflict, thereby, has shaped and sometimes redirected the process of organizational growth.

### 3. Organizational Growth

Explanations of NSC organizational change and development have generally overlooked the contributions of the individuals most involved in its organization and operation.<sup>4</sup> Individuals cause evolutionary change through trial and error in the use of organizational arrangements. Although changes are usually associated with presidential initiative, the president's role has often been limited to ratifying suggestions initiated by subordinates. Changes recommended by a president's political subordinates are considered in part concerning their likely impact on the incumbent's institutional and political circumstances at the time, and in part on the intrinsic merits of the

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establishing legislation, by performing a function that has come to be called "legislative oversight," and through the constitutionally dubious practice known as the legislative veto.

<sup>4</sup>While this seems to be a thoroughly reasonable proposition, it is rarely mentioned in the literature on the topic of the NSC system.

recommendation.<sup>5</sup> While the incumbent's personal preferences may influence the decision, these considerations are likely to predominate.

Our bias toward crediting the president with all activity flows from the manner in which history is recorded. Actions taken by a government are generally recorded in the name of its titular head. Many actions taken by the vast executive bureaucracy are associated directly with the incumbent president. While this practice may be appropriate in terms of accountability, and useful in terms of the political consequences flowing from any particular action, such a practice may be misleading when it comes to understanding the action itself.

Organizational innovation in the NSC system has often resulted from attempts by its members to improve (or control) the process by which coordination occurs in national security affairs. In the first days of the NSC's existence every action was innovative. Forrestal held a "dress rehearsal" before the first Council meeting in an attempt to steer its activities toward

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<sup>5</sup>An administration's philosophical predisposition toward the NSC system is considered to be inextricably bound up with considerations of institutional and political considerations and with the thinking predominant at the time.

his conception of its operation (Millis, 1951: 316-318). Clifford and Souers, both present at this meeting, were prompted to take action in the name of the president. Clifford secured office space for the NSC and his staff in the president's territory, and Souers prepared a guidance memorandum on the operation of the Council and its staff (Clifford, 1991: 163-164). Truman, girded with similar advice from the Bureau of the Budget, established that guidance as his policy at the first meeting of the NSC (Sander, 1972: 385-387).<sup>6</sup>

Efforts at organization building were constant throughout the Truman administration and the early years of the Eisenhower administration. The records of both administrations include several studies and recommendations toward the improvement of the process by which national security policy was coordinated. The story of that process as it relates to the thesis of this study unfolds below.

#### **B. Evolution: Growth and Incremental Change**

The years following the dramatic period that resulted in the establishment of the National Security Council witnessed a period of slow growth and incremental change. The development of the fledgling

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<sup>6</sup>See also the draft of the memorandum in Clifford's papers (Clifford, n.d.).

institution was not continuous, uneventful, nor without contention, but neither was it characterized by dramatic nor revolutionary change that altered the character of its existence--that is, until 1961 when Kennedy reconstituted the NSC system along personal lines. Truman had moved, reluctantly at first and then with greater conviction, to develop the NSC into a viable means to coordinate the activities of the executive branch. Eisenhower followed by according even greater emphasis to the NSC system, but without radically revising Truman's underlying premise concerning NSC operation. This period of growth and development is traced briefly below to illustrate the typical pattern of change associated with the NSC and to provide the context for the more radical change that followed.

### 1. The Initial Concept

Early interpretations of the role of the National Security Council conflicted, but over time a dominant theme emerged concerning its purpose and use. As the discussion in chapter 4 has attempted to make clear, the conflict pitted those who wished to lodge de facto if not de jure decision-making authority in the Council against those who resisted what was deemed to be an intrusion on the president's Constitutional

prerogatives.<sup>7</sup> Truman and Eisenhower both considered the NSC advisory. However, the corporate decision-making conception also attached to the Council appeared recurrently. The corporate view was tenacious enough that both Truman and Eisenhower felt compelled several times to say that the NSC was purely advisory and that it was the president who made the decisions and was solely responsible for them. Truman went so far as to publicly enunciate the advisory nature of the Council in a "Concept" statement in July 1948 (Lay and Johnson, 1988 [1960]: 4). References to corporate decision-making and lodging power in the Council apart from the president disappeared only after the NSC system was fundamentally restructured.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Chapter 4 discusses in some detail then Secretary of the Navy Forrestal's advocacy of a corporatist conception of the Council's role. He continued to favor that conception after his appointment as Secretary of Defense, and he saw the National Security Council as an important mechanism for controlling his decentralized department as well as national security policy more generally.

<sup>8</sup>It is not coincidental that the president was seen as less a captive of the Council following the restructuring of the NSC. Prior to the Kennedy reinstitutionalization the executive departments were the sole repositories of information and expertise. It was appropriate for presidents to rely heavily on the counsel of their advisors, indeed one reason the Council was established was to ensure that presidents would do just that. The new NSC brought to the president his own source of information and advice apart from the departments, including direct access to

The role that emerged through the efforts of Truman and Eisenhower placed the NSC system as one pillar of an information gathering network that included a close administrative relationship with the nascent Central Intelligence Agency (Souers, 1949: 537). An interdepartmental system for identifying and coordinating the positions of the departments and agencies on various issues was established and developed through a regular process of trial and adjustment. A staff component of the NSC was established and firmly associated with the Executive Office of the President, yet without crossing the boundary separating personal/political staff from institutional staff. The staff was the servant of the Council and supported the process associated with the NSC system.

The staff component of the NSC established its usefulness early, but its role was to be primarily administrative with a limited professional component charged with analyzing issues from a national

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operational cables. Under these circumstances the president was structurally less dependent on his advisors. Since these changes were instituted presidents have apparently not felt the need to indicate that it is the president, not the Council, that makes decisions.

perspective.<sup>9</sup> Of course other agencies and departments were encouraged to rise above their parochial considerations, but the NSC staff was considered the least parochial of national security staff agencies. Beyond gathering information and providing prospective solutions for the president's consideration, the NSC staff was to "provide another basis for continuity in national security policy, which has formerly been missing" (Souers, 1949: 537). The continuity would derive from non-political, career professionals assigned to the NSC staff and from permanent files spanning administrations.

The conception for the NSC system and its component parts was pragmatic and non-political. It assumed that "best solutions" existed to national problems, and that the NSC system was devised to find and promote those solutions despite politics. Moreover, it restricted the NSC to planning while

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<sup>9</sup>The choice of the term national rather than presidential is deliberate. There is no question that both Truman and Eisenhower understood the difference between a national and a presidential perspective. Each man wished his NSC system--particularly the staff component--to take a national perspective rather than be concerned with his particular political problems. Political issues were more appropriately, in their view, their personal concern or that of their personal staff. Part of the change associated with the Kennedy reinstitutionalization is a blurring of this distinction.

reserving operations to the departments and agencies. The Eisenhower NSC emphasized implementation and follow-up more than its predecessor, but the difference was one of degree rather than of kind.

Souers (1949: 542-543) noted the early development of the NSC system:

In summary, it can be said that the National Security Council, in the space of two years, has developed in the sphere of national security an increased sense of coherence, of teamwork, and of direction. While much remains to be done, at least there is now a place for coordinated consideration of our security problems. With its potentialities, the Council offers evidence of our ability to change our governmental structure in democratic fashion in order to meet changing conditions without departing from traditional principals.

Eleven years later Lay and Johnson (1988 [1960]: 1) could build upon that statement:

In a little less than thirteen years the National Security Council has been transformed from a brief statement of purposes in the National Security Act of 1947 into a well-established part of the governmental machinery. Two Presidents have endorsed, supported and fully utilized it. The organization and procedures of the Council have been adjusted to meet the individual needs and desires of each of the Presidents who have presided over it as well as the requirements of a changing world situation. However, the Council mechanism has also evolved continuously; each state in its development has been built upon the stage before.

## 2. Truman

Truman was first preoccupied with the concern that the NSC system not restrict his prerogatives or otherwise detract from the prestige or powers of his office. As noted in chapter 4, Truman was sensitive to the institutional dynamics among the president, Congress, and the various elements of the bureaucracy. Once the legislation establishing the NSC was in place, his efforts focused on setting precedents that would prevent encroachment on the president's institutional prerogatives.<sup>10</sup> Those precedents included: (1) establishing presidential control of staff resources, (2) limiting the focus of Council deliberations, (3) preventing Defense Department domination, particularly in the person of Forrestal, and (4) preserving the president's autonomy from the Council and the outputs of the system.

Truman, through the efforts of his personal staff and the Bureau of the Budget, controlled the staff by

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<sup>10</sup>By all accounts Truman was himself particularly sensitive to these concerns, but he was not without the aid of the Budget Bureau and his own personal staff in this regard. The Bureau wrote a guidance memo recommending his position toward the new NSC and its staff and so did Admiral Souers. Clifford and Souers were both instrumental in assuring that the president, not Forrestal and the new military establishment, controlled the NSC.

establishing limits on its size and activities, by personally nominating the Executive Secretary, and by locating the staff in the building next to the White House rather than in the Pentagon or the new State Department building.<sup>11</sup> He limited the focus of Council business by requiring that it consider only items requiring presidential action (Souers, 1949: 538). He prevented Forrestal from dominating the NSC by first taking control of the staff, by designating the Secretary of State to preside in the absence of the president, by strictly limiting its agenda, and by locating Council meetings in the White House Cabinet room.<sup>12</sup> He established his autonomy from the Council by repeatedly emphasizing its advisory nature, and by attending Council meetings infrequently.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Clifford (1991: 163) notes that he made this decision with the president's later approval. Lay and Johnson (1988 [1960]: 6 note 16) note that offices were nonetheless set aside in the Pentagon, but that they were never occupied. Lay and Johnson (1988 [1960]: 10) later note that Forrestal played a "striking" role in the early years of the Council through the initiating of Council projects.

<sup>12</sup>Most of these limits were laid out in Truman's guidance directive concerning the Council itself and the operations of the staff (Clifford, n.d.).

<sup>13</sup>Lay and Johnson, (1988: 5 note 11) note that Truman limited his attendance to 12 of the first 57 Council meetings. Ostensibly, Truman reasoned that his presence would interfere with the free flow of discussion among his department heads. While Truman

Truman's early approach to the NSC affected its organization and operations. His decision to limit the NSC's consideration of topics to only those that required his action limited the initial development of the interdepartmental committee (IDC) system under the NSC and resulted in the maintenance of a parallel IDC system. The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee developed in 1944 was expanded in 1947 to include the Air Force and became the State-Army-Navy-Air Force Coordinating Committee (SANACC). This organization functioned in parallel with the small NSC IDC component known as "The Staff."<sup>14</sup> Lay and Johnson (1988

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may have been concerned about his impact on discussion, his decision was part of a much larger pattern designed to avoid being dominated by a Council that was intended to do just that.

<sup>14</sup>References to the "Staff" during the Truman period can be somewhat confusing. The NSC staff during this period performed an entirely administrative function. The substantive work of the council was performed by individuals assigned by the departments to concentrate on NSC work. These individuals made up, in effect, an interdepartmental committee, but were called "The Staff." Later attempts to strengthen the NSC framework resulted in the development of the "Senior Staff." These individuals were still assigned by the departments, but they were appointed by the president, and they held assistant secretary rank. The Senior Staff remained an interdepartmental committee in form and function, and members of "The Staff" did the preparatory work for their Senior Staff member. The Truman administration did hire a few substantive experts to be members of the NSC staff, but their work remained largely administrative in nature (Lay, 1948: 8).

[1960]: 14) note that "it was recognized that SANACC's functions closely paralleled, if they did not indeed in many respects duplicate, the functions of the NSC Staff." But the duplication was retained to maintain the president's distance from the NSC until the decision was made to embrace the NSC system as an active instrument of presidential control.<sup>15</sup>

The National Security Act of 1947 had changed the framework within which the services fought their institutional battles, but it did not lay them to rest. Contentiousness among the services made the job of the Defense Secretary untenable, and early experience proved the National Military Establishment untenable. These conditions were the substantive basis for the move to amend the Act, and reopened the battle for institutional position.

**a) The National Security Act Amendments of 1949**

The single most important statutory change to the National Security Act concerning the National Security

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<sup>15</sup>The SANACC and the Interdepartmental Intelligence Conference are two examples of IDC's that existed separately from the NSC structure but were gradually drawn into its sphere. The latter was formally included under the NSC rubric as of March of 1948, and the former was subsumed in June of 1949 (Lay and Johnson, 1988 [1960]: 6, 14). The Hoover Commission (1949: 140) found more than 30 committees coordinating the activities of at least 46 departments and agencies in the area of foreign affairs in 1948.

Council came in June of 1949. The amendments upgraded the National Military Establishment to an executive department, renamed it the Defense Department, further clarified and expanded the Secretary's authority, and reduced each of the armed services to the status of military departments. The National Security Council's membership also reflected the spirit of this change by making the Secretary of Defense the sole military representative on the Council.<sup>16</sup>

The primary intention of the amendments was to redress the clearly untenable position of the Secretary of Defense. Forrestal was brought to the position of admitting that the decentralized structure he had done so much to create was unworkable in practice. His corporate conception was unable to control the disparate elements of the government's national security departments and agencies without the authoritative use of the National Security Council as he had conceived it. Truman's close hold on the Council and its staff, and his early refusal to integrate the interdepartmental structure into the NSC framework left the Secretary of Defense with no means

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<sup>16</sup>The legislation also created the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) position and established that officer as a statutory advisor to the Council, to the Secretary of Defense, and to the president.

to control the armed services let alone the entire national security apparatus.

The amendments moved the organization for national security a step closer to the unified structure originally recommended by President Truman and the War Department, but still embodied the central ideas of the corporatists and the Navy Department. The continued conflict between those who favored more hierarchical forms of organization and those who favored a more corporate approach to organization is evident in the content of the amendments. The NSC remained, but with a changed membership to upgrade the Secretary of Defense, and, interestingly, to include the Vice President.<sup>17</sup> The military departments were downgraded, but they retained their separate organizations and guarantees against transfer of functions or personnel. Their lead civilian officials

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<sup>17</sup>There is no indication in the Hearings on the amendments (Senate Committee on Armed Services, 1949), or in its report (Senate Report No. 366, 1949), as to the purpose or rationale underlying the addition of the vice president to the National Security Council as a statutory member. The change in membership originated as H.R. 1945 and had as its ostensible purpose keeping those immediately in the line of succession to the president informed of sensitive national security matters. Truman did not recommend the addition, and he acceded to it only because he did not wish to upset his relationship with his new vice president (Sander, 1989: 256-257).

retained the title of secretary, rather than undersecretary for air, army, and navy. And the position of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was created, but the authority of this position was severely circumscribed.

Truman had planned to strengthen the National Security Act once it became clear that his initial efforts on defense unification were going to fall far short of his original intent (Clifford, 1991: 157). Buttressed by Forrestal's change of position and the recommendations of the Hoover Commission, Truman moved in the spring of 1949 to remake the National Security Act along more hierarchical lines. Truman's recommendations were in line with his earlier preferences, but he took care not to eliminate the separate service departments as a means of reaching his preferred ends (Truman, 1949: 165).<sup>18</sup> Congress gave Truman some, but not all, of what he wanted. The impact was to incrementally strengthen the hands of both the Secretary of Defense and the President, and it

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<sup>18</sup>The Hoover Commission recommended the replacement of service secretaries of separate departments with undersecretaries for separate administrative branches within the single department of defense (Hoover, 1949: 194). The difference was termed by some during Senate Hearings a semantic one, but it was one that may have prevented the reopening of the full debate of two years earlier (Senate Committee on Armed Services, 1949).

was one in a series of steps that disposed Truman more favorably toward the NSC system.<sup>19</sup>

Although the substantive difficulties and philosophical positions recounted above provided the substantive basis for the reopening of the institutional debate, it was political maneuvering that provided the impetus and conditions that facilitated the submission of the amendments. The Hoover Commission, conceived by a Republican Congress with thoroughly partisan and ideological objectives, made possible Truman's restructuring on terms favorable to him.

#### **b) The Hoover Commission**

The Hoover Commission, more correctly labeled the Commission on the Organization of the Executive Branch, exemplified the tangled relationship between partisan

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<sup>19</sup>Interestingly, the National Security Act Amendments of 1949 did not immediately have their intended effect. Nelson (1981: 240-241) notes: "Organizationally, the NSC should have been strengthened by all these changes [within the NSC, the Defense Department, and the State Department in response to the Hoover Commission's recommendations]. Instead, it was weakened by the steadily deteriorating relationship throughout 1949 and early 1950 between Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson." This was clearly one instance where organization could not overcome barriers established in personal relationships. The organizational framework, however, did provide the basis for a greatly strengthened NSC organization in the future.

and institutional effects. How a Commission established by a Republican Congress and led by a former Republican President and staunch opponent of New Deal policies came to support the initiatives of a Democratic President requires some explanation.

The Commission was established by the Lodge-Brown bill (61 Stat. L. 246) with the purpose, according to Brown (its author in the House of Representatives), of "laying the groundwork for the complete house-cleaning [of New Deal agencies] that will be necessary [following the expected Republican victory in November 1948]" (quoted in Arnold, 1986: 123). Section 1 of the law stipulated, beyond organizational reform and cost-cutting recommendations, that the Commission recommend functions and activities to be abolished and, importantly, that these ends could be achieved by "defining and limiting executive functions, services and activities." Although it was couched in language designed to give it the "facade of bipartisanship," it was dominated by conservative members and had a clear ideological and partisan objective (Arnold, 1986: 122).

In many respects Hoover was precisely the man to facilitate the designs of the Republican majority in Congress, but several factors coincided to result in the paradoxical outcome. Hoover dominated the

Commission from the beginning and made substantial efforts to shape its recommendations toward his limited government predilections. But Hoover had a favorable attitude toward Truman,<sup>20</sup> he was guided toward a "Brownlowian" conception of the presidency through the efforts of the Bureau of the Budget,<sup>21</sup> and he was disposed toward an administratively strong presidency--based in part on his conception of administration and in part on his own experience in the office. It goes without saying, however, that Hoover had a far different conception of the ends that administrative control would foster than did his more liberal contemporaries.

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<sup>20</sup>The basis for this attitude had its roots in Roosevelt's spurning of the former president. FDR had renamed the Hoover dam the Boulder dam, and had ignored Hoover's offer to assist in mobilization efforts for the war. Truman reversed the decision on the name of the dam, and he had invited Hoover to assist on his Famine Emergency Committee. Arnold (1986: 126) suggests that these actions were responsible for a "curiously emotional tie" between the two men.

<sup>21</sup>James Webb, then Director of the Bureau of the Budget, encouraged Hoover to accept the assistance of Don Price who "offered Hoover the perspective of an intellectual community of scholar-public servants who were, beginning in these years, developing a new model of the strong presidency" (Arnold, 1986: 149). Webb and his staff also worked closely with Hoover in an effort to shape the outcome of the project, particularly after Truman won reelection in 1948.

Hoover's personal predilections aside, it was the impact of the 1948 elections that most affected the outcome of the report. The Commission's work was to prepare the ground for the incoming Dewey administration, and toward that end Hoover maintained a close liaison with Dewey through Dewey's counsel Charles Breitel (Arnold, 1986: 142). When the election results provided the unexpected upset victory for Truman, including returning control of Congress to the Democratic party, Hoover was faced with the possibility that his work would have no meaningful impact. Such an outcome was unthinkable to Hoover; therefore, the new conditions shaped the final form of the report.

Efforts to move the Commission toward an outcome acceptable to the Truman administration began immediately following the election. Webb and Price in the Bureau of the Budget convinced Truman to reaffirm his support for the Commission while they worked behind the scenes to fashion the reports.<sup>22</sup> The election also empowered the Commission's liberal members. Arnold (1986: 143) quotes Dean Acheson as having said that meetings "were rather different than before!" Arnold (1986: 147) concludes that "given the

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<sup>22</sup>The bureau provided much of the staff support for the commission and its various task forces.

ideological agenda with which the Hoover Commission began, its final reports were models of moderation."

The tangled relationship between partisan and institutional effects inherent in the Hoover Commission went beyond the Republican controlled Congress's efforts to lay the groundwork for the ouster of the Democrats from the executive branch. The Commission's task forces with a license to review the National Security Council managed to capture the two opposing views of that institution's role and operations held within the bureaucracy. The NSC was reviewed by the task force on Foreign Affairs and the task force on The National Security Organization. These two task forces arrived at sharply different conclusions.

The recommendations of the task force on Foreign Affairs most closely represented the views of President Truman. This task force proceeded from the explicit understanding that the president has the greater share of authority in our external relations and that the Secretary of State is his primary advisor in these matters. Their view toward the NSC was mixed. The practices of the NSC and its staff were not criticized (Nelson, 1981: 239), but it was noted that statutory bodies like the National Security Council "tend to obscure the responsibility for making executive

decisions, [and tend] to make each of the bodies acquire the aspects of a new agency" (Hoover, 1949: 152). These tendencies were considered prejudicial to good administration and were, therefore, to be avoided. On the other hand, it averred, Cabinet-level committees are necessary. In those cases where such committees are necessary, effective administration is facilitated by presidential control of membership and a full-time secretariat within the Executive Office of the President (Hoover, 1949: 152-154).

The task force on National Security Organization was much more critical of current organization and practice. The task force on National Security Organization was headed by Ferdinand Eberstadt, author of the famous report recommending the National Security Council and a leading advocate of corporate ideas in government organization.<sup>23</sup> This report considered the National Security Council the "keystone" of national security organization, but criticized it as ineffective as it currently operated (Nelson, 1981: 239). These criticisms were based in the divergence of

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<sup>23</sup>Eberstadt refused to lead the task force unless its mandate was framed to include the broader organization for national security rather than the mandate as it was originally conceived which was to review only the National Military Establishment (Dorwart, 1991: 163).

Truman's and Eberstadt's views on the proper use and purpose of the NSC. Truman's NSC was inevitably deficient by Eberstadt's standards because Truman did not want his NSC to do what Eberstadt had recommended. Eberstadt continued to urge a decentralized structure that responded to the authoritative direction of a council of informed leaders. Although the task force did recommend that the Secretary of Defense be the sole military representative on the National Security Council, it otherwise recommended against further centralization of the organization for national security. Opinion within the National Military Establishment remained bitterly divided on the matter; the task force report was criticized by Air Force Secretary Symington for having taken the view of the Navy Department in its struggle against further unification (Dorwart, 1991: 165).

Forced to choose between two competing conceptions of National Security Council organization and operation, and given the new political realities following the 1948 elections, the commission members came down on Truman's side. Hoover and Eberstadt, however, both made it clear in their subsequent testimony to Congress concerning the 1949 amendments to the National Security Act that their own views and

those adopted by the Commission did not always coincide.<sup>24</sup> Congress responded by giving the centralizers a measure of what they wanted, but attached modifiers that greatly reduced the effect of the more centralized organizational forms. In so doing, a Congress that was by that time controlled by the Democratic party displayed the conflicting loyalties of institution and party by placating yet frustrating their own president.

The Hoover Commission reports were significant to the development of the National Security Council. They were the first comprehensive reviews of NSC operations following its institution, and they provided a force for change within the Truman administration and Congress: The staff was officially ensconced in the Executive Office of the President; the Secretary of Defense was empowered within the Council framework; and the position of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was created and given a role in Council and Staff operations. The reports gave vent to two competing ideas regarding the NSC, and the Commission chose to validate the president-centered view of its place in government. The fact that the two task forces came to

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<sup>24</sup>See National Security Act Amendments of 1949, pp. 127-145, 48-71, and 201-202.

opposing conclusions contributed to the already strong tendency of Congress to compromise, and resulted in only incremental changes. Finally, the criticisms expressed by the task force on National Security Organization would be picked up by a later candidate for president. Eisenhower supported Eberstadt's efforts in 1949, and he later seized upon the task force's criticisms and recommendations in his 1952 bid for the presidency.<sup>25</sup>

**c) Korea**

No discussion of the early development of the National Security Council is complete without some reference to the impact of the Korean Conflict. Before that time (for the reasons discussed above) Truman rarely attended Council meetings and otherwise limited the NSC's role in decision-making. But with the onset of hostilities and an active U.S. role in war-making, Truman initiated a dramatic reversal in his involvement with the NSC.<sup>26</sup> He stipulated "that the Council meet

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<sup>25</sup>Eisenhower was a consultant to the task force on National Security Organization, and he defended Eberstadt when he came under criticism for skewing task force conclusions toward the Navy position (Dorwart, 1991: 164-165).

<sup>26</sup>Truman's attitude toward the NSC system had begun to change about the time he submitted the National Security Act Amendments of 1949. However, personality conflicts between Secretary of State Acheson and

regularly every Thursday and that all important recommendations relating to national security policy be coordinated through the Council and its staff," and he made it a practice to attend whenever he was in Washington (Lay and Johnson, [1960] 1988: 16).<sup>27</sup>

Truman's change of heart regarding the NSC had much to do with the demands placed upon his office by the Korean Conflict, but there was no requirement for him to emphasize the NSC in time of war. It has been well documented that Truman made the decision to commit the United States to the war outside the NSC framework, and there was no wartime precedent creating an expectation that he should use the NSC for that purpose. That Truman did choose to empower the Council and its supporting staff and committee structure is a testament to the efforts of the men working within the system during the first three years of the NSC's existence.

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Defense Secretary Johnson limited the effectiveness of the Council and its supporting committees. The effect of the war was to end Truman's tolerance of dissension, and resulted in his authoritative declaration empowering the NSC system.

<sup>27</sup>From September 26, 1947, to June 23, 1950, President Truman attended 12 of 57 Council meetings. From June 28, 1950, to January 9, 1953, he attended 62 of 71 Council meetings (Lay and Johnson, 1960: 5 and 16).

#### d) Establishing a Process

It is no small matter that a system was available to empower in the summer of 1950. The conflict between the president and the Defense Secretary threatened the system in its first days, and the State Department had finally recognized the potential peril the NSC posed to its prerogatives. State's first efforts were to minimize the role the Council and its staff would play, followed by efforts to shape the system to its liking. State and Defense held opposing views on the role of the Council as well as the sort of topics it would consider.<sup>28</sup> Plotting a course between these two bureaucratic behemoths was no small feat.

Admiral Souers, the first executive secretary, approached his new role with the skill of a diplomat. He did not assume that any large grants of authority came with his position, but instead worked with the president's staff, the department heads and their subordinates in planning positions, the Joints Chiefs,

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<sup>28</sup>Defense, under Forrestal, wanted to dominate the Council and its staff and preferred to consider issues of grand strategy from which specific guidance could be deducted. State opposed Forrestal's corporatist and deductive conception. Truman's guidance placing the Secretary of State at the Council's head in his absence along with Truman's proclivity to absent himself gave State the upper hand. Early Council work focused on policy toward specific nations.

and others in an attempt to solve their common problem of coordination (Bock, 1987: chapter 1). Practices were tried and evaluated, and problems were identified and dealt with within the limitations imposed by Truman's early decisions.

"The Staff" was established to accomplish the substantive work of the NSC.<sup>29</sup> "The Staff" was an interdepartmental committee composed of individuals below the rank of assistant secretary that drafted papers for consideration by the Council. These individuals held too low a rank to adequately represent the views of their departments, and they found themselves distanced from their departments as they came to be viewed as outsiders. Souers tried to overcome this problem by establishing departmental "consultants" at a higher level to keep both him and the "The Staff" informed. The consultants failed to provide the anticipated assistance because they were heavily burdened with departmental responsibilities. Lay, Souers's successor as executive secretary, perceived this problem and recommended the creation of the "Senior Staff." Members of this group would hold

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<sup>29</sup>The information in this paragraph is drawn from Nelson (1981; 1985), Prados (1991: part 1), and Lay and Johnson ([1960] 1988: the initial phase).

the rank of assistant secretary, would be appointed by the president upon recommendation of their department, and would have NSC work as their primary responsibility. "The Staff" would continue to exist to help the Senior Staff. Truman accepted this structure after commissioning then reviewing a study that agreed with the recommendation.

Domination by the State Department was short lived. State was empowered originally by the predominant position accorded to its secretary, and by the administrative decision (made apparently by Souers) to have the State Department provide a coordinator for "The Staff" in addition to their member. Difficulties arose because it proved impossible for one department to authoritatively direct the activities of another. Members of the NSC staff began to assume a more predominant role under the direction of Averell Harriman, Truman's special assistant with substantive interests in national security.<sup>30</sup>

Concern about the effectiveness of national security organization for policy-making corresponded

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<sup>30</sup>Harriman was appointed to the position in the summer of 1950 before the Korean Conflict began, but was to remain for a time to conclude his work in Paris as a Marshall plan coordinator. He moved quickly to establish himself in the position immediately after the invasion by North Korea (Prados, 1991: 42).

with the continued deterioration of relations with the Soviet Union. The famous policy paper that became known as NSC-68 provided a call to rearm. What is not well known is that the paper was accompanied by several annexes that dealt with related issues. Annex 9 was prepared by the Bureau of the Budget's Administrative Management Division and was concerned with organizational problems. Nelson (1981: 243) well summarizes its central concerns:

After only three years of experience with an emerging national security process, the authors could pinpoint the very problems in that process that were--and remain--the most intractable: the problem of a process that is only as strong as the internal organization of its major participants, the State and Defense Departments; the problem of implementing national security policy once it is decided; and the problem of creating a viable role for a staff assistant to the president for national security.

She goes on to note that the study approved of the creation of the Senior Staff and the appointment of Harriman as a special assistant.

By the summer of 1950 a two-tiered interdepartmental committee system was in place, the NSC staff had developed a functioning secretariat, the CIA was working closely with the NSC, and the daily political-military briefing of the president was conducted solely by the NSC executive secretary. It

was a system tried, evaluated, and improved over three years, and it was capable of assuming the increased authority Truman accorded it at the outbreak of the Korean Conflict.

### 3. Eisenhower

The presidential transition from Truman to Eisenhower was the first since the establishment of the National Security Council, and as such it did much to create the impression that the NSC was simply responsive to the style of the president. The impression relies, however, on views of both the Truman and Eisenhower periods that have not been sustained by the passage of time.<sup>31</sup> A fresh look at the transition supports the contention that institutional, partisan, and organizational factors shaped the choices and decisions made by incumbents and their administrations with respect to the National Security Council system.

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<sup>31</sup>Truman was held in particularly low esteem at the time he left office. His public approval rating was around 32% and a common expression held that "to err is Truman." His method of reaching decisions was little known and was tainted by association. Eisenhower was personally held in high regard when he left office, but the impression was that he delegated decision-making to a military-like staff machinery that ground out bland compromises.

Eisenhower chose to make a bid for the Republican nomination for president because he was convinced that the United States needed to maintain an internationalist foreign policy. When it appeared that the likely Republican nominee would be Senator Robert Taft, a noted isolationist, he threw his hat into the ring.<sup>32</sup> Eisenhower, a man of tremendous public stature at the time, won the Republican nomination, and was expected to easily win the contest with Adlai Stevenson, an internationally minded Democrat.

Eisenhower, however, was faced with the necessity of distinguishing himself from a Democratic opponent who held roughly similar views on foreign policy. Eisenhower's central argument was that the essential thrust of American policy was correct, but that it was managed poorly by an inept Truman administration. Eisenhower had had significant experience dealing with both the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, and in

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<sup>32</sup>There were many reasons why Eisenhower chose to pursue the presidency, but his fear of the repercussions of a Taft presidency on international affairs seems to have been the pivotal issue. Ambrose (1983: 497-498) reports that Eisenhower "tore up his drafted statement [repudiating efforts to draft him as a candidate]" following his interview with Taft on the Senator's position on collective security for Europe and NATO in particular.

his view both were sloppily administered.<sup>33</sup> He generalized this characterization to Democrats more broadly, and he campaigned on the pledge to "straighten out the mess in Washington."<sup>34</sup>

Eisenhower seized upon the criticisms of the National Security Council leveled by the Hoover Commission's task force on National Security Organization (with which he was associated as a consultant). He denounced the NSC as an empty shell in his campaign speeches, calling it a mere "shadow agency," and promised to make the NSC a viable instrument for policy-making. The campaign rhetoric created an expectation of change that Eisenhower moved quickly to satisfy. In retrospect, however, the

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<sup>33</sup>Evidence indicates that Eisenhower was sincere in his characterization of the Roosevelt and Truman administrations. He indicated his amazement at their haphazard organizations in an interview with Ambrose (1984: 25) and in his memoirs, Mandate for Change (Eisenhower, 1963: 87). His firsthand experience with the NSC following the Hoover Commission, however, had been limited. It was, in fact, a much different organization than he had known. It will never be clear whether he would have pressed the issue so strongly in his campaign had he known the extent to which the NSC had evolved since 1949. Nonetheless, his criticism of the NSC took on a partisan character and resulted in the expectation of change in that area.

<sup>34</sup>The "mess in Washington" was a broader reference concerned primarily with corruption centered in the White House staff (Anderson, 1968: 95-96).

changes made by Eisenhower appear less dramatic than they must have seemed at the time.<sup>35</sup>

Robert Cutler did much to foster the impression that Eisenhower's NSC represented a clear break from the past. He was a Boston banker and political confidant who drafted Eisenhower's speeches critical of the National Security Council. After the election, Eisenhower asked him to prepare a study recommending reform. Cutler assembled a group to help prepare the report and provided his recommendations on March 17, 1953 (Cutler, 1953).<sup>36</sup> He remained critical of the Truman NSC in his report, filed under the title "Project Clean-up," and he wrote in the years to come distinguishing Eisenhower's system from its predecessor (Cutler, 1955; 1956).

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<sup>35</sup>Henderson (1986; 1987), Greenstein (1982), and Burke and Greenstein (1989) have done much to dispel the military analogies and unfavorable stereotypes concerning the organization and use of Eisenhower's NSC. What had appeared at the time to be a military-like organization imposed on the White House has come to be viewed as an effectively operated system that was less military-like than originally thought.

<sup>36</sup>Prados (1991: 61-62) notes that according to Admiral Souers, the first executive secretary and a member of Cutler's study group, that it only met once and that the principals "never did see an actual draft report." Nelson (1981) and Lay and Johnson ([1960] 1988), however, indicate that Cutler met with the group at least twice for two all day sessions, and he met with several individuals separately. There is no question that the final report was Cutler's.

Cutler did not have to grope in the dark for ideas on how to improve the NSC. By this time there were many critiques and recommendations for Cutler to consider. The reports of the Hoover Commission provided the earliest assessment of the NSC system, but they were followed by internal reviews and recommendations by both Souers and Lay and by the Administrative Management Division of the Budget Bureau. Townsend Hoopes (1953), a one-time member of Forrestal's staff and planner at the Pentagon, had even recommended an NSC system similar to that which we know today. In addition, Cutler met with several individuals separately and in groups for "all day sessions" in his information gathering process (Lay and Johnson, [1960] 1988: 23-24). It should come as no surprise that he also took the advice of the intellectual father of the NSC, Ferdinand Eberstadt. In the end, Nelson (1981: 246) notes, the "changes [recommended by Cutler] bore a striking resemblance to the recommendations of Annex 9 [prepared in 1950 by the Administrative Management Division of the Budget Bureau]."

One of Cutler's recommendations was to create the National Security Advisor post to energize the president's involvement in the work of the NSC and to

insure its orderly operation. This idea had been floated earlier by the Hoover Commission (Henderson, 1987: 45), presumably Eberstadt's task force, and as one of the recommendations of Townsend Hoopes (1953). In an interview with David Hall (1982: 311-312) Souers noted that it was he that recommended the establishment of the National Security Advisor position. From whomever Cutler received the recommendation, Eisenhower accepted it along with many others and appointed Cutler to the newly created post.<sup>37</sup> From that post Cutler worked energetically to set up his conception of a properly organized staff agency.

The differences between the Truman and Eisenhower NSC systems were in large part due to the energy of Robert Cutler. Robert Johnson (1969: 715-716), who

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<sup>37</sup>Prados (1991: 42-49) points out that while Cutler was the first NSA appointed for the express purpose of managing the National Security Council system, he was not the first special assistant with a national security affairs portfolio. Truman experimented with the position when he brought in Averell Harriman to handle a variety of issues. In Prados's (1991: 558) words "Ike gave that job a name but Harry Truman created it." In fact, Eisenhower's first National Security Assistant was limited to that of an authoritative tender of the NSC machinery. Harriman's role was quite different from Cutler and his immediate successors, but it is useful to remember that the modern NSA's role has many antecedents. Goodpastor, staff secretary under Eisenhower, and Clifford, Special Counsel under Truman, also provide useful precedents for roles subsumed into that associated with today's National Security Advisor.

worked under Cutler for a time, has attributed to Cutler much of the penchant for order and neatness often associated with Eisenhower himself: "[Cutler's] two tours of duty as Special Assistant at the beginning of the first and second terms of the Eisenhower Administration had something to do with the motion the NSC machine generated in those periods." Given his role in the campaign, particularly concerning the speeches critical of the NSC, and his role in devising alternative structures, it is not unreasonable to infer that the system developed was as much Cutler's as it was Eisenhower's. In fact, Eisenhower grew tired of Cutler's incessant stressing of papers and detail at NSC meetings and repeatedly indicated his desire to move away from the emphasis Cutler had established for the system (Prados, 1991: 76).

The most notable of the changes implemented by Cutler included the establishment of the National Security Advisor position, the Planning Board, the Operations Coordinating Board, and the active role played by the NSC staff in keeping the efforts of these boards on track. The increased use of outside consultants was also a hallmark of the Eisenhower NSC

(Lay and Johnson, [1960] 1988: 23).<sup>38</sup> The Planning Board was basically the Senior Staff renamed to reflect its emphasis. Its purview remained long range policy planning, but it met much more frequently and the role of the president's representative shifted from administrator to director.

The Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) was developed in response to the perennial problem of implementation.<sup>39</sup> It was not among the initial changes made by Cutler and Eisenhower; it was established on September 3, 1953, after a few months of working with the system. The OCB was the successor of

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<sup>38</sup>Nelson (1981: 245) notes that Eisenhower campaigned on the promise of bringing in individuals from outside of government as a means to "bring fresh view points to the council's deliberations." Prados (1991: 75) reports, however, that though this was attempted in various forms during the administration, it was generally opposed by Cutler and John Foster Dulles.

<sup>39</sup>The Operations Coordinating Board replaced the Psychological Strategy Board created in the latter years of the Truman administration. It was established with the intent that it would provide an authoritative force for implementation as well as coordinate the activities of agencies sharing responsibility for policy implementation (Nelson, 1981: 247). Prados (1991: 64) notes that Attorney General Brownell believed that original wording used to establish the agency placed it between the operating agencies and the president in violation of the statutes establishing the line agencies. To rectify this matter he ordered that the OCB be empowered only to advise on policy administration. That restriction resulted in the OCB never fulfilling its intended role.

Truman's Psychological Strategy Board (PSB), and as such it incorporated its predecessors functions within a much broader mandate (Bock, 1987: 38, note 5). The common link between the PSB and the OCB, notes Nelson (1981: 247), was their purpose of encouraging "policymakers throughout the government to think in terms of the cold war relevance of each of their actions." Eisenhower, she notes, believed this purpose was better accomplished through a broader implementation process than the more narrow focus of the PSB.

Changes in staff size and organization accompanied the expansion of and increased emphasis on the interdepartmental committee system. The Council retained its secretariat which continued under the leadership of James Lay. The Planning Board and the OCB each had its own staff with their own subdivisions. Most elements of these staffs remained primarily administrative in their orientation, but there were exceptions. The Planning Board's staff had a unit of analysts called the "Special Staff." This group helped the NSA critique papers and prepared his comments for the Council. The Planning Board was also the home of the staff responsible for internal security established during the Truman administration (Lay and Johnson,

[1960] 1988: 29). The OCB's staff had a unit of area specialists that served as the eyes and ears of the Board in its search for conflicts and problems.

The staff secretary position deserves some mention. Henderson (1987: 45) notes that the Hoover Commission recommended that the position be established, and implies that its institution flowed from that recommendation. The more popular account of its origins suggests a more spontaneous beginning. Lore has it that Eisenhower, unhappy with the tracking of some decision or action, snapped, "I don't think I should have to be my own Sergeant Major around here. I want to have this kind of thing handled properly" (Goodpastor, 1984: 65-66). When a similar incident occurred a week or so later, Eisenhower repeated himself and immediately designated his military aide to fill that role. The post was designated staff secretary, and General Paul T. Carroll filled the position until he died in January 1954. General Andrew Goodpastor filled the position later that year.

Technically speaking the office of the staff secretary was not a part of the NSC system, but it was integrally related to the handling of national security matters. It is important to this analysis because the role would later become part of the accepted role of

the National Security Advisor. The staff secretary under Eisenhower, particularly during General Goodpastor's tenure, was a key element in a multifaceted system for handling national security affairs.<sup>40</sup> While the NSC system was responsible for handling long range planning, and the maintenance and implementation of administration policy guidelines, crises and operational matters were handled outside the NSC framework and involved the principals directly with the president. The staff secretary was involved as a facilitator. He was present during Oval Office meetings as a note-taker; he sought out information requested by the president; he communicated the president's desires to others where direct meetings were neither possible nor necessary; he assured that the necessary paperwork followed decisions; and, occasionally, he made trips for the president to gather information or deliver a message.

The separate roles of the National Security Advisor and the staff secretary reflected a desire to maintain the distinction between planning and

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<sup>40</sup>Part of the reason the staff secretary role became so important was the unique capabilities its second incumbent brought to the post. Prados (1991: 67) notes that Eisenhower "continually widened the scope of responsibilities accorded his staff secretary. Goodpastor flourished."

implementation and between policy and operations. The distinction can be attributed to Truman's administration as well, but it was much more developed and explicit during the Eisenhower years. The distinction was generally observed by the participants of the system, but on occasion Eisenhower himself would enforce the separation (Prados, 1991: 67).

In developmental terms the NSC system reached a certain degree of maturity during the 1950's.<sup>41</sup> While foment and change was nearly a constant during the early years of the NSC under Truman, changes in the Eisenhower years came early. Later years were a model of stability compared to the Truman years. Changes were made during the latter years of the Eisenhower administration, but those changes were largely on the margins. Some change accompanied personnel turnover, and incremental improvements to the process were made gradually. Eisenhower had four different National Security Advisors, with Cutler serving in that position

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<sup>41</sup>To characterize the Eisenhower NSC as organizationally mature is to recognize that it had developed to the extent possible given the conception of its purpose shared by Truman and Eisenhower. The characterization also recognizes that the systems instituted under later presidents were fundamentally different.

twice.<sup>42</sup> At different times Eisenhower changed the rank of the members of the OCB, merged its staff with the NSC staff, and finally appointed his NSA to head both the Planning Board and the Operations Coordinating Board (Prados, 1991: 74).

### C. Role Evolution

Irrespective of Cutler's efforts to portray the system he and Eisenhower created as something set apart from its predecessor, the changes were evolutionary in their character and extent. His own position had been prefigured in the roles played by Clifford, Souers, and Harriman; the Planning Board was a renamed and more active version of Truman's Senior Staff; the Operations Coordinating Board was reconstituted from the Psychological Planning Board, and was instituted in response to the long-recognized problem of implementation; and even the president's support and regular involvement had been the norm following the invasion of South Korea.

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<sup>42</sup>Eisenhower's four National Security Advisors were Robert Cutler, Dillon Anderson, William H. Jackson, and Gordon Gray. Jackson held the role for a three month period between Anderson's departure and Cutler's return for a second stint. Prados (1991: 76) reports that neither the NSC staff nor Eisenhower were "overly impressed with Anderson," and Jackson's role was only an interim one while Cutler prepared to return.

Souers downplayed the differences between Truman's and Eisenhower's NSC. Prados (1991: 70) quotes Souers: "Bobby Cutler told me the purpose was to make it look as if the Eisenhower administration had made good its promise to revolutionize the setup of the council but in effect not to change the way it was being run." He went on to say of the study group formed to recommend changes: "Everybody present agreed that a mistake was made in making those [1952 campaign] speeches [criticizing Truman's NSC]." Souers's reservations aside, the record indicates that the changes were more than symbolic, yet they were not revolutionary.

To say that the changes were evolutionary, however, is not to diminish the importance of the changes or the efforts of Eisenhower, Cutler, and their staff. The early efforts of every administration are critical to its future success or failure, and the early records of every NSC are indicative of the struggle to come to grips with the centrifugal forces inherent in the national security policy apparatus. Evolution is a label indicative of growth rather than degeneration. The Eisenhower NSC represented growth in size, amounts of activity, and substantive business. Some transitions are more successful than others, and

in the area of the NSC the Truman to Eisenhower transition was one of the more successful ones.

The fact that the changes were evolutionary in nature had much to do with the success of the transition. Truman's staff remained on and formed the core of the larger staff that came into being. The same basic idea concerning the role of the NSC system prevailed, and the members of the staff were familiar with their roles within the system, even if the system and its outputs were used and emphasized to a greater extent than before.

Evolutionary change continued throughout the Eisenhower years. Most of the structural changes were implemented within the first year of the administration, but evolution of the behavior associated with the established positions continued. The example of Goodpastor and the staff secretary is noted above. Perhaps as important but less recognized is the development of the role of the NSA during the tenure of Gordon Gray.

Gray qualitatively altered the role of the NSA, but in a most gradual way.<sup>43</sup> Gray was far different from Cutler in both experience and demeanor. Gray

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<sup>43</sup>Information in this paragraph is derived from Prados's extended discussions in part II.

combined expertise in national security affairs and a smooth, gracious demeanor with a sensitivity for the president's personal and political problems. He moved the Council away from administrative minutia and interposed the NSC staff in that role.<sup>44</sup> He took on the more diplomatic role among NSC principals associated with Souers rather than the more administrative role associated with Lay and (in a more high-powered fashion) Cutler. He chaired both the Planning Board and the Operations Coordination Board. He initiated "background" briefing of the press (Prados, 1991: 79). And he performed services for the president in crisis response situations (Taiwan Straights and Berlin crises) that encroached on the role associated hitherto with the position of staff secretary. Gray performed these roles while continuing to manage the extensive interdepartmental committee system and the complex of staff that became associated with the NSC.

Viewed together, the Eisenhower changes served to expand and further institutionalize the roles of the Council, the National Security Advisor, the NSC staff,

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<sup>44</sup>Gray initiated the practice of the NSC staff reviewing implementation progress rather than the Council itself (Prados, 1991: 78).

and the interdepartmental committee system. These changes were made with the purpose and result of increasing the president's control over the making and implementation of national security policy. The stipulation that the Vice President would chair meetings of the Council (rather than the Secretary of State) in the president's absence was symbolic of the shift of the policy-making locus from the departments to the White House. Kennedy would accelerate this trend by different means.

#### **D. Summary**

Eisenhower held roughly similar views on the purpose and role of the NSC system to those of Truman at the end of the earlier president's term. Both viewed it as a means of collecting information and advice from the disparate elements of the executive branch. Both established its advisory nature and reiterated the fact that only the president made decisions. Both considered planning its primary function, although Eisenhower made this distinction more explicit. Both used other means to handle crises and other operational events. Eisenhower expanded the NSC system in size and in the scope and pace of activity, but he did not change its fundamental nature.

Partisan conflict stimulated review and alteration of the NSC system. The Hoover commission was motivated by a Republican controlled Congress to discredit an Executive Branch that had mushroomed under the tutelage of Democrats in both Congress and the presidency. Eisenhower followed by criticizing the NSC for partisan advantage. His pre-election rhetoric virtually required some effort at reforming the system following his victory at the polls.

Institutional conflict was intertwined with partisan motivations. The Republican Congress that established the Hoover Commission did so with the intent of reining in a presidency and bureaucracy that in its view had run amok. Its goal was to return the presidency to the limited conception long favored by Republicans and, thereby, restore Congress to its traditional position of supremacy. The election of 1948 resulted in a Commission report that was skewed toward the conception of the presidency favored by the Democrats. Those elections had also returned a Democratic Congress, but Truman's proposals based on the Commission were received there with mixed results. Although its actions were ameliorated by partisan ties, Congress remained concerned with its own institutional prerogatives.

NSC system growth represented a shift in the balance of power between the president and Congress. Whatever the causes of the growth of the NSC system and other presidential staff agencies, their unmistakable result was an increase in the power of the president to control the activities of the executive departments of government. The NSC system as it had evolved under Truman and Eisenhower allowed the president to be more aware of, and more capable of controlling the activities of the operational arms of the government.

Individuals at the organizational level worked beneath the larger political conflicts to fashion a working system to draw together the disparate elements of the national security policy community. The record clearly demonstrates that the individuals who made up the NSC worked diligently with varying levels of support from above to create a system. Souers, Lay, Harriman, Cutler, and Gray were all instrumental in the process by which the role of the NSC system expanded and developed.

Finally, personality does matter, but not in the narrow, simplified manner suggested by the predominant interpretation of NSC development. Politics and political decision-making are very social enterprises wherein the interaction of individuals on a personal

level can affect professional relationships. Trust and respect can swell the responsibilities associated with any given position. Souers, Goodpastor, and Gray are all examples of how the trust of president combined with energy and initiative can expand any particular job description. The other side of the coin, however, is that poor relationships can prevent even well conceived organizations from functioning properly, as with Acheson and Johnson.

The focus for individuals concerned with the relationship between personality and organization is perhaps more appropriately placed at the level of the principal assistant charged with the NSC. Souers established a process and diplomatically maneuvered to promote coordination and harmony. Lay clearly discerned problems with the system and recommended organizational remedies, but, by all accounts, lacked the personal savvy required to facilitate harmony and coordination. It was perhaps Cutler's penchant for order that most shaped the early operations of the Eisenhower NSC. Finally, it was Gray who, with his gracious manner and broader conception of the NSA role, managed to push the NSC system toward more expansive involvement in the coordination of all national security affairs.

## Chapter VI

### I. Institutional Revolution

#### A. Introduction

The aura associated with the Kennedy presidency has been one of the most evocative of the modern era. The whole notion of Camelot evokes images of a modern prince, of a young man whose personal charisma energized a nation. John F. Kennedy was a man whose family wealth made possible for him to attain high office without first sullyng himself in the political trenches, whose physical attributes and opulent surroundings facilitated the creation of a myth. That myth was one of personal promise, of the ideal made possible. People saw in him an image more typically associated with fantasy, and that image made it possible for him to tap into the idealism of a generation. His tragic death froze that image in time, perhaps magnified its intensity, and made possible the perpetuation of the myth.

Myth and the presidency have not been easily distinguishable in American history. Dwight D. Eisenhower was no stranger to the practice of myth-making. The war hero, the leader of the largest military organization ever assembled in the history of man, the man whose personal popularity regularly

outstripped that of his administration was at the center of a very different image of perhaps equally mythical proportion. It was no accident that the Kennedy myth followed the Eisenhower myth,<sup>1</sup> and that organizational attributes came to be associated with the larger-than-life images associated with these men.

It was the Eisenhower-to-Kennedy transition that provided the clearest example for those who established and have perpetuated the style-centered interpretation. Like most myths, the Kennedy and Eisenhower myths are partly based on reality, but extend beyond what that reality actually was. Eisenhower was a staff expert, and Kennedy had little experience in that realm. Eisenhower was comfortable in large meetings, and Kennedy had little patience for them. But these personal attributes do not make a presidency. Emphasis on the readily apparent has obscured recognition of more pervasive factors shaping the distinctions between the administrations led by these men.

This chapter attempts to separate myth from reality and to explain radically different

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<sup>1</sup>It was no accident because of the tendency in American politics for one administration to react to the perceived shortcomings of the previous administration. See chapter two for the development of this concept with respect to the National Security Council.

organizational attributes in terms of the framework developed earlier. The interconnecting roles of partisan conflict, institutional conflict, and organizational level activity were associated with institutional evolution in chapter 5. Here they are associated with much more dramatic change.

### 1. Revolutionary Change

The change associated with the Eisenhower-to-Kennedy transition is labeled revolutionary because the National Security Council system was fundamentally altered. The NSC was not, however, deinstitutionalized in a strict sense of the word. It has become commonplace to label the Kennedy changes the "deinstitutionalization" of the NSC because of the dismemberment of the boards and committees associated primarily with Eisenhower. In fact, however, it is more accurate to state that the transition reinstitutionalized the NSC system along different lines. The National Security Council system never ceased to exist; its statutory basis was not changed; neither was its institutional position altered.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>The distinction between deinstitutionalization and reinstitutionalization is an important one for this analysis. Deinstitutionalization signifies an ending to what has existed and a disestablishment of the means for an organizational entity to perpetuate itself. Such an interpretation is consistent with the notion

The style-based interpretation of that change explains new organizational patterns in terms of their relationship to the political/decision-making style of the incumbent. Eisenhower's system was bureaucratic because he was personally comfortable with that mode of decision-making. Kennedy's system was naturally different because his style precluded conformance to rigid patterns of decision-making.

Style-centered interpretations assume a direct relationship between decision-making style and organizational forms. One leads necessarily to the other. If a president prefers one-on-one discussions to formal meetings, then the organizational structure of presidential staff agencies will reflect a lack of bureaucratic specialization and clear lines of authority.

The relationship between the decision-making style and organizational structure is neither direct nor

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that the National Security Council system is a personal creature of the individual who is president. Reinstitutionalization, on the other hand, signifies the perpetuation of an existing organization along different lines. This means that rather than each incumbent creating from scratch a new organization with little relationship to the last, each picks up where the last left off and modifies as necessary to suit changing circumstances. See Jepperson (1991) for a complete development of the distinctions between various forms of institutionalization.

clear. This chapter explains the Eisenhower-to-Kennedy transition in terms distinct from the style of the incumbent, and thus uncouples style and structure. Later chapters continue to illustrate the separation.

Cases of dramatic change pose particular difficulties for those who would explain change in institutional terms, however. Institutional change is most generally thought of as incremental and evolutionary. If change is not to be explained in terms of the incumbent's style, it must instead be explained by some combination of historical circumstances favoring such change. Partisan and inter-institutional conflict have generally provided the impetus for change in the case of the National Security Council.

## 2. The Political Context

Before discussing the partisan, institutional, and organizational aspects of the transition to a new style of National Security Council, it is useful to recall the political situation existing at the time.

Eisenhower was the popular candidate for president in 1952 and won by a substantial majority. He brought with him a Republican House and Senate. The Republicans, however, lost control of both the House and the Senate in the 1954 elections and were unable to

regain control of either house until the Republicans captured the Senate again in the election of 1980. Hence, beginning in 1955 we see the divided control of the executive and Congressional branches of government that has until recently been the norm in American politics. Like the case of Truman and the Republican 80th Congress, this resulted in the intertwining of party and institutional conflict. Under these circumstances, the levers of institutional control can be utilized for partisan purposes.

Eisenhower's successful resolution of the Korean conflict and his personal popularity resulted in an easy victory in the 1956 election over Adlai Stevenson. He was unable, however, to generalize his personal popularity and ideas on policy to the Republican party and thereby return Republicans to power in either the House or the Senate. The Democrats' continuing hold on the levers of Congressional power made it possible for them to use that power as a means by which to demonstrate their differences from the Republican party and its shortcomings. In the case of the NSC, Senator Jackson, a Democrat from Washington, used his highly publicized Subcommittee on national security policy machinery to discredit Eisenhower's organization for

national security, particularly his National Security Council.

Although both Republicans (under Eisenhower's leadership) and Democrats had at this time an internationalist perspective on relations with the outside world, their approaches to those relationships were nonetheless different. The differences lay in the domestic bases of foreign policy and national security. Eisenhower, and Republicans more generally, favored a restrained approach toward government spending and government activity that extended to the area of the armed forces. This restraint resulted in limited defense spending. The policy of massive retaliation, based on the early use of nuclear weapons, was one result of spending limitations. The assumption, in simplified form, was that countries would be sure to take our interests into account if faced with the prospect of nuclear annihilation, but perhaps even more important was the understanding that nuclear weapons were relatively inexpensive in comparison to the much larger force levels required for a flexible, conventional military response. Democrats, including Kennedy, argued that massive retaliation was unrealistic, and they were in favor of greater spending on defense (Firestone, 1988: 58).

During the Eisenhower administration, the Soviets appeared to be making impressive gains. A series of Soviet successes made it appear that they would soon catch or surpass the United States in technology, military, and world position. In 1953, they exploded their first hydrogen bomb. In 1954, Nasser seized power in Egypt and established close relations with the Soviet Union. In 1956, the Soviets crushed the Democratic reform movement in Hungary. In 1957, in a move that shocked American national pride, Soviets launched Sputniks I and II, beating the United States into space. The following year seemed to confirm the superiority of the Soviets in the space race. The United States launched Explorer I, a thirty-one pound satellite, while the Soviets launched Sputnik III, a 3,000-pound satellite. Shortly thereafter, the U.S. launched a moon rocket that failed to reach its destination, while the Soviet Union managed to put two monkeys into orbit and successfully land on the moon. In 1959, Castro consolidated his control over Cuba and nationalized U.S.-owned sugar mills. Finally, Khrushchev touched on a fear residing in the U.S. when he exclaimed, "We will bury you."

Senator Jackson, himself a potential presidential candidate, launched an attack on the administration's

national security policies in April 1958, in a speech to the National War College. "He expressed the belief that the United States was losing the cold war, that budgetary restraints were endangering national security, and that the National Security Council mechanism was unable to produce a coherent national program for U.S. survival" (Nelson, 1981: 253). The following year, Senator Jackson introduced a resolution to investigate national security policy machinery through the committee on government operations. The Eisenhower administration recognized the political dynamite inherent in an investigation and made an attempt to prevent it from coming to pass. What resulted was a compromise. Matters of policy were to be avoided. It was stressed that Jackson's Subcommittee would conduct a study rather than an investigation and that the study would be "directed [only] to matters involving purposes, composition, organization, and procedures" (Nelson, 1981: 253).

### 3. A Direct Relationship Between Process and Policy?

Jackson's focus had the result of confusing the relationship between policy and process. There was no question that Senator Jackson deemed current policy inadequate. The focus of his Subcommittee, on the means by which that policy was made, made it appear

that the process resulted necessarily in the policy. Policy-making by committee, the report concluded, resulted in watered-down compromises that represented the least common denominator solutions in a process of bureaucratic bargaining. The Subcommittee asserted that the president was not well served by such an organization.

The perception that organization and policy output were causally linked in a direct relationship was furthered by two additional factors. First, Eisenhower promoted the image that he was above politics, above the fray. He and his subordinates in the national security area portrayed the NSC as a mechanistic entity (Cutler, 1955; 1956). The perception was that Eisenhower sat on top of this pyramid, decided on policies presented to him by others, and walked away. This left him time to play golf or to recover from his many infirmities. Greenstein (1982) later demonstrated that this image was more facade than it was reality, however. In actuality, Eisenhower's system was flexible, he was engaged, and he had several different means through which he came to decisions (Henderson, 1986; 1987). But after years of fostering an above-politics image, it was not possible for Eisenhower to prove otherwise.

An emerging division in the way people viewed the relationship between policy and action furthered the perception that a given process led directly to a given type of policy.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, one could argue that a government makes policies, and actions flow from those policies in a deductive fashion. On the other hand, one could argue that government takes action on a successive series of events, and the pattern represented by those actions is government policy. The former school of thought was associated with a managerial conception of the presidency advocated by Hoover and apparently instituted by Eisenhower. The latter school of thought was more closely associated with the political conception of the presidency that came to be associated with the work of Neustadt and was modeled by Franklin Roosevelt. The associations followed party lines. A natural inference followed: conservative presidents were managers and had organizational forms that supported that emphasis; progressive presidents, on the other hand, were dynamic

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<sup>3</sup>The distinction between approaches to policy-making was pointed out by I.M. Destler in an interview with the author (Destler, 1988). He referred to the distinction as a means to criticize multiple advocacy as developed by Alexander George (1972; 1980).

politicians and required, alternatively, different organizational relationships.

## **B. Partisan Conflict**

Partisan conflict, although intertwined with institutionally based conflict, formed the basis for a shift from the bureaucratic organization associated with Truman and Eisenhower to the personal staff model associated with John Kennedy. Candidate Kennedy had never once attacked the organization of the NSC in his speeches or his actions prior to the election of 1960, but partisan conflict had set the terms of the organizational debate in such a way as to leave him little choice once he assumed office. Demonstration of this proposition requires further elaboration of the themes introduced above.

### **1. Competing Ideas**

Ideas have force to the extent that they become associated with and are given expression by an institution with the authority and capability of putting those ideas into practice. Chapter Four illustrated the play of ideas between those in the Navy Department who favored corporatist concepts of organization and those in the War Department who favored more hierarchical forms. The result in that case, as frequently happens, was a confused combination

of the two. Conceptual clarity and politics have not been regular bedfellows. The distinctions between those who advocated policy-making through general guidance and those who advocated policy-making through discrete decisions has been similarly confused.

The managerial conception of the presidency was closely associated with the notion that general policy guidance directed the subordinate actions of the bureaucracy. Presidents, according to this conception, would lead the government much like a Chief Executive Officer of a large corporation. Presidents beginning as early as Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft encouraged a managerial conception of the presidency as a means to increase their power over the executive branch (Arnold, 1986: 4; Sander, 1989: Ch. 1). Franklin Roosevelt fostered this impression as well and, in fact, did much to bring it about. The New Deal resulted in a much larger bureaucracy, and Roosevelt commissioned the Brownlow report as a means to help him further his control. Congress responded to the Brownlow report by increasing the President's managerial resources (albeit not to the extent desired by Roosevelt), but Roosevelt did little to institutionalize these resources within the White House or the Executive Office of the President. This task

was left to Truman and was consolidated during the Eisenhower administration. Thus, Presidents of both parties were associated with the managerial conception of the presidency.

Two factors resulted in the strong association between the managerial presidency and Republicans. The first was Herbert Hoover's high-profile commissions on executive branch organization, and the second was the perception nurtured by Eisenhower concerning his well-developed staff organization within the White House. Hoover emphasized those forms of control that are associated with managerial conceptions in almost every area. Clear lines of control, authority commensurate with responsibility, accountability, rational forms of organization, clear delineation of responsibility, and grouping of like functions within the same executive department were the hallmarks of his organizational reform. Eisenhower picked up on this theme, campaigned on the poor organization associated with FDR and Truman, and instituted rational forms of organization in the White House following his inauguration.

Democrats came to associate managerial styles of organization and management within the White House with the conservative policies of the Eisenhower administration. Professor Neustadt of Columbia

University played a large role in fostering this perception. Neustadt had been a staff member in the Truman administration and had remained active in Democratic politics from his position at Columbia. He exercised considerable influence in the transition of the National Security Council through three separate but related avenues. The first was his relationship as a consultant to the Jackson Subcommittee staff. The second came as a result of his involvement in that committee when Senator Jackson introduced Neustadt to the Democratic candidate John Kennedy. Kennedy was impressed by the professor and asked him to prepare a memorandum on staffing the presidency. The third was through the impact of his book, Presidential Power, which became, in the words of Theodore Lowi (1985: 9) "the Bible of the incoming administration."

Neustadt contended that rational (hierarchical, bureaucratic) forms of organization within the White House prevented the president from receiving the kinds of political information that made it possible for him to do his job. His model of an effective president was Franklin Roosevelt. Roosevelt, Neustadt asserted, was successful, not because his policies were in line with those that Neustadt approved (although this was certainly the case), but because he approached the

presidency in a manner that Neustadt considered dynamic. Organizational relationships were the key to dynamic leadership in the political sense. The organizational relationships advocated by Hoover and instituted by Eisenhower and to a lesser degree by Truman made it impossible, or at least unlikely, that the president would be able to feel the pulse of the political community and obtain the information so necessary to his political effectiveness. Neustadt's emphasis on the importance of information was quite explicit:

A President is helped by what he gets into his mind. His first essential need is information. . . . [But] it is not information of a general sort that helps. . . . It is the odds and ends of tangible detail that pieced together in his own mind illuminate the underside of issues put before him. . . . He must reach out as widely as he can for every scrap of fact, opinion, gossip, bearing on his own interests and relationships as President. . . . He can never assume that anyone or any system (emphasis added) will supply the bits and pieces he needs most. (Neustadt, 1980 [1960]: 113).

Clear delineation of areas of responsibility, hierarchical forms of control, and above all, a chief of staff made the president a captive of his advisors. Roosevelt's staffing arrangements, by contrast, utilized overlapping areas of responsibility and competitive relationships among aides. This style of

leadership made the president the center of information and forced decisions to the top. Neustadt's clear message was, if a president intended to be an active progressive leader, a leader rather than a clerk, he required more fluid, informal forms of organization. This message emerged clearly from Jackson's Subcommittee, from Neustadt's memorandum on staffing the president-elect, and from Neustadt's book, Presidential Power.

These competing conceptions on the management and use of the office of the president differed in their orientation toward policy-making. The difference was implicit. In the managerial conception of the presidency, the focus was on the development of general policy guidance that would direct the activities of the bureaucracy below it. In the political conception of the presidency, the emphasis was on making each of the discrete decisions that as a body made up U.S. policy.

In fact, the distinction between the two is not so clear in practice. The revisionist work of Greenstein (1982) has demonstrated that Eisenhower was integrally involved in both policy-making and operations; however, Eisenhower's practice of de-emphasizing his personal involvement and emphasizing the policy process made it appear that he did one to the exclusion of the other.

Roosevelt, too, had to rely on policy to direct the activities of the bureaucracy; however, his emphasis was on his personal involvement in the decision-making process.

The contemporaries of JFK were aware of this distinction and demonstrated their awareness through both their analysis of the Eisenhower administration and through the new organization developed for the new administration. In the study of the 1960-61 presidential transition on managing and staffing the Department of State undertaken by McKinsey & Company (1960), for example, the staff study criticized Secretary Dulles for following the same pattern as Eisenhower had, in distinguishing between policy and operations. The study notes "in retrospect, it appears that in applying this rule, Secretary Dulles tended to lose sight of the policy implications of many operational decisions" (McKinsey & Company, 1960: I-4). Dean Rusk, Kennedy's Secretary of State, later reiterated the importance of operations in the development of policy. When Bundy's National Security Council attempted to update the general policies left by the Eisenhower administration, he discounted the effort as unimportant. General policy, he averred, was

of little use in guiding the day-to-day decision-making (Thompson, 1988: 30).

## 2. The Jackson Subcommittee

The Jackson Subcommittee, despite the protestations of its chairman, was in both its initial intent and its products a partisan activity. It was conceived as a means to discredit the Eisenhower administration. Its products prepared the blueprint for an incoming Democratic administration.

Determining motivation is a difficult enterprise. It is particularly difficult in the case of partisan activity because those involved have tended to disguise, when possible, such motivations. In the case of the Jackson Subcommittee, however, four indicators suggest that it was, indeed, a partisan affair. The first is leadership. Jackson was an outspoken Eisenhower critic. He was a potential presidential candidate himself and had much to gain from discrediting the Eisenhower administration. The second is timing. The committee was established in 1959, but it held its hearings throughout 1960, during the presidential primary season and into the campaign season. The third is the interaction between the parties. The Eisenhower administration made every attempt to discourage the hearings and to limit their

focus. Due to Democratic party control of Congress, the Eisenhower administration was unsuccessful in heading off the study. The fourth is the products.

The outputs of the Jackson Subcommittee deserve close attention. Their impact on the incoming Kennedy administration is discussed in greater detail later. Here their partisan tone is highlighted. Although the Subcommittee's mandate extended to "matters involving purposes, composition, organization, and procedures," (Nelson, 1985: 253) its reach extended somewhat further. The Subcommittee's reports (1961: v. 3) criticized Eisenhower's National Security Council's focus; its output; and its usefulness. Their reports suggested that Eisenhower's elaborate system was designed to spare the president the necessity of choice. They suggested that the NSC system provided for coordination rather than delegation, and criticized Eisenhower and his people by suggesting that poor decisions were more the result of poor policy-makers than of poor organization. Such implications are not the likely results of a nonpartisan or bipartisan effort. Senator Jackson belied his intentions in his final statement, where he noted:

Faulty machinery is rarely the real culprit when our policies are inconsistent or when they lack sustained forward momentum. The

underlying cause is normally found elsewhere. It consists in the absence of a clear sense of direction and coherence of policy at the top of the government (1961: 4).

The Jackson Subcommittee reports did much to further the perception that the NSC system was peculiarly the creation of the incumbent president. Although the committee noted the evolutionary character of the growth of the National Security Council system (p. 32), it emphasized the personal character of the NSC system for two reasons: first, by associating the system currently in place explicitly with President Eisenhower, criticisms of that system would in fact be criticisms of the Eisenhower administration. Second, the emphasis on a president's latitude in determining the organization of the NSC system legitimized any changes an incoming president might make. Encouragement or legitimation of change within the Executive branch, or more closely, related to the presidency itself leads one to the institutional aspects of the conflict.

### C. Institutional conflict

Institutional motivations can be as difficult to discern as those of a more partisan character. Discernment is difficult because players may fill multiple roles, because the role definition or

requirement in a given circumstance may not be clear, or because players may not understand the importance of their actions to their institutional position. It is reasonable to assume that behavior is not solely parochial in its intent, but that it derives also from a conception of what is best for the nation, with the understanding that institutional motivation will often be neither clear nor pure. The analysis below attempts to place individual behavior in its institutional context.

#### 1. Congress

The doctrine of separate institutions sharing powers has resulted in conflict between Congress and the presidency for control of the executive bureaucracy, regardless of partisan control (Mayhew, 1991). As has been noted in earlier chapters, however, partisan conflict has an institutional base when control is divided between the parties. Democratic control of the Congress made it possible for Senator Jackson to conduct a study on executive branch organization. It is unlikely, although not impossible, that a Republican-controlled Congress would have approved such an investigation.

Congress had reason to be concerned with the centralization of policy-making that had occurred under

Eisenhower's administration. Chapter Four illustrated the benefits that accrue to members of Congress from a decentralized policy-making system. Congress has very close ties with the bureaucratic departments and has maintained its control through its role in the appropriation of funds, through the determination of operating procedures, through the legislation of establishing and operating procedures and parameters, and through the oversight process. The centralized policy-making machinery of Eisenhower's NSC system threatened to disrupt that close relationship.

The National Security Council system as it had evolved during the Eisenhower administration came to encompass a greater range of policy than had ever been the case before. The interdepartmental committee system on both the policy-planning and operations coordination sides, had pervasive influence over the policy-making process. Centralized direction may have limited traditional Congressional influence over particular matters. The close hold on military appropriations exercised throughout the 1950's is one indication of the effectiveness of Eisenhower's control through the NSC system.

Some of the conclusions and recommendations of the Jackson Subcommittee support such an interpretation.

The Subcommittee recommended abolishing the Operations Coordinating Board. It recommended limiting the scope and use of the Planning Board. It recommended that the locus of foreign policy activity be shifted to the State Department, and it emphasized delegation of responsibility to department heads over coordination by the Chief Executive. Further, it recommended that more reliance be placed on informal working groups, even though experience with this type of arrangement proved unsuccessful during the Truman administration. On the other hand, the Subcommittee also recommended that the president have a small but able staff to assist him in preparing the work of the council, recording its decisions, and trouble-shooting on-the-spot assignments, and it recommended that the Bureau of the Budget be strengthened.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. The Bureaucracy

The executive departments occupy that nebulous place between the Congress and the President. Whether a department prefers presidential or Congressional

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<sup>4</sup>It is unlikely that the Subcommittee recognized at the time the effect that a small but active professional staff at the NSC would have on the power of the president vis-a-vis Congress. The suggestion to increase the power of the Budget Bureau was, however, not in the interest of the institutional prerogatives of Congress.

control depends upon the time, the issue, and the specific circumstances. Chapter Four illustrated a case of very substantial disagreement among executive departments in this regard. In the case of the Jackson Subcommittee, however, the primary focus was on the NSC and its organization rather than on that of any particular department. While it can be argued that Eisenhower's extensive NSC system intruded on the prerogatives of the departments, it clearly did not threaten their institutional survival. On balance, the testimony of departmental representatives did not indicate a negative view of the National Security Council. Disparaging remarks subsequently printed by the Subcommittee in its reports were frequently drawn out of context and made to appear worse than was indicated by the overall message of the person giving the testimony.

There is a fundamental tension for executive departments between the opposing values of clear direction and autonomy. On the one hand, clear direction simplifies the problem experienced by an executive department by resolving critical questions of priorities and resource allocation. On the other hand, institutions have an inherent tendency toward self-preservation and desire to shape their requirements

with a view toward maintaining their institutional self-identification (Builder, 1989). Senator Jackson's Subcommittee captured this contradiction by recommending decentralization and clear direction at the same time.

The generally positive attitude of members of the bureaucracy toward the centralized NSC system was due to the perception that they, at least, had some say in the institutionalized process through which their marching orders were generated. Autonomy had its upside, but advantages that accrued from autonomy were offset by the unpredictability of direction that might be forthcoming from a process in which they had no institutionalized means to express their positions. Neustadt (1963: 860), the ever-observant analyst, noted that the bureaucracy needed some form of institutionalized direction: "orderly procedure, dutiful response, written records, [and] firm decisions." But these, he contended, served the needs of bureaucrats rather than the president.

#### **D. Organizational Decision-making**

President Kennedy was not at a loss for suggestions as to how to proceed in setting up his office. Early in the campaign he had commissioned Clark Clifford and Professor Neustadt separately to

prepare studies recommending the proper staff organizations should he be elected. Both delivered their reports shortly after the election, and Neustadt gave the president-elect a copy of Presidential Power as well. Senator Jackson similarly took it upon himself to deliver advance copies of his committee's recommendations to the president-elect. In addition to these, there were the transition reports prepared by committees with the mandate to review Defense and State Department's organization for making foreign policy. Both of these impacted on the president's own organization through their suggestions with respect to the National Security Council. What must have been most striking to the president-elect about all of this information was its substantial agreement concerning the organization of the National Security Council: The NSC system was held in universally low esteem by his advisors.

There is little evidence to suggest that the president-elect gave much thought to retaining the existing system. Kennedy was not bound to any particular action given that he had made no campaign promises or even allusions in this area. He had only suggested during the campaign that he was impressed by the work of the Jackson Subcommittee. He had made no

commitments. His decisions seem to have been guided by the cumulative weight of the advice he had received. And the form that the new system would assume was determined more by his selection of personnel and by happenstance than by some premeditated design.

The lone dissent concerned with retaining the existing system came from the outgoing administration. Eisenhower placed considerable emphasis in his discussions with the incoming president on the importance and operation of his NSC system. Gordon Gray, too, argued on behalf of the system, and suggested that at the very least, the system should not be dismantled before some alternative could be constructed. These pleas had little effect. In the end, they seem to have confirmed that such mechanisms were necessary for this particular president (Eisenhower), but not for one with more progressive intentions.

The National Security Council system as it existed in 1960 was abolished, more for what it symbolized than for what it was. Although Kennedy had not made specific commitments with respect to the NSC, he had run on a broad commitment to "get the country moving again." He had not, however, given much thought to just what it would take to do that (King, 1988: 174).

Dismantling the NSC system, therefore, symbolized his intent to take charge and rescue national security policy from the bureaucratic morass associated with his predecessor. It was a particularly desirable move because it allowed him to demonstrate his intention of being an involved and active chief executive without requiring commitments on specific policy matters. Symbolic gestures were in keeping with the practices of the Kennedy team whose campaign, according to Cronin (1988), was long on symbolism but rather short on substance.

The first indication of Kennedy's decision to dismantle the NSC system was his early inaction. Eisenhower had encouraged the president-elect to choose and announce his National Security Advisor at the first possible chance. Neustadt, on the other hand, had encouraged just the opposite. Kennedy's delay was the only outward indication of his acceptance of Neustadt's recommendation until his January 1st appointment of McGeorge Bundy as the National Security Advisor (Kennedy's last major national security appointment). Kennedy announced his intentions in the following words:

I intend to consolidate, under Mr. Bundy's direction, the present National Security Council secretariat, the staff and functions

of the operations control board, and the continuing functions of a number of special projects staffs within the White House. . . . It is my hope to use the National Security Council and its machinery more flexibly than in the past (Anderson, 1968: 261).

This limited pronouncement did little to clarify the role that a new National Security Council would have. However, the appointment of Bundy made it clear to those who knew him that the position of the National Security Advisor would be a source of power.

#### 1. Building a New System

The selection of McGeorge Bundy as National Security Advisor had significant implications. The timing of his selection indicated the victory of the reformers over those who would have continued the status quo, but the fact that McGeorge Bundy was a candidate for Secretary of State tremendously altered the role definition of the National Security Advisor. Bundy's expertise in American foreign policy, his status as an intellectual and as a potential candidate for Secretary of State combined with his renowned ambition, transformed the role of the National Security Advisor from the manager of process to an independent force for policy-making in its own right. Anderson (1968: 3) says of McGeorge Bundy, his "ambition glistens like a dagger in the moonlight." Bundy was

not, one can be sure, a passive player in the development of the new National Security Council staff. Bundy presented his first sketch of his ideas in a memo to the president three weeks after his appointment. His memo indicated the existence of substantial agreement about what should not be done but did not represent any clear consensus on what should be done. Bundy (1961a) noted: "Everyone who has written or talked about the National Security Council agrees that it should be what the president wants it to be. This is right." He then recommended substantial reorganization of the Planning Board, the Operations Coordinating Board, and the National Security Council staff, saying that, "they are too big, too formal, and too paper-bound to do the immediate or the planning work you want." Bundy also noted that he "agreed with Dick Neustadt's remarkable analysis."

In the next few days, Bundy received several additional recommendations concerning the future direction of the National Security Council and its staff. James Lay, executive secretary under Eisenhower, asked his staff members for their recommendations and submitted them in a package. Most of these recommended changes were incremental in nature and were quickly discounted by Bundy. Chuck Johnson,

however, submitted a set of recommendations that must have been more to the liking of Bundy. Johnson who had worked with Bromley Smith as a staff member for the Operations Coordinating Board, began his analysis with a statement summarizing his assessment of the prevailing attitude: "It is assumed that the president will make use of the statutory council on an ad referendum basis and will endeavor to keep it clear of routine review of policies that can adequately be performed at lower levels in the government by planning and operating officials who are aware of and responsive to the overall policy directions of the administration" (Johnson, 1961). Among other things, Johnson recommended abolishing the Planning Board, Planning Board assistant, the Operations Coordinating Board, and the OCB assistants. He recommended assigning all of the functions that these boards fulfilled to the Special Assistant to the President, Mr. Bundy. This was the direction in which Bundy appeared to be heading.

The decision to reject the system that had been developed by previous administrations resulted in organizational confusion. There were few rules, procedures, or grants of specific authority that anyone was aware of. What resulted was a scramble to try to

meet the business of the day without leaving important business unfinished or understaffed. At the first meeting of the Kennedy National Security Council, nearly two weeks into the new administration, Bundy reported that a different organization "involving fewer and smaller staff groups composed of more senior personnel," would be used (NSC Action No. 2401). Although he clearly repudiated what had gone before, he certainly did not replace it with any specific intentions.

Bundy was in the process, however, of developing his own approach to the National Security Council staff problem. In his initial memorandum, Bundy (1961a) recommended that he and his staff conduct studies on specific issues--a departure from the previous practice of facilitating and commenting on drafts prepared by the departments. Bundy (1961b) reiterated his desire to staff studies with his own personnel in his January 30th memorandum to the president. Bundy clearly indicated his preference for a substantively oriented National Security Council staff, rather than one focused on the administrative role associated with policy paper management. In his briefing memo preparing Kennedy for the first National Security

Council meeting, Bundy (1961c) wrote concerning Eisenhower's "large, formal, paper-producing staff. . . . I am sure you don't want that."

Work began to simultaneously dismantle the existing system and create a new system in its place. Tearing the old system down proved to be the easy part. In February, Kennedy formally abolished the Operations Coordinating Board. Bundy did his part by consolidating the various aspects of Eisenhower's National Security Council staff under his direction, and eliminating all distinctions among the formerly separate staff groups. Many of the administrative personnel were let go or transferred to positions in the executive departments.

Building a new National Security Council process proved to be more problematic. Bundy directed his creative energies toward that aspect of the staff previously known as the "special staff." He retained a couple of the professional staff from the Eisenhower years. He let others go, and he expanded his professional staff with several new additions. This staff of about a dozen men was the core of the Bundy National Security Council operation. These men were to be responsible for the independent analysis he had already proposed to the president and for the energetic

staff work advocated by Neustadt. At least this was the general concept.

At the core of Bundy's conception was his intention to shift the National Security Council staff from its role of supporting the statutory council to a new role centered on supporting the president himself. In his January 31st memorandum to the president, Bundy (1961c) noted that "the National Security Council staff (your staff, really) will have other jobs than preparing for the meetings." This was the practical result of extending Neustadt's prescription for the White House staff to the previously career-oriented presidential staff agency that the National Security Council staff had become.

Changes instituted by Bundy had the effect of politicizing the National Security Council staff. The career nature of staff assignments was forever changed. Although some members of Eisenhower's NSC staff remained for the Kennedy administration, there could be no question that they were retained at the pleasure of the new president. The influx of new staff members made it apparent that professional positions in the National Security Council were a new form of political patronage. The shift in emphasis from a predominantly administrative staff to one more focused on the

professional element of the staff led by an intellectual foreign policy expert had the effect of politicizing national security policy. The president was no longer simply an arbiter or manager of policy options produced by the national security bureaucracy. He was now, through the efforts of his National Security Council staff, an independent producer of policy. How this new conception of presidential staffing would work was not yet clear.

Bundy's system, if it could be called that in its early stages, was slow to take shape. The emphasis on dismantling the old system, and the prevailing anti-organizational attitude resulted in ad hoc arrangements. Two and a half weeks into the new administration, Deputy National Security Advisor Walt Rostow (1961) suggested developing means by which new and retained staff could be put "to honest work." At the end of February, Robert H. Johnson (1961) produced a plan to do just that. But as of early April, no decisions had yet been made. Confusion and ad hoc-ery may have added life to what seemed to have been a moribund process, but it was not without its costs.

## 2. Reevaluating Process

On April 17, 1961, the new president sent some 1,400 Cuban nationals to an early grave or a communist

prison cell. This tragedy became known as the Bay of Pigs and was widely considered a foreign policy disaster. Kennedy, concerned that his presidency would not survive another such fiasco, considered reestablishing the Operations Coordinating Board.<sup>5</sup> In a somewhat ironic twist of fate, Neustadt later remarked that the Jackson Subcommittee had "aimed at Eisenhower and hit Kennedy."

The Bay of Pigs disaster spurred both immediate change and recommendations to regularize and institutionalize the process. The immediate changes included a shift in location for McGeorge Bundy. He moved from the Old Executive Office building to a new office in the west wing of the White House. His new location was both symbolic and practical. His west wing office symbolized the president's increased reliance on his National Security Advisor and facilitated multiple daily visits by the National

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<sup>5</sup>Kennedy called Karl Harr, an Eisenhower assistant for the OCB and asked if those arrangements would have prevented the fiasco. Harr indicated that he did not think so because the OCB had been geared toward long-term issues (Prados, 1991: 104). While this apparently sealed Kennedy's opinion on the OCB, it also indicated his misunderstanding of Eisenhower's operation. The person he should have called was General Goodpastor, Eisenhower's staff secretary. Goodpastor would have been responsible for the adequate staffing of this sort of an operation.

Security Advisor to the Chief Executive. With Kennedy's support, Bundy redoubled his efforts to establish a White House situation room. Kennedy also made it a practice after that point to involve his longtime associates and confidantes in decisions of great import. These three changes further rubbed out the distinction between operations and planning and further personalized and politicized decision-making in national security. The role of staff secretary, which had gone unfilled since Goodpastor left the White House in early February, was now de facto folded into the role of the National Security Advisor. Direct delivery of cable traffic to the White House prevented departments from screening operational traffic, and resulted in close involvement by the White House and National Security Council staffs in the day-to-day operations of government. The involvement of Kennedy's confidantes in decision-making assured the further politicization of national security policy-making.

These immediate changes reflected the short-term desire of a president to protect himself, while the longer-term changes emerged from below and reflected the desire of other participants to assure a systematic process. Richard Hirsch (1961) recommended establishing an executive secretariat in the National

Security Council staff to better liaison inter-agency groups concerned with national security matters. He also suggested that meetings be made more systematic with agenda and minutes. He indicated that the New York Times should not be allowed to set the agenda. Bundy indicated the direction in which his thought was heading by noting at the top, "This is an excellent memo, and I agree with 97% of it." Undersecretary of the Treasury Fowler (1961) made similar recommendations to his boss, Secretary Dillon. He noted:

Beyond [the National Security Council's] functional purpose, there is a highly desirable element of political mysticism in the restoration to some degree of the procedures and system that came to enjoy a general acceptance by two presidents and the confidence of two generations of Americans that the delicate business of determining national security policy was being carefully directed.

By the end of June, something like a consensus had been reached. In a memo to the president, Bundy (1961d) conceded that "the president's staff is at present about two-thirds of the way toward a sound and durable organization for his work in international affairs." He expressed no distinction between the National Security Council staff and the president's personal staff. He recognized that this arrangement had both positive and negative implications, but he

contended that steps were being taken to mitigate its negative side effects. He recognized, however, that more remained to be accomplished. He noted that a division of labor had emerged within the staff but that the division was along regional and functional lines, rather than along the lines of planning and operations: "Resistance to this distinction is fundamental to our whole concept of work." He suggested that "timing and rules of procedure for the National Security Council itself needed some improvement" and that "the National Security Council should probably meet more regularly." He also noted, "the mechanism of interdepartmental coordination should be carefully but sparingly increased." He recognized that this might raise the specter of recreating the OCB and therefore took pains to distinguish his suggestion from what had existed formerly.

Shortly thereafter, Bromley Smith (1961) attempted to dispel the notion that policy machinery simply reflected a president's style. He suggested means by which the process could become more effective, and he stipulated that these changes could be made "without altering the president's present [personal] methods of carrying out his work in the international field." He concluded by recognizing that "the above changes

require presidential support, even though his method of dealing with international affairs would be affected only slightly."

Changes were slowly but gradually instituted. Regular meetings of the statutory council had been established by October of 1961, but as late as January of 1962, Bundy (1962a) had indicated the need to beef up staff work for those meetings. In November of 1962, following the Cuban missile crisis, Bundy (1962b) responded to criticisms from General Eisenhower, by admitting "that we did not promptly develop fully adequate new procedures of our own." He noted, however, that since that time they had substantially increased their own administrative organization and that innovations were currently being considered. In April of 1963, Bundy (1963) was still in the process of rebuilding adequate organization. He recommended a new committee that would roughly approximate the Planning Board and Operations Coordinating Board rolled into one committee under his chairmanship. What resulted was a series of committees that assiduously strove to effect coordination yet to distinguish themselves from their Eisenhower era predecessors.

### E. Summary

The changes instituted by the Kennedy administration represented a clear break from the past. The role of the National Security Advisor was substantially altered and expanded. NSC staff personnel and activity shifted in character from an administrative conception to a conception more similar to the activist White House staff itself. In fact, distinctions between the two were purposefully blurred. The complex interdepartmental committee structure established under Truman and developed under Eisenhower was largely disbanded in favor of more ad hoc arrangements. The statutory council itself was downgraded in an attempt to establish individual accountability for the department heads and in the person of the president. Each of these changes have been attributed to President Kennedy's political or decision-making style.

The above analysis, however, suggests that contextual factors played an important role. Even though Kennedy had indicated no preference concerning the organization of the National Security Council, it was widely assumed that he would abandon the existing structure in favor of methods more suitable for an activist president. Virtually all of the advice

Kennedy had received suggested the need to begin anew. Recommendations to the contrary were tainted by their association with the outgoing administration. In 1961, it would have taken a profile in courage to have affirmed the structures associated with the Eisenhower administration.

The decision to disband the existing system made it necessary to relearn the lessons of the Truman administration. Destruction proved to be easier than construction; resultantly, the NSC system proved to be the object of organizational tinkering throughout the Kennedy years. The national security complex had grown too large to coordinate on an ad hoc basis; destruction of the previous system made efforts to replace it imperative. The complexity and importance of the issues addressed mitigated against the decentralization explicit in Kennedy's campaign prescriptions; reality seemed to require that security affairs be directed from the White House. Personnel turnover made the learning process slow and sometimes painful.

The new National Security Council system emerged not by design but by default. It was shaped by the requirement that it not look like what it had replaced, by the personal preferences of McGeorge Bundy and, to a lesser extent, by those of his subordinates. It began

as a departure from formalized structures and gradually became more formalized itself.

The Kennedy National Security Council system set useful precedents for the future, however. Particularly important were the expanded roles of the National Security Advisor and the national security staff. Both have proved to be important assets for the president and have therefore not been discarded by later presidents.

## Chapter VII

### I. Institutional Synthesis

#### A. Introduction

The last case in this study considers the changes ushered in by Nixon and Kissinger. The Nixon/Kissinger changes marked the logical culmination of NSC system organizational form, with the exception of the Crisis Management Center (CMC) that emerged during the Reagan presidency. No subsequent president has departed from the fundamental form that Nixon and Kissinger established. In addition to demonstrating the applicability of contextual factors in the analysis of this final change, and the continued use of the NSC system for symbolic purposes, this chapter considers the particular case of NSA role development during Kissinger's renowned tenure in that office.

While the connection between personality, the style it engenders, and organization has been made for every president, Nixon still seems a special case. Safire (1975: 8) noted, "Everybody who writes [about] Nixon turns amateur psychoanalyst." Haldeman later commented that Nixon was the "weirdest" man to have ever occupied the office of the presidency. Barber (1985: 366) called him, "an expert flimflam man . . . [who] simply set up his own little government on top of

the constitutional one and dared the world to say him nay." George (1980) and Johnson (1974) connected the "weird" Nixon with the formal system that he established. The sense expressed is one of inevitability; Nixon's personality led directly to the system he created and the abuses that it ultimately generated.

This chapter attempts to redirect the focus from the person of Nixon to the contextual factors that led him to the decisions he made. The case of Nixon and the organization of the NSC system is especially illustrative of the themes developed so far in this dissertation. Partisan conflict, institutional conflict, and the play of individual interaction at the organizational level continued to be predominant influences on the development of organizational patterns within the Nixon/Kissinger NSC system.

#### 1. Symbolism and the NSC

By 1968, the symbolic importance of the NSC system had been well established. Truman's increased interest in the NSC system at the beginning of the Korean war reflected his desire to demonstrate a systematic approach toward decision-making in the war (Nelson, 1985). Eisenhower's elaborate system fostered the above-politics perception that sustained his hidden-

hand style (Greenstein, 1982), and Kennedy's quick disestablishment of Eisenhower's system demonstrated his desire to "get the country moving again" (see Chapter 6). Kennedy's undersecretary of the treasury Fowler had in mind a different sort of symbolism when he suggested in May of 1961 reestablishing some form of systematic NSC process:

There is a highly desirable element of political mysticism<sup>1</sup> in the restoration to some degree of the procedures and system that came to enjoy a general acceptance by two presidents and the confidence of two generations of Americans, that the delicate business of determining national security policy was being carefully directed (Fowler, 1961: 3).

Johnson, too, recognized the symbolic importance of the NSC system. He established continuity by retaining the Kennedy men and their procedures. Johnson later developed the Tuesday lunch as a regular means to make decisions, but held larger meetings of the council for their symbolic value (Prados, 1991). In each case, the NSC system became important as much for what it

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<sup>1</sup>Nixon's staff had this mysticism in mind when they moved quickly to establish the appearance of control. The importance of control in the Nixon administration is developed in the context of the times' politics below.

symbolized as for the products of its members' labors.<sup>2</sup>

The transition of power from one administration to the next is always a time of great symbolic importance: with the exception of the Johnson administration, whose overriding objective after the slaying of President Kennedy was to demonstrate continuity, each new administration had taken pains to demonstrate their differences from the outgoing administration in the area of the NSC. Eisenhower had emphasized the regularity and importance of the NSC mechanism, and Kennedy had emphasized the new energy and freedom from formalism that would characterize his NSC system. Nixon's NSC took similar pains to distinguish itself from its predecessors. Osborne (1970: 27) reported that "there was about it a tinge of change for the sake of change" in his early musings on the new Nixon NSC. David Broder noted a seemingly obsessive preoccupation with the machinery associated with the process of decision-making (Osborne, 1971: xi).

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<sup>2</sup>March and Olsen (1989) place great emphasis on what they call the "interpretation and the institutionalization of meaning." In their view, shared here, the manipulation of political symbols is a central part of the political process.

While these various organizational attributes have generally been attributed to stylistic differences of the incumbent, it is instructive to note that in each case the symbolic message conveyed was precisely what the incumbent intended. For Eisenhower, the watchword was order. He intended to impose some order on what many had considered the chaotic administration of the Democrats under FDR and, to a lesser extent, Truman. For Kennedy the watchword was action. He intended to convey a sense of restless activity in contradistinction to what many had perceived as the lethargy of the Eisenhower years. For Nixon, the watchword was control. He intended to demonstrate that someone could step into the midst of the social chaos caused by the Vietnam war and take control, demonstrating leadership to a war-weary and divided nation.

## **2. Synthesis**

This chapter is titled "Institutional Synthesis" to highlight the fact that there was little innovation in the organizational arrangements under Nixon. That organization was, simply put, a combination of what its progenitors considered the best aspects of the Truman/Eisenhower and the Kennedy/Johnson NSC systems. From the former, it took administrative complexity and

regularity, and from the latter, it took the increased emphasis on professional staff and the expanded role of the NSA. From each, it took those aspects of the system that gave the president his greatest levers of control. The innovation in this proposal was to bring these disparate elements together.<sup>3</sup>

One should not underestimate the importance of this synthesis, because the system it established formed the basis for what has become the standard format from which all future NSC organizations would deviate in degrees but not in basic substance. The interdepartmental committee system was formalized and brought under the control of the White House. A process for the systematic development and presentation of staff studies was reinstated. The pivotal role of the professional staff was continued, but was expanded to accommodate increasing specialization and complex arrangements within that part of the organization. The central role of the NSA as both manager and advisor was recognized through his chairmanship of the several interdepartmental committees.

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<sup>3</sup>Kissinger's distinctive development of the NSA is considered in detail below. As originally conceived, the NSA role was merely a combination of the behaviors associated with earlier incumbents of the position. It developed into more than that via the concatenation of many factors.

### 3. Political Context

The dominant political issue of the day in 1968 was the Vietnam war. Just as Korea had become Truman's war, Vietnam had become Johnson's war. Unfavorable reaction to both wars forced the sitting president to decide not to seek another term of office. Unlike the earlier war, however, the Vietnam war destroyed both the bipartisan political consensus underlying foreign policy in the post-war period and public confidence in the ability of its government to make decisions effectively. These two effects were not unrelated. The dissolution of elite consensus on foreign policy later documented by Ole Holsti (1979) occurred gradually and without fanfare, but had the long-term effect of politicizing the national security decision-making process. Social discord, in part due to the impact of the war at home and in part due to concurrent, sweeping social changes, had the immediate impact of discrediting and dividing the Democratic party.

The Vietnam war was divisive in many respects. Some Americans supported the war; some Americans believed that the war was necessary, but that it was prosecuted poorly; and some Americans questioned the very basis for American involvement in the first place.

The breakdown of elite consensus was accompanied by disillusionment and a heightened sense of salience among the population at large. Why a place as remote as Vietnam was vital to American security was not clear. The prospect of getting drafted broadened the sense of personal impact to a great majority of families in the country. Few were called to fight, yet many believed that they might be called. This personal impact made the war a particularly salient issue for most families in America.

The war on poverty added to the sense of social upheaval, in part because it was closely associated with the upsetting of the delicate balance of race and politics in the United States, and in part because of its economic impact. Racial integration had begun with Truman's decision to integrate the armed forces. It accelerated during the Eisenhower administration with the celebrated case, Brown v. Board of Education, and the subsequent forced integration of the schools in Little Rock. Kennedy had his opportunity to forcibly integrate students at the University of Mississippi, but Johnson was to attract most of the criticism due to his support of the 1964 Voting Rights Act. This landmark piece of legislation sowed the seeds of political realignment in the South particularly, and

gave rise to the Wallace candidacy in 1968 (Carmines and Stimson, 1989). Meanwhile, the decision to simultaneously purchase both guns and butter resulted in upward pressure on taxes and rising rates of inflation. 1968 was a turbulent year in American society, and its politics reflected that fact.

The 1968 presidential election centered around three major candidates: Humphrey, Nixon, and Wallace. Humphrey had the distinct disadvantage of being closely associated with the Johnson administration and of presiding over a fractured party. The decision to prosecute simultaneously both the Vietnam war and the war on poverty resulted in a difficult legacy for campaigning. Wallace was the spoiler candidate who registered white southern discontent with the politics and effects of racial integration. Nixon was the beneficiary of division. He emphasized control. In foreign affairs, Nixon promised to rein in the apparently out-of-control American involvement in Vietnam. In domestic politics, his emphasis on law and order was a euphemism for control that resonated with those voters who were appalled at the social discord in their midst, and that intimated solidarity with opponents of racial integration. Nixon's action to consolidate the reins of control in the White House was

entirely consistent with the substance of his message and, in a sense, demonstrated symbolically his intention to make good on his promises, or at least, to give the impression of doing so when his intentions were beyond his means (Broder, in Osborne, 1971).

## **B. Contextual Analysis**

The by now familiar contextual factors are sketched out below as a demonstration of their analytical utility in this final case. As in the earlier case studies, partisan conflict, institutional conflict, and organizational level activity were each important to some degree, but institutional dynamics are judged to have been the most salient to the development of the Nixon synthesis. Familiar partisan patterns emerged and shaped the outcome, and individuals (especially Kissinger) played a considerable role in defining the details of that shape, but the overriding impression established by the following analysis is the importance of institutional motivations in shaping the outcome of the process of determining the NSC system's organizational patterns and the role behaviors associated with those patterns.

### **1. Partisan Conflict**

While partisan conflict had played a pivotal role in motivating the Kennedy reinstitutionalization of the

NSC system in 1961, in 1969 partisan conflict was important to the outcome but not central to the debate. Patterns set in the earlier debate continued to be manifest in politicians' statements and activities. Democrats retained their commitment to State Department preeminence and conceived of the presidency in the "political" terms outlined by Neustadt; Republicans continued to emphasize White House control through the managerial approach identified with Hoover and Eisenhower. These established patterns made it likely that any Democrat elected in 1968 would likely have presided over incremental change in the direction of greater centralization and specialization, as had Johnson since 1963, and that any Republican would likely have presided over a more rapid shift in that direction, as did Nixon. Institutional forces were instrumental in determining the direction of the shift, while the timing and degree of the shift depended upon which of the parties controlled those institutions.

The partisan give-and-take on the topic of the NSC was but a small part of this larger political context. The NSC system was not a primary object of contention during the campaign, but that which did occur largely conformed to the analysis presented in this dissertation. In this case, it was the Republicans on

the outside criticizing the organization of the Democratic administration. Republicans favored a managerial conception of the presidency and advocated systematic procedures for decision-making.<sup>4</sup> The stated purpose of the process was to establish policy from which action would flow. Nelson Rockefeller stated the Republican position succinctly during the primary season:

There exists no regular staff procedure for arriving at decisions; instead, ad hoc groups as the need arises. No staff agency to monitor the carrying-out of decisions is available. There is no focal point for long-range planning on an interagency basis. Without a central administrative focus, foreign policy turns into a series of unrelated decisions--crisis-oriented, ad hoc, and after the fact in nature. We become the prisoners of events. (Kissinger, 1979: 39)

Nixon concurred; in his campaign for the general election, he promised to "restore the NSC to its preeminent role in national security planning," and he attributed "most of our serious reverses abroad to the inability or disinclination of President Eisenhower's successors to make use of this important council" (Kissinger, 1979: 38).

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<sup>4</sup>See Chapter 6 for a discussion of the development of the association of parties with administrative approaches.

Nixon's use of the NSC system in this context reflected his understanding of the NSC system as an important symbol. Nixon had learned the lesson of the Jackson subcommittee well.<sup>5</sup> In the former case, Jackson avoided attacking a popular president by attacking the mechanism through which that president made decisions. Nixon had a similar aim, but the intended recipient differed from that of the Jackson subcommittee. Jackson's intended audience was broad, but Nixon's intended audience was Johnson himself. Johnson, Nixon reasoned from a position of personal experience, had been lukewarm in his support for Humphrey, but could be expected if provoked to take measures that would greatly strengthen Humphrey's electoral position. For this reason, Nixon adamantly insisted that campaign attacks be directed not at Johnson but at his administration, of which Humphrey was a part, or at the previous two Democratic administrations (Safire, 1975: 84). In this case, Johnson was portrayed as poorly served by his decision-making system. By invoking the memory of the Eisenhower years, Nixon also associated himself with a time once thought of as boring and not dynamic, but a

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<sup>5</sup>See Chapter 6 for the purpose and impact of the Jackson subcommittee.

period on which people were beginning to reflect more positively.

## 2. Institutional Conflict

The Democrats departed from managerial forms of White House control in 1961 not because they favored a lesser role for the president in the direction of the government, but because they believed direction was separable from management, and because they associated managerial forms of control with the conservative policies such organizational forms had produced under Eisenhower. In the case of the NSC system, this shift resulted in the innovation of using an activist professional staff to assert the control no longer facilitated by a centralized administrative structure. In a sense, this represented one step forward and one step back in institutional development. The new staff system did energize the president's ability to selectively intervene in the affairs of the bureaucracy, but this energy could only be applied sporadically. The reemergence of structures facilitating centralized administrative control in conjunction with an activist professional staff completed presidents' drive for organizational forms, to assist them in asserting control over the widest

possible reach and depth of executive branch activity.<sup>6</sup>

Institutional concerns and conflict were central to the development of the Nixon NSC system. Johnson's successor, regardless of party or personality, would have to deal with a Congress that reflected popular dissensus on the underlying precepts of foreign policy, and with a bureaucracy which believed that it had been denied its appropriate place in the policy-making arena.<sup>7</sup> Johnson's Republican successor, regardless of

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<sup>6</sup>Moe (1985) has asserted that the inexorable drive for increased control within the White House is a result of the effort to achieve institutional "congruence." In other words, presidents have felt the political pressure to control events over which they have only limited control. Because they believe their political viability and place in history depends on their ability to control those events, they strive to find the means to do so. This analysis agrees that how and when such institutional changes occur is shaped significantly by partisan conflict and by dynamics among the individuals involved.

<sup>7</sup>The position of the bureaucracy was somewhat paradoxical. In organizational terms, the preeminence of the State Department was enshrined in Johnson's 4 March 1966 directive asserting that fact, which it established through State Department control of the Senior Interdepartmental Group and the subordinate Interdepartmental Regional Groups. Melbourne (1983: 57) has asserted that although this was intended to limit the requirement for presidential direction, the result was to reduce the bureaucracy to ineffectiveness due to resulting squabbles among bureaucratic actors. The resistance of other departments to following State's lead resulted in the marginalization of IDC output and effectiveness. The bureaucracy was further marginalized through the "Tuesday Lunch" convention.

his personality, would have additional problems. Democrats retained firm control of the Congress in 1968, adding partisan to institutional motivations for conflict, and after eight years of Democratic control of both the presidency and the Congress, a vastly expanded bureaucracy was largely occupied by Democratic loyalists. While Nixon's crass denunciations of bureaucrats were indicative of his personal bitterness, his distrust of the bureaucracy was in no sense a departure from established norms.

Nixon's decision-making regarding organizational forms for the NSC system was not guided by overt expressions of institutional conflict. In 1968 there was no equivalent of the Hoover Commission or Jackson Subcommittee. Rather, it was based on the desire to maximize control over the national security decision-making apparatus. It had been well-established by 1968 that the NSC was "peculiarly a presidential instrument," and the goal of the Nixon planners was to optimize that instrument. Optimization of this instrument required a certain institutional sophistication regarding the NSC system's environment.

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This forum provided Johnson with feedback from his advisors, but resulted in the disembodiment of the departments from their titular heads.

That sophistication came from years of close contact with the system and study of the effects of organizational and institutional environment on decision-making. Henry Kissinger and Morton Halperin, the principal architects of the Nixon organizational structure, had both.<sup>8</sup>

The primary institutional problem was to involve the foreign policy and national security bureaucracy such that its resident expertise could be brought to bear in the making and implementation of policy, at the same time assuring that it was the president who made the decisions and that implementation was consistent with those decisions. The problem was not new, but previous presidents' attempts to solve this problem

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<sup>8</sup>Interest in the effects of bureaucracy on decision-making and policy implementation proliferated in the late 1950's and 1960's. The Jackson Subcommittee's (1961) reports are littered with references to the problem of parochialism and means to control it (short of formal presidential control). In 1966 at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government Professor Ernest May formed a study group to systematically review the problem. A list of the members and associates of what came to be called the "May Group" reads like a Who's Who of America's most prominent political analysts and government advisors. Halperin was a member of this group before and after his period of government service, and he credits it in his preface to Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy (1974). Kissinger was certainly aware of the group's efforts, and he had expounded at some length on the effects of bureaucracy in his early academic efforts (1957; 1960; 1968).

appeared to be inadequate. The Eisenhower system engaged the bureaucracy but appeared to hold the president hostage to the solutions it proffered. The system as it had developed under Johnson appeared to be disengaged from the president. Johnson's famed Tuesday lunch, which roughly approximated formal NSC attendance requirements, provided the president with the advice of his principal assistants (which was, after all, the ostensible purpose of the council). The lunches left the foreign policy bureaucracy with the perception that it had not been fully integrated into the decision-making process, and that it lacked sufficient direction for its subsequent operations. The result, according to Johnson himself (1971), was a bureaucracy that was not adequately responsive to the president's needs.

The solution to the problem of harnessing the bureaucracy's talents while effectively controlling its efforts was considered to lie in the administrative regularity optimized during the Eisenhower administration and the professional staff energy that was instituted during the Kennedy administration (Kissinger, 1968: 9). Administrative regularity would ensure that issues were properly "staffed", that the appropriate agencies and departments would feel like they had their "day in court", so to speak, to lobby

for their preferred solutions, and that the outcome would be seen as the proper and legitimate outcome of a fair and even-handed process in which all participants were guaranteed an opportunity for advocacy. The professional staff component associated with the latter was to ensure that presidential priority matters were considered, that options reaching the president were more than bureaucratic consensus, and to ensure that presidential control extended through implementation. The process itself was a product to the extent that the process would create the perceptions that policy was being considered systematically with due regard to all participants, and that the president had established firm control.

In practice, the combination of these two systems meant an expansion of both the administrative and professional staff components of the NSC and the shift of the interdepartmental committee system to a more regularized system controlled directly from the White House. Kennedy had shifted control of the IDC system to the State Department upon the recommendation of the Jackson Subcommittee. Also in accord with Jackson's recommendations, Kennedy had stipulated that the IDC system would be utilized on an ad hoc basis under the term task force.

The ostensible rationale behind the recommendation and subsequent decision to move the locus of control of interdepartmental systems from the White House to the State Department was to recognize that department's preeminent position in the making and implementation of foreign policy. The recommendation was clearly in the interest of Congress because its ability to influence the State Department was much greater than its ability to influence the president directly. The recommendation was also consistent with the opinions of the foreign policy intelligentsia in government and outside of it. In retrospect, however, it is clear that the shift was inconsistent with emerging and continuing trends toward centralization and decision-making in the White House. Why those trends led toward greater expectation of presidential involvement in decision-making is a subject of contention better considered elsewhere (cf. Moe, 1985). The fact is, however, that both presidents and the concerned public expected action to emanate from the White House and expected that presidents would be held accountable for the success or failure of those actions.<sup>9</sup> Seen in

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<sup>9</sup>For an elaboration of the point concerning prevailing expectations of the role of the president on the conduct of the office see Arnold (1993).

this context, Kennedy's decision to move the locus of control of the IDC system to the State Department was contrary to the needs of his office, yet consistent with his political motivations as discussed in Chapter 6.

The institutional innovation of the activist professional staff instituted by Kennedy and Bundy and expanded by Johnson and Rostow compensated for the formal shift in the locus of interdepartmental coordination. The activist professional staff began as a collection of generalists with the purpose of prodding the entrenched bureaucracy to stimulate activity in accord with presidential interests and to expedite and follow up on presidential requests and decisions. This component of the NSC staff gradually grew in size and increased its organizational complexity through the division of area and functional responsibilities among staff members to facilitate specialization.<sup>10</sup> This innovation was more in accord

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<sup>10</sup>Numbers varied as individuals came and went or were coopted from other areas but some sense can be gleaned from the following: Bundy began with about eight men and gradually expanded to about a dozen. Rostow began where Bundy left off and expanded to fifteen or so. As for specialization, it became apparent in Kennedy's first year in office that some specialization was useful, and perhaps necessary to prevent issues from "falling through the cracks." Specialization began more as a function of staff interest than expertise

with prevailing trends toward centralization but could not in and of itself guarantee presidential direction and control on more than a sporadic basis. To accomplish this end, presidents required the regular and sustained participation of senior bureaucrats under the direction of White House personnel as was facilitated by the return to White House direction of the interdepartmental committee system.

Moves toward greater presidential control and a more regularized system of interdepartmental coordination did occur during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations but were limited by their acceptance of the Jackson Subcommittee recommendations and the ideas underlying those recommendations. Chapter 6 illustrated the prevailing conception that the use of interdepartmental committees to draft policy alternatives necessarily resulted in conservative policies. Kennedy therefore symbolized his intention to be an activist, progressive president by abolishing the formal committee structure developed under Eisenhower. What was probably not apparent to Kennedy at the time was that the system he had abolished could

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since staff members were not chosen on the basis of knowledge but on loyalty and commitment. Specialization increased as numbers grew and as experts were drawn into service under Rostow.

be an effective instrument for presidential control rather than an encumbrance on his prerogatives. The ad hoc task force system constructed in its place was a poor substitute for regular, concerted presidential involvement. Melbourne (1983: 57) later noted that no systematic policy review was conducted under Kennedy or Johnson; hence, they missed the opportunity to place their stamp on the broad contours of American policy.<sup>11</sup>

It should have come as no surprise that an ad hoc system would be less than effective. Lay and Johnson, in their report to the Jackson Subcommittee concerning the organizational history of the NSC during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations (1960: 15) reported that ad hoc committees were "sometimes a useful and occasionally a notably successful device, but regular referral of problems to such committees often also delayed work unduly." They followed by stipulating several factors that limited the effectiveness of such groups, and they made it clear that later developments in interdepartmental coordination were more

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<sup>11</sup>This was partly due to the prevailing policy/action relationship discussed in Chapter 6, and partly due to the overwhelming rush of activity that accompanied the concomitant commitment to presidential activism and reduced structural ability to handle the increase in activity.

satisfactory. Neither Jackson nor Kennedy heeded Lay's advice gleaned from earlier experience in the council framework; thus, they were both doomed to relearning those earlier lessons. As noted in Chapter 6, the lessons were slowly relearned, and the number, frequency, and regularity of interdepartmental committees were increased gradually. Kennedy was jarred into more systematic policy appraisals through the Bay of Pigs debacle. Kennedy established a special group for counterinsurgency, and Bundy established, under the chairmanship of the Undersecretary of State, a committee called the NSC standing group. Bromley Smith (1988: 51) later noted that the poor support of the group's chairman made the life of the group rather "desultory". Bundy apparently learned his lesson with that group's failure and the following year reestablished the group, this time under his own chairmanship.<sup>12</sup> The NSC standing group failed to make the transition to the new Johnson administration, but Johnson and his deputy Rostow managed to construct in its place several interdepartmental regional groups, and at their apex a senior interdepartmental group

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<sup>12</sup>Smith noted (1988: 53), "As once before, the group meetings declined in number, and its work was taken over by informal ad hoc committees," but he did not indicate why the second NSC standing group dissolved.

(SIG). These groups retained State Department chairmanship while the presidential perspective was provided by NSC staff members who sat on the committees. These committees did provide some coordination, but as noted above, they appeared to be disconnected from presidential decision-making.

As before, the early experimentation in the NSC system with committees chaired by constituent department members had proven the practice untenable. Again, quoting from Lay and Johnson (1960: 16):

The dual role of the State [department representative] as an impartial chairman and as advocate of a State Department position, became increasingly difficult. Over time, the feeling grew that other departments and agencies would cooperate more effectively in the work of the council in matters directly affecting their own responsibilities if the major interdepartmental staff groups were chaired by someone without departmental ties. Finally, and of great importance, was the recognition that the work of the interdepartmental staff group which prepared reports for the NSC could be fully effective in serving the council only if the chairman of the group was personally cognizant, through regular contact with the president, of his desires and requirements regarding the work of the council.

The recommendation forwarded to Nixon regarding the structure of the NSC system took into account the fundamental lessons learned through both the early administrative conception of the NSC's purpose and the later, professionally oriented, activist staff. It

recommended that the formal statutory council be buttressed by a structure of subcommittees directed from the White House. The senior committees would be chaired by the NSA and the subordinate committees would be chaired by the NSC staff professional in that area of responsibility except in cases of particularly specialized subject matter, where the chairman would be selected from the department or agency with primary responsibility in that area.<sup>13</sup> The result was the formal abolition of the senior interdepartmental group chaired by the undersecretary of State, in favor of the review group chaired by the NSA. President Eisenhower strongly supported that move. Kissinger (1979: 43) later reported that in a meeting with the former president:

Eisenhower insisted that the SIG structure had to be ended because the Pentagon would never willingly accept State Department domination of the national security process. It would either attempt end runs or counterattack by leaking.

Evidence of the symbolic and real importance of that move shortly followed. At a meeting in Key Biscayne during the transition period, Nixon presented

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<sup>13</sup>Kissinger (1979: 42) indicated that subordinate IDC's were to be chaired by the lead department. In practice, Osborne (1972: 50) later reported, all groups came to be dominated by Kissinger or his men.

to his Secretaries of State and Defense his decision to accept this structure as proposed by Kissinger. Initially, they accepted this decision without objection, but they reversed themselves shortly after meeting with their departmental advisors. Secretary of Defense Designate Laird wanted primarily the right to propose the initiation of studies and to ensure that the Joint Chiefs of Staff would be limited in their ability to circumvent him in their role as direct advisors to the president.<sup>14</sup>

Secretary of State Rogers' objections were much more fundamental, however. Kissinger (1979: 42) described State's concerns thus:

The State Department considered [the SIG and its substructure] a major bureaucratic triumph because it formally enshrined the department's preeminence in foreign policy. Equally predictable was the dissatisfaction of every other department. It made no difference that the NSC had rarely met in the Johnson administration and therefore, there had been little for the senior interdepartmental group to do. Nor did it matter that the follow-up to the Tuesday lunches, where decisions were made, was outside the SIG structure. To the State Department, its preeminence, however hollow and formalistic, was a crucial symbol. And it was not wrong, given the Washington

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<sup>14</sup>Laird also wanted to assure that the director of the CIA would be allowed to participate in NSC meetings. This subject is considered more fully later. Kissinger (1979), Prados (1991), and Ambrose (1987) all described the maneuvers concerning the CIA's appropriate role.

tendency to identify the reality of power with its appearance.

Kissinger, in a move that portended the future, bested the State Department in their first major confrontation.

The difference between the handling of the role of the State Department and the role of the CIA indicated the importance of institutional rationale in final decisions as compared with Nixon's personal predilections. Nixon trusted neither the Foreign Service nor the CIA. He frequently referred to Foreign Service officers as "striped-pants faggots," and did little to hide his disdain for the institution they served. His decision to limit State Department influence in national security policy-making has frequently been attributed to this personal characteristic. However, Nixon expressed similar disdain for the "Ivy League liberals who . . . have always opposed him politically" (Ambrose, 1987: 232). Nixon's original instructions were to limit the role of the State Department and to exclude the CIA from meetings of the statutory council (Prados, 1991: 265). His desire concerning the State Department was in line with his institutional interests and the decision stuck. However, the involvement of the CIA was

different. Nixon's personal pique with respect to the CIA was out of line with the institutional interests of the presidency. Decisions, in order to be legitimate in the eyes of the public, had to be made with full consideration of available information. Thus, Nixon's intention with regard to the CIA was reversed.

### **3. Organizational Activity**

Earlier case studies have demonstrated the importance of the play of personalities, the timely use of an individual's particular skills, or the acceptance of a subordinate's idea to the development of patterns of interaction associated with organizational structures. It is at this level of analysis that the president's style has been accounted for, while still recognizing the limits of his impact. Nixon's peculiar personality and style posed a useful case for analysis because so much emphasis has been placed on his personal attributes as causal in and of themselves. Analysis reveals, however, that Nixon's tendency to seclude himself to make substantive decisions gave freer rein to subordinates to work out patterns of interaction among themselves. Just as in earlier cases, Nixon merely ratified the organizational plan presented by his chosen NSA; the ideas and skills of certain individuals (especially Kissinger) profoundly

impacted system development, and working relationships affected whether and how work was completed.

Organizational level activity centered about the person of Henry Kissinger. Nixon was no stranger to the NSC system, and he clearly had ideas about how the system should be organized. But like all presidents, Nixon had many other things on his mind as well, and left the details for Kissinger to work out. Kissinger was himself no neophyte in the operations of the presidency and national security. He had significant contact with the national security bureaucracy since the early '50's, and he had been a consultant to Kennedy himself in national security matters. Kissinger had also concerned himself with the effects of organizational attributes on the formation and conduct of national security policy in his academic work. He explored the connection between policy and bureaucracy in his book Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy (1957) and in The Necessity for Choice (1960). Prior to Kissinger's first meeting with Nixon, he had laid out his modus operandi concerning NSC use and organization in what was later published in a pamphlet assembled by Bernard Brodie under the title Bureaucracy, Politics, and Strategy (1968).

Kissinger also drew on the advice and active involvement of others in his search to reinstitute the NSC system.<sup>15</sup> Morton Halperin was, perhaps, the single most important contributor. He had made a name for himself in his "bureaucratic maneuvers" from his position in the Pentagon concerning the SALT negotiations (Prados, 1991: 262), he had studied the effects of bureaucracy on policy at Harvard, and he had later earned broader recognition through the publication of Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy (1974). In Halperin Kissinger found someone who understood both the needs of the bureaucracy and the means by which its disparate elements could be effectively controlled. Together they developed the recommendations for a revitalized NSC system that Nixon approved in toto and without reservation.

The recommendation prepared by Kissinger and Halperin and presented to Nixon in late December 1968 was the most thoroughly conceived plan of action regarding the organization and use of the NSC system since its inception. As a blueprint for organizational relationships it was impressive. But human

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<sup>15</sup>Kissinger (1979: 43) also relied heavily on General Andrew Goodpastor, Eisenhower's Staff Secretary who was brought in to consult at the special request of the President-Elect.

relationships and interactions are not so easily foreordained. In a short paragraph that expressed Kissinger's (retrospective) understanding that the best-laid plans would be affected by the flow of events, Kissinger noted (1979: 16):

But the pledges of each new administration are like leaves on a turbulent sea. No president-elect or his advisors can possibly know upon what shore they may finally be washed by that storm of deadlines, ambiguous information, complex choices, and manifold pressures, which descends upon all leaders of a great nation.

Although this plan was well-designed given institutional realities, its implementation depended greatly upon events and individuals who were to put it into action.

The plan for the NSC staff component of the larger system, submitted to Nixon by Kissinger and Halperin, had fine distinctions. The professional staff was divided into three neat segments: assistants for programs, an operations staff, and a planning staff. The neat distinctions among the responsibilities of these different groups of professionals dissolved with the "storm" of activity that Kissinger later reported in his memoirs. Kissinger had stated his intention to restore the policy-to-action relationship favored under managerial conceptions: that is, action flowed from

policy, rather than the opposite, as had frequently been the case in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.<sup>16</sup> The distinctions among the separate entities of the professional staff disintegrated in the rush of activity and the play of personalities. Osborne (1971: 4) related his perception of "Henry's Wonderful Machine" in this way: "Trying to define and differentiate [the functions of the separate units] is a stupefying exercise, partly for the excellent reason that the operators plan, the planners operate, and the analysts do some of both." Prados (1991: 277-301) has recounted the Byzantine maneuvers of individuals on Kissinger's staff for position and portfolio. He noted in particular the struggle for the position of deputy to the National Security Advisor. This struggle culminated in Haig's appointment, only after Nixon's man, Richard Allen, was frozen out by Kissinger. Lawrence Eagleberger had succumbed to exhaustion and collapsed on the job. Morton Halperin was discredited and was wire-tapped based on suggestions that he was disloyal, and Al Haig had bested his last competitor, David Young, by moving

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<sup>16</sup>See Chapter 6 for a discussion of the purposeful "blurring" of these formerly separate aspects of policy-making and implementation.

the wall between their offices so that Haig's office size was nearly doubled and Young's halved. Maneuvers and shifts within and among the professional staff divisions were perhaps not as tortured as the maneuvering for the deputy slot, but were dependent on the personalities and expertise held by the individuals comprising the professional staff. Prados (1991: 282-283) noted that Kissinger's commitment to long-range planning within the staff perished with the departure of Robert Osgood, a respected academic and author of Limited War (1957). In fact, nearly 40% of the original professional staff members were gone by early fall of 1969.

Another casualty of that "storm" of activity was Kissinger's intention to restore the division between planning and operations. Kissinger stated his intention in a December 19th meeting to the assembled White House and NSC staffs: "We should not make policy on the basis of cables, but shape our cables on the basis of previously thought-out policies" (Safire, 1975: 115). While Kissinger may have been able to keep the two separate in his own mind, the distinction was never reestablished to anywhere near the degree attained during the Eisenhower administration. The question of why Kissinger's goal proved impossible to

implement requires further examination. Had something changed in the previous eight years that rendered it impossible, or had it more to do with the characteristics of the individuals involved?

Something had changed. Kissinger and his staff made decisions that contributed to the storm of activity that rendered their neat distinctions moot, but the context within which they were operating had also substantially changed since Eisenhower had left office in 1961. The context referred to is that created by the climate of expectations concerning the role that the White House organization would play in the process of governance. The role of the president and his staff in the day-to-day administration of national security affairs had been gradually expanding with each successive incumbent.<sup>17</sup> While the Truman and Eisenhower administrations had been part of this gradual expansion, they had endeavored to assure that departments retained their predominant positions. Substantive policy analysis professionals were resident to the departments, and White House staff had no operational responsibilities outside of occasional information-gathering or delivering messages. Kennedy

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<sup>17</sup>See Arnold (1993) for a parallel analysis concerning the progressive era presidency.

had purposefully blurred the distinction between policy-making and operations and had drawn operational information directly into the White House through the establishment of the situation room. Johnson followed in Kennedy's footsteps and increased the president's operational role by personally selecting bombing targets in Vietnam. Their actions had the effect of raising the expectations concerning the White House's role in the population and in the minds of the bureaucrats responsible for sending the president information and requests for decisions. The president, Kissinger, and his staff no doubt shared these expectations and increased the difficulty of their predicament through their efforts to increase White House control over the national security apparatus.

Kissinger expressed his *modus operandi* concerning the extension of presidential control over the bureaucracy while he was still associated with Governor Rockefeller's campaign. In an essay delivered at UCLA, Kissinger summarized the problem of decision-making in modern nation-states with large bureaucratic mechanisms, and he laid out strategies for coping with the problem. Kissinger (1968: 4) noted:

As a general rule, I believe a new president, in the areas where he wants to effect change, must do so within the first four months. He

need not complete it within this time, but he must give enough of a shake to the bureaucracy to indicate that he wants a new direction, and he must be brutal enough to demonstrate that he means it.

The organizational means to accomplish this "shake" would be effected by "combining the procedural regularity of Eisenhower with the intellectual excitement of Kennedy" (Kissinger, 1968: 9). The procedural mechanism would follow the example of McNamara, who "got control of the Defense Department by flooding the various agencies with questions which they had to answer and which gave him good information" (Kissinger, 1968: 9-10). This he implemented with great energy through the use of the national security study memorandum (NSSM), the procedural means for requesting agencies to prepare studies identifying policy alternatives and identify potential problems. These studies would make their way to the statutory council and the president through the interdepartmental committee system under the supervision of Kissinger and his professional staff. Kissinger's final strategy for exercising control was extra-bureaucratic:

Because management of the bureaucracy takes so much energy and precisely because changing course is so difficult, many of the most important decisions are taken by extra-bureaucratic means. Some of the key decisions are kept to a very small circle while the bureaucracy happily continues

working away in ignorance of the fact that decisions are being made, or of the fact that a decision is being made in a particular area. One reason for keeping the decisions to small groups is that when bureaucracies are so unwieldy and when their internal morale becomes a serious problem, an unpopular decision may be fought by brutal means, such as leaks to the press or to congressional committees. (Kissinger, 1968: 5)

The administrative regularity of the Eisenhower administration combined with the professional staff of the Kennedy administration, along with an NSSM process designed to "shake" the bureaucracy, plus the requirements associated with extra-bureaucratic activity all compounded the problems associated with the "storm" of activity inherent to the early phases of a new administration.

The staff coped with the flood of requirements by vastly expanding over the first year of its operations, despite its high rate of attrition. The professional component of the staff originally numbered 28 individuals, but by the end of 1969 numbered 40 and continued to expand thereafter. It was nearly impossible to retain neat divisions in responsibility during periods of such flux.

### C. Role development

The role of the NSA as it developed during Kissinger's incumbency warrants special consideration

due to its apparent exceptionalism. No NSA before or since has exercised as much power as Kissinger, and no other has ever served, as he did, concurrently as both NSA and Secretary of State. The explanation for this apparently aberrant development is drawn in part from the special relationship between Nixon and Kissinger, in part from the trends established by earlier NSA's, and in part from the political and institutional dynamics of the day.

Role shifts had been occurring for some time. Nixon had elliptically indicated his preference regarding the relative positions of the NSA and Secretary of State by announcing the appointment of Henry Kissinger as NSA on the second of December, before he had appointed his Secretary of State. Kissinger (1979: 16) remembered Nixon's contradicting his private remarks about the nature and substance of Kissinger's new role in the public announcement of Kissinger's appointment. Nixon said that his assistant for national security would have primarily planning functions and that he intended to name a strong Secretary of State. His NSA would deal with long-range matters, not tactical issues. In his private remarks, however, Nixon told Kissinger he intended to run foreign policy from the White House, and that Kissinger

would be an important instrument in that regard. While at one level this bit of dissimulation was indicative of Nixon's tendency to misrepresent his intentions, at another level it was an indication of contradictory pressures concerning role definitions in the case of the NSA and Secretary of State. Although the accepted norm had the Secretary of State dominating in his domain, the prevailing working relationships had tended to shift power away from the Secretary and toward the White House for quite some time. The NSA was the beneficiary of this shift.

The role associated with the position of the NSA reached its apogee during the tenure of Kissinger under Nixon. Again, this is often attributed to the quirky personality of Richard Nixon, but a closer analysis of the case suggests a more complex explanation. Certainly, Nixon's proclivity to limit access to a very few advisors considerably heightened the status of those advisors to whom he did give his time. It is also true, as discussed in Chapter 5, that within the presidential branch of government, power flows to those in whom the president has placed his trust and confidence. Trust, propinquity, access, Nixon's proclivity for secrecy and sensational events--all of these factors played into the role's development; they

were solely controlled by the president, and, hence, fostered the impression that the "super NSA" was uniquely Nixon's creation. Such one-sided explanations, however, stem from the larger-than-life myths that are frequently associated with modern presidents, and as such stretch the credulity of objective observers.

The old adage, "it takes two to tango," reminds us that Kissinger had at least some hand in the development of his role. Nowhere has it been said that Kissinger was self-effacing, disinterested in the pursuit of power, magnanimous in his distribution of the plaudits that come with success, or gracious and humane in his handling of subordinates. Kissinger, while he had a lighter side, was ruthlessly Machiavellian in his pursuit of power. Upon assuming the position of NSA, Kissinger had a keen analytical grasp of power's sources and its potential uses, and while in office he developed an equally keen sense of the practical side of power manipulation. According to Stoessinger (1976: 210-211),

Kissinger decided immediately after January 20, 1969, to establish personal control over the bureaucracy. Those whom he could not dominate, he would manipulate, and those whom he could not manipulate, he would try to bypass. He embarked on this course of action as a result of a rational decision.

Stoessinger, it should be noted, was one of Kissinger's most kindly biographers. Stoessinger attributed a benevolent purpose to Kissinger's drive for power and to his "anguish" in its use, but Stoessinger was clear and direct in his identification of Kissinger's fundamental drive.

The fact that Kissinger's control over U.S. foreign policy sometimes seemed to surpass the influence of presidents he served is evidence that NSA role development was not solely an object of presidential favor. Surely Nixon did not intend to be overshadowed by a subordinate. Kissinger courted favor, not always successfully,<sup>18</sup> but with the persistence and intelligence necessary to establish himself as an important asset to the president.<sup>19</sup> Nixon and Haldeman, for their part, believed that Kissinger was controllable (Nixon, 1978). Kissinger (1982: 414) related the reasons Nixon had considered him a "safe" candidate for the NSA position:

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<sup>18</sup>Bock (1987) has described some instances when this relationship was not as close as at other times.

<sup>19</sup>Kissinger, for example, suggested and made possible Nixon's State of the World Message which demonstrated the president's interest and grasp of foreign affairs and his intention to take charge from the White House (Nixon, 1970).

As a Harvard professor, I was without a political base; as a naturalized citizen, speaking with an accent, I was thought incapable of attracting publicity; in any event, since I was a member of the President's entourage, my access to the media could be controlled by the White House.

Thus, there was more to the rise of the NSA than the president's style and intention.

Although the sometimes symbiotic relationship between Nixon and Kissinger played a part in the rise of the role of the NSA, this symbiosis should not be viewed as causal in and of itself. Psychological or idiosyncratic explanations of behavior generally discount or minimize evolutionary trends in role development, as well as the contextual factors that shape those trends. In the case of the NSA, we have seen the steady development of the role from its beginnings in 1952 through the end of Rostow's term in 1969. Personalities aside, the pattern is such that Kissinger's behavior was not so much anomalous as it was an amplification in kind and in frequency of behaviors already associated with the position. Cutler established direction of the interdepartmental committee process as early as 1953. By 1959, Gray had expanded the role of the NSA beyond the administrative conception implemented by Cutler. Bundy established a new set of behaviors in the role, while not departing

significantly from the role's purpose under Eisenhower.<sup>20</sup> Rostow introduced advocacy to the role. The extra-bureaucratic emissary role had previously been separated from the position of the NSA but had been deliberately merged by Bundy and Rostow for that purpose.<sup>21</sup> What was unprecedented about Kissinger's behavior was not that he did any one of these activities, but that he did them all and to an unprecedented extent.

Kissinger's exceptionalism can be explained not only in terms of his personality, but also in terms of the developing institutional context. Kissinger was acutely aware of the institutional dynamics at work in the foreign policy arena. He labelled the American system of government the bureaucratic-pragmatic type, and he identified the difficulties associated with this sort of decision-making process, as well as the behavior patterns associated with executives in the system whose backgrounds are generally from the legal

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<sup>20</sup>As discussed in Chapter 6, Bundy's personal probing, combined with the energetic activities of his professional staff, attempted to replace the administrative apparatus previously in use, toward the common purpose of presenting the president with policy alternatives.

<sup>21</sup>The reader may recall that Truman employed Harriman and Eisenhower tasked Goodpastor, his Staff Secretary, in these roles.

or business communities. His prescriptions for overcoming these problems were outlined above. What he did not emphasize in his writings, however, was the peculiarly American dynamic resulting from a separation-of-powers system. He shared the predominant perception common to analysts within the national security academic community, that in foreign policy the president gets his way.<sup>22</sup>

The perception that the president got his own way in foreign policy was based on a solid track record of presidential successes since the Second World War. Presidential successes in foreign policy resulted, in part, from a consensus in that area painstakingly developed by Truman and his successors (Holsti, 1979). American involvement in Vietnam was due to a large degree to the overconfident application of the assumptions underlying that consensus. The escalation of American involvement in that war and Johnson's arrogation of power in the process of that escalation strained and ultimately fractured the consensus that both legitimated the conflict and made possible the president's relatively free hand in this area of policy. Congress could not be expected to pliantly

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<sup>22</sup>This point of view is best expressed in Aaron Wildavsky's article titled, "The Two Presidencies."

accept presidential direction in an area of policy dissensus--even though presidents had come to expect such as their right (Koh, 1990).

Nixon lacked the political capital necessary to build a consensus on his terms. Both houses of Congress remained in the hands of the Democrats following the 1968 election. Nixon was elected to the presidency by the one of the smallest margins of any modern president, and because the vote was split three ways, he carried only a plurality of the voting electorate. Because Nixon's political position was exceedingly weak, he was ill-prepared for a confrontation with Congress to shape the outlines of a new political consensus. Under these circumstances, the position of the NSA held significant advantages over that of the Secretary of State. The NSA did not have to be confirmed by the Senate, nor did he have to submit to interrogation by Congressional committees, nor did he have to contend with the difficulties of managing the disparate elements of the State Department bureaucracy. These factors created the conditions within which Nixon and Kissinger could effectively expand the role of the NSA. There was nothing inevitable about that expansion, but viewed from this

perspective, historical events seem more understandable and evolutionary than anomalous.

The impact of the NSC's institutional synthesis on the doctrine of the separation of powers was not lost on Senator Symington. Senator Symington had been an adversary of the NSC concept since its origination. He was affiliated with the Army Air Corps during the 1947 debate that established the Council. He criticized Eberstadt's task force under the Hoover commission for its role in trying to strengthen the fledgling system, and he led a task force in 1960 for Kennedy's transition team that heartily favored the dismantling of the NSC system. By 1971, he was a vociferous opponent of the Nixon-Kissinger system. Symington, with Senator Fulbright, complained that concentration of power in the White House which the system had allowed, "denied Congress as a whole and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in particular their proper roles in the evolution and execution of foreign policy" (Osborne, 1972: 48). Osborne (1972: 50) noted that:

Kissinger perceived that he was only an incidental target of the Symingtons and Fulbrights. His concern, it was said at the White House, was not for himself, but for the NSC and interdepartmental policy structure that serves the president through him. He believes, as the president does, that is a necessary response to the pressures and requirements of the times, and that if

retained, it can be a permanent asset to the presidency.

The return of the role to more reasonable proportions was a product of the balance of powers reasserting itself.

A resurgent Congress has since attempted to regain lost ground in its contest with the president to control policy. Its efforts and those of the national security community have managed to convince subsequent presidents that a Kissinger-like role for the NSA is not in the best interests of the nation or of the president. Kissinger's eventual concurrent appointment as Secretary of State was largely a product of the disintegration of Nixon's presidency in the aftermath of Watergate. Kissinger was by that time the clear "vicar" of American foreign policy. He was reluctantly appointed by a president who saw his authority slipping away and recognized that the best interests of the nation were best served by continuity in foreign affairs and that the presidency no longer afforded an adequate power base (Kissinger, 1982: 416-423). Kissinger's conception of the proper role of the NSA followed his move to the State Department, but the system he did so much to create remained. Congress, having once forced the idea on a reluctant president,

has had to reconcile itself to a system that has become "a permanent asset to the presidency."

#### **D. Summary**

This chapter has addressed the development of the NSC system under Nixon. The combined system established at that time was characterized by centralized direction and control of an extensive interdepartmental committee (IDC) system from the White House with formalized processes for the generation of studies (NSSM's), decision-making, and implementation; central direction was achieved through the use of a large, active, professional staff which was organized along complex lines to facilitate specialization. Both the IDC system and the professional staff component were hierarchically organized. The IDC's were generally chaired by a member of the professional staff. Paper flow was administered by a greatly expanded administrative staff, and substantive work was coordinated to a large degree by the deputy NSA, a position which emerged only after considerable infighting. At the apex of this organization was the NSA, who chaired the most important committees, briefed the president, and presented issues at meetings of the formal Council. The decisions central to the development of this system were explained in terms of

the contextual factors central to this dissertation: partisan and institutional conflict and organizational level activity.

Additionally, the symbolic importance of organizational patterns was reiterated. For Nixon, his NSC system, later dubbed "Henry's Wonderful Machine" by Osborne (1972), demonstrated control. While one might infer a psychological basis for the effort to project the impression of control, it was not an inappropriate or unexpected symbolic gesture given the political context of the times.

Finally, the exceptional expansion of the NSA role through Kissinger's incumbency was considered in light of historical trends, and the political and institutional context. The symbiotic relationship between Kissinger and Nixon was credited in part, but again, the political and institutional context favored role expansion. As historical precedents existed for much of what Kissinger attempted, and as no body of law proscribed such activity, it was difficult to criticize except on grounds of separation of powers. Watergate cut short the brewing conflict in the NSC arena, by resulting in Kissinger's appointment as Secretary of State and undermining presidential initiatives in all policy areas, including national security.

Institutional conflict in the area of national security took the form of the War Powers Resolution, which limited presidential prerogative (at least in intention, the point is hotly debated) in the area of committing armed force, but did not address the central issue: the centralization of power in the White House made possible by the elaborate new NSC system. Kissinger moved on, but the system he helped to create remained intact. Subsequent presidents have modified it by degrees, but its basic structure has been retained precisely because it provides such an asset to presidents within their otherwise constraining institutional environment.

## Chapter VIII

### I. Summary

#### A. Introduction

This study has explained the development of the National Security Council (NSC) system in institutional terms. Two interpretations of NSC system development were reviewed, one that considers the president's decision-making style the key independent variable in that development, and one that considers contextual variables more important. This study has supported and developed the latter interpretation.

The study has been presented in two parts. Part one introduced the NSC system and divided it into four separate components: the Council of principals and advisors, the supporting staff, the National Security Advisor, and the interdepartmental committee system. Clear distinctions between NSC system component parts were essential because each part has experienced a different development pattern. These separate patterns are summarized later in this chapter.

Part one also introduced the New Institutionalism and established a three-part framework for analyzing NSC system development. The New Institutionalism was discussed as it is most frequently applied in political science, and its two main research approaches, rational

choice and history-centered, were reviewed. This approach has been consistent with the history-centered branch of the New Institutionalism. As such, this study has emphasized the larger historical context and the importance of temporality, or order of events. Precedent proved to be an important factor in NSC system development. Individuals attempted to set precedents that would support their preferred alternatives, and system participants frequently justified their actions (or limited the actions of others) by pointing to earlier precedents.

The framework developed in part one separated the approach to contextual influences into three levels of analysis: inter- and intra-institutional conflict, partisan conflict, and organizational activity. The first two levels of analysis emphasized the importance of institutionalized conflict (between the president and Congress, among the departments and agencies of the executive branch, and between the political parties) in the development of organizational patterns. The third level of analysis considered the role of individuals below the president in shaping the development of the organizational structure within which they work. The effects at each level of analysis are summarized below.

Part two analyzed four case studies using the framework developed in part one. The cases were ordered in their proper historical sequence. This order allowed the reader to become familiar with the details of NSC system development as they actually unfolded. The first case focused on the National Security Act of 1947 which established the NSC. The second case considered the factors influencing NSC system evolution from 1947 (after the Act was passed) to 1960. The third case discussed how those same factors resulted in revolutionary reorganization of the NSC system during the Kennedy transition of 1961. The final case considered the reinstitutionalization of the NSC system during the Nixon administration. The analysis ended here because the broad outlines of NSC system organizational form have remained basically the same since that time. Organizational change has decreased with time because the forces underlying early NSC system development have established accepted boundaries.

The methodology employed by this study has served a number of purposes. Concepts and relationships developed in early chapters were illustrated and further elaborated in the cases that followed. Cases were selected in a manner designed to promote a broad

understanding of both the chronological flow of events and of the purposes and processes associated with the NSC. The particular time frame was selected for analysis in an attempt to refute the style-centered interpretation at a point when that approach seemed most applicable. Finally, analysis proceeded along lines intended to demonstrate the utility and appropriateness of the relationships suggested by the contextual framework discussed above.

No study is concluded without first confronting the researcher with a few surprises. So it was in this case. Having proceeded with the intention of developing and illustrating an analytical framework, it became quickly apparent that the roles of symbols and organizing ideas were too important to leave out. These abstractions complemented the framework because they tended to break down along institutional lines. Their effects are summarized below.

Now we turn to summaries of each of the aspects of the present study. First the development pattern for each of the components of the NSC system is reviewed. Then the utility of each of the three levels of analysis is discussed. The summaries end with a discussion of the importance of symbolism and organizing ideas. The study is drawn to a close with a

review of the contributions of the study, and a discussion of the implications for future research.

#### **B. NSC System Component Development Patterns**

The NSC system was divided into the Council itself, the supporting staff, the National Security Advisor, and the interdepartmental committee system. Only the Council and its supporting staff were included in the founding legislation. Of these two, the Council was clearly intended to be predominant. Their relative importance has reversed since the NSC system was established. That reversal has had important implications for the distribution of power within the federal government.

##### **1. The Council**

The Council, the reader will remember, resulted from the larger debate concerning the unification of the armed services. The Navy proposed the Council in lieu of a unified Defense Department, while President Truman and the War Department favored a strictly hierarchical organization. The final compromise leaned more toward the Navy's proposal. The National Military Establishment that resulted was more a federation than a unified organization, and the Council was the means by which this unwieldy arrangement would be controlled. The president and War Department never believed in the

Council as an organizational alternative, but acceded in order to get some reform passed, and with hopes that they could mold the organization in the future. Truman considered congressionally mandated advisory groups an infringement on presidential prerogative, and rightly so, because the Council's proponents clearly intended it that way.

Chaired by a president who did not want it, the Council had an inauspicious beginning. Truman was unwilling to use the Council, and Forrestal was unable to use it as he had intended. Therefore, the Council was of little import up to the Korean War. Truman was finally able to move the system in the direction he wanted in 1949 by amending the National Security Act to limit Council membership and strengthen the Secretary of Defense. This made the NSC system more hierarchical, and it thus resembled more closely his preferred alternative. The Korean War followed closely on the heels of this reorganization, and had the effect of focusing attention on national security. Truman turned to his reorganized Council as a means for decision-making. His use of the Council empowered the entire NSC system.

Eisenhower further strengthened the Council. He trumpeted the Hoover Commission's criticisms of the NSC

system (most of which had already been addressed by Truman's 1949 changes), and vowed to make the Council the center of national security decision-making. In fact, he never did use the Council to the extent promised (Greenstein, 1982), but the Council reached its zenith during the Eisenhower Presidency nonetheless.<sup>1</sup>

Kennedy de-emphasized the Council. During his campaign, Kennedy trumpeted the Jackson Subcommittee Report, the Democrat's alternative to the Hoover Commission. The Report's central criticisms were that collective decision-making forums defused accountability and inhibited innovation (Jackson Subcommittee, 1961). Jackson called for new leadership and a new style of governing. Kennedy gave him both. He rarely called Council meetings, and he introduced a new type of staff that forever changed the relationship between the president and the executive departments.

The Council never recovered. Kennedy and his staff struggled to replace the system they had so

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<sup>1</sup>Reagan and Bush used the Council more than their predecessors, but not to the extent that Eisenhower did. Furthermore, Reagan and Bush operated within a vastly changed NSC system. By the time of their presidencies, the president was supported by a large professional staff. The addition of that staff changed the dynamics of intra-Council relationships by placing the president in control of more information.

rapidly and indiscriminately discarded, and Johnson struggled to make the system he inherited work. A revitalized Council was a part of neither president's plans, and neither was particularly successful. Nixon promised to restore the Council to the pinnacle it had achieved during the Eisenhower presidency, but he did something quite different. Nixon empowered the National Security Advisor and the staff, both of which were perched above a revitalized and re-centralized interdepartmental committee system, rather than the Council itself. Later presidents continued much more in the manner of Nixon than, likely, any of them would admit.

## **2. The Staff**

The staff has had a very different developmental pattern from the Council it was created to support. Originally conceived to be a career-oriented administrative unit, it has become a powerful professional staff supporting the president directly. Because staff tenure is entirely at the pleasure of the president (or the National Security Assistant on the president's behalf), the staff has become quite politically oriented.

Like the Council, conceptions of the staff's purpose and use differed among those who created it.

Congress was likely aware of these conflicting assumptions, but chose not to resolve their differences in the National Security Act. The Act specified only that a staff should exist, and that it would be headed by an executive secretary. Forrestal, in his first move as Secretary of Defense, attempted to coopt the staff for his own use. He relied on the Act's statement making the Secretary of Defense the president's primary advisor in matters affecting the national security. He even assigned the staff space in the Pentagon, and held it open for over a year.

Truman, his personal staff, and the Budget Bureau saw the matter differently. They were sensitized to Forrestal's power maneuvers by this time, and were committed to preventing incursions on presidential authority. Clifford, Souers, and Murphy ensured that the staff was safely ensconced within the Executive Office of the President (EOP).<sup>2</sup> Truman kept a tight reign on staff activity in his efforts to constrain the scope and use of the larger NSC system, but he held to the notion that the staff's purpose was to support the Council rather than the president. Although Truman

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<sup>2</sup>The staff was physically located in EOP spaces in the building next to the White House beginning in the fall of 1947. The National Security Act Amendments of 1949 placed the staff officially under the EOP umbrella.

failed to use the staff to its full advantage, its positioning within the EOP facilitated its future shift to supporting the president rather than the Council.

The staff grew during Eisenhower's tenure, and performed more tasks due to the increased use of the NSC system, but its focus changed only slightly. The staff continued to support primarily the Council. The change resulted from the expansion of the interdepartmental committee (IDC) system and the addition of the National Security Advisor (NSA). The expansion of the IDC system required a more active coordination role on the part of the staff. The addition of the NSA tied the staff more closely to the president since the NSA was dependent on the political fortunes of the president, and the NSA, rather than the executive secretary, now controlled the staff. Early NSA's developed the first professional component of the NSC staff as a means to help them evaluate the proposals of the departments. The shift toward evaluation deviated only slightly from the coordination role at first, but it provided a precedent for later changes.

The shift in staff support from the Council to the president occurred early in the transition from Eisenhower to Kennedy. Eisenhower had made some moves

in this direction, particularly during the tenure of Gordon Gray, his last NSA, but it was Bundy and Kennedy that precipitated revolutionary organizational change. They purposely blurred the distinction between NSC staff and the president's personal staff at the same time that they diminished the Council's role and formally shifted the IDC system to State Department control. These changes together resulted in a fundamental shift in staff activity as well as in the object of its support. The administrative staff activities associated with coordinating IDC's and departmental proposals for an active Council became superfluous (even though still necessary) under the new arrangements. The new president-centered staff placed a premium on professionals who could actively seek out new ideas, evaluate their usefulness, and sell them to the president and the larger government. Administrative personnel dwindled. They were replaced by activist professionals who, due to their limited numbers, were generalists.

The system gradually constructed during the Kennedy administration was selectively centralized. The abolition of the NSC system in place at the end of the Eisenhower administration was ostensibly for the purpose of decentralizing decision-making processes.

The newly activist professional NSC staff, however, countered that decentralization in selective areas. A dozen professional staff members could not control the vast array of activity in the national security arena, but they could draw selected issues into the White House. For reasons related to the evolving role of the presidency in American government and society, this model proved to be too limited. Re-centralization of administrative coordination processes began even during the Kennedy presidency, and expanded during the Johnson presidency.

Wholesale re-centralization of national security policy coordination processes occurred during the Nixon presidency, however, and marked the beginning of the NSC staff form that has existed since that time. The IDC system was pulled back under White House control, resulting in the expansion of administrative duties for the NSC staff. The system was purportedly modeled after Eisenhower's system, but the emphasis had shifted since Eisenhower's time. Instead of performing the honest-broker role expected in earlier days, IDC's were headed by members of the NSC's professional staff who operated more along the lines established under Kennedy. The new staff exceeded even the Kennedy model, however, because staff size had vastly expanded (it had

quadrupled), and its members were frequently subject-area experts. Since the new staff had both expertise and access to information, the previous institutional advantages held by the executive departments and agencies, the president's independence from the executive branch was increased appreciably.

It is easy to see why presidents have maintained staff organization along the lines finally achieved during the Nixon administration. Staff members owe their loyalty to the president and are therefore, sensitive to his political interests. Centralization of coordination processes under the direction of this professional, expert-oriented staff gives the president tremendous flexibility and control vis-a-vis executive branch departments and agencies, and Congress. While presidents may still feel overly constrained by their institutional limitations, this staff arrangement maximizes the advantages now available to them.

### 3. The National Security Advisor

The position occupied by the National Security Advisor exists nowhere in statute. The NSA is a presidential creation, and presidents have fiercely protected their prerogative to utilize the NSA free from congressional over-sight. As became clear in the above discussion of the rise of the NSC staff, the NSA

has played an important role in the expansion of the president's resources in the national security area.

Truman experimented with various arrangements to coordinate the national security matters he held an interest in. Members of his personal staff, primarily Clifford, worked on security issues as necessary. Truman also developed a trusting relationship with Souers, the first NSC executive secretary, and kept him on as a personal consultant after Souers had resigned the executive secretary position. Truman also brought Harriman on to his staff to perform roles similar to those of later NSA's.

It was Eisenhower, however, who created the NSA position on the recommendation of the Hoover Commission. The role varied during Eisenhower's presidency with each of the four different men who occupied the position. Cutler, the first NSA, was largely responsible for constructing the NSC system associated with Eisenhower. Later NSA incumbents were able to do more or less based on their personal abilities and ambitions. Gordon Gray, Eisenhower's last NSA, brought the system and his particular role some distance from what had been established by Cutler.

Bundy, Kennedy's NSA, was the first of the new breed of NSAs. An academic with expertise in national

security policy and incredibly ambitious, Bundy was cut from a different cloth than his predecessors were. Bundy pioneered in a limited way the policy entrepreneur orientation more frequently associated with his successors. Bundy was largely responsible for the changes ushered in by the Kennedy administration. He had studied the Jackson Committee reports and the recommendations of his predecessors, and recommended the actions to be taken to Kennedy. When Kennedy accepted his recommendation to abolish the existing system, it was Bundy who had the responsibility of creating a new one in its place. Notes from the period seem to indicate that the resulting system grew more through trial and error than according to a master plan. The loss of the IDC network combined with the down-grading of the Council made the work of the NSA particularly important to the president. IDCs and the Council had previously performed the coordination role now left entirely to the NSA and his staff.

NSAs after Bundy expanded the role still further. While Bundy seemed constrained to act more like an honest broker than like a policy entrepreneur, Rostow, his successor, seemed to tilt more toward the latter. Rostow forced wider the door opened by Bundy, and Kissinger nearly disregarded earlier role limitations.

Like Bundy, Rostow and Kissinger were ambitious academics with national security policy expertise. Each fostered ties with national political figures, and each grasped the opportunity to convert their ideas to policy. Kissinger pressed the role to the limits of what other participants in the broader governmental system would accept. Efforts have been made to restrict the NSA's influence since that time.

#### **4. The Interdepartmental Committee System**

IDCs have been a part of the American scheme of government in the national security arena since early in the twentieth century. IDCs have proliferated as America's interactions with the rest of the world have grown more frequent and complex. Two areas of IDC system change have been important to this study, the extent of the system and the locus of system control.

Before the NSC system was established, IDCs were operated by executive departments and agencies to coordinate policy proposals to the president and Congress, and to coordinate policy implementation. Presidents did not concern themselves much with IDC activities. Concern with IDC activity increased during the unification debate because the Navy placed great emphasis on their use in lieu of unity-of-command concepts and organization. The Council itself was to

be an IDC at the highest possible level. Subordinate IDCs, in the Navy's view, would both feed proposals to the Council for ratification and ensure effective implementation of policies approved by the Council.

Truman feared that the emphasis on corporate decision-making within IDCs would limit presidential authority. He reasoned that policies constructed within an elaborate IDC structure would develop a certain momentum and legitimacy that would effectively bind presidents to the consensus reached there. Truman prevented this from happening by emasculating the Council, as discussed above, and by disallowing the existing IDC structure, associated with the State-Army-Navy-Air Force Coordinating Committee, from operating within the NSC system (Lay and Johnson, 1988 [1960]: 14). This mandate resulted in the operation of parallel systems for policy coordination until Truman felt confident he could control the NSC system. This duplication ceased in June 1949.

While Truman eventually combined the IDC systems, it was during the Eisenhower administration that the IDC system experienced tremendous growth and centralization. IDCs under Truman were not extensive, and those that existed were largely run from the State Department. NSC staff members provided administrative

support, and the executive secretary kept the president informed. All of this changed under Eisenhower. Great emphasis was placed on IDCs subordinate to the Council, and IDCs were created to cover many specialized policy areas. IDC activity was directed by an active Council and coordinated by an active administratively-oriented NSA. Topics considered by the council were either first developed by subordinate IDCs, or they were referred to IDCs for proper "staffing." Once a policy was established, it was referred to the Operations Coordinating Board (itself an IDC with a subordinate IDC structure) to ensure proper implementation. This system was roundly criticized by the Jackson Subcommittee.

Kennedy accepted Jackson's recommendations and abolished the NSC system existing at the end of the Eisenhower administration. Most IDCs were abolished. The State Department controlled the remaining IDCs. Ad hoc groups formed to coordinate proposals of particular interest to the White House.

Ad hoc groups and State Department controlled IDCs provided inadequate coordination and control from the president's perspective. Both Kennedy and Johnson struggled unsuccessfully to make systems they did not control responsive to their needs. Dissatisfied with

their systems and unwilling (or unable) to return to that which had previously existed, both presidents tinkered endlessly with organizational relationships.

Nixon re-centralized the IDC system under White House control and expanded the system beyond what had existed under Eisenhower. The new system differed from Eisenhower's in more than just extent, however. It received its direction from the White House rather than the Council, and NSC staff members emphasized direction rather than coordination. The shift in emphasis reflected the new role of the NSA and his staff, and illustrated the changing relationship between the president and the executive departments and agencies. Nixon and his successors continued to modify specific arrangements within this structure, but the basic structure has remained intact since it was established in 1969.

### C. Analytical Framework Utility

Most analysts agree with the chain of events discussed above. Analysts part ways, however, in the emphasis each places on the role of the president's style vis-a-vis contextual factors in determining organizational relationships. This study has suggested that contextual factors play a more important role, and has illustrated the effects of contextual factors on

organizational development through a three-part analytical framework. That framework has defined influences at three levels: institutional conflict, partisan conflict, and organizational activity. It has also suggested that contextual influences act to limit the extent of change over time. Below the effects of each level are traced separately, and then how they work together to place boundaries on change is discussed.

#### 1. Institutional Conflict

Institutional conflict is inherent to the American scheme of government. Divided government, the reader will remember, was Madison's method of enabling the government to control itself. Conflict between separate branches of government prevents government from tyrannizing the people. The principle and practice of institutional conflict has prevented any part of the federal government from acting with complete autonomy. This concept alone mitigates against the style of any one individual from controlling the development of any governmental organization. This study labeled conflict between the president and Congress "inter-institutional" and conflict among the president and executive branch departments and agencies "intra-institutional." Both

were considered under the rubric of conflict at the institutional level.

Institutional conflict was the primary force behind the establishment of the NSC system. Chapter four describes the unification debate in detail, and traces the inter- and intra-institutional processes that resulted in the NSC's inclusion in the National Security Act of 1947. We will not retrace those steps here. Suffice it to say that Truman did not want a National Security Council. His best efforts succeeded only in limiting the NSC's impact on presidential prerogatives.

Institutional dynamics shifted once the NSC left the legislative arena and entered the establishment phase within the executive branch. Department secretaries empowered by Congress during the legislative debate found themselves with less institutional leverage once the NSC was an intra-institutional matter. The president assumed the upper hand at this point, but he did not find himself uncontested. The president and guardians of his institutional prerogatives had to vigilantly prevent Forrestal's efforts to shape the system according to plans favoring the Defense Department. Even Truman's careful efforts to control the NSC once it was safely

ensconced in the EOP were not completely successful. He was unable to make it work as he planned, and his institutional opponents turned to other means to further their struggle.

The Hoover Commission provided the vehicle for executive departments and agencies to again try to shape NSC system development. The Hoover commission was established by Congress to criticize executive branch organization and operations. Truman chose to try to control its outcome and effect rather than to prevent Congress from establishing it in the first place. This choice was predicated by the realization that he would likely be unable to prevent Congress from establishing the Commission. The 1948 elections changed the institutional dynamics associated with Hoover's Commission and largely redirected the changes it intended, but some changes to the NSC were based on the efforts of one subordinate task force within the larger Commission. Truman managed to minimize change, but he was not entirely in control of its direction. Eisenhower built on the base provided by Truman, and extended the NSC in the direction recommended by the Hoover Commission.

Congress again intruded on the organization and use of the NSC system beginning in 1959 through the

Jackson Subcommittee hearings. Centralization of the national security decision-making process within the White House limited congressional influence on specific policy matters within the executive departments.

Results of the process used by the NSC system under Eisenhower did not always find favor in the eyes of his congressional critics. The Jackson Subcommittee was their means of reestablishing some control over the process, and was a convenient mechanism to publicly criticize a Republican administration without attacking its popular president personally.

When Kennedy became president, he implemented the organizational form recommended by the Jackson Subcommittee. The fact that both Kennedy and Eisenhower found existing recommendations (approved by the Congress associated with their predecessors) suitable for their purposes makes the association between style and organization appear questionable. Kennedy's and then Johnson's (as well as many others below them) dissatisfaction with their ability to control the activities of the executive branch under the new arrangements set the stage for the next major organizational change. By 1969 there existed a depth of experience and sophistication concerning

organizational arrangements that surpassed those of earlier times.

The NSC system instituted in 1969 anticipated institutional conflict more than resulting from it. The architects of the new system, Kissinger and Halperin, had studied and experienced the systems operating during the administrations of Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson. They saw the strengths and weaknesses of both the alternatives used to date, and they attempted to design a system that provided the White House with maximum control. Such a system would be necessary, they reasoned, given the state of popular dissension and a Congress controlled by the opposition party.

Nixon ratified their recommendations. While the system certainly facilitated the penchant for control often attributed to him, Nixon's successors have been reluctant to dismantle a system which has maximized their institutional advantages. Moe (1985) considers the drive exhibited by all modern presidents to maximize their institutional advantages a necessary response to the demands placed on their office. The use of coordinating mechanisms to accomplish this end is, according to Rockman (1981), the natural response to our divided government system.

## 2. Partisan Conflict

Madison hoped his scheme of divided government would prevent the rise of American political parties. His plan has certainly made it difficult for any one faction, or party, to control political events in this country, but it did not prevent their ultimate rise. Parties have been an enduring part of the American electoral system since the late eighteenth century. The resulting partisan struggle has affected operation of Madison's scheme, and, in the process, has affected the development of the NSC system. In many cases since the establishment of the NSC system, partisan conflict has reinforced, or been expressed through, institutional conflict. In other cases it has manifested itself through the electoral process. In either event partisan conflict has been responsible for publicizing organizational alternatives, and inter-party transfers of power have resulted in the greatest changes to the NSC system.

The unification debate that resulted in the National Security Act of 1947 was a predominantly institutional struggle. As large a battle as that was, it did not result in separate positions adhered to by opposite parties. Partisan jockeying for relative advantage did occur, but these activities were minor in

the larger context of the debate. In the end, it was a Republican Congress that passed an Act that was not much to the Democratic president's liking, but Truman was unable to get a better deal from the Democratic Congress that preceded it.

The Hoover Commission, however, was motivated principally by partisan conflict. Truman appeared very weak by the end of 1947, and nearly everyone expected him to lose in 1948. Republicans in Congress hoped to lay the ground-work for the incoming Dewey administration by establishing a commission to study the executive branch and recommend sweeping changes to the organization and activities of government (Arnold, 1986). The Commission would perform, in their view, the valuable task of criticizing the current administration in an election year while establishing a blueprint for Republican reform. Their plans, obviously, did not come to pass, but the report did cause some immediate change, and it provided political ammunition for the 1952 presidential election.

The Jackson Subcommittee was the Democrat's alternative to the Hoover Commission. Like the Hoover Commission, the Jackson Subcommittee was established by a Congress controlled by the opposition party to the president then in office. It too was established just

prior to the presidential election season. It too provided political ammunition in that conflict, and established a blueprint for the next administration. Unlike the case of the Hoover Commission, however, this time the opposition party won the presidential election and its recommendations were implemented immediately.

In each of the cases discussed above, partisan conflict reinforced institutional conflict, but their effects extended beyond the immediate institutional battle. The elections of 1952 and 1968 were both removed by some time from the debates associated with the Hoover Commission and the Jackson Subcommittee. Both Eisenhower and Nixon, however, had been a party to those earlier debates; both were affected by those debates, and both brought the ideas associated with the losing party with them when they assumed the presidency at later dates.

### 3. Organizational Level Activity

The final level of analysis in the framework focused on individuals' activity below the level of the president. While advocates of the style-centered interpretation contend that these individuals find it necessary to conform to the demands of the president, the contextual approach found that these individuals quite frequently independently shaped the system within

which they toiled. Presidents are too outnumbered and overwhelmed to personally dictate the shape of a single staff agency. Individuals within the system often have personal and institutional motivations different from the president for whom they work, and members of the NSC staff are more directly impacted by the style of the NSA than of the president. NSAs, furthermore, are not without resources in their relationship with their president: they are generally appointed based on their expertise in the national security area, and they have the advantage of concentrating solely on the NSC system and the matters before it. NSC system organization and operation has, therefore, been dependent on the ability of the NSA to effectively marshal system resources, including the president, at key points.

Unlike the two other levels of analysis, conflict was not the focus. This does not mean that those at the organizational level have not seen their share of conflict: they have. The shift in emphasis results from the realization that system participants are tasked with making the organization work. While institutional and partisan actors view the system in terms of its impact on their ability to get what they want, those at the organizational level have to take the political and institutional situation as it exists

and use the system to reach viable policy alternatives. At this level, participants are motivated to make the system work within existing limitations. Their efforts to make the system work have often resulted in improvements to the system.

The discussion of organizational level activity began in chapter five, after the system had been established in statute. We noted the contributions of and the differences between Souers and Lay. They labored to create a system where none had existed. Souers had even written the guidelines, accepted by Truman, delineating the limits of NSC system activity. We noted the decreased effectiveness of the system with Souers departure, and Lay's inability to perform roles established by Souers.

Cutler played a role similar to Souers during the early years of the Eisenhower administration. Cutler had authored Eisenhower's speeches critical of the NSC system during the 1952 campaign, and Eisenhower accepted the system Cutler proposed after assuming the presidency. Later NSAs modified the system under Eisenhower by degrees, with Gordon Gray, Eisenhower's last NSA, significantly departing from the original design.

Bundy and Kissinger performed the same service for Kennedy and Nixon, respectively, as had Souers and Cutler for their presidents before them. The role of each of these men was to review the existing information concerning the effectiveness and usefulness of the NSC system within the existing political and institutional climate. In each case they proposed an organizational plan that met with the approval of the new incumbent. Once designed, organizational arrangements fluctuated with the individuals filling the roles within the system.

It becomes readily apparent that the most critical period of change is at a presidential transition. This fact has been used to support style-centered interpretation of organizational development. Further review, however, makes it clear that it has been the NSA (or the executive secretary under Truman) who has been charged with interpreting the political and institutional climate and designing a plan to fit the times. Granted, the president's decision-making style has probably entered in to those calculations, but that is only one factor among many.

#### **4. Limits to Change**

In Chapter two we discussed the means by which boundaries limiting organizational change are set. The

cases reviewed in Part two illustrated how ideas about what is acceptable and useful come to be broadly accepted by individuals. The three levels of analysis were particularly useful in illustrating the dynamics at work in limit-setting.

The primary arbiters and enforcers of organizational limits are institutional actors. Congress, particularly, with aid from concerned departments and agencies within the executive branch, acts to limit (or force) change. The Hoover Commission and the Jackson Subcommittee were reviewed in this regard. Later years saw War Powers hearings, Senate hearings on the role of the NSA, and Iran-Contra investigations. With notable exceptions, these congressional inquiries rarely resulted in statutory limitations on the president's authority to structure staff agencies, but in each case congressional action prompted changed behavior on the part of presidents and those who work for them. Fights with Congress are fraught with high political costs. A president, or his staff, is likely to avoid organizational forms that have raised congressional ire before. Political capital, it seems, is better spent on other matters.

Partisan conflict has served to highlight perceived problems and tout allegedly superior

alternatives. Candidates seize issues that hold the promise of relative advantage and work to capitalize on them. Candidates are likely to criticize the way a current incumbent does business if they think such criticisms work to their advantage and if they see preferable alternatives.

As noted above, it is actually those who surround the president who are responsible for bringing issues like NSC organization to the candidates attention and for structuring alternatives. These individuals are likely to have a good understanding of what previous arrangements have been and of the relative merits of alternatives.

Organizational alternatives have diminished with the passage of time. Unacceptable and unworkable arrangements have been established through conflict, trial, and error. Candidates no longer consider NSC system organization an issue to be debated. What exists now has been accepted and they look forward to having the system work for them. NSAs and potential NSAs have a good sense of what is useful, and what would not be accepted by the larger political and institutional system. Limits have been established concerning the size and activities of the professional staff, the IDC system, and the behavior of the NSA.

Most of these limits exist only by mutual understanding among actors and potential actors within the system.

There is no guarantee that these limits will hold into the future. It is conceivable that some turn of events will result in efforts to break previously established boundaries or in unacceptable behavior in an area where no limit has yet been established. What is predictable is the reaction of institutional actors to squelch that behavior.

#### **D. Symbolism and Organizing Ideas**

A new understanding of the relationships between institutions and the ideas they propounded was an unexpected result of this study. In the process of developing and illustrating an analytical framework, it became quickly apparent that the roles of symbols and organizing ideas were fascinating and integral parts of the overall development of the NSC system.

Symbolism was a particularly important aspect of the early development of the NSC system. Manipulation of organizational forms allowed presidents to reap an immediate symbolic product in a policy area where the substantive impacts of their efforts were likely to be uncertain and delayed. Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Nixon all established the perception that they were the masters of their organizational environments by

instituting sweeping NSC system changes. In Eisenhower's case the changes were less sweeping than they were portrayed to be. In Kennedy's case he was less a master of events than he was caught in the current of those events. And in Nixon's case the perception of control was a carefully crafted product of the change.

Ideas linking organizational forms and politics, though generally inconsistently and incompletely articulated and utilized, shaped the debates and their outcomes in successive struggles to define the NSC system in interesting ways. Institutions adopted philosophies of organization that suited their institutional interests and then tended to shape their actions to conform with their adopted philosophy. The Navy and War departments were the best examples of this phenomena covered in the four case studies. Their philosophies of organization were based in their own arrangements, but were developed to meet their institutional needs during the unification debate. Each allied itself with the branch of government that had the most to gain from their preferred organizational alternative. Opinion was divided within each department at the outset of the debate, but

divergence from the departmental philosophy diminished as it became further developed and articulated.

Ideas associated with institutions or parties in times of conflict tended to shape the thoughts of individuals within them for several years into the future. The Navy and War Departments again served as a good illustrative case, but so did the political parties in both the Hoover Commission and Jackson Subcommittee cases. Prior to the Hoover Commission the political parties each had an identifiable orientation toward the role of government in society and the roles of the separate branches within the government, but this did not extend to an orientation concerning the means of organization and control within presidential staff agencies. The Hoover Commission raised the question as a political issue for the first time, but it did not resolve it one way or the other.

The separate alternatives to an executive's approach to organizational arrangements and control were classified as either political or managerial, even though such a classification simplified the issues at hand. The Hoover Commission embodied both approaches in the recommendations of its various task forces, but leaned toward the managerial approach. Eisenhower seemed to accept entirely the managerial prescriptions

recommended by Hoover, and the Jackson Subcommittee hearings seemed to brand this approach unacceptable. Presidents, of course, could be completely neither one way nor the other, but the conflict broke down along party lines with Republicans supporting managerial approaches and Democrats supporting political approaches. The Republicans' heroes were Hoover and Eisenhower, and the Democrats' hero was Franklin Roosevelt (Truman was hard to classify, and still short of hero status at the time). The conflict solidified perceptions about the appropriate form of organization and political style that have remained with incumbents of both parties since that time.

#### **E. Contributions**

This study has contributed to the academic literature in two distinct ways. First, a strong case in favor of contextual factors as the primary independent variable in the development of the National Security Council system was presented. The process of making this case resulted in two important products. We have described the various means by which presidents have historically organized and utilized the National Security Council system as a decision-making mechanism. We have also organized that information within a theoretical discussion of the forces that move and

limit presidents with respect to their organizational choices. The case for a contextual interpretation of NSC system development, the collection of NSC historical information, and the theoretical discussion of presidential behavior all contribute to the literature on the presidency in general and to the more narrow field concerned with national security decision-making.

Second, we have provided another case study in the growing literature associated with the New Institutionalism. To this more general debate on the forces that condition political behavior we have contributed an analytical framework through which researchers can approach and filter the mass of information related to institutional change. This framework has been thoroughly developed and illustrated in the preceding pages.

#### **F. Implications for Future Research**

This study suggests at least two potential opportunities for future research. First, and most obviously, the years after the Nixon administration could be analyzed using this framework. Second, it might be instructive to apply this analytical framework to other presidential staff agencies or governmental

institutions. The three levels of this analytical framework are clearly exportable.

An analysis of the continued development of the NSC system under later presidents is the obvious next step. The analytic approach developed above certainly suggests explanations to later developments, but many issues remain to be worked out. How have later Democratic presidents, Carter and Clinton, for example, reconciled the divergent tendencies inherent in their party (toward decentralized, political means of control) and in the institutional presidency (toward centralized, formal, managerial forms of control)? Carter is a particularly interesting case in terms of this central conflict. It appears that Carter reluctantly surrendered to centralization, but that in the process he and Brzezinski managed to re-initiate an institutional conflict over the role of the NSA left unresolved with Kissinger's departure (Committee on Foreign Relation, 1980).

The Iran-Contra affair is another case particularly rich with potential research questions appropriate to a contextual analysis. The investigators and prominent politicians who have analyzed the NSC system's involvement in the matter have ascribed this later institutional crisis (and

foreign policy disaster) to the failure of the individuals involved (President's Special Review Board, 1987; Cohen & Mitchell, 1988). Their analyses were variations on the political style theme disputed by this dissertation. The rise of the Crisis Management Center and the abuses it spawned, however, seem eminently explicable by the contextual factors developed above.

This study suggests directions for future research in other areas as well. While we have concentrated exclusively on the NSC system, the analytical framework developed here may be of use in analyses of other presidential staff agencies. Clinton's attempt to create a parallel agency for economic matters offers an intriguing opportunity for a parallel analysis. The Council of Economic Advisors is another potential object of study. Created in 1946, it has experienced an extraordinarily different development pattern. Why has this been the case? Do the same factors explain its divergent path? Such questions offer important opportunities for future research.

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