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Dissertation

**FIGHTING FOR NATIONAL SECURITY:
BUILDING THE NATIONAL SECURITY STATE IN THE
EISENHOWER AND KENNEDY ADMINISTRATIONS**

by

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“I am convinced that we rely far too much on organization, in the sense of sketching formal relationships on a chart, and we forget that within each box on the chart there are men and women who may or may not know anything about what they are doing—who may or may not know anything about what they are doing—who may or may not agree with each other—and who may be far more sympathetic with the ideas of some outside pressure group than with the purpose of the authority in the next box above them”-Don K. Price “The New Dimension of Diplomacy” 1951

“There are dangers in oversimplification in any discussion of this subject. Analysis inevitably produces some distortion. One makes nice distinctions between policy formulation and operations or between command and staff functions. One draws neat charts dividing responsibilities into geometrically precise compartments. One speaks of levels of authority as if government could be arranged with the measured symmetry of a staircase. For analysis we divide things up; in practice they are all of a piece together.”-Paul Nitze statement before the Jackson Subcommittee, 6/17/60

“Good people can triumph over faulty organization, but good policy machinery can never substitute for outstanding officials.”-Memo on Transition-Senate Subcommittee on Policy Machinery

“Policy isn’t made on paper; it’s a continuously changing mix of people and ideas.”
-NSC staffer comment to Harold Saunders, 1961

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ADMINISTRATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

Between 1953 and 1963, during the administrations of President Dwight Eisenhower and John Kennedy, the United States government transformed the way it formulated and executed foreign and defense policies. These changes gave the White House its own foreign policy staff, in the form of the National Security Council, and increased the powers of the Secretary of Defense. Most of these changes began under Eisenhower in the 1950s. Eisenhower, however, delayed making several key reforms despite the recommendations of his staff. He believed some reforms were unnecessary and remained ambivalent about others. Moreover, he wanted to avoid sending complex reorganization legislation through Congress, which Eisenhower feared would allow legislators to interfere in matters of the Executive Branch. Democrats in the 1960 presidential election capitalized on the failure to push through these reforms. The Democratic attacks proved remarkably compelling to a bipartisan audience. Kennedy used this bipartisan agreement to enact many of the reforms Eisenhower had ignored. The motivating factor for many of these decisions was not merely an attempt by either President to concentrate power in the White House, it was a belief that the post-1945

world was so unstable that only giving the White House unfettered access and oversight of the levers of power could ensure the safety of the nation.

This work merges Diplomatic History with the field of American Political Development to examine these dramatic changes to the structure of the US government. Historians traditionally have examined these Kennedy era administrative changes in isolation. Studying them together with those that took place under Eisenhower yields a more complete picture of how the national security state developed. Despite Eisenhower's reluctance to adopt some of the reforms embraced by Kennedy, both presidents believed that major reforms were necessary. Any sound analysis of the ways the contemporary United States makes its foreign and defense policies requires understanding momentous changes that took place during the transformational period of the early Cold War

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List of Abbreviations

- 5412 Committee-Covert Action Coordinating Group (part of NSC)
- EOB-Executive Office Building
- GOC-Government Operations Committee
- ICBM-Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
- IRBM-Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile
- ISA-Office of International Security Affairs, Department of Defense
- NME-National Military Establishment
- NSC-National Security Council
- NSRB-National Security Resources Board
- OCB-Operations Coordination Board (part of NSC)
- ONE-Office of National Estimates (part of CIA)
- ORE-Office of Research and Estimates (predecessor to ONE, part of CIA)
- OSS-Office of Strategic Services
- PACGO-President's Advisory Committee on Government Organization
- PB-Planning Board (part of NSC)
- PCG-Planning Coordination Group
- PNSR-Project on National Security Reform
- PPS-State Department Policy Planning Staff
- PSB-Psychological Strategy Board
- SANSA-Special Assistant for National Security Affairs
- SCU-Statistical Control Unit

SLBM-Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile

SNPM-Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery (Jackson's Subcommittee)

Introduction: Richmond Hobson's Dream

Richmond Hobson should probably have died on June 3, 1898. Hobson, a lieutenant in the US Navy during the Spanish American War, volunteered to lead a mission to trap the Spanish fleet in Santiago Harbor by scuttling a ship in the entrance to the bay. Faced by powerful Spanish shore defense and the Spanish fleet, survival and success seemed unlikely at best. The Spanish detected his vessel and opened fire. The ship sank, having failed its mission. But Hobson and his entire crew survived unharmed. Despite the failure, Hobson emerged a hero, the only Naval officer to win the Medal of Honor during the war. His Navy career fizzled, but he remained popular, and in 1906 won a seat in the House of Representatives.¹ Once there, he was appointed to the House Naval Affairs Committee.

Hobson used his position to argue that America was dangerously unprepared to confront the 20th Century. The world was in flux: old powers, like Russia and the Ottoman Empire, seemed to be declining. New powers, like Japan, were jousting for power with an increasingly powerful America. Europe was rife with tensions. America, Hobson argued, needed to meet these challenges head on. That could only be done by better coordinating the policies of America's military services, as well as the nation's diplomatic efforts. Hobson proposed a "Committee of National Defense," a group that would "determine a general policy of national defense and shall recommend to the President, for transmission to Congress, such measures relating to the national defense as

¹ Barton C. Shaw, "The Hobson Craze" *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* Vol. 102, Issue 2 (February 1976), p. 54-60.

it shall deem necessary and expedient.”² Hobson tried to rally his colleagues by pointing out that lacking such coordination could have dire consequences.³ He also noted that every other major European nation, as well as Japan, already possessed some form of national defense council.⁴ Hobson proposed that the US council be led by the Secretary of War, joined by other military officials and the Congressional leadership of the finance, military, and naval committees.⁵ He introduced a bill to form this committee in 1910, 1911, and 1912.⁶ Each time it failed to pass, despite an endorsement by William Howard Taft in his 1911 State of the Union.

Hobson left Congress in 1915, his dream unrealized. In fact, it took two world wars, the start of the Cold War, and thirty more years to finally see the inklings of his ideas come to fruition. That began in 1947, with the passage of the National Security Act. That Act, however, proposed weak institutions that failed to function as envisioned or as modified. Dwight Eisenhower and John Kennedy sought to change that. During their administrations, the government of the United States centralized power in the hands of the president in unprecedented ways. The White House effectively gained its own foreign policy arm through the staff of the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense gained increasing control over the vast military bureaucracy. This was not, of

² HR 29371, *A Bill to Establish a Council of National Defense*, 61st Congress, December 14, 1910.

³ Report No. 2078, Council of National Defense, 61st Congress, February 6, 1911. He specially cited Russia’s performance during the Russo-Japanese War and Britain’s strategy during the Boer War.

⁴ Ibid. Included in this were the UK, France, Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Italy, Spain.

⁵ Report No. 584, Council of National Defense, 62nd Congress, April 22, 1912 and S 6691, *A Bill to Establish a Council of National Defense*, 63rd Congress, December 7, 1914. This included the Secretary of the Navy, the Army’s Chief of General Staff, his Naval opposite number, and the presidents of the Army and Navy War Colleges.

⁶ He also tinkered with the concept. Originally the board seemed like a proto-Defense Department. In the end, after he added the President and Secretary of State, it seems far closer to the National Security Council.

course, the first time that presidents had this power. During the First and Second World Wars, the United States had created similar organizations to manage the foreign and defense policies of the nation. Yet, two things made these later changes stand out. The first was that this all, ostensibly, took place in a time of peace. Tensions with a foreign power were nothing new, even if the threat from the Soviet Union hit a new high. The second was that these moves were not justified as temporary solutions to merely combat the Soviet threat; they were permanent modifications that changed the very structure and operations of the US government. They swelled the ranks of the civil service and stripped the State Department, the traditional manager of America's diplomacy, of its primacy of position. Moreover, they were an acknowledgement that the line between war and peace, diplomacy and military force, had become almost inseparable. They caused a rupture in the functioning of government.

What about this time period that inspired these changes? In part, officials were responding to the failure of the National Security Act of 1947. That piece of legislation had introduced the concept of a unified defense department and National Security Council, among other ideas. However, their implementation during the Truman Administration proved rocky, at best. The question when Eisenhower took office was how much of this apparatus should be retained and what should be scrapped.

The search for an answer began as set of very practical reforms begun by Eisenhower and other officials in his Administration. It also set off a decade's worth of change to these institutions. It is too facile to explain this as simply an aspect of a growing "imperial presidency." Nor is the explanation merely that America was in the

throes of the Cold War. What was so special about this period that convinced these officials to take steps no one had considered before and that seemed deeply at odds with America's political tradition? In some cases, it was relatively selfish: a handful of officials advocated for reforms in the hope they could leverage the new system to win a bureaucratic turf war with a colleague or to expand their own federal fiefdoms. Others seemed motivated by distrust. If the idea of the "deep state" is more modern, distrust of an existing bureaucracy is not. Presidents have always worried that the federal bureaucracy was arrayed against their interest. Both Dwight Eisenhower and John Kennedy often felt they had to rely primarily on their handpicked advisors to carry out their orders and offer advice.

Yet this explanation, too, is somewhat misleading. Many of the officials who endorsed strengthening the powers of the Executive agencies had previously served in the federal government and knew that their former coworkers were trustworthy. For them, it was a question of time. They worried that the federal government was too inflexible to deal quickly enough with the issues of the day. That was, of course, a nod to the threat of nuclear war. But it also referred to a world where all events, big and small, seemed to be increasing in importance, and in speed, and in need of the president's attention. Many of those who endorsed these changes had spent their careers prioritizing careful, deliberate, decision-making. It seemed shocking that the world could change so fast. This was not a power grab for the presidency; it was a pragmatic decision they felt needed to be made for the nation's security. Most of the aforementioned officials were members of the Executive Branch or consultants brought in to help in reorganization efforts.

Perhaps as importantly, there was an overall desire for improved governmental organization at this time. Between 1947 and 1955, Congress sponsored three different reviews of this subject. Eisenhower retained his own stable of reorganization experts throughout his entire presidency and constantly kept them engaged with work. That paved the way for some of these improvements. Equally important, Democratic Senator Henry Jackson (D-WA) launched his own investigation of government organization in 1959, culminating in 1960. Despite its partisan beginnings, that effort attracted surprising bipartisan support. The findings laid waste to much of Eisenhower's efforts. Kennedy did not attach nearly as much importance to organization as Eisenhower did, but Jackson's investigations allowed Kennedy and his officials wide latitude in codifying what they liked from the Eisenhower years, and pushing their own organizational ideas.

The method of foreign policy management during these years essentially established the operating methods of the US government today. If you took a member of the White House staff from before this period and dropped him into the present, he would be in a world that would be largely unfamiliar. Yet to someone from during or after this period, the current operations of the federal government would, with perhaps the exception of technological advances, feel similar to what he knew. Despite the brief interlude of Jackson, however, the fact is that these reforms had wide bipartisan support. Almost every stripe of American political official believed that change was needed.

That relative unanimity can be seen in examining the specifics of how these developments took place. On entering office, Eisenhower identified problems with each organization. In terms of the National Security Council, Eisenhower reinvented it as an

organization that would centralize policy making and execution in the White House. For the Defense Department, the reorganization that took place in 1949 had failed to fix many of the issues inherent in the decentralized institution. Eisenhower instituted an initial round of reforms in 1953, building up the NSC and giving more power to the Secretary of Defense. Yet neither of these reforms worked as Eisenhower expected. In the White House, the NSC performed its job, but failed to do so as intended due to issues of structure and personnel. In the Defense Department, the Secretary of Defense found it difficult to harness the new powers bestowed by Eisenhower. In part, this was because the first incumbent, Charles Wilson, effectively served as Eisenhower's placeholder in the Pentagon. This arrangement discouraged him from taking the initiative on any number of management issues.

During his second term, Eisenhower continued to fix these problems. He did so by tapping a variety of sources from within the administration as well as heavily relying on the President's Advisory Commission on Government Organization. In the end, Eisenhower made only minor changes to the NSC, despite pressures from others within the administration to do more. Sputnik forced Eisenhower to enact more serious reforms to the Pentagon via congressional legislation in 1958. That process was slow, and only partially effected by 1960. During that year, however, Eisenhower confronted another threat: Jackson's investigation. His Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery focused most of its energy on attacking Eisenhower's organization and use of the NSC. The reforms to the Pentagon, starting in 1958 with that year's Defense Reorganization Act, largely spared that institution Jackson's wrath, though Eisenhower's defense budget came

under attack. The Jackson investigation had a politically biased motive, but it also told some important truths, while simultaneously inflicting tremendous damage to Eisenhower's reputation as a national security expert.

More importantly, during the Kennedy Administration Jackson's work led to a concentration of power at the fingertips of the president heretofore unknown. The ideas that Eisenhower either rejected or only partially implemented lay dormant in the bureaucratic milieu of the US Government. Kennedy cared little for organization, but did care for efficiency and responsiveness. How he achieved that responsiveness mattered little to him. But the micromanaging President's move allowed the ideas that had been gestating since the Eisenhower years to blossom. While some of the change was the result of outside sources, many of the organizational innovations came from within, or were a happy medium between members of the new Administration and long service employees.

Understanding this is not just of interest for state development, but also policy development. The choices that took place during this period decided early US Cold War grand strategy and the nation's policy towards nuclear weapons, to say nothing of countless foreign policy entanglements around the world. These decisions did not take place in isolation, but in a specific bureaucratic context that is not always obvious in documents or oral histories. If we are to fully grasp the choices made by officials during this period, we must understand the institutional restraints that existed when the decision were made.

Despite its importance in the making of the modern state, this process has been unevenly studied. Presidential biography remains a booming business, but a more academic study of the presidency itself has only recently returned.⁷ Some of the key figures in this study have received lavish attention, while others remain surprisingly unexamined.⁸ The field of American political development has done extensive work excavating the development of the early American state.⁹ Yet the same attention has largely not been given to the general development of national security intuitions.¹⁰ The major exceptions are works looking at the development of the national security state in the Truman years.¹¹ But that approach has not been applied to later administrations in the same manner. Several important monographs focus on the development of National Security Council, but the same cannot be said for the Departments of State and Defense.¹² Another approach, to examine the evolution of an institution via biography, has also

⁷ Brian Balogh and Bruce Schulman, eds. *Recapturing the Oval Office* (Cornell UP, 2015).

⁸ For instance, outside of Vietnam, Robert McNamara has received limited biographical coverage (see footnote 13). Regardless, Kennedy staffers have received significantly more scholarly attention, with some exceptions, than Eisenhower's staffers.

⁹ Brian Balogh, *A Government Out of Sight* (Cambridge UP, 2009); Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State* (Cambridge UP, 1982); Daniel Carpenter, *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy* (Princeton UP, 2001), Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soliders and Mothers* (Belknap, 1995).

¹⁰ Amy Zegart *Flawed by Design* (Stanford UP 2000); John Burke, *Honest Broker* (Texas A&M UP 2009). Anna Katsen Nelson did several important shorter works that address some of these issues. See bibliography.

¹¹ Michael Hogan, *A Cross of Iron* (Cambridge UP, 2000), Arnold Offner, *Another Such Victory* (Stanford UP, 2002); Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power* (Stanford UP, 1993), Douglas Stewart, *Creating the National Security State* (Princeton UP, 2012).

¹² In addition to the Zegart and Burke books mentioned above, there is also Ivo Daalder and I.M. Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office* (Simon and Schuster, 2009); John Prados, *Keepers of the Keys* (William Morrow and Co, 1991); Charles Stevenson, *SECDEF* (Potomac Books, 2006); Douglas Kinnard, *The Secretary of Defense* (UP of Kentucky, 1981). While the State Department's *Foreign Relations of the United States* is invaluable, the Department has no equivalent of the *Secretary of Defense Historical Series* released by the Pentagon.

achieved some notable successes.¹³ As with the presidency, historians and political scientists in the last two decades have been focusing more on Congress' role in these developments as well.¹⁴ These all tell some of the story, but they do so in an understandably divided fashion and often ignore or underplay the important links that existed between the organizational ideas of the Eisenhower Administration and those seen in the Kennedy Administration.

A brief note: at various points, I refer to the national security state. By this I mean, simply, the institutions in government devoted to ensuring the security of the nation. From the United States' independence until 1940, one might have argued that the nation's security was overseen by the military and the State Department with some amount of oversight from the White House. The list of institutions that could fit that description, however, ballooned in the years after the Second World War. This included organizations devoted to intelligence gathering, like the CIA and National Security Agency; those that oversaw the management of the nation's security, like the NSC; a new military service in the form of the Air Force; the Defense Department to oversee all of the United States' military efforts; and even new departments that, at first glance, seemed tangential to either diplomacy or armed conflict, like the Agency for International Development or the US Information Agency. This expansion alone speaks to the sudden realization, or fear, in US political circles that post-war national security required robust control, oversight, and expanded capabilities.

¹³ Andrew Preston, *The War Council* (Harvard UP, 2006); Deborah Shapley, *Promise and Power* (Little, Brown, and Co, 1993); H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty* (Harper, 1997); Paul Henderickson, *The Living and the Dead* (Vintage, 1997); Henry Trewhitt, *McNamara* (Harper and Row, 1971).

¹⁴ Julian Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy* (Basic Books, 2009), Paul Light, *Government by Investigation* (Brookings Institution, 2013), Linda Fowler, *Watchdogs on the Hill* (Princeton UP 2015).

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I believe that to understand this story completely one must understand the background of the National Security Act of 1947, the intellectual heritage of the Act, and how it played out in the final years of the Truman Administration. That Act took place because the US Navy and Army spent the early part of the 20th Century pushing for a greater role in making national policy. In the aftermath of the 1947 Act, however, they lost much of the power they initially hoped to gain. Moreover, the Act itself proved brittle. The groups it created, almost from the start, needed significant reform.

The size and capability of the Army and Navy expanded dramatically during the 19th century.¹⁵ This growth, however, masked a problematic truth: while the departments that controlled these organizations increased tremendously in size, they remained bureaucratic wrecks. One might argue that the success of the Army and Navy in the wars of the 19th century came in spite of the chaos at the War and the Navy Departments.¹⁶ The organization of the departments and the relative lack of power held by the service secretaries prevented effective organization.¹⁷ One Army historian called the late 19th century War Department “little more than a hydra-headed holding company.”¹⁸ The Navy was the first service to take professionalization seriously.¹⁹ It did this in part by wooing

¹⁵ Clayton Newell, *The Regular Army Before the Civil War* (Center for Military History, 2014), p. 7-8 and 50-51; Max Edling, *A Hercules in the Cradle* (U of Chicago Press, 2014), p. 165 and 217-218; Richard W. Stewart ed *American Military History Vol 1: The United States Army and the Forging of a Nation, 1775-1917* Richard W. Stewart ed. (Center for Military History, 2009), p. 308.

¹⁶ Leonard White, *The Federalists* (Macmillan, 1956), p. 152.

¹⁷ James Hewe, *From Root to McNamara* (Center for Military History, 1975), p. 3; Paul Koistinen, *Mobilizing for Modern War* (UP of Kansas 1997), p. 64.

¹⁸ Hewe, *From Root*, p. 5.

¹⁹ James C. Rentfrow, *Home Squadron: The US Navy on the North Atlantic Station* (Naval Institute Press, 2014), p. 1,4, and 7-8; Koistinen, *Mobilizing*, p. 33, 41, and 44; Ronald Spector, *Professors of War: The Naval War College and the Development of the Naval Profession* (UP of the Pacific, 1977), p. 73 and 77.

powerful allies in Congress. Officers like Alfred Thayer Mahan and Stephen Luce showed that the service could play an active role in expanding and protecting America's new overseas ambitions. The service also moved from a "heroic leadership" model to more "managerial leadership" model.²⁰ In fact, the Navy began to see its role overseas as almost a universal representative of state, engaging in diplomatic negotiations independent of the State Department in several instances.²¹ Further efforts to professionalize the officer corps in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War, in effect produced a Navy general staff.²² While the Navy increasingly focused on the world stage, the Army struggled to keep pace.²³ It began to plan for wars around the world as much for the possibility of those wars as to train its officers to think through problems.²⁴ In the Navy, some officers reasoned that it would be better to play a more proactive role, believing that they should have access to either the President or the State Department in order to help set America's foreign policy on the grand level. Both the Navy and Army

²⁰ Rentfrow, *Home*, p. 138 and Morris Janowitz *The Professional Soldier* (Free Press, 1971), p. 425.

²¹ George Herring, *From Colony to Superpower* (Oxford UP, 2008), p. 141; John Kuehn, "A Turning Point in Anglo-American Relations? The General Board of the Navy and the London Naval Treaty" in *At the Crossroads Between Peace and War* JH Maurer and CM Bell eds (Naval Institute Press, 2014), p. 34-36; Jim Leeke, *Manila and Santiago* (Naval Institute Press, 2009), p. 17 and 78-80. The idea that the Navy knew diplomacy better than Washington had a darker side, too: retired naval officers criticized the Commander of the North Atlantic Squadron after the destruction of the USS Maine in 1898. His predecessors, they argued, would not have consulted the White House and instead sailed to Havana, and forced the Spanish to surrender the island. Rentfrow, p. 137 and 138. The Army also played a significant role in overseas diplomacy. Andrew Bacevich, *Diplomat in Khaki*: (UP of Kansas, 1989), p. 211.

²² John T. Kuehn, *Agents of Innovation: The General Board and the Design of the Fleet That Defeated Japan* (Naval Institute Press, 2008), p. 11.

²³ Graham Cosmas, *An Army for Empire* (Texas A&M, 1998), p. xviii; Paul Y. Hammond, *Organizing for Defense* (Princeton UP, 1961), p. 35.

²⁴ Dirk Bonker, *Militarism in A Global Age* (Cornell UP, 2012), p. 146-147. Mark Stoler, *Allies and Adversities: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and US Strategy in World War II* (UNC Press, 2003), p. 27-28; Henry Gole, *The Road to Rainbow: Army Planning for Global War* (Naval Institute Press, 2002) p. 27-28, 81-82, and 95. For instance, the long planning for war against Japan resulted in the eventually successful War Plan Orange. Edward Miller, *War Plan Orange* (Naval Institute Press, 1991), p. xix-xx

attempted to reach out to the State Department to form some sort of joint planning agency so that diplomatic and political concerns might be merged with military plans or, at the very least, so that the military might understand America's broad political aims.²⁵ The Navy, however, was far more enthusiastic about this possibility and the Army was considered the "handmaiden of policy."²⁶

During the First World War the Navy got its wish. The State Department engaged in limited coordination of foreign policy objectives with the armed services. That ceased after the end of hostilities.²⁷ The Navy was not satisfied. In 1919, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, sent Secretary of State Robert Lansing a highly detailed memo advocating for a joint Army-Navy-State planning board. As it turned out, Roosevelt's memo was never opened.²⁸ Two years later in 1921, the Secretaries of the Navy and War worked from Roosevelt's initial plans and together submitted a plan to Secretary of State Charles Hughes for a similar planning body. Hughes dismissed the notion out of hand.²⁹ It took another decade, and repeated attempts, for the Navy to win its cause.³⁰ In part, this happened because former naval official Franklin Roosevelt occupied the White House.³¹ But it was also because of military concerns military

²⁵ Stoler, *Allies*, p. 3 and 15.

²⁶ Hammond, *Organizing*, p. 85-86 and 105.

²⁷ Ernest May, "The Development of Political-Military Consultation in the United States" *Political Science Quarterly* (June 1955), p. 171.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 168. In part, this was due to a bureaucratic snafu. That being said, Ernest May considered the plan unworkable and overly complicated, especially given that simpler plans were vetoed by the State Department.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 169.

³⁰ Hammond, *Organizing*, p. 105; May, "Development", p. 171.

³¹ May, "Development", p. 171.

concerns of the war and because Roosevelt had more faith in the military's ability to carry out his orders.³²

Starting in the middle of the Second World War, the Army and Navy began to jockey for position in the post-war world. The Army wanted to achieve unification of the services, with it as the main beneficiary.³³ The Navy wanted to retain its independence, as well as a seat at the policy planning table, cementing the role in national policy it developed during the 1930s and 1940s.³⁴ Supporters of both services in Congress introduced legislation trying to transform their ideas into law. Truman wavered on how to proceed, even as he grew increasingly frustrated at the constant infighting between the services, both the halls of Congress and in the press. Ending this very public three-year long debate was a priority. But the question remained which side to support. Two facts perhaps swayed Truman to endorse the Navy's plan. First, it had a slightly advantage in Congressional support. Second, Truman's own military advisor, Admiral William Leahy, apparently advised him against accepting the Army's plan.³⁵ That helped secure victory for Navy. The original "do-nothing" Congress passed the bill, titled the National Security Act of 1947.³⁶

Five major organizations, in addition to several minor ones, came from this act.

The National Military Establishment (NME), the forerunner of the Defense Department,

³² Douglas Stuart, *Creating the National Security State: A History of the Law That Transformed America* (Princeton UP, 2012), p. 34-37 and Stoler, *Allies*, p. x-xi.

³³ Hammond, *Organizing*, p. 186-187, 213-214.

³⁴ Hammond, *Organizing*, p. 101-105, 206; Paul Koistinen, *Planning War, Pursuing Peace: The Political Economy of American Warfare, 1920-1939* (UP of Kansas, 1998), p. 10-12.

³⁵ Stuart, *Creating*, p. 83-103.

³⁶ Robert David Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War* (Cambridge UP, 2006), p. 12. As Johnson argues, often the debate in Congress was less about the theory of the two bills, and more about who supported what service.

was created with a weak secretary who would essentially serve as a coordinator. The power in the NME would rest with the service secretaries overseeing the Army, Navy, and the Air Force (which was created by the Act). In the White House, two organizations were formed. One, the National Security Council (NSC) aimed to be a forum where the President could discuss international and security matters with his closest advisers, including the military services. The other, the National Security Resources Board (NSRB), would oversee the connection between industry and the military, and make sure the armed forces stayed equipped to oversee future mobilization. Lastly, the Central Intelligence Group, formed in January 1946, became the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). These changes did not give the Navy everything it wanted, but they fulfilled interests the Navy had held for decades.

Two men played a key role in drafting this Act: Ferdinand Eberstad and Pendleton Herring. Herring, a Harvard political science professor was, by far, the more radical of the two. His view of the National Security Act was of a fundamental transformation of US government, arguing that “The day of the positive state is upon us.”³⁷ He argued that the only way America could confront overseas threats was to fuse the organizational capabilities of a totalitarian state to America’s democratic heritage.³⁸ He believed this could be done without significant problems. Eberstadt, whose final report formed the basis of the National Security Act, embraced Herring’s idea, but only to a degree. Eberstadt was originally a Wall Street banker. Like so many of his ilk, he was pulled into government service in both the First and Second World Wars. He also became

³⁷ Quoted in Stuart, *Creating*, p. 21.

³⁸ Stuart, *Creating*, p. 29.

good friends with Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, who asked Eberstadt to help him write the Navy's version of the National Security Act. Unlike Herring, Eberstadt had a mixed view of the state. Central coordination could be a force for good, especially one between business and government.³⁹ But he also feared the New Deal, and what he saw as the needless, and perhaps dangerous, growth of the government under Franklin Roosevelt.⁴⁰

Eberstadt designed what was effectively a series of organizations that could be expanded or shrunk as needed. He still believed business and government worked best together and believed in times of national emergency, as in the First and Second World Wars, that these institutions could be staffed by technocrats and Wall Street lawyers like himself.⁴¹ He both embraced the power of the state while simultaneously displaying a strong undercurrent of anti-statism.⁴²

That attitude set the National Security Act up for disaster, specifically the NSC, NME, and NSRB. These agencies proved too weak or were easy to ignore. For instance, Truman rarely attended NSC meeting until after the Korean War began, and the Secretaries of the Army and Navy were quickly removed as statutory members. The board's utility remained questionable. The NME proved so difficult to manage that stories of internal battles made their way into the press, embarrassing the Administration. They also, most likely, caused James Forrestal to kill himself in 1949. Congress passed a set of reforms in 1949, renaming NME the Department of Defense and putting some

³⁹ Jeffrey Dorwart, *Eberstadt and Forrestal* (Texas A&M Press, 1991), p. 84-85.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 26.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 3-10. Eberstadt even compiled what he termed the "Good Man List" of who should get these jobs.

⁴² Aaron Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State* (Princeton UP, 2000), p. 3-4

limits on the powers of the service secretaries to allow greater centralized control. Many questions remained unanswered about its proper organization. For the most part, the NSRB rarely met, disappearing entirely by 1950.

Harry Truman patched these institutions up as best he could, but after 1950 organization took a back seat to fighting the Cold War in Korea and elsewhere. The National Security Act as envisioned by Eberstadt effectively ceased to exist. The loose and decentralized bodies Eberstadt hoped would manage national security had failed in to survive peacetime. Eberstadt's concept of filling government with "dollar-a-year men" did survive. The system was not set up to necessarily encourage promotion from within, but to have individuals join the government temporarily. If 1947 was a turning point, it was one that also demonstrated how much more work needed to be done. Yet, it was a start. If Richmond Hobson had lived to 1950 he might have argued that however messy the debates, or poorly executed the plans, America was finally serious about developing the institutions it needed to project its power and defend the nation.

Chapter 1: Nelson Rockefeller's Nightmare

During the first week of January in 1955, Nelson Rockefeller settled into his new job as Dwight Eisenhower's Special Assistant for Foreign Affairs. His office, Room 208 in the old State, War, and Navy Building across from the White House, had an illustrious history. It had been the office of the Secretary of State between 1888 and 1947, when George Marshall moved the department out.⁴³ Originally, the three departments that represented the US overseas were expected to fit snugly in one building. As the number of employees in each department increased, space grew tighter. Things got so bad the Navy moved out of the building entirely in 1918. That solved the problem for two decades, but the same problem forced the Army to relocate in 1938. A year after the Army left, however, White House staffers started moving in.⁴⁴ The influx of White House denizens forced State to move, ironically to a building originally meant for the War Department complete with a warlike mural in its entrance way. The history of the State, War, and Navy Building in many respects mimicked the growth of the national security state.

Yet the building barely survived the Eisenhower Administration. The new administration bestowed upon it a far blander title: the Executive Office Building (EOB).⁴⁵ Perhaps befitting Eisenhower's reputation for corporate and military management styles, some in the White House wondered whether the aging building

⁴³ "The Cordell Hull Conference Room-Room 208: The Former Secretary of State's Office" White House Website, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/history/eobtour/room208-flash.html>, accessed 3/10/15.

⁴⁴ "Eisenhower Executive Office Building" White House Website, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/eeob>, accessed 3/10/15.

⁴⁵ It gained the even less appealing name of Old Executive Office Building in 1965 after a New Executive Office Building was built.

should be torn down altogether.⁴⁶ In 1957 a presidential advisory commission said it should be replaced by a new, modern office building. In the end, the EOB was saved through a combination of financial prudence—demolishing and replacing the building would have been expensive—and an outpouring of support from prominent individuals.⁴⁷

Rockefeller appreciated the building. In fact, he was one of the people who helped save it. His main opponent in this and many other things was Eisenhower's frugal White House chief of staff Sherman Adams.⁴⁸ Rockefeller was not content just to save the building; he wanted to improve it. He had his office walls repainted from their general issue government green to a more pleasing Williamsburg yellow.⁴⁹ Frustrated by the size of his staff, he brought over a large, handpicked group from other parts of government and from his private offices in New York. Moreover, he paid many of their salaries out of his own pocket when Adams refused the additional positions.⁵⁰ When he found he needed an auditorium, he again turned to his own bank account to build such a space in the EOB.⁵¹ Rockefeller served the Eisenhower Administration in a variety of capacities for almost six years and, in many cases, he played an outsized and prophetic role. Yet he struggled to change policy. As with the EOB, many of his assignments focused on advising Eisenhower on building, repairing, renovating, and fixing, the evolving national

⁴⁶ Fred Greenstein, *The Hidden Hand Presidency* (Johns Hopkins UP, 1994), p. 103.

⁴⁷ "Dwight Eisenhower Executive Office Building" Government Service Administration Website, <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/ext/html/site/hb/category/25431/actionParameter/exploreByBuilding/buildingId/461#>, accessed 3/10/15 and "Eisenhower Executive Office Building" White House Website.

⁴⁸ Richard Norton Smith, *On His Own Terms: A Life of Nelson Rockefeller* (Random House, 2014), p. 236.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Adams, indirectly, lost this fight in other ways. Rockefeller successfully claimed a deduction from the IRS for these expenses meaning the US government ended up paying some of their wages. Cary Reich, *The Life of Nelson Rockefeller: Words to Conquer 1908-1958* (Doubleday, 1996), p. 555.

⁵¹ Reich, p. 556.

security state. Some of those renovations were successful but, unlike his success with the EOB, others proved elusive. Nelson Rockefeller advocated for modifications to the structure of the National Security Council that mimicked the changes that took place during the Kennedy Administration. Despite Rockefeller's best efforts, however, the President failed to embrace his most ambitious recommendations.

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Eisenhower's administration was a great experiment in governance. In 1952, Harvard professor William Y. Elliot oversaw a report on the future of the US government. That report admitted that, in the past, the control over foreign policy wavered between the White House and the State Department. While the State Department always controlled day-to-day activities, setting the overall direction of US diplomacy could come from either the White House or the Secretary of State. As Elliot's report said, "the relationship of power to policy was never clearly accepted... Either the President allowed a dominant Secretary of State... or he acted in effect as his own Secretary of State."⁵² The agencies and offices proposed by the National Security Act of 1947 attempted to introduce an order to this system. No longer would there be a question of who controlled foreign policy. The NSC members would jointly advise the President. As with so much of the Act, however, the Truman Administration embraced some of these ideas, but many of the new powers and organizations prescribed by the Act went underused or ignored. After winning the 1952 election, Eisenhower attempted to reorder the chaos. Unlike Truman, Eisenhower placed great interest in matters of organization

⁵² *United States Foreign Policy: Its Organization and Control* William Y. Elliot ed. (Columbia UP, 1952), p. 86.

and set about reordering the government and studying organization with great zeal. He wanted to complete what the National Security Act had started.

On the face of it, many of these were simple organizational changes. In effect, however, Eisenhower attempted to use military organizational structures and operating methods to address Elliot's concerns. If foreign policy had swung between two poles in the past, Eisenhower hoped to move foreign policy coordination, if not day-to-day control, to the White House via the mechanism of the National Security Council (NSC). Eisenhower believed that a central organization and a robust staffing mechanism was the key to success, be it in organizing the invasion of France or running America's foreign policy. He felt the NSC would give him that oversight and organization. After his first two years in office, Eisenhower's experiment had proven, at best, a partial success. He spent the balance of his administration trying to correct the problems he encountered, but solutions proved elusive.

Adding more advisors to the system proved pointless, as did most attempts at reform. In both cases, failure can be partially attributed to the fact that Eisenhower's deputies resisted his call for reforms, and Eisenhower rarely pushed to overrule them. This led to mounting frustration, both within and outside the government. It also sullied the reputation of Eisenhower and his advisors after a damaging leak in 1957. Even when Eisenhower approved a complete overhaul of his system, towards the very end of his second term, that attempt was frustrated. A long gestation process, the death of John Foster Dulles, and mounting Congressional opposition, doomed the effort. The most successful reforms to the system, ironically, came only when Eisenhower largely

abandoned his idea that there should be a “policy middle ground” in the NSC, and allowed his White House staff to play a more prominent role in making and executing policy.

Four problems underpinned his attempts at reform. The first was whether to enforce organizational principles or allow individuals to work outside the system. The inability of both the President and others to decide which to support, or to create a system that allowed either or both to flourish inhibited the administration from finding a pattern of operation that truly fit its needs. Second, the administration never seemed to properly identify what a good organization was supposed to do. Was it supposed to allow the President to create a grand strategy? Was it supposed to facilitate day-to-day coordination between different parts of government? Was it to respond to crises? Or was it to consolidate the wide responsibilities of foreign policy management into the hands of a few? These questions were not mutually exclusive, but many contradictions existed in them. Third, the NSC system prioritized long-range planning at the expense of responding to immediate problems. Eisenhower’s military planning background leaned heavily on the former. The latter seemed to grow in importance the longer the administration was in office.

The fourth problem involved reforms to the system. To learn from lessons and adjust to changing circumstances is the sign of a healthy organization. It is a mistake to claim that the very fact Eisenhower considered reorganization schemes implies failure. Yet members of his administration seemed consumed by continuous concerns about what was wrong with the NSC system and how it might be fixed. While Ike’s people often

correctly identified the problems in the system, they seemed flummoxed by how to fix them. That the President in 1960 was prepared to completely restructure the way he conducted foreign policy suggests that, after eight years of trying to make the system work, Eisenhower felt he had failed. This failure was not just one in the abstract or of organization. For eight years the NSC outwardly claimed to rationally manage the foreign policy of the United States. More often than not, however, it was instead a bureaucratic muddle that hamstrung US policy, offered little oversight of policy, and actively prevented an easing of Cold War tensions.

A Voyage Up and Down the Policy Hill

Under Truman, the national security state changed dramatically. The trials and tribulations of the National Defense Establishment, soon the Department of Defense, are chronicled in later chapters. In the White House, however, the main change was the establishment of the NSC. Until the Korean War began, Harry Truman rarely attended his NSC meetings. Much like Wilson and Roosevelt, Truman had his own, small, group of national security advisors in the White House including W. Averell Harriman and George Elsey. Even if he did not use the Council extensively, it continued to meet and its executive secretary, Admiral Sidney Souers, kept Truman informed of its discussions.⁵³

In Truman's absence, the State Department ran NSC meetings with most chaired by either George Marshall or, later, Dean Acheson. Much of the material discussed by the council came from the State Department's Policy Planning Staff (PPS) thanks to

⁵³ John Prados, *Keepers of the Keys* (William Morrow and Co, 1991), p. 34-35.

Marshall. Befitting his planning background, Marshall hired George Kennan to lead this new staff.⁵⁴ Marshall modeled the staff after the Army's own strategy planning department that, for much of the interwar period, he managed. Under Kennan and his successor, Paul Nitze, Policy Planning produced some of the most sophisticated and authoritative papers concerning government policy and America's grand strategy. It far surpassed any comparable unit in government, and Policy Planning's papers often set the agenda for NSC discussions. While the most famous of these was NSC-68, the work of Kennan, Nitze, and the PPS influenced US policy for decades to come. The influence of the State Department reached its zenith during these years. Led by strong secretaries, supported by confident planning group, and with a staff sharpened by years of war and expanding power, it claimed an outsized role. In large part this was because there was no one to challenge it. The Defense Department was in a state of flux for Truman's entire term. The President also liked and supported Marshall and Acheson. State stepped into a power vacuum, happy to be the first among foreign policy equals.

During the 1952 campaign, Eisenhower attacked Truman's foreign policy and his use of the NSC. In a speech at the Cow Palace in San Francisco he argued that Truman had "failed to bring into line [the] criss-crossing [sic] and overlapping and jealous departments and bureau and agencies" pointedly adding that "[Truman] has failed to follow up the policies made by the National Security Council."⁵⁵ George Marshall privately agreed with Eisenhower's critique, believing that Truman's process was counter-productive. He argued that Truman played almost no role in the meetings and did

⁵⁴ John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (Penguin, 2011), p. 264-266.

⁵⁵ "General Eisenhower Foreign Policy Speech at San Francisco Cow Palace" *Daily Boston Globe* 10/9/52.

nothing to lead the assembled group. The non-PPS papers discussed were often a collection of meaningless compromises, and the participants were often unprepared or uninterested in meetings.⁵⁶ A member of the Defense Department wrote a memo arguing that what Truman really needed was an aide who could represent him on the NSC and generally troubleshoot foreign policy matters for the President.⁵⁷ Ferdinand Eberstadt, godfather of the National Security Act, commented that “[t]he NSC must be for national policy, as the Bureau of the Budget is for national administration, the focal point for the generation of national security policy and the principal instrument for supervising its coordinated execution.”⁵⁸ The study done by Elliot made similar recommendations.⁵⁹

Though Eisenhower promised massive reforms, many of the Truman era officials in the NSC, State, and Defense Departments retained their jobs. In part, this was because most staff were considered non-partisan. Eisenhower also ran into one of the inherent problems of Eberstadt’s plan: the institutions created in 1947 were often meant to be bare boned formations, augmented in times of trouble. Instead of starting from scratch, Eisenhower often relied on people already serving. The State Department proved the major exception to this rule.

Even if, in this new administration, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles expected to wield considerable power, he made it clear early that the Department’s personnel

⁵⁶ General George C. Marshall-NSC Study 2/19/53, SANSAs Files Box 6, NSC Organization and Functions [January-February 1953] (5), DDE.

⁵⁷ Prados, p. 61.

⁵⁸ Ferdinand Eberstadt-NSC Study 2/10/53, SANSAs Files Box 6, NSC Organization and Functions [January-February 1953] (4), DDE.

⁵⁹ Elliot, p. 82-96. While Elliot’s group believed that more should be done to centralize the President’s office, it added that actual information about how the NSC proper operated was so closely guarded—then as now—that a discussion was difficult. They were “were unable to do more than suggest...the [continued] study...to the degree possible within the limits of security outside the official rings of secrecy.” Ibid, p. 96.

would not necessarily wield the same power. Dulles told PPS chair Paul Nitze that, from now on, strategy would be run out of the White House—presumably code for the NSC.⁶⁰ Dulles also purged most of the PPS staff. He wanted Nitze out of Foggy Bottom, but approved a lateral move to the Pentagon. Sen Robert Taft (R-OH) vetoed that move, and Nitze found himself without a job.⁶¹ In the coming years, Nitze and other former members of his PPS staff would cause headaches large and small for Eisenhower.⁶²

Upon taking office, Eisenhower began a substantial reorganization of both the White House and US Cold War strategy. Eisenhower entrusted both of these reviews to Robert Cutler, a Boston banker who helped write Eisenhower's Cow Palace speech. Cutler first organized "Project Solarium," Eisenhower's review of US Cold War strategy. Eisenhower used this exercise to adopt a strategy mimicking the ideas presented by Kennan and Nitze.⁶³ As importantly, Cutler addressed the NSC system. He first recommended that, in addition the NSC's Executive Secretary—a purely administrative job after Souers left—the board needed someone to oversee the organization. Out of this recommendation came the post of Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (SANSA). The SANSA was not supposed to make policy, but ensure the NSC mechanism ran smoothly and that the President remained informed. Cutler, who was quickly appointed SANSA, made an extensive review in designing a new NSC system. He, however, ignored the overwhelming advice given by officials from the Truman years:

⁶⁰ Strobe Talbot, *The Master of the Game: Paul Nitze and the Nuclear Peace* (Random House, 1989), p. 61.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 61-62.

⁶² In all fairness to Dulles, Nitze's dislike for the new Secretary preceded his termination from PPS. That incident, however, deepened the enmity. Ibid, p. 60-61.

⁶³ Though Eisenhower's New Look strategy would focus more on nuclear weapons than it would on the Truman era conventional buildup.

give the NSC its own staff which could both produce policy and execute orders on behalf of the President.⁶⁴ Perhaps he felt that move was too dramatic. Instead, he modified Truman's existing organization to create what appeared to be an impressive policy creation and monitoring mechanism, what Cutler said Eisenhower considered a "valuable tool for his constant use."⁶⁵ This was needed because, "[i]n a world shrunk by supersonic speeds, loomed over by ominous atomic clouds, fragmenting into new political entities, living in uneasy peace or scourged...by war, it was no long possible for a President himself to integrate the intelligence and opinions flooding to him from all sides."⁶⁶ In response, Cutler created what he called the "Policy Hill" of the Planning Board, the National Security Council itself, and the Operations Coordinating Board.⁶⁷ [See Figure 1 on page 63]

To understand Eisenhower's style and Cutler's recommendations it is important to remember the President's background. As Cutler noted, "Eisenhower [believed] in continuous policy planning...based on his long experience with war planning...More important than *what* is planned is that the planners *become accustomed* to working and thinking together on hard problems."⁶⁸ The planning process, and resulting debate, was often as important as the actual outcome. In many respects the National Security Act of

⁶⁴ Alfred Dick Sander, *Eisenhower's Executive Office* (Greenwood Press, 1999), p. 82-85.

⁶⁵ Robert Cutler, p. 295.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 296.

⁶⁷ Robert Cutler, "The Development of the National Security Council" *Foreign Affairs* April 1956.

⁶⁸ Cutler, p. 296-297. Note: Emphasis from the original.

1947 set up an organization that mimicked a military organization. Eisenhower attempted to take this a step further into the Oval Office.⁶⁹

Eisenhower hoped to use the NSC to generate ideas and discussion. General Andrew Goodpaster, who served as Eisenhower's Staff Secretary, later said that the President "would have an occasional idea he would want...investigated, but mostly what he did was to cause studies...to be made, out of which...ideas would flow."

Eisenhower's preferred method was to have "an energetic and alert staff bat thing up to him...But he did provide goals...he provided a style and sense of what we were reaching for."⁷⁰ Elmer Staats, Executive Secretary of the Operation Coordinating Board, added that the findings of the NSC reports often were not a surprise to the President.⁷¹ He was, to a greater or lesser extent, kept informed of progress as it developed. That was how the White House was supposed to function. The goal of the NSC was to keep officials informed of what was going on and to make sure they knew how to carry out the President's orders if they acted independently.

The first step in the NSC process took place in the Planning Board (PB). The PB was originally set up as a combination policy writing group and policy ombudsman.

Known in the Truman Administration as the Senior Staff, it was comprised primarily of

⁶⁹ While practicing long range planning had been a key part of interwar US military policy neither Eisenhower nor the US military seemed to find it as valuable in the years after 1945. Richard M. Leighton, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense: Strategy, Money, and the New Look, 1953-1956* (GPO, 2001), p. 659-661. On the topic of the similarities between the White House and the military, Harry Truman anticipated some of the frustrations Eisenhower would have, noting in 1952 that he expected Eisenhower to give orders "And nothing will happen! It won't be a bit like the Army." Quoted in Chris Whipple, *The Gatekeepers* (Crown, 2017), p. 18.

⁷⁰ Interview by Hugh Helco with Andrew Goodpaster, Ann Whitman, Raymond Saulnier, Elmer Staats, Arthur Burns, and Gordon Gray, 6/11/80, Eisenhower Presidential Library Oral History Project, DDE.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Assistant Secretaries from the various departments. The SANSA, often under Eisenhower's guidance, set the PB's agenda. The PB would discuss a policy topic and outline the best recommendations they had to address a situation. Those suggestions would be compiled into a report that was sent to the NSC itself for review. At a typical Council meeting, possibly consisting of up to thirty statutory members plus occasional guests, the Council would discuss the PB's papers and other topics.⁷² They technically aimed to render some judgment on the PB's reports and recommendations. Yet, as an NSC official later observed, Eisenhower "used the NSC structure to 'exercise the troops' ... [I]t was an effort to give officials some practice, as a general would do in field maneuvers, so that when a real life situation would arise, the bureaucracy would know how to respond. In effect, Eisenhower demanded policy 'dry runs.'"⁷³ Robert Bowie, head of Dulles' PPS, said that the NSC meetings were a way for officials to experience "living with the problem." Bowie believed "meetings were the most effective means to school his subordinates about the guidelines he expected them to follow."⁷⁴

⁷² In addition to the President and Vice President the Council consisted of the following members-
White House Special Assistants: SANSA, Atoms for Peace, Foreign Economic Policy, Information Projects, Science and Technology, Security Operations Coordination,
White House Staff: NSC Executive Secretary, Deputy NSC Executive Secretary,
Foreign Affairs: Secretary of State, Aide to the Secretary of State, Director of the International Cooperation Agency,
Defense Matters: Secretary of Defense, Deputy Secretary of Defense, Aide to the Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the JCS, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, Director of the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization,
Others: Attorney General, Secretary of the Treasury, Director of the CIA, Director of the Bureau of the Budget

Annex E. Karl Harr Papers Box 2, Cutler, Robert, "Report on National Security Council Mechanism," 6-24-58, DDE.

⁷³ Harold H. Saunders Interview, 11/24/93, The Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, p. 9-10.

⁷⁴ R. Bowie and R. Immerman, *Waging Peace* (Oxford UP, 1998), p. 89.

After the NSC decided on a course of action, it was passed down for implementation by the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB). Chaired by the Undersecretary of State and comprised primarily of similarly ranked officials from around the government, this group met weekly. At these meetings, representatives of the line agencies dealing with foreign affairs, and a White House representative, discussed how the various departments were carrying out Eisenhower's policies. Their brief was not only to monitor implementation, but also manage coordination between the departments. Often they would farm out papers dealing with particular regions or issues to an ever-growing number of subcommittees—sometimes numbering twenty or thirty people in each—in addition to White House representatives.⁷⁵ They were supposed to record their observations in reports back to the NSC. The Council could analyze those reports and issue updates in the form of new directives.

In its day-to-day work, the NSC handled a wide variety of issues. Eisenhower's "New Look" defense policy was fleshed out in a paper drafted in the PB and subjected to a thorough discussion in the NSC.⁷⁶ OCB officials largely oversaw America's response to Iceland's flirtation with Communism in 1956, not only convincing the nation to stay in NATO but expanding the US military presence on the island in the process.⁷⁷ The Council and its boards were instrumental in coordinating US scientific policy towards Antarctica.⁷⁸ In addition to the reports it produced, the discussions in the NSC system

⁷⁵ Comments on E.B. Staats Draft, n.d., White House Office, National Security Council Staff, Papers, 1948-1961: OCB Central File Series Box 100, Proposed Transfer of the OCB to NSC (4), DDE.

⁷⁶ Meena Bose, *Shaping and Signaling Presidential Policy* (Texas A&M UP, 1998), p. 36-37.

⁷⁷ Greg Winger, "U.S. and Iceland in the Eisenhower Years: Cod Wars, Base Politics, and the Cold War" paper presented at Society of Historians of Foreign Relations Annual Meeting, June 2015.

⁷⁸ Prados, p. 74.

disseminated information throughout the US government: the CIA, for instance, found it a useful venue to collect information on what other agencies were doing.⁷⁹

A more detailed example of how the board worked can be seen in the NSC's management of the United States' spy satellite program. In 1954, a panel recommended the US needed to improve its intelligence collection capabilities.⁸⁰ Two major programs resulted from this NSC-sponsored review. One was the U-2, over which Eisenhower gave control to the CIA.⁸¹ The other was a satellite program and remained under control of the NSC.⁸² The Council outlined a course of research in a document, NSC-5520.⁸³ While NSC 5520 highlighted the dual civilian and military uses of such research, it still concluded that all research "represent a technological step towards... a large surveillance satellite."⁸⁴

Eisenhower farmed out the day-to-day management of the program to another panel, but the NSC continued to monitor NSC 5520, reviewing its progress and cost.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Comments on the OCB System, 1/8/57, National Security Council Staff Papers, OCB Central Files Box 100, Proposed Transfer of OCB to NSC (4), DDE.

⁸⁰ Adams, p. 114-117.

⁸¹ Yanek Mieczkowski, *Eisenhower's Sputnik Moment* (Cornell UP, 2013), p. 41 and Robert Dienesch, *Eyeing the Red Storm* (U of Nebraska Press, 2016), 67-69.

⁸² Before the creation of NASA, the NSC oversaw America's space policy.

⁸³ Dwayne Day, "A Strategy for Reconnaissance: Dwight Eisenhower and Freedom of Space" in *Eye in the Sky* (Smithsonian, 1998), p. 124.

⁸⁴ Quoted in Day, p. 124.

⁸⁵ This was the President's Science Advisory Panel. Eisenhower also formed that committee and put at its head MIT's James Killian, the first person to hold the title of Special Assistant to the President for Science and Technology. While other individuals, starting with Vannevar Bush, had held similar positions in the White House, none had the power Eisenhower, and later presidents, invested in the position. Zuoyue Wang, *In Sputnik's Shadow* (Rutgers UP, 2000), p. 80-83, and 100-102. Memorandum of Discussion at the 283d Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, May 3, 1956, DDE FRUS Vol. XI, Doc. 343; Memorandum of Discussion at the 310th Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, January 24, 1957, Document 344; Memorandum of Discussion at the 322d Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, May 10, 1957, DDE FRUS Vol. XI, Doc. 345; Memorandum of Discussion at the 339th Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, October 10, 1957, DDE FRUS Vol. XI, Doc. 348; Memorandum of Discussion at the 357th Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington,

When the Defense Department gave funding to a Navy satellite design instead of an Army satellite design, the NSC was forced to step in. The Army scientists, mostly Germans and led by Wernher von Braun, were outraged. They went to the chairman of the OCB, Herbert Hoover, Jr., and claimed the decision was not made on the technical merits, but stemmed from anti-German prejudice.⁸⁶ Given the OCB's reporting duties, Hoover passed the complaint to Goodpaster and Eisenhower.⁸⁷ Though the NSC decided not to act on von Braun's charges, the anecdote gives some understanding of how the full NSC system worked.

Four years later, the NSC again intervened in the project. This time it did so after a group of officials pushed for a more ambitious—and potentially dangerous—approach. They wanted to develop a satellite-based anti-missile system to defend the US. After years of being sidelined, a supporter used a 1960 meeting of the NSC to advocate for the idea.⁸⁸ This was a desperate attempt and it did nothing to change the President's mind.⁸⁹ Eisenhower never evinced much enthusiasm for putting weapons in space, and used the NSC to stop similar projects by issuing Council directives. Starting with NSC 5522, the PB drew up a series of documents for Council approval proclaiming that the United States believed no country could claim sovereignty over Outer Space and should not

March 6, 1958, DDE FRUS Vol. III, Doc 437; Memorandum of Discussion at the 371st Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, July 3, 1958, DDE FRUS Vol. III, Doc 440; Memorandum of Discussion at the 376th Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, August 14, 1958, DDE FRUS Vol. III, Doc 441.

⁸⁶ Day, p. 130.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Sean Kalic, *US Presidents and the Militarization of Space, 1946-1967* (Texas A&M UP, 2012), p. 56.

⁸⁹ Kalic, p. 57.

militarize it.⁹⁰ Eisenhower restated this principle again in 1958 in NSC 5814.⁹¹ A year, later the NSC outlined what it considered the military applications of the US space program in the January 1960 NSC 5918. This stated that America's only military goals in space concerned reconnaissance, early warning, communications, mapping, and related matters.⁹²

The NSC proved remarkably successful in providing oversight to this effort. The Council oversaw the efforts of numerous subgroups and advisory bodies to create what became a highly successful reconnaissance satellite program. NSC 5520 inspired both the first spy satellite—the CIA's Corona program—as well as an early warning satellite system.⁹³ At the very least, it gave the US an intelligence advantage that continues to this day. Most members of the PB, NSC, or OCB had little technical training, or even interest in these matters. Yet they kept the focus on programs that eventually proved incredibly successful.

By contrast, Eisenhower felt there were limits to the NSC's utility. He considered the U-2 program so secret, for instance, he forbade discussion of it in Council meetings. He instead coordinated the program with his staff secretary, Andrew Goodpaster, and the Dulles brothers.⁹⁴ Goodpaster felt that not having NSC oversight caused the Administration to bungle their response to the downing of Francis Gary Powers in 1960.

⁹⁰ Day, p. 126.

⁹¹ Day, p. 139-140; Dienesch, p. 80.

⁹² Brugioni, p. 383.

⁹³ Dienesch, p. 182-183.

⁹⁴ Dino Brugioni, *Eyes in the Sky* (Naval Institute Press, 2010), p. 39, 118, and 151. The Air Force had initially showed no interest in the U-2 program, effectively forcing the CIA to take over. Eisenhower had endorsed civilian control of the program. The Air Force, however, grew jealous and eventually forced the CIA to turn over about half the U-2 fleet by 1960. Jeffrey Richelson, *The Wizards of Langley* (Westview, 2002), p. 15, 19, and 104-105.

As Goodpaster remarked, “we handled the situation in a very miserable and unsatisfactory way.”⁹⁵ He even asked Eisenhower “whether in retrospect he felt that the NSC and any of its machinery should have been more formally involved.”⁹⁶ Eisenhower reiterated it was too sensitive.⁹⁷

That Eisenhower decided to keep such an important program out of the NSC gives some insight into a problem hanging over the Administration. Despite success stories like Iceland or the spy satellite program, many felt that NSC systems did not work very well. Those complaints covered all aspects of the Council. The PB, for instance was instructed not to write policy papers as such, but instead write documents expressing “the most statesmanlike solutions to the problems of national security.”⁹⁸ Planning Board documents aimed to create a perfect synthesis of administration thinking.⁹⁹ However, an observer reported that its reports were “victims of the passion for unanimity.”¹⁰⁰ In reaching consensus between different viewpoints, it struggled over how to report significant disagreements, new ideas, contradictory thoughts, or disputes. NSC attendees sometimes seemed to care little about the documents.¹⁰¹ When the PB did highlight disagreements, the reports were criticized for complicating the task of briefing the

⁹⁵ Quoted in Jordan, p. 104.

⁹⁶ Memorandum of Meeting with the President, 5/31/60, SANSAs Files, Special Assistant Series, Presidential Subseries, Box 4, Meetings with the President, 1960 (3), DDE.

⁹⁷ Ibid; Discussions at the 445th Meeting of the National Security Council, Tuesday, May 24, 1960, DNSA, Berlin Crisis, NSA. About the closest he came to discussing it was discussing the public relations fallout of the shoot down with the Council.

⁹⁸ James Lay and Robert Johnson, “Organizational History of the National Security Council” in *Organizing for National Security: Studies and Background Materials Submitted to the Committee on Government Operations, US Senate, by its Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery Volume II* (GPO, 1961), p. 447-448.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 450

¹⁰⁰ Improvement of Foreign Affairs Organization—Some Considerations on the Role of the NSC and OCB in Foreign Policy Coordination, 5/13/57, RG 4, Series O, Subseries 5, Volume 52, RAC.

¹⁰¹ Gordon Gray Oral History Interview with Maclyn Burg, 6/25/75, DDEL OHP, p. 5.

Council members, and “confused council discussion, and waste[d] time at the Council table.”¹⁰² PB staff morale plummeted. They did not like their jobs, nor did they think their papers mattered.¹⁰³ Cutler, too, felt the Board was not performing as designed.¹⁰⁴

Eisenhower attempted to boost morale by having the PB focus less on specific issues and more on creating new policy ideas. Despite his good intentions, the Board’s outlook remained unchanged.¹⁰⁵

Problems also existed in the Council. For the first two years the agenda was so dense that the meetings often ran well over two and a half hours.¹⁰⁶ Cutler blamed this on the participants, saying they were not prepared.¹⁰⁷ As he noted, “Without adequate preparation, few men have the over-all perspective to deal with long range security issues.”¹⁰⁸ Eisenhower eventually became frustrated by the document driven meetings, and asked Cutler to structure the meetings around more freewheeling discussions. This upset the agenda-focused Cutler, who only partially complied.¹⁰⁹ The changes did not

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Shaw Livermore to Nelson Rockefeller 4/12/55, RG4, Series O, Subseries 7, Box 71, Folder 565, RAC.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Report on the National Security Council Mechanism, 6/24/58, Harr Box 2, Cutler, Robert, Report on the National Security Council 6-24-58, DDE; Komer to Bundy, 1/13/61, NSF 321, Komer, Robert W., 1 Jan-14 March 1961, JFK.

¹⁰⁶ Report to the President Subject: Operations of the National Security Council January 1953-April 1955, 4/1/55, Culter Papers Box 7, Binder on NSC Organization (2), DDE.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. He reiterated this in his 1958 review, see Cutler to Eisenhower 4/7/58, Harr Box 2, Cutler, Robert, Report on the National Security Council 6-24-58, DDE. He was not completely wrong. Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson often skipped his pre-NSC briefings. Gordon Gray Oral History Interview with Maclyn Burg, 6/25/75, DDEL OHP, p. 5.

¹⁰⁹ Guidance from President on Conduct of Council Meetings, 4/2/58, Harr Box 2, Cutler, Robert, Report on the National Security Council 6-24-58, DDE.

mollify the President, who sometimes felt the meetings were so predictable that he would leave in the middle of the NSC's discussions.¹¹⁰

The Council faced a series of other issues. First, for instance, it had problems handling anything but longer-range issues. Indeed, a review conducted in early 1957, after Suez Crisis and the Hungarian Revolution, noted that the Council was “out of its element” when discussing emergencies. It struggled with Hungary since, “all the policy papers it had written were useless. Moreover, it took “at least two months” to develop new policy papers.¹¹¹ Second, there was a fear that departments and agencies regularly withheld information in NSC meetings that might either tip their hand or portray them in a negative light.¹¹² Third, like the U-2, there were some issues Eisenhower just rarely discussed in the NSC, including disarmament, most of America's Middle East policy, and budget issues.¹¹³ All of these issues limited the effectiveness of NSC meetings.

The NSC mechanism also gave little oversight for covert programs, one of Eisenhower's favorite tools. To oversee these the Council established the 5412 Committee—named after the NSC act governing covert actions. Cutler considered the 5412 Committee deeply flawed. He wrote that “ad hoc projects are taken up without advanced study...and without guiding criteria. [I]t is almost impossible for the [SANSATo] satisfactorily determine as to the quality, comparative need, and effectiveness of a

¹¹⁰ Sander, p. 98; Report on the National Security Council Mechanism, 6/24/58, Harr Box 2, Cutler, Robert, Report on the National Security Council 6-24-58, DDE.

¹¹¹ Report to the President Subject: Operations of the National Security Council January 1953-April 1955, 4/1/55, Culter Papers Box 7, Binder on NSC Organization (2), DDE.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Report on National Security Council Mechanism 6/24/58, Harr Papers Box 2, Cutler, Robert, “Report on National Security Mechanism,” 6-24-58, DDEL.

particular project and to give or withhold ‘policy approval.’”¹¹⁴ Cutler might not have been relieved had he known that other officials also doubted the NSC could provide the needed overview of covert operations.¹¹⁵

The OCB was perhaps the most problematic piece of the entire NSC. An OCB staffer noted, “The question of reorganizing or revamping the [OCB] is much like a hardy perennial: it come up anew each year.”¹¹⁶ Administration officials expressed concern that, like the PB, the OCB’s reports to the NSC were watered down and of little value.¹¹⁷ The OCB also lacked a mechanism where members could easily register disagreement or could come to any solution other than a compromise. All its reports to Eisenhower were unanimous and officials feared that a thin veneer of compromise masked disagreements between the departments.¹¹⁸ Perhaps most disturbing to White House officials was the rumor that departments and agencies were purposely undermining the OCB by dumping unreliable officials in its committees while sending their most trusted staffers to work with each other outside the NSC system.¹¹⁹ An idea pervaded Washington that the Board would disappear when the next Administration took power, if not sooner.¹²⁰ One OCB member complained that Herbert Hoover, Jr., the Board’s secretary, was part of the

¹¹⁴ Report on the National Security Council Mechanism, 6/24/58, Harr Box 2, Cutler, Robert, Report on the National Security Council 6-24-58, DDEL.

¹¹⁵ The History of the Planning Coordination Group 1/23/56, RG 4, Series O, Subseries 9, Box 4 Folder 111, RAC.

¹¹⁶ Memorandum for All Members of the Operations Coordination Board, Subject: Principals of the Operation of the OCB, n.d. Harr Papers Box 4, OCB (2), DDEL.

¹¹⁷ “Suggestions for Improving the Effectiveness of the OCB” 5/22/57, White House Office, National Security Council Staff, Papers, 1948-1961: OCB Central File Series Box 100, OCB 334, OCB File #3) (9), [April 1956-June 1957], DDEL.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ “Memorandum for All Members of the Operations Coordinating Board Subject: Principles of Operation of the OCB” n.d., Harr Papers, Box 4, OCB 2, DDEL.

¹²⁰ Emler Staats Draft “Increasing the Effectiveness of the OCB” n.d. Transfer (4) OCB 100

problem. He turned the OCB into an “‘ice cold morgue’ with his ‘bureaucratic pocket veto methods.’”¹²¹ His replacement, Christian Herter, did a poor job of coordinating with other members, often leaving the board unprepared for their meetings.¹²²

At one point, Eisenhower believed the key was to do a better job selling the board to the rest of the government.¹²³ Even the OCB’s own staffers felt that was a difficult task: Karl Harr, the Board’s Vice Chair noted two weeks after starting, “The OCB staff is practically useless as far as I am concerned” while complaining that OCB members, “already suspect that the [board] is a backwater [and] a paper mill.”¹²⁴ Officials all over Washington rejoiced at “‘getting the OCB out of their hair’” considering it “effectively curtailed.”¹²⁵ One OCB member pessimistically noted “A heavy shot of adrenaline is needed to keep [it] from lapsing into [a] comatose state for the remainder of the present administration.”¹²⁶ Nelson Rockefeller commented that part of the problem stemmed from the fact the State Department ran the Board. In “an era which is neither peace nor war” the denizens of Foggy Bottom lacked the perspective of all the agencies dealing with foreign affairs and the military.¹²⁷ He recommended that the White House run the board to ensure “vigorous leadership, imaginative planning, and critical review of

¹²¹ Quoted in Reich, p. 617.

¹²² Harr “Proposed Revision of OCB Procedure” 8/22/58 and Unsigned letter to Herter, 8/25/58, both in Harr Papers Box 4, OCB (1), DDEL.

¹²³ Undated Comments on ES in Folder 4 “The Operation Coordinating Board” no date. NSC Staff Files, Papers, OCB Central Files 100, OCB 334, OCB (Files #3) (5), April 1956-June 1957, DDEL.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Black to Harr, 4/13/59, Harr Papers Box 4, OCB (1), DDEL.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Proposed Reorganization of the Operations Coordinating Board, 12/22/55, PACGO 25, Operations Coordinating Board (OCB), 1953-60, DDEL.

. Those other agencies being, among others, the ICA (the forerunner of USAID), CIA, and US Information Agency.

operations.”¹²⁸ Despite all this discussion, no amount of reform seemed to fix the Board’s problems.

Some of the problems with the NSC clearly stemmed from more than just dysfunctional machinery. An analysis of the NSC system commented that the Council had “certain members who are especially powerful...If these influential members take a strong position for or against something, usually this is what the direction will be.” Eisenhower avoided confronting these individuals “if an overruling jeopardizes the continued close harmony of his Administration.” Such powerful forces tended “to inhibit real latitude in criticism and in devising novel approaches to problems.”¹²⁹ In fact, Eisenhower often relied on small groups, rather than the formal NSC system, to make important decisions. The 1958 decision to intervene in Lebanon, for instance, was made outside the Council.¹³⁰ One might see this as part of Eisenhower’s “Hidden-Hand” strategy.¹³¹ The formal NSC meetings provided him cover, and a reasonably public forum, in which to make decisions. In fact, Eisenhower’s reliance on advisors over the system perpetuated a vicious cycle: the more he relied on people, the less the system functioned. That further angered Eisenhower, who, in turn, relied more on advice from outside the system. He also proved unwilling to intervene with staffers who were disrupting the system. This set up a scenario leading to a substantial scandal for the Administration.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Improvement of Foreign Affairs Organization—Some Considerations on the Role of the NSC and OCB in Foreign Policy Coordination, 5/13/57, RG 4, Series O, Subseries 5, Volume 52, RAC.

¹³⁰ Shannon Mohan, “‘My Mind was Practically Made Up’: Eisenhower and the Decision to Intervene in Lebanon” Paper Presented at 2015 Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations Annual Conference

¹³¹ Greenstein, p. x.

The Problem with People

Despite its logical and tidy organization, the story of Eisenhower's national security apparatus is about the push and pull between a reliance on organization and a reliance on people. If the public story of the administration was about military-like organization, the private story was about how people interacted with and sometimes overruled that system. Eisenhower seemed unwilling to either change the system to allow for these personalities, nor address the problems with the people upsetting the system. Eisenhower's reliance on individuals instead of machinery grew during his time in office. By the end of the decade Eisenhower felt he needed to set up entirely new committees to do what it seemed the NSC was incapable of doing. Three people intentionally or unintentionally challenged the NSC system: Andrew Goodpaster, the White House Staff Secretary, John Foster Dulles, the Secretary of State and, ironically, Robert Cutler himself. Each had a lengthy tenure, Goodpaster served as Staff Secretary between 1955 and 1960 while John Foster Dulles served as Secretary of State between 1953 and 1958. Cutler served on and off between 1953 and 1958.

Soon after taking office, Eisenhower decided he needed something akin to a foreign policy version of White House chief of staff Sherman Adams. Andrew Goodpaster came to the post with an impressive background: in addition to a decade-long friendship with Eisenhower, he had the endorsement of George Marshall, and was seen as

a member of the Army intelligentsia.¹³² Goodpaster's role, while crucial, was often near invisible. His duties were, in part, clerical, but he played an operational role in some situations. In addition to his aforementioned role in the U-2 program, he occasionally acted as Eisenhower's representative in meetings and generally functioned the President's "spot" man, making sure things got done.¹³³ Though Goodpaster was not formally an advisor, this sort of role meant that his own ideas and proclivities must have seeped through into his work. His job remained so shadowy that, during the transition to the Kennedy Administration, no one took over the unofficial aspects of his job. There was nothing inherently wrong in having someone who could get the job done but it, in part, allowed Eisenhower to end-run the NSC system.

Cutler himself posed a series of problems. Eisenhower era officials are often compared unfavorably to their Kennedy era counterparts: gray, stodgy, bureaucrats versus worldly and cosmopolitan action intellectuals. Robert Cutler was an investment banker, yet he also composed poetry and wrote two romantic novels. The *Saturday Evening Post* noted in a profile that he was one of Boston's "funniest after-dinner speakers."¹³⁴ He may not have been as outwardly dynamic as McGeorge Bundy, but he was not a simple hidebound bureaucrat. Cutler came to the job with his own foreign policy bona fides. He worked in the War Department with Henry Stimson during the Second World War and met Eisenhower in the late 1940s while working on temporary

¹³² Robert S. Jordan, *An Unsung Soldier: The Life of Andrew J. Goodpaster* (Naval Institute Press, 2013), p. 13-14; Martha S.H. VanDriel, *"The Lincoln Brigade": One Story of the Faculty of the USMA Department of Social Sciences* West Point Department of Social Sciences, 2012.

¹³³ Jordan, p. 104-105; Gray OH, p. 7.

¹³⁴ Samuel Lubell, "The Mystery Man of the White House" *Saturday Evening Post* 2/6/54, p. 79

assignment for the Defense Department.¹³⁵ After these initial meetings Cutler became one of the key backers of the “draft Eisenhower” movement, and helped write Eisenhower’s Cow Palace speech.¹³⁶

As noted previously, Cutler helped shape both the NSC system and the SANSAs job. He served from 1953 until 1955 and then returned for another stint between 1956 and 1958. This was a job with many responsibilities. It is perhaps no coincidence that his memoirs were titled *No Time for Rest*. Both his memoirs and the *Saturday Evening Post* noted it seemed Cutler enjoyed nothing more than complaining about how overworked he was.¹³⁷ Some of this was surely for show, but some was legitimate. Cutler proved obstinate in the face of Eisenhower’s requests for NSC reforms. Late in his tenure he seemed to be calling for Eisenhower to replace him, writing “Implicitly as I believe in the Heraclitan theory of the necessity for constant change, it is more difficult for one who has operated the Council mechanism for almost four years to change long-established procedures than it is for a [new SANSAs] to do so.”¹³⁸ Yet Eisenhower did not replace Cutler until he voluntarily stepped down.

One figure overshadowed all others among Eisenhower’s foreign policy advisors: Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Dulles was a polarizing Secretary. Either a genius at managing US foreign policy, or a dangerous madman all too ready to rattle the nuclear saber. When Paul Nitze was asked for comment after Dulles’s death, he remarked that “I thought much of what [Dulles] said was sanctimonious moralizing

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 80

¹³⁶ Prados, p. 61

¹³⁷ Lubell, p. 79 and Culter, p. 294

¹³⁸ Report on the National Security Council Mechanism, 6/24/58, Harr Box 2, Cutler, Robert, Report on the National Security Council 6-24-58, DDE.

which bore little relations to the things which he actually did or authorized.”¹³⁹ Karl Harr countered that Dulles was an astute and shrewd diplomat who possessed impressive “intellect, strength of character, and determination.”¹⁴⁰ Dulles left a mixed record as Secretary of State. While he was a formidable diplomat, he cared little for the operational and managerial aspects of running a department.¹⁴¹ Under his watch department personnel were targeted by both the Red and Lavender Scares. Morale generally plummeted. Yet, Dulles hated to part with any of the power of the State Department.¹⁴² Harr, who faced off against Dulles as a member of both the Defense Department and White House staff called him “one of the great in-fighters of our time... When the time came he just spoke to the President and laid it out cold...[Dulles] used to wander over to the White House almost every night...just to talk things over.”¹⁴³ He was often joined in this by his brother, Allen, the head of the CIA.

As a result, Dulles effectively short circuited the elaborate NSC system. From the start, he fought against the powers of the White House in the management of foreign policy. He effectively cut out some of his early competitors and quickly established a position from which only death managed to dislodge him.¹⁴⁴ When the analysis of the NSC system quoted earlier referred to members “who are especially powerful” who

¹³⁹ Nitze to Willard Range 8/25/60, Nitze Papers Box 23, Folder 3, LoC.

¹⁴⁰ Karl Harr Interview with Richard Challener 1/14/66, J.F. Dulles Oral History Project, Princeton University (hereafter Harr OH), p. 25

¹⁴¹ Reich, p. 508.

¹⁴² Ibid, p. 508.

¹⁴³ Harr OH, p. 31.

¹⁴⁴ For instance, Dulles managed to sideline C.D. Jackson and the Psychology Strategy Board within the first year of Eisenhower’s first term and later did the same thing to Nelson Rockefeller in 1955.

“inhibit[ed] real latitude in criticism and in devising novel approaches to problems” it was talking about Dulles.¹⁴⁵

All this, however, does point to Eisenhower’s personnel/organization problem. Eisenhower could be expected to have people like Goodpaster and Dulles serve on his staff. Every president did, does, and will continue to. Even a highly critical review of the NSC noted, “many of these so-called ‘weakness’ are attributed to the frailties of humans...[N]o organizational arrangement may be capable of effectively overcoming them.”¹⁴⁶ Yet, Eisenhower seems to never have considered, or admitted, the many costs these people imposed on the overall system. Goodpaster’s coordination role challenged the function of the OCB. Dulles, by the same token, made many of the NSC discussions questionable. If he was going to make the final decision, why engage in all this paper writing and discussion? At the same time Eisenhower, even as he grew more frustrated, proved unwilling to fire Cutler even though the SANSAs himself seemed to be begging for relief. All of this, of course, preserved Eisenhower’s “innocence” to some extent. By not working harder to incorporate Dulles into the NSC system or actively firing staffers, he retained deniability and broad support, even as frustration grew. This all came at an institutional cost in morale and efficiency.

In one instance, however, Eisenhower tried to use a person, Nelson Rockefeller, to both end run the system while simultaneously fixing it. In some respects, this was perhaps an effort to placate the New York millionaire. Rockefeller initially joined the

¹⁴⁵ Improvement of Foreign Affairs Organization—Some Considerations on the Role of the NSC and OCB in Foreign Policy Coordination, 5/13/57, RG 4, Series O, Subseries 5, Volume 52, RAC.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

administration as Assistant Secretary in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, as well as leading the President's Advisory Committee on Government Organization. Though he liked his Assistant Secretary job, he grew frustrated at his subordinate position and upon seeing many of his policy initiatives frustrated by both the White House and Congress.¹⁴⁷ He announced his intent to resign with the hopes that Eisenhower would offer him another job. The ploy worked when Eisenhower offered him a White House post. Rockefeller became Eisenhower's Special Assistant for Foreign Affairs and moved into the EOB.¹⁴⁸ Whether Eisenhower genuinely wanted Rockefeller, or aimed to simply buy his loyalty, is open to debate. Regardless, Rockefeller's new post came with an opaque brief, the sort of thing that seemed out of place in Eisenhower's hierarchy precisely because of its ambiguity and flexibility. That latitude suggests at hidden motives on Eisenhower's part. With access to the President and a seat on the NSC, Rockefeller was placed at key points in the national security apparatus. Almost nothing went as Rockefeller hoped. Yet, even in failure, he proved remarkably prescient on a number of fronts.

Initially Eisenhower tasked Rockefeller with overseeing America's Cold War public information and psychological warfare strategy.¹⁴⁹ When Rockefeller described his job, however, it seemed far more grandiose. Via James Reston and *The New York Times*, Rockefeller plated a story saying that John Foster Dulles was so overwhelmed with the day-to-day work of State that Rockefeller was brought in to "supply the miraculous

¹⁴⁷ Smith, p. 233

¹⁴⁸ Reich, p. 550-551.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 554.

element” to American foreign policy.¹⁵⁰ This was not a complete fabrication. Rockefeller believed that, in order to create a grand narrative to sell the world, you needed a grand strategy for the nation. Containment, nuclear sabre rattling, or whatever Dulles did, was not enough. Moreover, Rockefeller considered the State Department’s rank-and-file intellectually timid.¹⁵¹ In reality, more conservative leadership, like Dulles and Hoover, often squelched the Department’s bold ideas.¹⁵² Regardless, this caused tensions between Rockefeller and the State Department.¹⁵³ Rockefeller also harbored a long-standing personal animosity towards Dulles which Dulles reciprocated.¹⁵⁴

Rockefeller sought to challenge Dulles by, in March 1955, establishing an Eisenhower-endorsed alternative to the NSC, called the Planning Coordinating Group (PCG).¹⁵⁵ The idea of the PCG was simple. It would basically perform the OCB’s coordination tasks, but the committee would be smaller—the Under Secretary of State, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and the Director of the CIA—and Rockefeller would manage it, reporting directly to Eisenhower. One of Rockefeller’s staffers, Army Col. William Kintner, laid out the stakes for the PCG in a memo to Rockefeller. He said,

The secret of “selling” the [PCG] will lie in the aura which surrounds it and in the attitude of mind which pervade the set-up. [If it] can be made to look, act, and radiate as if it were the top level government planning group in an active shooting war, it has a chance to become one... This calls for a psychological campaign in Washington, the success of which will depend upon personalities and props. Chairman Rockefeller and his... associates and staff must act like there is a war

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Reich, p. 552.

¹⁵¹ Smith, p. 241.

¹⁵² Bowie and Immerman, p. 226.

¹⁵³ Smith, p. 237.

¹⁵⁴ The two first came to blows in 1946 over a variety of issues at the San Francisco Conference. Though they managed to patch things up in the following years, Dulles’ saber-rattling and hard line statements angered Rockefeller. Ibid, p. 184-185, 218, and 237.

¹⁵⁵ Memorandum for the President 6/7/55, RG 4, Series O, Subseries 7, Box 62 Folder 517, RAC.

going on. Dedicated, almost ruthless urgency must be the keynote of its impact...Some of the props [include] the cold war situation center [and] up-to-date and dramatic charts and maps...[Its] report should be short memos and informal chits. A paper blizzard must be avoided...Although the [PCG] is to “advise and assist” and is not directly responsible for the implementation of plans and programs...it must devise means of insuring that the various departments...implement vigorously the plans it adopts....”¹⁵⁶

In many respects, Kintner believed this all boiled down to a far more basic problem,

The truth of the matter is that there are very few “implementers” in Washington. Government charts list many policy makers and advisers but few reflect the presence of implementers or expeditors. Consequently, results in Washington depend upon the personality of “activists” who see that things get done.¹⁵⁷

Rockefeller threw himself into the PCG. When Sherman Adams refused to give him more staffers, he hired them personally. He also worked hard to establish what he called the Cold War Situation Center in the EOB. The idea was to create a central location where Rockefeller and the President could monitor the Cold War in real time. Rockefeller tried to get the PCG involved in every major foreign policy and program in the administration’s portfolio.

The experiment did not go as Rockefeller hoped. The White House refused the funds he requested for renovations.¹⁵⁸ Far more importantly, the Dulles brothers, with the help of Herbert Hoover, Jr., froze the PCG out of most important discussions. As one staff lamented, “[t]he failure of the PCG stemmed largely from the lack of sincere, enthusiastic support from the member agencies.”¹⁵⁹ Rockefeller admitted his gambit had

¹⁵⁶ Launching the Planning Coordinating Group 3/23/55, RG 4, Series O, Subseries 7, Box 62 Folder 517, RAC.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ The Cold War Situation Room would have cost \$145,000. William Miller to Percival Brundage 6/14/55, RG 4, Series O, Subseries 7, Box 62 Folder 516, RAC.

¹⁵⁹ The History of the Planning Coordination Group 1/23/56, RG 4, Series O, Subseries 9, Box 4 Folder 111, RAC..

failed.¹⁶⁰ Only a few months after its creation, he wrote Eisenhower a memo suggesting the PCG be abolished. The President agreed.¹⁶¹

As the PCG disbanded, William Kintner wrote Rockefeller a memo complaining that Eisenhower had “not developed a satisfactory method for making timely operational decisions and for assuring the effective implementation of decisions... The next ‘solution’ must tap into the presidential authority.”¹⁶² Kintner argued the best way to manage foreign policy was to form a new group run from the White House. The staffers of that new organization “should sever the connections with any other governmental department or agency... The key problem is one of absolute loyalty to the” White House.¹⁶³ In effect, Kintner proposed what would become the model of operations pioneered by Kennedy and Bundy’s NSC staff.

With the PCG dead, Rockefeller made one last attempt to prove his relevance. Working with a committee of academics, he created the “Open Skies” concept, which would have allowed regular reconnaissance overflights of US and Soviet territory as a step towards reducing tensions. Rockefeller brought the report to Eisenhower, bypassing the NSC system entirely, and argued he should present it to Nikita Khrushchev at the upcoming 1955 Geneva Conference. Dulles objected, but was overruled by the

¹⁶⁰ The History of the Planning Coordination Group 1/23/56, RG 4, Series O, Subseries 9, Box 4 Folder 111, RAC.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. State used the opportunity to slap Rockefeller in the face one more time. State hardly contributed to the work of the PCG, in one case overtly sabotaging the results of its study, yet Rockefeller needed its concurrence to disband the board. State officials took a month to return a memo agreeing to its dissolution.

¹⁶² Suggestions for a United State Cold War Organization 6/20/55 RG 4, Series O, Subseries 7, Box 62 Folder 517, RAC.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

President.¹⁶⁴ “Open Skies” failed to take flight at Geneva, laid low by a Soviet veto. Yet, Eisenhower received considerable international praise for suggesting such a bold idea. When Rockefeller tried to replicate this success a few months later, however, Dulles successfully shot down the initiative.¹⁶⁵

Rockefeller then submitted his resignation. In his brief stint, he made a growing list of enemies in the Administration. His operating style annoyed colleagues and his free spending angered fiscal conservatives. One aide argued that Rockefeller proposed “too many new ideas and departures, rather too bumptiously for a junior man.”¹⁶⁶ Even Eisenhower himself admitted if Rockefeller had “100 ideas...maybe one of those ideas is brilliant.”¹⁶⁷ When Rockefeller announced his resignation he might have expected Eisenhower would again step in and offer him another post. He did not.¹⁶⁸

While Eisenhower quietly enabled Rockefeller’s initial power grab, the President also did little to support him or stop Dulles from effectively sidelining his efforts. Rockefeller’s own tenacity and self-assurance, to the point of folly, robbed him of allies that might have helped him succeed. Yet he also deserves significant credit. “Open Skies” became a key aspect of reducing post-Cold War tensions when a modified form was passed in 1992 and remains active today. The PCG failed, but pointed to a set of

¹⁶⁴ Though “Open Skies” was seen as an idea rebelling against the Cold War orthodoxy, like so much of Cold War policy, it came from a place of fear. Rockefeller’s group, like the Gaither Committee two years later, believed that America would be so vulnerable in the next decade that it had to negotiate now from a place of strength lest the Soviets gain the upper hand. Ibid, p. 238-245.

¹⁶⁵ Reich, p. 628-629. Included in this were an ambitious plan to use psychological warfare and an increased use of foreign aid to combat expanding Soviet influence in the Third World.

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in Sander, p. 140.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Smith, p. 250.

reforms that might have fixed many of the NSC's problems. Rockefeller, at times, might have been his own worst enemy, but his ideas had merit.

Eisenhower could have used Rockefeller to change to his system. It is possible to view Rockefeller's stint as a low-risk, high reward ploy. Eisenhower would never have challenged Dulles outright but Rockefeller's new position and the PCG could do this. That Eisenhower allowed Rockefeller such free rein, even if he also did little to help him, is significant. The President even supposedly staged an argument in front of Dulles with Rockefeller to convince his Secretary of State that he was adopting "Open Skies" under great duress.¹⁶⁹ He might have secretly hoped that Rockefeller's almost limitless energy would be enough to overcome the system. The problem was "the dominant powers in our government, such as State and Defense...see in such a venture an intrusion...and loss of jurisdiction and freedom of action."¹⁷⁰ Perhaps if Rockefeller had been a better bureaucratic infighter he might have succeeded.

Eisenhower now turned to groups of consultants from outside the government—primarily from, business, industry, and academia—to "supply the miraculous element" to American foreign policy.¹⁷¹ Cutler was wary of these groups.¹⁷² He reminded Eisenhower that it was the NSC's job to conduct investigations and make recommendations.¹⁷³ When Cutler left the White House in 1955, and prior to his return in 1957, Eisenhower's use of

¹⁶⁹ Smith, p. 242. It is unclear whether Eisenhower was truly angry, but the idea this was a staged managed confrontation designed to placate Dulles is a possibility.

¹⁷⁰ Harlow to Gray, 11/12/58, Harlow Papers Box 6 (A67-56), National Security Council, 1958, DDEL.

¹⁷¹ Quoted in Reich, p. 552.

¹⁷² Report to the President Subject: Operations of the National Security Council January 1953-April 1955, 4/1/55, Culter Papers Box 7, Binder on NSC Organization (2), DDEL.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

outside consultants grew.¹⁷⁴ One of these groups, the Gaither Committee, proved to be one of the great missteps of the Eisenhower Administration. The principle behind the Committee was simple. Officially titled the “Security Resources Panel” their mission was to investigate America’s vulnerability to a Soviet attack.

The Committee, eventually chaired by Sprague Electric Company CEO Robert Sprague, first convened in August 1957 and spent months interviewing officials and reviewing highly classified reports. Many of its approximately 100 members had worked for Eisenhower on other review boards.¹⁷⁵ One interesting addition was Paul Nitze. The White House allowed him to serve only after members of the committee insisted he be added. He quickly assumed a key role in drafting the committee’s findings.¹⁷⁶ The final report painted a picture of an overwhelming and existential threat from the Soviet Union, calling for a massive investment in offensive and defensive systems.¹⁷⁷ While some of their suggestions seemed prudent, others seemed outlandish to the White House and were dismissed almost immediately.

This angered some members of the Committee. One member, still unknown, leaked the report to the press. The *Washington Post* first broke the story and a redacted copy made its way to Congress. Lest one simply blame this on Nitze, over twenty committee spoke to the press after the news broke.¹⁷⁸ Coming in the wake of Sputnik, and

¹⁷⁴ “Report on the National Security Council Mechanism” 6/24/58, Karl Harr Papers Box 2, Cutler, Robert, “Report on National Security Council Mechanism,” 6-24-58, DDEL. During his first term, Eisenhower used committees of outside expert on seven occasions. In the only first eighteen months of his second term, during Cutler’s absence, he authorized eight panels.

¹⁷⁵ Valerie Adams, *Eisenhower’s Fine Group of Fellows* (Lexington, 2006), p. 215-217.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 174

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 180.

¹⁷⁸ David Snead, *The Gaither Committee, Eisenhower, and the Cold War* (Ohio State Press, 1999), p. 140.

endorsing the notion of a “Missile Gap” in the favor of the Soviet Union, the report haunted the Administration. Disgruntled Committee members began challenging the Administration’s security policies and decision-making process. Much like the Team B exercises of the late 1970s—in which Nitze also played a key role—the Gaither Report created a false image of America’s vulnerabilities, causing irreparable damage to the White House that Democrats exploited in 1960.

In seeking a solution to the administration’s organizational problems Eisenhower accidentally stumbled into a greater morass. Outside experts could solve some of the NSC’s problems, but came with their own risks. The President’s inability to match his, understandable, reliance on personal advisors with the elaborate machinery he created caused a reoccurring problem. This mounting frustration caused Eisenhower to finally consider meaningful reforms, in some cases more fundamental than what took place in 1947. It was an ambitious project that aimed to discard the NSC, and replace it entirely with a system that would have the White House run US foreign policy.

The First Secretary of Government

The twelve months after the launch of Sputnik might have been the *annus horribilis* for Eisenhower’s national security apparatus. The NSC was in flux. The OCB was barely functioning. Eisenhower’s long held reliance on outside experts backfired when the Gaither Committee leaked their classified report, warning that the nation was vulnerable to a Soviet attack. As Eisenhower dealt with a variety of international crises—including a failed US coup in Indonesia, the US intervention in Lebanon, and the notion,

albeit incorrect, of a growing Soviet missile menace—he also launched a final attempt to fix the national security infrastructure of the White House. He did this through the aegis of the President’s Advisory Committee on Government Organization (PACGO). These moves foreshadowed many of the changes made during the Kennedy years, even if neither side would have admitted that. Eisenhower was defeated in this effort by internal debate, Congressional opposition, personnel changes, and, eventually, the looming 1960 presidential election. Despite the vision and foresight displayed by many involved, the overall process was a start-stop effort muddled by timing, politics, and personalities.

PACGO’s genesis lay in Eisenhower’s interest in increase efficiency and eliminate waste in government.¹⁷⁹ In the words of the press release announcing its formation, its function was to “promote economy and efficiency in the operation of [the Executive B]ranch.”¹⁸⁰ It also stemmed from a relatively bipartisan feeling that, after the haphazard agency creation of the New Deal and World War Two, some effort should be made towards better organization. This idea was nothing new. Debates over organization boomed in the late 1940s. In addition to the National Security Act, Hebert Hoover oversaw a reorganization committee in the late 1940s, and Nelson Rockefeller even self-financed his own set of reviews, with the help of Temple University, in early 1953. Though the reports from Temple were serious, Rockefeller also used this effort to secure PACGO’s top spot.¹⁸¹ During Eisenhower’s first term PACGO developed a series of

¹⁷⁹ Joanna Grisinger, *The Unwieldy American State: Administrative Politics Since the New Deal* (Cambridge UP, 2014), p. 202.

¹⁸⁰ Press Release on Executive Order 10432, 1/27/53, PACGO 1, No. 3, Administration: Organization, Function, and Procedures, DDEL.

¹⁸¹ Smith, p. 218-219; Grisinger, p. 202.

reorganization plans that impressed both Eisenhower and Congress.¹⁸² Despite his rocky White House tenure, Rockefeller stayed attached to PACGO until he was elected Governor of New York in 1958.¹⁸³

If PACGO was a tool to improve the administration, it was also a weapon Eisenhower used offensively against Herbert Hoover. Hoover was both upset at the expansion of the New Deal state and frustrated that fellow-Republican Eisenhower seemed to be expanding it. Hoover recruited allies in Congress to put forward a bill establishing a second Hoover Commission.¹⁸⁴ Through this, he hoped to cut down the growing state. Eisenhower feared an attack from his political right, and worried about his legislative agenda. He countered with a risky ploy: he offered Hoover and his congressional allies a compromise. Hoover could have his Commission, but it had to focus on policy, not structural, recommendations.¹⁸⁵

Hoover took the bait. As Eisenhower hoped, Hoover produced many policy ideas toxic to anyone not in the extreme wing of Republican party.¹⁸⁶ Eisenhower allied with Democrats in Congress, including Lyndon Johnson (D-TX) to beat back other ideas. He killed some of Hoover's ideas with bureaucracy, subjecting them to long and thorough reviews by PACGO. And Eisenhower's adopted Hoover's more commonsense measures, giving the impression that the Administration was fully committed to the Commission's

¹⁸² Peri E. Arnold, *Making the Managerial Presidency* (U. Press of Kansas, 1998), p. 206 and Smith, p. 291.

¹⁸³ Nelson Rockefeller Interview, Columbia University Oral History Project, DDE.

¹⁸⁴ Arnold, p. 167.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 168-169.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 200 and Kenneth Whyte, *Hoover* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2017), p. 597.

findings.¹⁸⁷ Eisenhower won, but at a price. PACGO performed their job perfectly, yet the review of Hoover's suggestions took almost Eisenhower's entire first term. Only in 1956 could they turn their attention to other reforms.

The most pressing reform was how to reduce the president's workload. PACGO, and Eisenhower, felt that too much minutia, of all types, crowded his days. The modern presidency was busy, and he needed to concentrate on important matters. PACGO pitched a solution. The White House needed three new vice presidents: a Vice President for International Affairs, Domestic Affairs, and Business.¹⁸⁸ The names caused understandable confusion: these were supposed to be appointed, not elected officials. There were also charges Eisenhower was "shucking [his] duties."¹⁸⁹ Rockefeller tried to take the high road, responding that "The President does not want this for himself; he wants it for the country."¹⁹⁰ This did not quell congressional opposition.¹⁹¹ As it was, Democrats did not believe the White House needed more staffers.¹⁹²

The idea of extra vice presidents died, but the idea of a foreign affairs assistant survived. It gained a new name, "The First Secretary of Government." That name, too, inspired skepticism with its decidedly parliamentarian connotations.¹⁹³ Under this concept the First Secretary would oversee the NSC, State Department, and every other part of the Federal Government that dealt with foreign policy. Such oversight would be

¹⁸⁷ Hoover's recommendations were not all unreasonable. In addition to those adopted by Eisenhower, the Democratic Congress easily passed Hoover's more technocratic recommendations.

¹⁸⁸ Arnold, p. 207.

¹⁸⁹ 11/22/58 Meeting, PACGO 3, Minutes and Notes for PACGO Meeting FY 58, DDE.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Arnold, p. 207..

¹⁹² "Senator's Block Hoover's 2nd Vice-President Plan" *International Herald Tribune* 4/30/56.

¹⁹³ Stuart, p. 252.

possible because they would be unencumbered with day-to-day managerial minutia. They would, in effect, run America's foreign policy. PACGO believed Eisenhower needed this help, calling it "One of the big issues" facing government.¹⁹⁴ Rockefeller argued that America needed to complete the development of its foreign policy apparatus.¹⁹⁵ Even Sherman Adams, Rockefeller's nemesis, agreed the "time [was] ripe" for such a move.¹⁹⁶

The idea took on many permutations.¹⁹⁷ But most returned to Eisenhower's call for getting "top notch administrators" into the White House.¹⁹⁸ Both Adams and Andrew Goodpaster agreed: there were plenty of staffers in the White House, what was needed was better oversight and coordination. Yet the constant talk of recruiting top talent implies, on some level, a dissatisfaction with those already serving.¹⁹⁹ There also seemed to be an evolving consensus that, however this new position evolved, the NSC could be downgraded and the OCB could be eliminated.²⁰⁰ John Foster Dulles agreed with this, noting that the NSC, is "'too much a paper operation' and is not serving effectively as a top forum for consideration of basic policy issues."²⁰¹ He ominously warned one staffer,

¹⁹⁴ 5/23/56 Handwritten Notes, PACGO 3, Minutes and Notes for PACGO Meeting FY 56, DDE.

¹⁹⁵ 4/30/57 Meeting in NAR Office, PACGO 3, Minutes and Notes for PACGO Meeting FY 57 (2), DDE.

¹⁹⁶ Minutes-Foreign Affairs Reorganization, RG4, Series O, Subseries 5, Box 51, Folder 453, RAC and Committee Meeting and Evening Discussion, 10/17/56, PACGO 3, Minutes and Notes for PACGO Meeting FY 56, DDE.

¹⁹⁷ Including an entirely new foreign policy department or a massive restructuring of the State Department (which envisioned some Kennedy era reforms). 10/17/56 Committee Meeting Typed Notes, PACGO 3, Minutes and Notes for PACGO Meeting FY 56 and Minutes of Meeting Held on March 26, 1957, PACGO 3, Minutes and Notes for PACGO Meeting FY 57 (2), both DDE;

¹⁹⁸ Notes from 10/17/56 Evening Meeting, PACGO 3, Minutes and Notes for PACGO Meeting FY 56, DDE.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid

²⁰⁰ 10/17/56 Committee Meeting Typed Notes, PACGO 3, Minutes and Notes for PACGO Meeting FY 56, DDE and 12/21/56 Handwritten Notes, PACGO 3, Minutes and Notes for PACGO Meeting FY 56, DDE.

²⁰¹ Meetings of Committee Meeting, Sunday, February 9, 1958, PACGO 3, Minutes and Notes for PACGO Meeting FY 58, DDE.

“We do not know what is going to happen to the NSC.”²⁰² Indeed, Eisenhower might have seen the First Secretary post as a way to keep the increasingly frail Dulles in Washington and by his side. Throughout these discussions Eisenhower emphasized that this position would not deal with military issues nor would it include the CIA. The First Secretary would be solely a diplomatic position.

The president needed help, and the First Secretary might be the person to do so. Yet PACGO debated the idea for two years. Only in 1958, right after the Gaither Committee debacle, did they start considering legislation. To PACGO’s frustration, the concept continuously hit roadblocks. Was it unconstitutional, for instance, to give a member of the Executive Branch, who was neither the President nor Vice President, statutory powers over the cabinet?²⁰³ When PACGO tried to resolve this issue, and draw up legislation, a Bureau of the Budget staffer commented the draft was so confusing it implied that “Congress does not even have a legitimate interest in the exercise of the President’s constitutional powers.”²⁰⁴ The Bureau recommended that Eisenhower avoid legislation completely, and instead make informal changes.²⁰⁵ Another problem was that, in 1958, Eisenhower had already pushed a massive sets of Pentagon reforms through Congress. The White House felt they could not fight two reorganization battles in one year (see chapter 6).²⁰⁶ Dulles’ death in 1959, as well as continued discussions over the

²⁰² Gray to Harlow, 12/16/58, Harlow Papers Box 6 (A67-56), National Security Council, 1958, DDE.

²⁰³ 4/30/57 Meeting in NAR Office, PACGO 3, Minutes and Notes for PACGO Meeting FY 57 (2), DDE.

²⁰⁴ Moore to Carey, 1/5/60, PACGO 12, Management and International Affairs, 1959-1960 (1), DDE.

²⁰⁵ Moore to Carey, 1/5/60, PACGO 12, Management and International Affairs, 1959-1960 (1), DDE.

²⁰⁶ Minutes of Committee Meeting Held 4/29/58, PACGO 3, Minutes and Notes for PACGO Meeting FY 58, DDE.

act, caused a further delay to 1960.²⁰⁷ At that point, Eisenhower lost interest in legislation. As PACGO's administrative secretary concluded, the best outcome "may be [to] put [it] forward as a statesmanlike proposal for consideration by the next President and Congress."²⁰⁸ This did not prevent PACGO from working on related plans, even discussing the establishment of an Office of National Security Affairs in the White House.²⁰⁹ The First Secretary idea made its way into the 1960 Republican Platform.²¹⁰ In August, 1960 Sen. Jacob Javits (R-NY) even introduced, to little fanfare, an act to create such a post.²¹¹

The First Secretary plan died a prolonged death. Even some of its greatest supporters, however, worried that it might not solve any problems. Rockefeller worried that "All of [our investigations] are studying the tools- not the fundamental national and foreign [policy] objectives."²¹² The lack of new policy ideas coming from either the White House or the State Department frustrated Rockefeller, who additionally complained that "What the President needs [are] concepts [of] how to achieve objectives-

²⁰⁷ Minutes of Committee Meeting, 4/9/59 and Notes from Committee Meeting 6/5/59, PACGO 3, Minutes and Notes for PACGO Meeting FYS 59-60 (2), DDE.

²⁰⁸ Kimball to Rockefeller 7/28/59 and Kimball to Rockefeller, 5/29/59, RG4, Series P, Box 10, Folder 238, RAC.

²⁰⁹ The idea was that the First Secretary would head this office. Kimball to Flemming, M. Eisenhower, and Price, 12/17/59, PACGO 12, Management and International Affairs (First Secretary and Office of Exec. Management), 1959-60 (2), DDE.

²¹⁰ Republican Party Platform of 1960, 7/25/60, The American Presidency Project www.presidency.ucsb.edu

²¹¹ Congressional Record, Senate, 8/30/60, p. 16996. It was drafted with the "technical assistance, though not policy backing," of the White House. Memorandum on Javits Bill Re: S3911 n.d., Javits Paper Series 2, Box 49, S 477 Provide for a First Secretary of Govt. 1961, SB.

²¹² 10/17/56 Committee Meeting Typed Notes, PACGO 3, Minutes and Notes for PACGO Meeting FY 56, DDE.

---[but] everyone [is] too busy [with operations].”²¹³ This could not just be accomplished merely by making a more powerful position: the lower echelons would have to function more effectively as well.²¹⁴ Early in the process a member of PACGO worried “[The] more powerful the top structure, [the] weaker the subordinates”²¹⁵ Yet the universal belief that something like a First Secretary was needed shows just how much members of the administration understood the flaws in their system.

Conclusion

In 1959, while the First Secretary concept was being discussed, America and the Soviet Union were facing off over Berlin. Gordon Gray, Cutler’s replacement as SANSAs, grew increasingly frustrated by the problems in the PB/NSC/OCB system. After one particularly fruitless meeting, he went to Eisenhower and stated his view that the president, and Council members generally, were being ill-served by the Council. Gray felt that US policy had to be tightly controlled and monitored. That was flatly not possible in the existing NSC system. Gray asked that he be allowed to function more as a troubleshooter and even policy creator, and less as a functionary. Eisenhower agreed and Gray began to increasingly exert his influence.²¹⁶ He made small, but important, modification to the NSC system. One of these was an increasing emphasis on the OCB’s weekly, informal lunches, where top officials from all over the government met to have

²¹³ 11/23/56 Notes from Committee Meeting, PACGO 3, Minutes and Notes for PACGO Meeting FY 56, DDE.

²¹⁴ 5/30/57 Committee Meeting PACGO 3, Minutes and Notes for PACGO Meeting FY 57 (1), DDEL.

²¹⁵ Notes from Committee Meeting 11/12/56 PACGO 3, Minutes and Notes for PACGO Meeting FY 56, DDE.

²¹⁶ Prados, p. 88-89.

unstructured discussions. It was a widely applauded solution.²¹⁷ Bromley Smith, a veteran of the Eisenhower and Kennedy White House, said it was “one of the most effective devices I have ever experienced, short of the [Cuban Missile Crisis EXCOM].”²¹⁸

Gray, unlike Cutler, felt unencumbered by the NSC system. He also did not have to fight John Foster Dulles. Unlike Rockefeller and PCG, Gray also made these changes with Eisenhower’s unhesitating support. Gray’s greater powers, however, partially suggest why Eisenhower might have allowed PACGO’s planning to languish, even if he thought the First Secretary concept was important. In effect, he followed the Bureau of the Budget’s advice, using his existing powers to make his own First Secretary.²¹⁹ This also moved the NSC from a group focused, however imperfectly, on long range planning to one dealing more with day-to-day issues. It was what Eisenhower felt was needed, even if went against his original plans.²²⁰

Eisenhower’s NSC system, whatever its original intentions, was flawed. The system itself proved too inflexible and individuals, like Cutler and Dulles, did little to help it function. It is impossible to blame any particular event on the problems related to Eisenhower’s NSC. Yet, in preserving his NSC system, Eisenhower kept most of the foreign policy bureaucracy in knots. The constant paper writing and discussion might

²¹⁷ Coordination for Action: The Work of the OCB, Harr Papers Box 4, OCB (1), DDE; Sander, p. 148-150; Remedies” handwritten note, n.d., Harr Papers Box 4, OCB (2), DDEL and Critique of OCB Procedures, 10/7/58, Harr Papers Box 4, OCB (1), DDE; “Suggestions for Improving the Effectiveness of the OCB” 5/22/57, White House Office, National Security Council Staff, Papers, 1948-1961: OCB Central File Series Box 100, OCB 334, OCB File #3) (9), [April 1956-June 1957], DDE.

²¹⁸ Bromley Smith Oral History Interview (OH-270), DDEL OHP.

²¹⁹ Moore to Carey, 1/5/60, PACGO 12, Management and International Affairs, 1959-1960 (1), DDE.

²²⁰ PACGO, especially Rockefeller, was always enthusiastic about placing some sort of planning group within the new First Secretary’s office to make up for State’s downgraded PPS and the failure of the NSC to do much better.

have had a tangible benefit, allowing members from across the government to share ideas and talk. The records, however, suggest otherwise. The old interpretation of the NSC was that it prevented Eisenhower from responding quickly to emerging threats. That, patently, is untrue. The NSC did, however, cause damage. At the very least, it inhibited the introduction of new ideas into discussions over foreign policy. It is instructive that something like the “Open Skies” idea came from far outside the NSC structure. Compromise is not inherently bad, but the focus on compromise and clinically written papers worked against the ability to bring new ideas to the attention of the NSC. For a president who felt his job was already overloaded with minutia, dealing with the NSC and its various components added to an already crowded schedule. In his memoirs Eisenhower admitted that he could have perhaps used a smaller staff to run foreign policy, but that was about as far as he went in publically acknowledging the flaws in his system.²²¹ For all intents and purposes, however, Eisenhower ended his administration by consolidating power in the White House.²²² The NSC was not designed to inhibit ideas. It was designed to both synthesize opinions and bring those opinions to the attention to policymakers.²²³ The system, however, had several unintentional choke points in its design where dissent could be eliminated, and its emphasis on synthesis created a

²²¹ D.D. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace* (Doubleday, 1965), p. 634.

²²² Indeed, as early as 1957 PACGO complained that part of the NSC’s problem was that its members found it difficult to think of problems from the President’s point of view. Their own administrative bailiwicks overruled their ability to consider problems in a broader context. Admittedly this was, in theory, what Eisenhower expected so the comment, while valid, also highlights one of the problems with the NSC’s very design. Improvement of Foreign Affairs Organization—Some Considerations on the Role of the NSC and OCB in Foreign Policy Coordination, 5/13/57, RG 4, Series O, Subseries 5, Volume 52, RAC.

²²³ Eisenhower did eventually assign a member of the NSC staff to monitor the work of think tanks in the hopes of using their ideas to inform US policy. He only did this, however, in May 1960 and there is scant evidence it had much of an impact. Minutes of the 443rd Meeting of the National Security Council, May 5, 1960. OMM 443rd MtG: Tab E, RG 273, Entry 5, Box 25, NACP.

situation that favored the status quo.²²⁴ The system did not automatically force Eisenhower to perpetuate a hardline Cold War strategy. Nor did avowed Cold Warriors overwhelm the system. Both, however, worked in concert to endorse a more conservative approach to foreign policy.

Recent works on Eisenhower have praised him for largely avoiding Cold War crises.²²⁵ When compared to Kennedy, with the Cuban Missile Crisis and Vietnam, or even Truman, with Korea, Eisenhower does look accomplished. Yet, America's international situation in 1960 was not particularly promising. Relations with the Soviets were growing increasingly frosty, especially over Berlin. America seemed to be out of step with the emerging Neutralist movement. Even in its own hemisphere, in the case of Cuba, America seemed to be threatened. Eisenhower also appeared to have committed a series of blunders. Some of that criticism was true—the administration's handling of the U-2 crisis caused a black eye for the nation and further degraded relations with the Soviets. Some seems unfair—the “Missile Gap” did not exist. Eisenhower claimed that he had a system to deal with the Cold War and American foreign policy generally. From the perspective of could 1960, system seemed to have failed, and America was a step behind of international developments. Looking on from the Governor's Mansion in

²²⁴ This is not to argue that Eisenhower designed it this way. If the record shows anything, it is that Eisenhower liked being exposed to new concepts. This is also not to say that, but for the rigidity of the NSC, Eisenhower would have adopted a more liberal Cold War strategy. Indeed, his mistrust of Nonaligned nations, nuclear weapons focused strategy, and enthusiasm for covert operations suggest otherwise. Yet, this is a president who did try to deescalate the Cold War, eventually embraced Open Skies, was intrigued by public diplomacy, and grew increasingly enthusiastic about the use of foreign aid. If the intellectual environment within his administration had been of a different character, it is not out of the realm of possibility that he might have embraced a more moderate strategy.

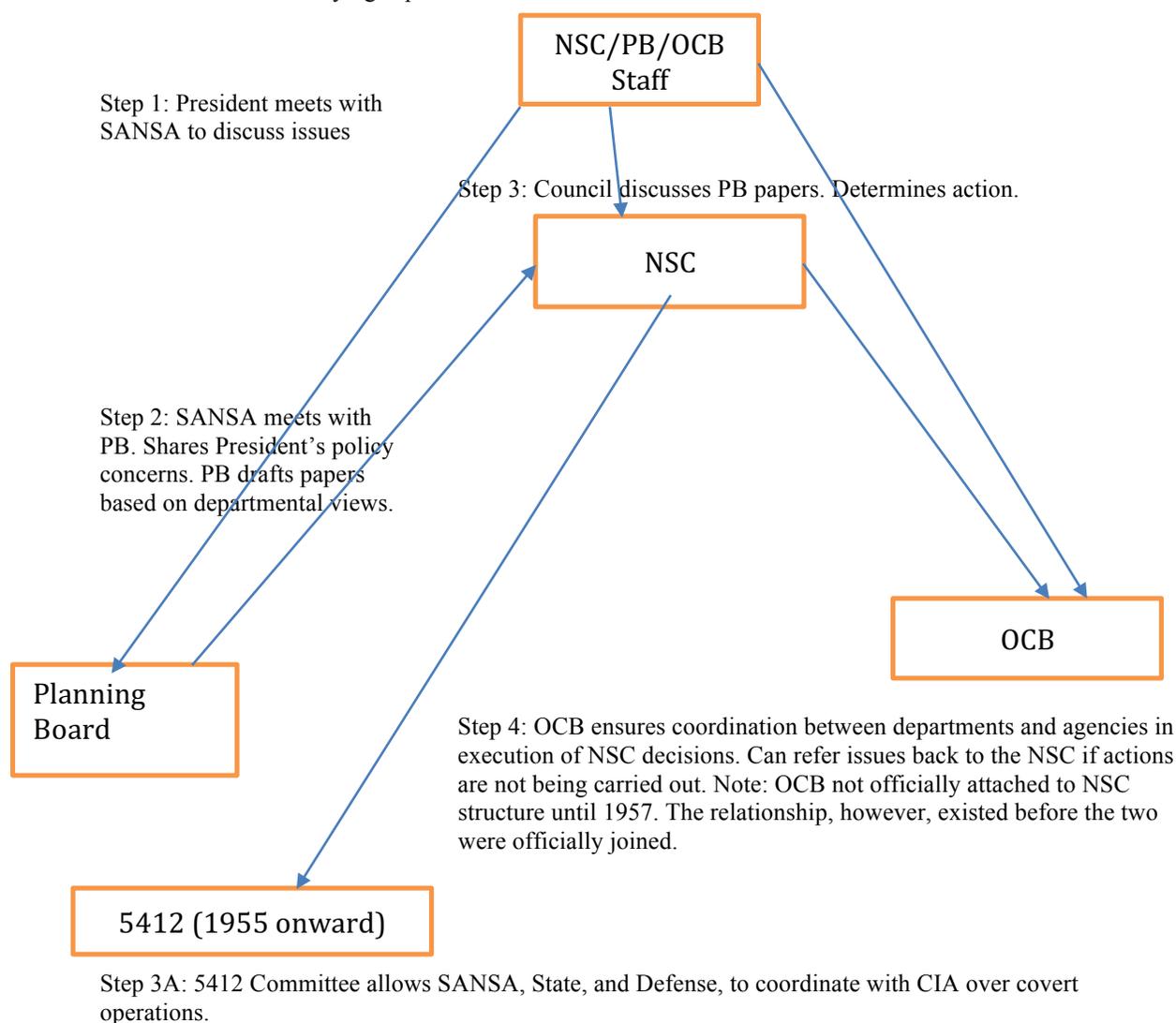
²²⁵ See, for instance Evan Thomas, *Ike's Bluff* (Back Bay Books, 2013) and Paul Miller, “Organizing the National Security Council: I Like Ike's”, *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (September, 2013), p. 592-606.

Albany, Nelson Rockefeller must have wondered how, after almost a decade of working to equip the government with the machinery it needed prevent this outcome, the nation still faced this nightmare situation.

Figure 1

Theoretical Proper Function of the NSC System (Late 1953 onward)

Note: Staff members provide largely clerical, research, and other support functions for boards. They are not involved in executing policy decisions and only rarely directly involved in making policy. Roughly 90 individuals serve in varying capacities.



Chapter 2: Henry Jackson's Public Victory

On July 11, 1960, Charles Haskins snapped. Sitting in his EOB office, the NSC staffer probably wondered how he ended up with such a painful assignment. Haskins had a distinguished past. A graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Business School, he served in Army intelligence in both Europe and the Pacific during World War II. After the war, he attended law school and clerked for a prominent federal judge. He parlayed that into a post at the prestigious law firm Ropes and Gray. Recalled to duty during the Korean War, he did another stint in intelligence as well as a legal posting, until he was transferred to the White House in 1955.²²⁶

The NSC staff during the Eisenhower years played largely a support role. They researched issues, sometimes advised Cabinet members, but mostly stayed in the background. Haskins seemed to enjoy the job but languished in a different type of purgatory. In late 1959 the White House made Haskins the NSC liaison to Washington Democratic Senator Henry Jackson's Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery (SNPM). An offshoot of the Senate's Government Operations Committee (GOC), the name hardly implied a dynamic subject. Initially, Haskins' assignment was easy, mostly observing members of the SNPM staff as they conducted background research. In February 1960, however, Jackson started to hold hearings. This initially benign and boring assignment now took on a sinister tone. Egged on by Jackson's pointed questions, Haskins sat mute as witness after witness attacked Eisenhower, his administration, and

²²⁶ Charles A. Haskins-Biographical Note, 7/27/59, BH, Pre-Acc Box 23, National Security Council Investigation (Jackson Resolution) (1), DDE.

the NSC. Haskins vented his frustrations to a former colleague who testified before Jackson's committee. Haskins wrote:

I have patiently heard 32 witnesses testify...Of these, 13 have specifically testified, or in many instances speculated, about the NSC...One witness, for example, after testifying for over 30 pages [of prepared text] as to what was wrong with the NSC...admitted that he had actually attended only one meeting of the council...I would only like to say that I found your testimony thoughtful, objective, and refreshingly authentic.²²⁷

Haskins would have rued the thought, but he was witnessing a key event in the development of the National Security State. Jackson's investigation was a series of contradictions. Jackson simultaneously framed it as the most serious examination of national security organization since the passage of the National Security Act of 1947 even as he struggled to hide its partisan undertones. It was intended to raise Jackson's national profile and establish his foreign policy bona fides. Foreign policy experts took the hearings so seriously that, for decades, they cast a shadow over interpretations of Eisenhower's administration and his management of the NSC. Jackson represented one of the Democrats' strongest attacks on both Eisenhower and the Republicans during the run-up to the 1960 campaign. His investigation painted the Eisenhower Administration as obsessed with institutional organization at the expense of actual policymaking. Jackson, however, struggled to get the investigation off the ground. The Democratic party hierarchy in the Senate worked hard to scuttle his investigation before it began. Although the investigation focused on some of the driest subjects in the field of national security, Jackson still made it front page news for several months. It changed the narrative of

²²⁷ Haskins to Bowie 7/11/60, White House Office, NSC Staff Papers, Misc Staff Files Box 1, Jackson Committee Hearings, June 27-July 1, DDE.

Eisenhower's NSC, and its lasting influence overshadowed more serious studies conducted around the same time. Between April 1959 and June 1960, Jackson skillfully maligned Eisenhower's administration, promoted his own political future, challenged the Imperial Presidency, and proved to be a headache for the long-suffering Charles Haskin.

Eisenhower spent the 1950s building the public image of his administration: technocratic, corporate, and efficient. Though he struggled with the NSC machinery behind the scenes, he believed his system was better than any alternative, especially those recommended by people without insider experience. That image was not without blemishes, but Eisenhower retained an aura of expertise and command. Although little remembered today, Jackson's investigation did considerable damage to that aura. While Jackson himself did much of this, he transformed his committee into a venue where other Democrats and Republicans did much of the work for him. Especially among foreign policy experts, Jackson's subcommittee tore down the façade of Eisenhower's NSC. It questioned the need for elaborate organization, and highlighted the drowning out of individual voices in the national security process. Moreover, it directly questioned whether this over-organization hurt the national security of the United States. At the very least, the Jackson Subcommittee opened the way for the more decentralized organization of Kennedy's NSC staff, even if that set up bore little resemblance to Jackson's actual findings.

Humanity's Hope Depends on Us

Between 1952 and 1959, Henry Jackson witnessed a tremendous amount of history, but the most part he did not make it. He lived adjacent to it. Not that one should downplay the accomplishments of the life-long Democrat. Starting as a local prosecutor in Washington State, he fought a tough primary campaign in 1940 to win one of Washington's Congressional seats. Denied a chance to join the Army due to his seat in Congress, Jackson finally got overseas in 1945. There, he toured newly liberated Buchenwald. Another trip took him to Norway where he listened to the locals about life under occupation and their fear of the Soviets. While he remained a solid liberal on domestic grounds, these experiences gave Jackson lasting memories of totalitarianism's effects.²²⁸

Jackson's was popular in Washington State. Despite his tough primary campaign in 1940, he easily won the general election. He was also the only House Democrat from the Pacific Northwest to survive the 1946 midterms. He won a comfortable victory to the Senate in 1952, running against an unpopular opponent with close ties to Joseph McCarthy. Though one-on-one he came across as likeable, he was an indifferent public speaker.²²⁹ Jackson was a workaholic. Most nights Jackson sequestered himself away in his room to study policy.²³⁰ When he did go to social events, he followed a familiar pattern. Upon arrival Jackson would request a glass of scotch and water. With an aide dutifully at his shoulder he would then proceed to make his way around the room, usually over the course of an hour or two. After that, the scotch only half consumed, he would

²²⁸ Robert G. Kaufman, *Henry Jackson* (UW Press, 2000), 39-41. While in Norway Jackson almost died of an infection, and benefitted greatly from the nation's health services. This led Jackson to be a lifelong advocate for national healthcare.

²²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 21 and 24.

²³⁰ *Ibid*, 114-116.

say his goodbyes. For Jackson, this was more about politics than it was socializing. Depending on the night and time he finished the first event, he might repeat this routine at another one or two cocktail parties, aide still in tow, before turning in for the evening.²³¹ Jackson was about as straight an arrow as they came. Considering his company in Congress, Jackson seemed positively boring. At the height of Jackson's political power in the 1970s, the KGB tried several times to dredge up incriminating material. They found nothing.²³² Jackson was a hard worker who liked policy, liked details, and kept his nose to the grindstone. Not surprisingly for a Senator with a small social life, he had few close friends in the Senate. He entered the Senate with three other new Democrats, John F. Kennedy (D-MA), Stuart Symington (D-MO), and Mike Mansfield (D-MT). Kennedy and Jackson quickly developed a friendship. Jackson might not have been one of the uber-social Kennedy's closest friends, but the two had served together in the House and seemed to have a bond, perhaps due to their shared intense interest in national security issues.²³³

Jackson, Kennedy, and Kennedy's brother Robert cemented this bond when all three found themselves assigned to the Senate's Government Operations Committee (GOC). For a new Senator, the forty-year-old GOC could be a backwater assignment. The Legislative Reform Act of 1946 allowed for a proliferation of investigatory subcommittees all over the Senate, and gave the GOC oversight over the laws enacted to reorganize the Executive Branch as well as America's interactions with international

²³¹ Richard Page interview.

²³² Steve Coll "Defying Conventions" *The New Yorker*, August 8-15, 2016.

²³³ Richard Page interview and Kauffman, p. 114.

organizations.²³⁴ That, in and of itself, did nothing to make the GOC's mandate more exciting, but enterprising senators, with a little creative thinking, could use the GOC's broad jurisdiction to their advantage.

Joseph McCarthy may have been the first to do this. McCarthy long hoped to get a seat on the Foreign Relations subcommittee. When that failed, he used his seat on the GOC, and the Committee's broad oversight powers, to form his notorious Communist hunting subcommittee.²³⁵ John McClellan (D-AR), the Committee's Chair assigned Jackson to McCarthy's Subcommittee and Jackson had a ringside seat for McCarthy's excesses. He participated in the Democratic boycott of the Committee aimed at cutting McCarthy's power.²³⁶ It was on that committee that Jackson grew close to Robert Kennedy, then the Democrats' minority counsel.

Jackson also served on Stuart Symington's 1956 subcommittee on Air Force Preparedness for the Cold War. Symington's hearings exposed what seemed to be dangerous flaws in the Air Force's readiness for nuclear war and helped perpetuate the notion of the "bomber gap."²³⁷ It also significantly elevated Symington's profile as he prepared for his presidential run in 1960 and energized the Democrats.²³⁸ In many respects this committee was a formative experience for Jackson. Symington knew this investigation would damage Eisenhower, but he did not consider it an entirely partisan enterprise. He went out of his way to make sure Republicans were included in the

²³⁴ Robert David Johnson, "The Government Operations Committee and Foreign Policy During the Cold War" *Political Science Quarterly* (113, No. 4), p. 648-649.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Kaufman, p. 77.

²³⁷ Paul C. Light, *Government by Investigation* (Brookings, 2014), op. 150-151.

²³⁸ Ibid, p. 151.

investigation to ensure it maintained a veneer of bipartisanship, even as the committee's Democrats, including Jackson, sharpened their legislative knives for an attack on the White House.²³⁹ Jackson even remarked, "We all realize that once [the committee] becomes a political football, why, then, the whole thing will blow up in smoke and confusion."²⁴⁰ Starting with a high caliber witness, in this case retired General Omar Bradley, Symington initially seemed to be making headway in his attack on Eisenhower. Until, that is, he publically attacked Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson.²⁴¹ Jackson joined in the assault.²⁴² Even as they painted a picture of military unpreparedness, the investigation seemed increasingly partisan.²⁴³ Once it crossed this threshold, it slowly faded from the public view. The final report, little noticed when published, further undermined Symington's efforts. While the Democrats on the committee wrote a blistering attack, the committee's Republicans undermined the findings when they issued a dissenting report that stoutly defended the Administration.²⁴⁴ Even if Symington's political misstep, and Jackson's excessive enthusiasm, gave the Administration a temporary reprieve, Symington's investigation began to build the case that Eisenhower's national security strategy was dangerous and poorly planned. The idea of the "missile gap," a key belief to many testifying before the SNPM, fit into a narrative bolstered by the Symington Committee. It also gave Jackson a roadmap of what to do, and not do, with his own investigation.

²³⁹ James Olson, *Stuart Symington* (U. of Missouri Press, 2003), p. 310-311; Julian Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy* (Basic Books, 2009), p. 132.

²⁴⁰ Quoted in Olson, p. 311.

²⁴¹ Ibid, p. 313-314.

²⁴² Leighton, p. 642 and 646.

²⁴³ Olson, p. 314-315.

²⁴⁴ Leighton, p. 650-651.

Though he remained passionate about domestic issues, Jackson tried to increase his profile on international matters, sensing a growing Soviet threat.²⁴⁵ Jackson developed a keen interest, and expertise, on nuclear weapons via his service on the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. He spent much of the 1950s crusading for America to improve its atomic arsenal.²⁴⁶ One might have expected Eisenhower's "New Look" strategy, underpinned by nuclear weapons, to mesh well with Jackson's beliefs. But for many Democrats and a growing number of Republicans it did not. The New Look was criticized on any number of fronts. Some felt that the strategy relied too heavily on covert operations. Others lamented Eisenhower's stingy support for conventional capabilities. Even on the nuclear front, the President seemed vulnerable. During Eisenhower's tenure, Strategic Air Command expanded significantly. Yet, America seemed far behind on missile technology. Only a few months before the launch of Sputnik Jackson gave a speech in the Senate highlighting America's technological deficit.²⁴⁷ If Sputnik portended Soviet nuclear superiority, the leaked findings of the Gaither Committee confirmed America's vulnerability. Jackson could understand part of the problem: Eisenhower deliberately chose to eschew a large defense budget. Jackson was less sure how the President could ignore an avalanche of advice coming from foreign policy experts and military officials.

²⁴⁵ Kaufman, p. 61.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 85-86. During this process, he saved the career of Hyman Rickover, who the Chief of Naval Operations wanted to force into retirement. Jackson, using his seat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, objected, allowing Rickover to stay in the Navy and help build the nuclear powered, and armed, submarine fleet.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 91.

Jackson was hardly alone in expressing his concerns. Democratic organizations, like Americans for Democratic Action and the Democratic Advisory Committee, also spoke out against Eisenhower's military and foreign policies. More luminous lights in the field, like Dean Acheson and Paul Nitze, trod the same ground as Jackson. As the 1960 election approached, Jackson feared for America's security and hoped to give a boost to his political career. The question was how best to do this? Jackson wanted to launch an investigation that examined the whole of US cold war strategy, not just military matters. In his mind, the ideal place to do this would be from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson (D-TX), however, denied him a seat when one opened.²⁴⁸ Jackson also sat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, but the purview of that body limited what he could investigate. Jackson and his staff considered their options, and seemed to reach the same conclusion McCarthy did years before: use the GOC. The GOC, under its mandate, could investigate all the entities created by the National Security Act of 1947, including the Pentagon and the NSC. Moreover, if he played his cards right, Jackson could turn the words of others into political weapons. Jackson could only tarnish Eisenhower so much, but the statements of others, especially non-partisan experts, might have an even greater effect. The most explosive parts of Symington's subcommittee came often from those testifying, not Symington himself. Still, Jackson first needed to have the Senate to pass a resolution authorizing a subcommittee. He began the process in early 1959.

²⁴⁸ That senator, Frank Church (D-ID), helped cast the deciding vote on the 1957 Civil Rights. Caro, p. 978-989.

Jackson kicked off his efforts with a speech in April 1959 delivered at the National War College in Washington, DC, where he laid out the case against the Eisenhower Administration. While Jackson highlighted the deficiencies of the Eisenhower defense budget, he argued that much of the problem stemmed from how Eisenhower made decisions. He acknowledged that “Organization by itself cannot assure a strategy for victory...But good organization can help, and poor organization does hurt. Let’s face it: we are poorly organized.”²⁴⁹ He then described Eisenhower’s NSC system as being not just overly bureaucratic, but dangerous to the nation. Jackson pointed to a myriad of reports warning the White House of national security and defense problems. That the president ignored these warnings was proof to Jackson that good ideas seemed to disappear in the NSC’s warren of alphabet soup subcommittees. At the very least, it inhibited good decision-making. At worst, the machinery actively encouraged poor choices. Lest anyone doubt how seriously Jackson took all this, he concluded his speech by saying “The truth is that to every threat of defeat there has always come the resolute response of free men—‘it shall not be.’ This can be so again, as we in our time bend out efforts to building a decent world for which we stand—knowing that humanity’s hope depends on us.”²⁵⁰ This speech got Jackson the attention he sought. Positive press coverage portrayed the senator as finally exposing pitfalls in the President’s planning.²⁵¹

Over the next several months, Jackson engaged in combat with both the luminaries of his party and the White House. Both wanted to quash his investigation and

²⁴⁹ “How Shall We Forge a Strategy for Survival?” *Organizing for National Security* Vol. II.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Hans Morgenthau “Can We Entrust Defense to a Committee?” *New York Times Magazine* 6/7/59.

went to lengthy measures to do so. Jackson bested each of these attempts with cunning and guile. When Senate Democrats tried to shut down his investigation on procedural grounds, Jackson rebuffed their attempts by outlining the holes in their claims. When Lyndon Johnson and Dwight Eisenhower accused Jackson of being reckless, the Senator from Washington avoided the pitfalls of the Symington Committee, moderated his tone, and kept plotting. The White House made the greatest mistake: it agreed to let Jackson have his subcommittee, but only if he agreed to terms it believed would defang his investigation. Jackson agreed and built carefully worded loopholes into the agreement. Jackson's success rested in part on luck and the poor strategy of his opponents. But it also resulted from good staff work in Jackson's office and the Senator's own instincts.

The White House was not happy with Jackson's speech, but felt it could be ignored. One official said that Jackson's attack was so scattershot, it was hard to tell where exactly to begin the rebuttal.²⁵² Robert Cutler characterized the speech as "a vigorous polemic."²⁵³ He claimed that Jackson misidentified how the NSC operated, its functions, and its purpose. Nor, Cutler correctly noted, did the Senator make any recommendations for how to fix any of this.²⁵⁴ Cutler suggested the best response would be a "careful statement of how the mechanism does operate."²⁵⁵ Jackson did not wait for the White House's response. On May 5, he introduced Senate Resolution (S Res) 115, which aimed to investigate

²⁵² Gleason to Gray, 6/22/59, WHO, NSC: Exec Secs Subject File Series, Box 11, Jackson Committee (2), DDE.

²⁵³ Cutler to Person, 6/4/59, WHO, NSC: Exec Secs Subject File Series, Box 11, Jackson Committee (2), DDE.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

the effectiveness of present organizational structures and operational methods of agencies and instrumentalities of the Federal Government at all levels in the formulation, coordination, and execution of an integrated national policy for the solution of the problems of survival with which the free world is confronted in the contest with communism.²⁵⁶

Surprisingly, the first line of resistance Jackson encountered came from the top echelon of his own party: J. William Fulbright (D-AR), Richard Russell (D-GA), and Lyndon Johnson. Fulbright, for one, looked askance at Jackson's study because his Senate Foreign Relations Committee was, simultaneously, almost exactly what Jackson proposed. The Foreign Relations Committee's detailed study ran 15 volumes, including an entire volume dedicated to the formulation and administration of America's foreign policy. Released in the fall of 1959, it heavily criticized the NSC, noting "it is clear that an interdepartmental committee, no matter how exalted, operates under severe limitations and can be only a partial aid in coordinating matters of foreign policy...A committee cannot be a very effective decisionmaking [sic] instrument... The result is often a heavily compromised agreement."²⁵⁷ It recommended that the President should scrap the NSC system and essentially adopt something akin to Rockefeller's First Secretary Concept.²⁵⁸ Gordon Gray thanked Fulbright for forwarding the report to the White House, made a few comments on the report, and was done with the matter.²⁵⁹ There were no further repercussions.

Other attempts from within Congress also bore little fruit. Humbert Humphrey's (D-MN) staff participated in an informal study group on national security reform comprised of

²⁵⁶ S. Res 115, 86th Congress, 5/5/59.

²⁵⁷ H.F. Haviland et. al., *Formulation and Administration of US Foreign Policy* (Brookings, 1960), p. 47.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 54-56.

²⁵⁹ Gray to Fulbright 12/8/59 and 12/9/59, WHO, NSC Staff Papers, Exec Sec. Subject Files, Box 12, Jackson Committee (3), DDE.

members of RAND, the Brookings Institution, and representatives from the Pentagon, the NSC, and the Legislative Reference Service.²⁶⁰ Though that group met for several months and came up with some policy proposals, their ideas were never implemented.²⁶¹

Humphrey had no better luck when he and Jacob Javits (R-NY) released a plan in 1959 to form an “Advisory Council on National Security” to supplement the NSC. It would be made up of all the living former presidents—Eisenhower must have groaned at the thought of giving Herbert Hoover another bully pulpit—and twenty-five distinguished civilians. When Javits and Humphrey introduced the bill it received wide press coverage and considerable public interest.²⁶² The bill, however, languished in the Armed Services Committee, several Executive Branch departments dismissed it out of hand, and the White House claimed no such committee was needed since “such advice was already available to the President.”²⁶³ Henry Jackson and the White House did not agree on much, but one of Jackson’s aides admitted to Charles Haskins that the Javits-Humphrey idea was “a ‘grim piece of legislation.’”²⁶⁴ Even Nelson Rockefeller, who wholly embraced the need for national security reform, gently told Javits the idea was terrible.²⁶⁵ Javits might have consoled himself with the fact that Rockefeller, too, failed to effect

²⁶⁰ Humphrey to Javits, 5/13/59, JJ, Series 2, Box 40, SJR 83: Advisory Council on National Security, 1959, SB.

²⁶¹ Informal Minutes of Luncheon Meeting, 18 June 1959, Brookings Institution, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 69, Hilsman, Roger: The Foreign Policy Consensus-An Interim Report, UW; Planning for National Security: A Proposal both in HJ, Accn 35606, Box 69, Hilsman, Roger: The Foreign Policy Consensus-An Interim Report, UW

²⁶² Memo on Javits Bills-86th Congress, Re: SJ Res 83, JJ, Series 2, Box 40, SJR 83: Advisory Council on National Security, 1959, SB.

²⁶³ Ibid and Millenson to Javits Re: S. 3301, n.d. JJ, Series 2, Box 40, SJR 83: Advisory Council on National Security, 1959, SB.

²⁶⁴ Memorandum for the Record, Subject: S.J. Res 83, 10/14/59, WHO, NSC Staff Papers, Misc Staff Files, Box 1, Jackson Committee-SJ Res 83 (Javits), DDE.

²⁶⁵ Rockefeller to Javits, 4/10/59, JJ, Series 2, Box 40, SJR 83: Advisory Council on National Security, 1959s, SB.

change. Rockefeller, via the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, had commissioned a multi-volume study of American foreign and domestic politics. The volumes that dealt with US foreign and military policy, though short, criticized both Eisenhower's policies as well as how the Administration made decisions. The volumes were immensely popular when released.²⁶⁶ Given Rockefeller's previous efforts, the study somewhat disingenuously noted, "There is reason to believe...that there is serious concern in both the executive and legislative branches as to whether the federal government is properly organized to conduct the nation's business in the foreign policy field."²⁶⁷ It even called for a joint Executive-Legislative study on the organizational and procedural aspects of foreign policy.²⁶⁸

One, then, can understand why the trio of Fulbright, Russell, and Johnson possessed doubts. What could Jackson do that these far more prominent groups had failed to accomplish? Moreover, a series of Senate Committees—including Symington's 1956 investigation and Johnson's own subcommittee investigation launched after Sputnik—seemed to have already answered many of the questions Jackson wanted to ask.²⁶⁹ Jackson was a junior senator encroaching on the territory of his superiors including, Johnson feared, the Texas senator's own ambitions for higher office. Fulbright and Russell tried to dissuade Jackson by sending him down a procedural rabbit hole. Fulbright insisted that Jackson secure the agreement of Russell, head of the Senate

²⁶⁶ Niall Ferguson, *Kissinger 1923-1968: The Idealist* (Penguin, 2015), p. 394.

²⁶⁷ August Heckscher, ed. *The Mid-Century Challenge to U.S. Foreign Policy* (Doubleday and Co, 1959), p. 70.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Light, p. 90-91 and 150-151.

Armed Services committee, before starting any investigation.²⁷⁰ Russell, promptly, refused.²⁷¹ Fulbright then claimed the matter was out of his hands and that Jackson should stay away from the field of foreign affairs, in part to avoid “the harassment of Executive Branch officials by duplicating Senate studies,” until after his own investigation was concluded in early 1960.²⁷²

Jackson struck back at Fulbright, and in doing so won a major procedural victory. In a strongly worded memo to the Senate Rules Committee, Jackson claimed Fulbright’s study “relates to the machinery for the formulation and administration of foreign policy only.” The SNPM, by contrast, would study “the integration of foreign, defense, and domestic policy...If [Fulbright] plans to have [his study] go beyond the field of foreign policy machinery, then [he] is exceeding [his] jurisdiction.”²⁷³ In a significant win, the Rules Committee sided with Jackson. If they had sided with Fulbright Jackson would, at the very least, have had to rethink his approach. It might have killed the SNPM outright. Instead, he could now bring S Res 115 to the Senate floor.

Lyndon Johnson, however, remained in Jackson’s way. Though Jackson and Johnson collaborated on a variety of issues, their personal relationship could charitably be called frosty.²⁷⁴ Despite Jackson’s win, Johnson pleaded with him to halt the push for

²⁷⁰ Fulbright to Jackson 3/13/59, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 68, US Senate, GOC, National Policy Machinery Subcommittee, Establishment: SJ Res 115, UW.

²⁷¹ Russell to Jackson 4/6/59, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 68, US Senate, GOC, National Policy Machinery Subcommittee, Establishment: SJ Res 115, UW.

²⁷² Fulbright to Jackson 5/18/59, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 68, US Senate, GOC, National Policy Machinery Subcommittee, Establishment: SJ Res 115, UW;

²⁷³ “Memorandum by Senator Jackson on Senate Resolution 115” 5/18/59, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 68, US Senate, GOC, National Policy Machinery Subcommittee, Establishment: SJ Res 115, UW.

²⁷⁴ Kaufman, p. 114. It did not help that Jackson had a terrible relationship with Johnson’s whip, Robert Kerr (D-OK). Ibid.

S Res 115.²⁷⁵ Johnson also turned to a new ally in this battle: Dwight Eisenhower. The two had conspired before. Eisenhower worked with Johnson in 1954 to stop an amendment, brought by the right wing of the Republican Party, that would have curtailed the powers of the Executive Branch in foreign affairs. Since Johnson helped him deal with mutinous Republicans, Eisenhower seemed happy to help the Texan deal with upstart Democrats. Johnson also believed that too forceful an attack on Eisenhower's foreign policy apparatus would make the party seem dangerously partisan and hurt the party's electoral efforts.²⁷⁶ He might have had ulterior motives: on at least one occasion he lobbied Eisenhower to attack his then-Democratic Primary opponent John Kennedy.²⁷⁷ If Jackson mounted a successful set of hearings, it might encourage his own presidential ambitions. Watching from down Pennsylvania Avenue, Eisenhower "expressed his displeasure at [Jackson's] efforts...and made, in emphatic terms, an observation that there would be no investigation of the [NSC]."²⁷⁸ Eisenhower reiterated his feelings to the three Democrats. Russell urged the president to write a public letter accusing Jackson of being reckless.²⁷⁹ Eisenhower did just this, even using much of Russell's own wording. He argued that Jackson's investigation would "thrust Congressional investigative activities deeply into the Nation's highest national security and foreign policy deliberative process which traditionally as well as Constitutionally have remained within the province of the Chief Executive[.] [I]n the interest of our national security... further

²⁷⁵ Johnson, "The Government Operations", p. 651.

²⁷⁶ Johnson, p. 651.

²⁷⁷ Caro, p. 97-98.

²⁷⁸ "Memorandum of Meeting with the President" 4/30/59, WHO, SANSA, Spec Assn Series, Pres Subseries, Box 4, Meetings with the President-1959 (3), DDE.

²⁷⁹ Johnson, p. 651 and Gilbert Fite, *Richard B. Russell* (UNC Press, 1991), p. 357-358.

action on [S Res 115 should] be indefinitely withheld.”²⁸⁰ To follow this up, the White House’s Congressional liaison spent two hours in Jackson’s office trying to reason with the senator.²⁸¹ At the same time, the White House worked on a backup plan. Gordon Gray acknowledged that, while “all reasonable effort [should] be made to avoid the adoption of [S Res 115]...it is recommended that the Executive Branch be prepared to cooperate in a limited way with the Jackson Committee.”²⁸²

Jackson, however, seemed to bow to the pressure. Publically he changed his tone considerably, now saying that S Res 115 was not an investigation but a “non-partisan, undramatic and unsensational study.”²⁸³ He did not anticipate any hearings and said that he expected the study would be “constructive help, not destructive.”²⁸⁴ Moreover, Jackson reached out to a series of Republicans, promising to review their own proposals for improving the NSC and giving a bipartisan sheen to his efforts.²⁸⁵ The White House remained suspicious of Jackson’s motives and explanations. Even as Jackson claimed in writing that he planned no hearings, the White House noted that he called for them in his

²⁸⁰ Eisenhower to Johnson 6/25/59, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 67, US Executive Department: The White House, UW.

²⁸¹ Jackson to J.K. Mansfield, 6/26/59, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 68, Folder 2, U.S. President (Eisenhower, Dwight D.), UW.

²⁸² Memorandum for the President Subject: Jackson Committee Investigation, 6/11/59, WHO, NSC, Exec Sec Subject Files, Box 12, Jackson Committee (2), DDE.

²⁸³ Memorandum of Comments on President’s Letter to Senator Johnson of June 25, 1959, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 67, US Executive Department: The White House, UW; Johnson, p. 651-652.

²⁸⁴ Memorandum of Comments on President’s Letter to Senator Johnson of June 25, 1959, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 67, US Executive Department: The White House, UW; Johnson, p. 651-652.

²⁸⁵ Johnson, p. 652.

public statements.²⁸⁶ Yet, the White House admitted that the actions of Johnson and Russell seemed to calm Jackson. Eisenhower thanked the two for their help.²⁸⁷

The President, however, sought to put the final nail in Jackson's coffin. He agreed to let S Res 115 pass if Jackson accepted a series of rules governing the study.²⁸⁸ During the first half of July 1959, Jackson, his staff, and White House officials worked to shape these guidelines. The White House, curiously, seemed happy to adopt many of Jackson's own suggested rules.²⁸⁹ In large part, they did so because their modifications seemed to devalue Jackson's efforts: Jackson would conduct a study, not an investigation, and members of the Executive Branch would not be compelled to testify about substantive policy, only "purposes, composition, organization, and procedures." The White House also demanded that any sensitive testimony be taken in Executive session and reserved the right to strike any sensitive testimony from the public record.²⁹⁰ In essence, the guidelines sought to accomplish two goals: prevent current officials from talking about policy and focus any testimony almost entirely on organization and structure. Eisenhower perhaps hoped that forcing Jackson to look exclusively at organization would simply bore everyone to death. Government officials testifying about org charts would not make for gripping news.

²⁸⁶ Reaction to "Memorandum of Comments on President's Letter to LBJ of June 15, 1959" BH, Pre Acc Box 23, National Security Council Investigation (Jackson Resolution) (3), DDE.

²⁸⁷ Johnson, p. 652.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ It appears Everett Dirksen might have played some role in this since some guideline revision notes are written on his personal stationary. See handwritten notes in HJ, Accn 35606, Box 67, US Senate, GOC, National Policy Machinery Subcommittee, US Executive Department: The White House, UW.

²⁹⁰ Proposed Guidelines, n.d. HJ, Accn 35606, Box 67, US Executive Department: The White House, UW.

In essence, the guidelines sought to accomplish two goals: to prevent current officials from talking about policy and to focus any testimony almost entirely on organization and structure. This was Eisenhower's way of reversing the strategy he used on the Hoover Committee five years earlier. In that case, compelling the committee to focus on policy, not organization, proved highly effective in limiting its influence. If right wing ranting about government overreach killed Herbert Hoover's crusade in 1955, Eisenhower hoped that forcing Jackson to look exclusively at organization would simply bore everyone to death in 1960. Government officials testifying about committee organization would not make for gripping news.

Yet the guidelines hewed to a distinction that, at best, appeared hazy. They said the Executive Branch officials could talk about "their own policies or activities but without reference to substantive considerations of such matters by the [NSC]."²⁹¹ How could an official discuss his policies without discussing the Administration's policies or events of the time? That contradiction became even clearer several months later. When Jackson asked to test the NSC machinery by running a hypothetical paper through it, the White House staff asked "how far you could go with a hypothetical example[?]" Even a superficial discussion might involve "the substance of current policies as well."²⁹² Another official commented that Jackson's guidelines "did not appear to offer [Federal] agencies much protection."²⁹³ For whatever reason, the White House dismissed these legitimate concerns. It seemed convinced Jackson could not outmaneuver the obstacles in

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² "Memo for the Record: Planning Board Discussion on September 11, 1959 of the Jackson Study" 9/17/59, WHO, NSC: Exec Secs Subject File Series, Box 11, Jackson Committee (3), DDE.

²⁹³ Memo for the Record, 9/10/59, RG273, Records of the NSC, Mill Papers 207-231, Entry 2, Box 5, MILL 212, NARA.

their agreement or, if he did, it would not matter. But the White House failed to understand that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to prevent Jackson from discussing organization separately from policy. Jackson deliberately built in this loophole. After only a week or two of negotiating, Eisenhower clearly felt he had bested the Senator from Washington when Jackson agreed to the guidelines. Once Eisenhower gave his permission, Lyndon Johnson expedited the vote on S Res 115. On July 14, 1959 the GOC formed Jackson's Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery. Eleven says later it held its first meeting. In addition to Jackson, the GOC seconded Hubert Humphrey and later Edmund Muskie (D-MN) to serve at Jackson's side. Karl Mundt (R-SD) served as the ranking minority member.

The Administration prepared to work with Jackson, but kept an eye on the Senator. The White House assigned Charles Haskins from the NSC staff to liaise with Jackson. If the SNPM held hearings, Haskins had the right to veto discussions of sensitive subject matters, both during the live testimony and in editing the transcript of the Executive Sessions. Eisenhower expected Haskins to be an active adversarial presence, though warned him to "not challenge [Jackson] but...to point out where he...thought they were getting close" to discussing restricted information. Despite this message, the President seemed unusually confident that this would not be necessary. He told Haskins "Of course, nobody is going to get into the substance of national security

matter; that is out of bounds...NSC discussions is advice given to the President and as such is privileged.”²⁹⁴

In addition to Haskins, other Republican eyes would watch Jackson. Karl Mundt served on the SNPM from its creation while Jacob Javits joined in January 1960. Some aspects of Mundt’s background fit the mold of a conservative Republican by standards of the 1940s and 1950s. Until late in the Second World War his views on foreign affairs might best be described as belonging to a pure strain of Taftian thought.²⁹⁵ He served on the House Committee on Un-American Activities in the late 1940s. When he arrived in the Senate he requested a variety of committee appointments. Most of those were turned down and he, too, ended up on the GOC.²⁹⁶ There he became one of Joseph McCarthy’s closest allies during the McCarthy hearings.

Despite his hard-line appearance, he became an early advocate of several internationalist causes. He was an enthusiastic supporter of the UN, being one of the major American champions of UNESCO, and also wanted the body to have greater powers to stop war.²⁹⁷ He even tried to have UN headquarters established in Rapid City, South Dakota.²⁹⁸ He played a major role in the formation of the US Information Agency, the Voice of America, and educational exchange programs with Latin American nations.²⁹⁹ He unsuccessfully tried to negotiate a peace between the Army and McCarthy

²⁹⁴ Memorandum of Meeting with the President, 7/29/59, WHO, SANSAs, Spec Assn Series, Pres Subseries, Box 4, Meetings with the President-1959 (4), DDE.

²⁹⁵ Scott Heidepreim, *A Fair Chance for a Free People* (Leader Print Co, 1988), p. 67.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 157

²⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 67-71. For instance, he wanted the UN to control and international air force.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 72-75. He had a decent, if still very strange, reasoning behind this. That being said, if you think this sounds odd, you’d be right.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 70, 74-80.

and, very reluctantly, took over as chair of the Army-McCarthy hearings.³⁰⁰ Mundt could be considered a reliable and loyal Republican. But he was no attack dog. John Kennedy apparently jokingly referred to him as the “Leaning Tower of Putty.”³⁰¹ Jackson and his staff often went out of their way to ensure Mundt felt included in the deliberations.³⁰² Even if Mundt rarely acted in an overtly partisan manner, Jackson worked hard to neutralize the Senator from South Dakota.

Mundt, to his credit, attempted to hold the line against Jackson once the partisan nature of the hearings became clear. He spoke out in the Senate in support of Eisenhower, and did his best to work with the White House to mitigate any damage. Yet, Mundt was distracted by a close race back in South Dakota against George McGovern, necessitating frequent trips back home. Mundt’s eventual victory in November was hardly a forgone conclusion during the SNPM’s hearings.³⁰³ Of the twenty-eight hearings held by Jackson between February and July 1960, Mundt only attended ten. As he admitted, “These past few months have been particularly busy for me.”³⁰⁴

The Republican cause was not helped much when the membership of the SNPM was suddenly expanded in January 1960. Jackson got the help of Edmund Muskie, who attended most of the Subcommittee’s hearings and proved an able ally to Jackson. Mundt’s Republican reinforcement proved less helpful. Jacob Javits, while a fine Senator, brought little to the proceedings. He acted as the Republican representative during

³⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 168-171.

³⁰¹ Ben Bradlee, *Conversations with Kennedy* (W.W. Norton and Co, 1975), p. 157.

³⁰² Richard Page interview.

³⁰³ Thomas J. Knock, *The Rise of a Prairie Statesman* (Oxford UP, 2016), p. 234-240 and 250-251.

³⁰⁴ Mundt to Pendleton, 6/30/60, KM, RGIII, Box 570, Gov Ops Committee, Misc Material, 1957-1962, FF6, DSU.

Mundt's absence, but was far less active outside of the hearings. In large part Javits was also an awkward ally for Mundt. Javits' own doubts about the NSC system were well known. Indeed one of Javits' own staff members noted that Jackson's War College speech "brought out exactly the points [Javits] had been making with regard to general policy."³⁰⁵ At one point Javits even complimented Jackson saying, "I think our chairman has done a great service in being the spark plug which brought about [the SNPM]."³⁰⁶ While Javits played some role, the SNPM was not his main focus. In hindsight, finding reliable allies was the least of Mundt's concerns. Well before any testimony took place, Jackson worked to put the Republicans at a disadvantage.

Scoop's Troops

Even before S Res 115 passed the Senate, Jackson was setting the stage for the upcoming investigations. At the first meeting of the SNPM, Jackson reiterated that his objective was to conduct a non-partisan study "without going into substantive matters." He expected the study would last roughly a year. If he held hearings, he noted, they would not take place before February 1960.³⁰⁷ Jackson also laid down the ground rules: over the next several months the Subcommittee staff would conduct interviews and commission a series of staff studies. With this bipartisan lip service out of the way,

³⁰⁵ Kaufman to Javits 4/17/59, JJ, Series 2, Box 40, SJR 83: Advisory Council on National Security, 1959, SB.

³⁰⁶ Javits comment in James Baxter Testimony, 2/24/60 in *Organizing for National Security* Vol. I (GPO, 1961).

³⁰⁷ Minutes of the Meeting of the Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery Held July 16, 1959, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 68, US GOC NPM, UW. Perhaps we might also see this statement as a concession to Fulbright.

Jackson and the committee set about creating a staff for the SNPM. In a matter of minutes Jackson, without a single objection from Mundt, stacked the deck in his favor.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Senate staffs were small. While important, they had a more limited role. Jackson, however, always depended heavily on his staff and developed a large one by the standards of the day. He leveraged this to his advantage. The SNPM's Republicans and the Democrats could each appointment staffers to work on the subcommittee's studies. In a reflection of his view of the SNPM, Mundt believed all he needed was one staffer. The White House recommended Edward Pendleton, a Washington lawyer. Though Pendleton seemed to have a firm legal mind, had government experience, and was knowledgeable on matters of national security matters, it would be a stretch to call him an expert. Moreover, Pendleton only worked on a part-time basis until January, 1960.³⁰⁸ He expected to be full time from January to June, after which he would leave the committee.³⁰⁹ He would not be needed longer since this would not be a drawn out affair.

By contrast, Jackson brought on three highly experienced staffers: J. Kenneth Mansfield, Robert Tufts, and Dorothy Fosdick. Pendleton proved outmatched in the face of such opposition. Tufts and Fosdick combined real world experience with solid academic credentials. Like Paul Nitze, both found themselves expelled from State's Policy Planning Staff after Eisenhower took office. Tufts, an OSS veteran, left PPS during the 1952 election to work for Adlai Stevenson. After Stevenson's loss, Tufts found himself unemployed. Stevenson, however, got him a job at Oberlin College. Tufts

³⁰⁸ Mundt to Jackson, 8/21/59, KM, RGIII, Box 533, Gov Ops Committee, General, 1959-1961, FF4, DSU.

³⁰⁹ Pendleton to Jackson, 9/19/59, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 68, Minority Counsel, 1959-1961, UW.

did not lose his anger at Dulles and Eisenhower, observing from Ohio that the State Department's morale was "low and sinking." He missed policy matters, though.³¹⁰ Tufts, a rather low-key individual, ended up being the principal draftsman for many of the SNPM's written work.

The historic record paints J. Kenneth Mansfield as a bland functionary. Even White House staffers, suspicious of the entire Jackson enterprise, commented that Mansfield seemed interested in just the facts.³¹¹ In reality, he combined insider knowledge of Congress due to a long stint in as a staffer, with organizational skill. In many respects, he was the brains behind the investigation.³¹² Jackson used Mansfield's insight and experience to fight off both the White House and Senate Democrats.³¹³ Moreover, Mansfield gave Jackson an advantage that other investigations like the SNPM lacked: Mansfield had in-depth technical knowledge of nuclear weapons from previous work. That, in turn, allowed Jackson to introduce a serious discussion of science and technology into the proceedings.³¹⁴ This line of attack proved crucial in the shadow of Sputnik and debates over the Missile Gap.

By far the most intriguing of Jackson's staffers was Dorothy Fosdick. If Tufts drafted many of the memos, and Mansfield served as the political brains, Fosdick acted as Jackson's alter ego. She easily ranks as one of the most influential women in American foreign policy in the postwar years. There were others, but in the '50s and '60s the club

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Johnson, p. 654.

³¹² Ibid, p. 653.

³¹³ Jackson to J.K. Mansfield, 6/26/59, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 68, U.S. President (Eisenhower, Dwight D.), UW.

³¹⁴ Richard Faulknor interview and Johnson, p. 653.

was small. Her time with Jackson not only included the SNPM but years later she mentored the first generation of neoconservative thinkers, several of whom worked on Jackson's staff. Much of Fosdick's day-to-day role remained buried in the shadows. Her choices, however, showed a clear logic. Behind the scenes, she could exercise a tremendous amount of power without drawing attention to herself. Fosdick did not always follow Louis Brownlow's advice that a good staffer should have a passion for anonymity: she was happy to get into a fight if needed.³¹⁵ She always relished her role as Jackson's main foreign policy staffer.

Fosdick joined the State Department in 1942, rising quickly through the ranks and gaining notice along the way.³¹⁶ Early on, she played a key role the American effort to plan for the UN.³¹⁷ Her reputation and experience also helped her survive a stint in State's Bureau of European Affairs. Never a "self-conscious feminist," Fosdick described her new assignment as "a tough, man-controlled, anti-feminist environment."³¹⁸ Fosdick, however, thrived, quickly being promoted to George Kennan's Policy Planning Staff. He brought her on as a UN expert, though Fosdick suspected that "he also seemed to think it was time to have a woman there."³¹⁹ Kennan, in Fosdick's words, "was the prince" of the PPS staff and she his confidante. When times got bad, Kennan subjected Fosdick to

³¹⁵ *Henry Jackson Foundation Newsletter*, 10/90.

³¹⁶ She effectively lied to her parents about where she lived once she moved to DC. Though safely ensconced in a nice part of Georgetown, she claimed she lived next-door to Felix Frankfurter and Dean Acheson. When her parents visited they seemed disappointed. It sounds as if they were not upset that their daughter had lied to them, they were upset that she was not actually close friends with the notable people she mentioned.

³¹⁷ 8/9/45 Entry, FF, Box 1, Letters/Journals 1930-1945, SC. Her work with the UN continued something of a family involvement in multinational organizations: her uncle, Raymond Fosdick, had served briefly as Undersecretary of the League of Nations and was a prominent advocate for that organization. ³¹⁷ 8/12/45 Entry, FF, Box 1, Letters/Journals 1930-1945, SC. Note, this entry says it was written on August 2.

³¹⁸ John Lewis Gaddis Interview with Dorothy Fosdick, 10/29/87, JLG, Box 1, PU.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

lunches where he would “pour his heart out” to her.³²⁰ When Paul Nitze took over the PPS, however, “we were all equals.”³²¹ Fosdick was part of the most influential staff in the most influential foreign policy section of the American government. She was the woman with the most power in the preparation of policy.³²² When asked how other women might emulate her success, she admitted that her own rise would be hard to replicate: “It’s hard to say. In fact, I don’t know. Work, I suppose, is the key to any success. But, I guess there isn’t any sure way.”³²³

During the 1952 election, Fosdick became both Adlai Stevenson’s advisor and paramour.³²⁴ After his loss, and their breakup, Fosdick decided she had to leave the State Department.³²⁵ In part this was because she did not like John Foster Dulles. Though he had connections with Fosdick’s family back to the 1920s, she had a negative opinion of the incoming Secretary and could not stand the idea of serving with “that odd man...Dulles.”³²⁶ After two years in the wilderness, she met Henry Jackson in 1954. Jackson quickly hired her. Both were workaholic workaholics, laboring for long hours with little respite.³²⁷ Jackson’s views on foreign policy were very similar to those of Fosdick,

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Only one other woman reached Fosdick’s power, Ruth Shipley of the Passport Office. Her power, however, was far more bureaucratic in nature. Robert L. Beisner, *Dean Acheson: A Life in the Cold War* (Oxford UP, 2006), p. 114.

³²³ Addah Jane Hurst “Dr. Fosdick’s Daughter Tells of State Dept. Work” *Worcester (MA) Evening Gazette* 1/19/49. Her promotion to the PPS was fairly well covered by the press at the time, with articles in those close to the center of power (*New York Post*, *New York Herald Tribune*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Washington Daily News*, and the *New York Times Magazine*) and those farther afield (*Anchorage Daily News* and the *Guam News*)

³²⁴ Porter McKeever, *Adlai Stevenson* (William Morrow and Co, 1989), p. 164-165, 188, 208. In fact, Fosdick convinced Stevenson to hire Tufts.

³²⁵ Ibid, 165-66 and 397.

³²⁶ “One of the Great Things” n.d. FF, Box 1, Family Stories, SC

³²⁷ Kaufman, p. 84 and 114-116.

whose Christian realism called for America to confront the Soviet Union and uphold democracy. Fosdick also combined academic credentials with real world experience and her time in PPS provided direct connections to the elite of the foreign policy establishment. For Fosdick, Jackson was a rising star and an entrée back into the policy field. To paraphrase Theodore Roosevelt, Fosdick reveled being “in the arena.”³²⁸ When a staffer later asked her why she never returned to academia she said it paled in comparison to being involved in policy matters.³²⁹ As Henry Jackson’s wife later commented, Fosdick “preferred shaping policy to just studying it.”³³⁰

She quickly developed an outsized role on Jackson’s staff, organizing it into a group playfully called “Scoop’s Troops.” Richard Perle, later a staffer, said “under [Fosdick’s] command [w]e learned that you don’t go home until the job was done and the job wasn’t done until no one could think of any way to do it better.”³³¹ In part this was due to her incredible energy: one acquaintance described her as “a dynamo” while another called her “a little ball of fire.”³³² While she had a jovial streak (see Figure 2, p. 114), she played her cards close to the vest. Delineating exactly how she influenced policy can be difficult.³³³ Behind the scenes, Fosdick acted as a liaison with many of her former colleagues and members of the foreign policy elite. For instance, she solicited

³²⁸ After the opening reception of the UN in London Fosdick told her parents that, “This sort of a job satisfies both my intellectual and social instincts and I quite thrive on it.” 8/9/45 Entry, FF, Box 1, Letters/Journals, 1930-1945, SC.

³²⁹ Richard Page Interview

³³⁰ *Henry Jackson Foundation Newsletter*, 10/90.

³³¹ Richard Perle, “Dorothy Fosdick, 1913-1997”, FF, Box 1, After Retirement, Obituaries, Eulogies, Burial, SC.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Richard Page interview.

opinions from Paul Nitze during the debate over S Res 115.³³⁴ Fosdick, however, was aware that her gender made her vulnerable. She was a woman working in a world dominated by men. When a staffer new to Jackson’s office and who knew little of Fosdick, offered to help “Mrs. Fosdick” move some material she stopped him: “You may call me Dickie or you may call me Dr. Fosdick.” Though she made this request in a friendly tone, it served a direct purpose. Dickie designated her an insider, a member of the club. Dr. Fosdick spoke to her intellectual authority and credentials. “Mrs.” was not only incorrect, given her education, but also marked her out as an other.³³⁵

Why do these three people matter? In an era of small Senate staffs, Jackson stocked the SMPM with a series professionals who were experts in their field, many with an axe to grind against John Foster Dulles and Eisenhower’s policy machinery. Jackson and the staff worked long hours—one of the staffers said the SNPM resembled a graduate level seminar—interviewing over 100 people including business leaders, diplomats, academics, military officers, and government officials.³³⁶ Twice that number received surveys asking for their opinion.³³⁷ The SNPM’s interviews and questionnaires did not come across as nakedly partisan. Yet, the very broadness of their questions—asking for

³³⁴ Fosdick to Nitze, 2/3/59, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 68, S. Res 115, UW.

³³⁵ Richard Faulknor interview.

³³⁶ Brewster Denny, *Seeing American Foreign Policy Whole* (University of Illinois Press, 1985), p. 192-193 and Memo for the Record, 9/10/59, RG273, Records of the NSC, Mill Papers 207-231, Entry 2, Box 5, MILL 212, NARA.

³³⁷ Background Memorandum on Study of National Policy Machinery, 10/59, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 68, Folder 14, Staff Memorandum, UW

the recipients’ “spontaneous view on the strengths and weaknesses of the present machinery...and [their] proposals for specific changes”— invited critical thought.³³⁸

Through their efforts, it quickly became clear just how many Democrats and Republicans doubted the wisdom of Eisenhower’s system. That word quickly spread. Former Army Chief of Staff Gen. Matthew Ridgway, already an Eisenhower critic, was contacted twice by Jackson’s staff.³³⁹ Ridgway then took the material he wrote for Jackson, and sent it to friends, including the current Army Chief of Staff.³⁴⁰ Ridgway claimed that this was mainly advisory in nature, “for your personal files (including, of course, the waste-paper bucket).”³⁴¹ In doing so, he not only expressed his displeasure with the Eisenhower Administration, but helped legitimize Jackson’s ideas and mission among influential colleagues. One retired general wrote back, “The President should see [your] letter.”³⁴²

Jackson also took his message on the road, for both public and private audiences, during the fall and winter of 1959. He pitched his ideas, with the help of Fosdick and Mansfield, to an approving audience at the Council on Foreign Relations.³⁴³ At this

³³⁸ Jackson to Ridgway 7/28/59; MR, Box 38, Correspondence, Retirement-Jackson, Henry M, 1959-1969, CMH. Ridgway received a slightly more personalized letter. Dean Rusk, whose opinion were solicited in a later round of letters, merely was asked about “any comments you might have as well as suggestions for other fruitful lines of inquiry.” Though perhaps slightly less damning it remained in the same spirit. Jackson to Rusk 10/1/59, DR, Box 1, Folder 12, RAC.

³³⁹ Ridgway to Jackson, 8/14/59; Ridgway to Jackson 11/11/59, MR, Box 38, Correspondence, Retirement-Jackson, Henry M, 1959-1969, CMH.

³⁴⁰ Ridgway to Lemnitzer 12/4/59; Lemnitzer to Ridgway, 1/15/60, MR, Box 38, Correspondence, Retirement-Jackson, Henry M, 1959-1969, CMH.

³⁴¹ Ridgway to Milton Baker, 12/4/59, MR, Box 38, Correspondence, Retirement-Jackson, Henry M, 1959-1969, CMH.

³⁴² Devers to Ridgway 12/23/59, MR, Box 38, Correspondence, Retirement-Jackson, Henry M, 1959-1969, CMH.

³⁴³ P.E. Mosley [PEM] to Franklin, 10/20/59; Mosley Memo to Franklin, 10/23/59; Mosley memo to Rusk, 11/5/59; Mosley Memo to Fosdick, 11/5/59 all in CFR, Box 452, Records of Meetings Vol. XXXIII July

dinner Ferdinand Eberstadt, the prime author of the National Security Act of 1947, even remarked that NSC was flawed and “it seemed...its provisions had not been carried out.”³⁴⁴ Jackson later used the annual convention of the American Political Science Association to meet with luminaries in the national security field.³⁴⁵ Simultaneously, and no doubt in covert coordination with Jackson and the SNPM staff, Paul Nitze faced off with Gordon Gray on a panel discussing the utility of the NSC.³⁴⁶ It did not go well for Gray, who admitted that “had I known [in April about the SNPM], I probably would have not accepted the invitation.”³⁴⁷ In addition to speeches, Jackson reached a larger public audience when, late February 1960, he appeared on *Meet the Press* to discuss the SNPM’s investigations. It was a busy fall.³⁴⁸

Despite all the behind-the-scenes work, the SNPM thus far had little to show for its efforts.³⁴⁹ The staff released a seven-page report in October and a slightly longer version in January.³⁵⁰ Neither were stinging indictments and neither of caused any panic in the White House. This seemed to confirm that Eisenhower’s strategy was working. Officials continued to expect that Jackson would produce a dull report, a belief that lulled the White House into complacency regarding the SNPM. SNPM minority counsel

1959-June 1960 (I-Q), Ibrahim-Ladejinsky, PU; Undated Untitled Record of Dinner Discussion, n.d., CFR, Box 452, Records of Meetings Vol. XXXIII July 1959-June 1960 (I-Q), Ibrahim-Ladejinsky, PU.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Informal Seminar, 9/12/59 and “People at Lunch Today”, n.d. both in HJ, Accn 35606, Box 68, American Political Science Association Seminar, UW.

³⁴⁶ Gray to Jackson, 8/21/59, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 67, US National Security Council, UW.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Mosley to Franklin, 10/20/59, CFR, Box 452, Records of Meetings Vol. XXXIII July 1959-June 1960 (I-Q), Ibrahim-Ladejinsky, PU.

³⁴⁹ Mosley to Franklin, 10/20/59, CFR, Box 452, Records of Meetings Vol. XXXIII July 1959-June 1960 (I-Q), Ibrahim-Ladejinsky, PU.

³⁵⁰ Background Memorandum on Study of National Policy Machinery, 10/59, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 68, Folder 14, Staff Memorandum, UW and Interim Report in *Organizing for National Security* Vol. II (GPO, 1961).

Edward Pendleton, for instance showed little concern. He believed their work was “a very fair statement, concentrating on substantive problems and without yet committing the staff to any particular point of view. The main purpose seems to be to raise questions, rather than answer them.”³⁵¹ After meeting with Robert Cutler, Pendleton wrote Mundt that “With witnesses like him available, the Subcommittee will have to go a long way to ignore the facts.”³⁵² Pendleton also believed that Gordon Gray was building an ironclad defense for the Administration, writing that Gray “demonstrated rather clearly that the machinery is operating well and leaves little area for criticism.”³⁵³ Others agreed that the SNPM’s initial findings seemed to be non-partisan. The CIA commented that Jackson’s interim report was, despite its brevity, “intelligent and comprehensive.”³⁵⁴ Even Robert Cutler approved, writing: “Perhaps I am losing my grip, but...the entire climate is different...They [Jackson’s staff] talk now unfavorably of making...statuary changes to the National Security Act. They talk about [it] as we would, I think. [Jackson] seemed intelligent, friendly, and disposed to live up to the ‘agreement,’ I would say.”³⁵⁵ Only Karl Harr warned that, “a large part of [J.K.] Mansfield’s efforts had been aimed at disarming” the White House.³⁵⁶

³⁵¹ Pendleton to Mundt 10/5/59, RGIII, Box 533, Gov Ops Committee, General, 1959-1961, FF4, DSU.

³⁵² Edward Pendleton to Karl Mundt 11/7/59, KM, RGIII, Box 533, Gov Ops Committee, General, 1959-1961, FF4, DSU.

³⁵³ Edward Pendleton to Karl Mundt, 11/14/59, KM, RGIII, Box 533, Gov Ops Committee, General, 1959-1961, FF4, DSU.

³⁵⁴ Robert Amory to Allen Dulles, 1/21/60, CIA FOIA Website

³⁵⁵ Robert Cutler to Bryce Harlow, 1/7/60, RG273, Records of the NSC, Mill Papers 207-231, Entry 2, Box 5, MILL 212, NARA.

³⁵⁶ “Memo for the Record: Planning Board Discussion on September 11, 1959 of the Jackson Study” 9/17/59, WHO, NSC: Exec Secs Subject File Series, Box 11, Jackson Committee (3), DDE.

Jackson embraced the image of the well-intentioned senator. He seemed to vacillate on whether he even planned to hold hearings.³⁵⁷ Either by omission or commission, Pendleton and Haskins had little to add to this murky picture.³⁵⁸ When, in mid-February 1960 Jackson finally announced that he would hold hearings, and issued a list of witnesses, only Haskins expressed concern. But the White House took little to no action.³⁵⁹ The White House seemingly remained convinced Jackson could not make any of his investigations newsworthy or interesting. With the benefit of an historian's hindsight, however, we can see that the SNPM staff spent the fall and winter of 1959 preparing the ground for an attack on the Eisenhower Administration. Indeed, as early as July 1959 the SNPM's Democratic staff outlined all the changes they hoped (or planned) to recommend, seven months before they even held their first hearing.³⁶⁰ Jackson probably knew more about the inner workings of the Eisenhower White House than many people who worked there. After all this work, Jackson now prepared for a public forum to display of the SNPM's work.

Legislative Investigation at its Very Best

³⁵⁷ Minutes of Meeting of Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery 8/20/59, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 68, US GOC NPM, 1960, UW; Jackson to Gray, 9/29/59, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 67, US National Security Council, 1959-1960, UW; Jackson to Gray 2/10/60, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 67, General Correspondence, US National Security Council, 1959-1960, UW.

³⁵⁸ Haskins to Gray, 2/9/60, WHO, NSC, Exec Sec Subject Files, Box 12, Jackson Committee (4), DDE.

³⁵⁹ Haskins to Gray, 2/11/60, WHO, NSC, Exec Sec Subject Files, Box 12, Jackson Committee (4), DDE.

³⁶⁰ Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery (Purpose and Plan of Study) 7/25/59, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 68, Staff Memorandum, 1959, UW. This should not necessarily be viewed as malicious: at least one member of Jackson's staff—though it is unclear who—considered it worthwhile to try to work with Milton Eisenhower and PACGO to effect meaningful change. The hope was that he might persuade the President to form a “Joint-Congressional Presidential Commission on the Organization of the Executive Branch for National Security.” Though an interesting idea (with, perhaps, a terrible name), the plan seemed to go nowhere. “Operation Scylla and Charybdis”, 8/19/59, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 68, Memos, UW.

Two scholars have theorized that congressional investigations take one of two forms: those that fight fires (respond to specific events) and “police-patrolling” investigations that monitor policy and agencies.³⁶¹ Jackson’s committee falls squarely into the “police-patrolling” category. Even here, however, it stands out. When one considers the two other major organizational investigations in the post-1960 period, the Tower Commission after Iran Contra and the 9/11 Commission, both were more of the firefighting type: responding to specific events. Other notable police-patrolling investigations might include Fulbright’s hearings on the Vietnam War or the Church and Pike Committees’ investigations of the CIA. In some respects, Jackson’s investigation makes complete sense in the context of the Church and Pike Committees. It was, after all, an attempt to review and recommend improvements to the nation’s policy machinery. Yet, as can be seen with the Tower and 9/11 Commissions, most organizational investigations take place after a major event. This puts the SNPM in a unique position. It did not take its mandate from one specific event or series of events. Nor was it engaging with one specific federal agency or organization. It sought to be all encompassing.

Jackson selected Robert Lovett to be the SNPM’s first witness precisely because he had been involved in so many aspects of America’s national security bureaucracy. Robert Lovett almost personified the development of the national security state. The impressive list of posts he held included assistant to the Secretary of War, Secretary of War for Air, Undersecretary of State, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and Secretary of Defense from 1951 to 1953. Though a registered Republican, he served in Democratic

³⁶¹ Loch K. Johnson, *A Season of Inquiry Revisited* (UP of Kansas, 2015), p. 289.

administrations. By 1960, he was happy to be in civilian life—government service had wrecked his “glass insides” —but he remained worried about Eisenhower’s foreign and defense policies.³⁶² Like others, Lovett grew concerned about an overreliance on nuclear weapons and an atrophy in conventional capabilities.³⁶³ On the other end of the spectrum, he considered the CIA’s covert action agenda counter-productive. As early as 1956 he warned Eisenhower about this, but to no avail.³⁶⁴ In this environment, Lovett gravitated towards Henry Jackson. Not only did Jackson say the right things—his National War College Speech, for instance, echoed many of Lovett’s own thoughts—but his connections to prominent Democrats gave him further cachet. Jackson’s logic in choosing Lovett as the SNPM’s first witnesses is clear: his background and sterling bipartisan credentials were just what the committee needed.³⁶⁵ Lovett accepted, and worked on the testimony for several weeks and previewed it to a trusted handful of individuals.³⁶⁶

The White House and Congressional Republicans, meanwhile, seemed blissfully unaware. At a meeting on the SNPM on January 7, 1960—its first since August 1959—Jackson let slip two important facts. First, he admitted that the SNPM’s study, originally slated to take twelve months, would certainly last longer. Second, he revealed a plan to have several months of hearings. On February 12, Jackson’s office issued a press release announcing that the SNPM would soon hold its first round of hearings. After a briefing by CIA director Allen Dulles, Lovett would testify on February 23, followed by three

³⁶² Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men* (Simon and Schuster, 1986), p. 574.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 574-575.

³⁶⁵ Though, it should be noted, this type of service was far more common during this period than it is today.

³⁶⁶ Arthur Hadley to Jackson, 3/3/60, HJ, Accn 35603, Box 256, SNPM General Correspondences, 1960, UW.

other witnesses over the next two days.³⁶⁷ Neither Mundt nor the White House expressed much concern over any of this.

Lovett's testimony started inauspiciously: three of the five members of the SNPM could not attend. When Humphrey, busy campaigning, asked that the hearing be moved to the evening of February 23, Jackson refused, citing the busy schedules of those testifying.³⁶⁸ Perhaps this was true, but Jackson was chasing headlines. He packed the hearing room with TV cameras to record the hearings for the nightly news.³⁶⁹ After a glowing introduction by Jackson, Lovett dove into his prepared remarks. Lovett prefaced his statement by stating that his views would focus on the "fields of Government operations in which I served some years ago" and that "it should be clear that none of these observations [are] intended to be critical of any individuals or operational decisions."³⁷⁰ He added that "government has now become gigantic at the very moment in history when time itself is not merely a measure, or a dimension, but perhaps the difference between life and death." Lovett then listed a litany of issues: the Pentagon had become a politically partisan institution; its officials generally made poor decisions; there was too much turnover in key positions; cooperation between the Pentagon and State Department was poor; NSC bureaucracy had minimized the power of the Secretary of State (who was often overwhelmed with minutia anyway); an obsession with

³⁶⁷ Henry Jackson Press Release, 2/12/60, KM, RGIII, Box 570, Gov Ops Committee, Misc, 1957-1962, FF6, DSU.

³⁶⁸ Minutes of Meeting of the Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery, 1/7/60, HW, Accn 35606, Box 68, US GOC NPM, UW.

³⁶⁹ Subcommittee Meeting Procedures, n.d. HJ, Accn 35606, Box 68, US GOC NPM, UW.

³⁷⁰ Lovett Testimony, 2/23/60 in *Organizing for National Security* Vol. I.

organization hurt decision-making. As Lovett noted, “no organizational chart is a substitute for a sense of common goals.”³⁷¹

Lovett took care to note that organization and machinery were not inherently bad. Indeed, he felt much of the existing government organization could work with only minor tweaks.³⁷² To win the Cold War, however, the country needed more than minor tweaks. It needed a set of goals. It needed better morale. It needed to make sacrifices—specifically higher taxes—to keep up with the Soviets. While he did not directly attack Eisenhower, Lovett noted that “I feel that [today] we are doing something short of our best.”³⁷³

Instead of pontificating, Jackson used his question time to let Lovett elaborate on his main points. Mundt asked Lovett just how he proposed the nation pay for a bigger defense budget. Lovett said taxes needed to be higher, while noting “Senator Mundt, I loathe taxes.” Mundt shot back, “That does not put you as a member of a very exclusive club.”³⁷⁴ Lovett struck back at the South Dakotan and asked if the nation could fund greater military expenditures not by raising taxes, but by cutting agricultural subsidies. Mundt seemingly gave up. In Executive Session later that day, Lovett continued his attacks. He concluded his remarks saying of the NSC, “I...have grave doubts about its ability to operate...I think it would inhibit frank discussion. I think it would be an embarrassment as regards [to] the vigor with which a man might want to defend his position. I think it would limit the quality of the debate which the President ought to

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

hear.”³⁷⁵ In the Truman era, Lovett claimed, meetings ran “for whatever number of hours were necessary in order to exhaust a subject and not just exhaust the listeners.” Once a decision was made there was no need for an elaborate monitoring mechanism: “That was that. You had your orders. You went out and did your job.”³⁷⁶ Minority Counsel Edward Pendleton the only Republican present, mounted only a limited defense of the Administration.

The next day Robert Sprague and James Baxter—both Gaither Committee alums—continued the assault. Both argued that Eisenhower had ignored that group’s recommendations and, in doing so, made America vulnerable. Sprague warned that “one of our basic problems today stems from the failure of most Americans to realize that we have actually been at war since 1946.”³⁷⁷ Sprague argued that “barriers to communication in the Government are high and complicated” and that these barriers often kept decision-makers from getting important information. Sprague also accused Eisenhower of withholding critical information from the public. Sprague, a self-confessed “conservative Republican,” also argued Americans should embrace higher taxes to fund defense spending.³⁷⁸ When Mundt asked Sprague if prominent citizens like him bore some responsibility for communicating the size of the Soviet threat, Sprague answered: “I think there is one man in [America] who can do this effectively, and that is the President.” Sprague added, “I believe...that the danger is more serious than the President has expressed himself to the public. I do not know whether he feels this or whether he does

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Sprague Testimony, 2/24/60 in *Organizing for National Security* Vol. I.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

not. But I do not believe that the concern I personally feel has as yet been expressed by the President to the...public.”³⁷⁹ Towards the end of the question period Jackson prompted Sprague to reiterated the major findings of the Gaither Committee.

Later that day James Baxter, a diplomatic historian and president of Williams College, continued the attack. Compared to Sprague, Baxter spoke glowingly of Eisenhower. But Baxter also warned that America could expect a bleak future if it did not increase the size of the defense budget. He cautioned that, if confronted by the Soviets, “judging by [America’s] emphasis on... nuclear [weapons] as compared to conventional weapons, both the British and ourselves would either have to use nuclear weapons or lose the game.”³⁸⁰ Baxter lamented “I am not advocating we waste anything, for that is not in the nature of a New England Yankee. I am willing to pay more taxes if it is necessary to do the things we need to do, and I believe that our entire people would feel the same way if they realized all that was at stake.”³⁸¹

The next day Thomas Watson, CEO of IBM, took his turn in front of Jackson. The participation of another CEO in this hearing speaks to an important point: Eisenhower’s many advisory panels were stocked with CEOs, investment bankers, scientists, and academics. In contrast to Kennedy’s White House, which embraced its ties to the intellectual community, these panels served as both advisory commissions and avenues by which Eisenhower could perform outreach to businesses, scientists, and universities. The testimony before the SNPM showed how that could backfire. Watson,

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Baxter Testimony, 2/24/60 in *Organizing for National Security* Vol. I.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

though not a member of the Gaither Committee, ran one of the most important technology companies in the nation. Instead of endorsing Eisenhower, he reiterated the message of Sprague and Baxter, focusing on what he perceived as the growing scientific and technological gap between the US and the Soviets. Speaking as a successful CEO, he also took a swipe at Eisenhower's national security bureaucracy: "The responsible leaders must have complete authority and responsibility... They must be able to stop study and discussion at any point... Study and review beyond a certain point in the decision-making process of a business merely delays the decision and confuses the issue."³⁸² Unlike Sprague and Baxter, however, Watson believed the Cold War could be good, as seen in this exchange with Jackson:

Watson: I would think that the need to compete with the Soviets, if we accept the challenge, could be one of the greatest things to happen to [America] in a long time.

Jackson: Rather than abhor this competition, we might welcome it with the realization that we could be a stronger and a richer and a better country for it.

Watson: Yes, sir.³⁸³

Throughout all this Mundt and Javits did little to contain the damage. Perhaps this was malpractice, on their part. Or, perhaps, neither wanted to closely align himself with the foundering White House. Whatever the case, their questioning never managed to trip up the witnesses in any meaningful way. The all-Republican line-up of Lovett, Sprague, Baxter, and Watson used impressive credentials to deliver a crushing message. Moreover, they represented a diverse set of backgrounds—government service, big business, academia, and the scientific community. All suggested that the Soviets were stronger and

³⁸² Thomas Watson Testimony, 2/24/60 in *Organizing for National Security* Vol. I.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

more dangerous than people realized and highlighted America's vulnerability. All hinted that Eisenhower bore some responsibility, and most argued the extensive NSC system was hurting, rather than helping the nation. Whether one agreed with the assessment or not, their claim was hard to dismiss out of hand.

The White House was furious, with Lovett getting the most direct anger. Gordon Gray quickly contacted Lovett to get a better explanation of his comments. Lovett told Gray that, as his preface stated, his testimony was supposedly drawn from notes he wrote eight years before.³⁸⁴ Lovett gave a similar explanation when Mundt wrote him demanding a clarification. Lovett noted, "my use of the expression 'the President' meant 'a President', or 'any President', not specifically [Eisenhower]."³⁸⁵ Though he pled ignorance, Lovett added: "in view of the public interest [in the SNPM], it is not surprising to find some agencies or individuals who feel that the shoe might fit. I know of no way to keep them from trying it on for size."³⁸⁶ That type of answer did little to calm anyone in the White House. Eisenhower was angry. He spent weeks talking to Gray about the issue.³⁸⁷ The minutes are vague about what exactly Eisenhower said during these meetings. Like with so much of his presidency, Eisenhower's "hidden hand" is sometimes hard to discern. Even if we cannot know his exact reactions, the memos of Gray, Haskins, and others convey the impression they were unhappy. It seems entirely

³⁸⁴ Gray to Lovett, 3/15/60, WHO: Staff Secretary Records, Subject Series, Alpha Subseries, Box 17, Lovett Testimony [February-March 1960] (3), DDE.

³⁸⁵ Mundt to Lovett 3/30/60 and Lovett to Mundt 4/4/60, KM, RGIII, Box 570, Gov Ops Committee, Misc, 1957-1962, FF6, DSU.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Memorandum of Meeting with the President 3/9, 3/15, and 3/21 WHO, Office of the SANSAs, Special Assistants Series, Pres Subseries, Box 4, 1960-Meetings with the President-Volume I (5), DDE.

reasonable that their displeasure was caused by, and perhaps mimicked, Eisenhower's own displeasure.

What really upset the White House, however, was the press coverage. The print media had a field day with the combined Lovett/Sprague/Baxter/Watson testimony. Edward Pendleton compiled a four-page digest of purely negative press quotations.³⁸⁸ The *New York Times* wrote extensively about Lovett, reprinted two extensive excerpts of his testimony, and called called Jackson's hearing "legislative investigation at its very best."³⁸⁹ The *Washington Post* claimed "No one can accuse Robert A. Lovett of playing partisan politics" and applauded the SNPM's "extremely thoughtful and nonpartisan job."³⁹⁰ Walter Lippmann's column on Lovett's testimony implied that Eisenhower's extensive national security bureaucracy made decisions for the president.³⁹¹ The *Times* and *Post* were not alone in covering the hearings.³⁹² NBC recorded the testimony and broadcast portions of it with the nightly news. Jackson's appearance on *Meet the Press*, where he furthered his critique of the Administration, took place only a few days after Lovett's testimony. Jackson came out of all this looking evenhanded and avoiding the partisan critiques that had doomed Symington years earlier. When the Brookings Institution, for instance, wanted to have something placed in the Congressional Record, they considered reaching out the Jackson since he was "objective."³⁹³

³⁸⁸ Pendleton to Mundt, 3/4/60, KM, RGIII, Robert D. Johnson Materials, DSU.

³⁸⁹ "Defense is his Specialty: Robert Abercrombie Lovett" *New York Times*, 2/29/60; "Our Aims: A Challenging View" *New York Times* 2/28/60; "Test of Lovett's Testimony on US Defense Policies" *New York Times* 2/29/60; "Inquiry at Its Best" *New York Times* 2/26/60.

³⁹⁰ "Voice of Experience" *Washington Post*, 2/25/60

³⁹¹ "How to Make Decisions" *Washington Post*, 3/1/60

³⁹² Pendleton to Mundt, 3/4/60, KM, RGIII, Robert D. Johnson Materials, DSU.

³⁹³ McLean to Graham, 6/22/60, Entry 86, Director's Correspondence, January-July 1961, BI.

That was just the beginning. The SNPM's hearings ran for four more months. Jackson accumulated damaging testimony from twenty-eight more witnesses. During a series of hearings on science and technology, even a more optimistic witness admitted that "the USSR does not seem to be lagging much behind us and it is ahead of us in many regards."³⁹⁴ A group that testified on the retention of talent in the Federal government painted a picture of a system that, if not broken, did little to keep bright individuals in government service. In June, Jackson unleashed a veritable who's who of anti-Eisenhower foreign policy intellectuals: W. Averell Harriman, George Kennan, Paul Nitze, and Maxwell Taylor. All provided damning assessments of a broken system. Throughout this entire process other Gaither Committee alums—like Nitze, Baxter, and Sprague—testified, allowing Jackson to continuously re-examine that Committee's findings and grievances.

While the intense press interest in the SNPM slackened, it became something of an investigatory ulcer for the White House. No matter what it tried, it could not stop the bleeding. Some junior members of the Administration seem to have been truly surprised "by the misconceptions which had been reported in the press."³⁹⁵ One staffer noted before the hearings that "there have been continuous changes to the NSC machinery....Therefore, anyone who does not have up-to-date personal experience with the NSC...cannot be thoroughly familiar with the present procedures and processes."³⁹⁶

³⁹⁴ Testimony of Eugene P. Wigner, 4/27/60 in *Organizing for National Security* Vol. I.

³⁹⁵ Memo for the Record: Meeting at the White House on Wednesday, March 23, 1960, at 3 pm on the Jackson Committee Study, 3/24/60, WHO, NSC Staff Papers, Exec Sec. Subject Files, Box 12, Jackson Committee (4), DDE.

³⁹⁶ Reaction to "Memorandum of Comments on President's Letter to LBJ of June 25, 1959" n.d., BH, Pre-Accn Box 23, National Security Council Investigation (Jackson Resolution) (3), DDE.

That comment points to the problem. The NSC system was too difficult to describe to the public. That did not stop the White House from making strange choices. It took a frantic request from Mundt before the White House provided him with a list of “non-partisan, non-Administration witnesses...to testify along lines which will be favorable to the Administration.”³⁹⁷ Mundt’s staff tried to do their best, but with so little help they seemed to be grasping at straws. His chief of staff suggested the White House could ghost-write a piece for Mundt that could introduce into the Congressional record. “It then is [a] Document with a look of officialdom [which] could set [forth] the Administration’s position most clearly.”³⁹⁸ Mundt also made at least two speeches on the Senate floor defending both Eisenhower and the NSC system.³⁹⁹ Somewhat surprisingly, Mundt seemed mildly shocked by Jackson’s actions, telling a friend that “Jackson...seems to be using the subcommittee as a forum to advance the argument that [America] is lagging in...military preparedness.”⁴⁰⁰ Mundt, however, clearly agreed with some of what he was hearing. For example, he approvingly sent three friends a copy of James Baxter’s testimony.⁴⁰¹

Instead of sending “non-partisan, non-Administration witnesses,” the White House first dispatched former SANSAs Robert Cutler and Dillon Anderson. Cutler,

³⁹⁷ Mundt to Bryce Harlow, 3/12/60, KM, RGIII, Robert D. Johnson Materials, DSU; Memo for the Record: Meeting at the White House on Wednesday, March 23, 1960, at 3 pm on the Jackson Committee Study, 3/24/60, WHO, NSC Staff Papers, Exec Sec. Subject Files, Box 12, Jackson Committee (4), DDE.

³⁹⁸ McCaughey to “Ned and Bob” n.d., KM, RGIII, Box 570, Gov Ops Misc, 1957-62, FF6, DSU.

³⁹⁹ Eisenhower to Mundt, 4/12/60 and Cross Reference Sheet Name: Mundt, Hon. Karl E., 3/10/60, both in WH Central Files, Alpha Files, Box 2187, Mundt, Karl E., DDE.

⁴⁰⁰ Mundt to Melvin Bird, 3/16/60, KM, RGIII, Robert D. Johnson Materials, DSU.

⁴⁰¹ Mundt to Ralph Hoggett, 2/25/60; Mundt to Donald Schenk, 2/25/60; and Mundt to Richard Putnam 2/26/60; all in KM, RGIII, Box 570, FF6, DSU.

especially, felt certain he could “set the record straight.”⁴⁰² They failed. The White House sent the Secretaries of State, Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in front of the SNPM for little gain. Charles Haskins tried to limit the damage: sending high profile figures to testify before the SNPM did little to clarify the issues and returned coverage to page 1.⁴⁰³ Jackson cut down several other pro-White House witnesses with questions they simply could not answer well. As Edward Pendleton noted, the White House’s witnesses “seemed unable to present progress and accomplishments of [the] Administration.” Perhaps, he somewhat bizarrely theorized, this was because of the witnesses “excessive modesty.”⁴⁰⁴ About the only positive point was that the White House managed to plant a few positive stories in newspapers and that the TV channels stopped covering the hearings.⁴⁰⁵

For Charles Haskins, the process was Sisyphean in nature. Each day he had to watch the testimony, write a summary of it for his White House superiors, then re-read the transcript to make sure no one violated Jackson’s agreement with Eisenhower. He had to sit and watch a respected bipartisan group criticize his bosses and the system they had worked to create. In large part, however, the White House created its own problem.⁴⁰⁶ They were unwilling to acknowledge any issues with the system.⁴⁰⁷ Deep down, many

⁴⁰² Memo for the Record: Invitation of General Cutler to Testify Before the Jackson Committee, 5/9/60, WHO, NSC Staff Papers, Exec Sec. Subject Files, Box 12, Jackson Committee (5), DDE.

⁴⁰³ Haskins to Gray, 5/19/60 and Haskins to Gray, 6/7/60 both in WHO, NSC Staff Papers, Exec Sec. Subject Files, Box 12, Jackson Committee (5), DDE.

⁴⁰⁴ Pendleton to Mundt, 5/2/60, KM, RGIII, Box 570, Gov Ops Committee, Misc, 1957-1962, FF6, DSU.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Anna Katsen Nelson “National Security I: Inventing the Process” in *The Illusion of Presidential Government* H.H. Helco and L.M. Salamon eds. (Westview Press, 1981), p. 256-257.

⁴⁰⁷ I.M. Destler’s, “The Presidency and National Security Organization” in *The National Security: Its Theory and Practice, 1945-1960* N.A. Graebner ed. (Oxford UP, 1986), p. 239.

clearly believed the system, however broken, could work.⁴⁰⁸ Yet they proved unable to convey this adequately in public. The contradiction can be seen clearly in one of Charles Haskins' memos. Haskins, in critiquing George Kennan's testimony, notes "Mr. Kennan seems...to overlook the fact that it is the President [not the NSC] who [sets policy]."⁴⁰⁹ That was true. But neither the public nor many experts would have been able to divine that simple point from the testimony of Administration officials.

As if the White House did not have enough to worry about, on May 1, 1960 the Soviets shot down Francis Gary Powers' U-2. Jackson jumped on the U-2 incident and incorporated this dramatic policy failure into his line of questions. Lyndon Johnson praised Jackson on the Senate floor for his actions.⁴¹⁰ John McClellan demanded that the NSC be abolished since, as he argued, it was clearly ineffective.⁴¹¹ The SNPM returned to the front page. One columnist suggested that the U-2 incident proved what Jackson had been saying all along: Eisenhower's Administration was broken.⁴¹² In light of the U-2 incident the SNPM staff quickly drew up a report critical of Eisenhower's handling of intelligence. The committee's Republicans, equally frustrated with the White House,

⁴⁰⁸ Eisenhower to Gordon Gray, 5/10/67; Eisenhower to Gordon Gray, 5/22/67, GG, Series B, Box 1, Dwight D. Eisenhower 1967-1968, DDE. Dillon Anderson to Robert Cutler and Gordon Gray, 1/24/68; Gordon Gray to Dillon Anderson, 1/30/68; Dillon Anderson to Gordon Gray, 4/15/68; and Gordon Gray to Dillon Anderson, 7/26/68, all GG, Series B, Box 1, Dillon Anderson-Robert Cutler (2), DDE. See also undated typed sheet with handwritten title "II (i) Flower" Box 6, Writings by Karl Harr, Notes and Chapter Drafts, "Flower of Nations," 1961-1962 (2), KH, DDE.

⁴⁰⁹ Haskin to Lay 6/1/60, WHO, NSC Staff Papers, Exec Sec. Subject Files, Box 12, Jackson Committee (5), DDE.

⁴¹⁰ Extension of Remarks of Hon. Lyndon Johnson, Congressional Record-Appendix, A4731, 6/3/60.

⁴¹¹ Senator Mansfield's Statements on the NSC, 6/30/60, WHO, NSC, Exec Sec. Subject Files, Box 12, Jackson Committee (6), DDE.

⁴¹² Chalmers Roberts, "How Eisenhower Let [sic] Others Decide" *Washington Post* 6/5/60.

joined with Jackson and the Democrats in a unanimously agreed-upon statement against the Administration's handling of intelligence matters.⁴¹³

Sitting in the EOB, Charles Haskins readied his superiors for the U-2 memo. He knew it was coming. Edward Pendleton had warned him that something was up, but “honorably [chose] not to divulge to me the content of the paper in question.”⁴¹⁴ Haskins wryly added: “It goes without saying that the paper can be expected to be critical of the Administration, possibly (1) with respect to its actual policies; (2) as regards the current operation of the national policy machinery; or (3) as to some phase of the way in which the U-2 incident was handled.”⁴¹⁵ He was correct on all three counts. Pendleton left the SNPM staff in June and returned to his day job as a Washington lawyer. As he left he wrote Gordon Gray a letter thanking Gray and the NSC staff for their “fine cooperation” in his job as minority counsel.⁴¹⁶ He added “I want to commend Charles Haskins who has been a pillar of strength in this joint endeavor.”⁴¹⁷ Perhaps that made Haskins feel better. But after almost a year of monitoring the SNPM, one suspects it was cold comfort.

Conclusion

To demonstrate the impact of the Jackson hearings, one must only look at how historians have rehabilitated Eisenhower and his administration. They have advanced the notion that Eisenhower employed a “hidden hand” management style to counter the previous image that the President was a golf obsessed executive with little interest in the

⁴¹³ “U-2 Quiz Finds Silence is Golden” *Washington Post* 6/17/60.

⁴¹⁴ Haskins to Gray, 6/14/60, BH, Records, Box 6, Jackson Committee, June 1960, DDE.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Pendleton to Gray 6/30/60, WHO, NSC, Exec Sec. Subject Files, Box 12, Jackson Committee (6), DDE.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

office. If Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles rattled the nuclear sabre, they also kept the country from engaging in a nuclear war. Evaluations of Eisenhower's reputation have risen dramatically over the last two and a half decades.⁴¹⁸ Eisenhower's reevaluation is warranted. Even if some praise is overly laudatory, it serves as a necessary corrective to the historic record. If Eisenhower's personal decision-making has enjoyed newfound popularity and respect, the same cannot be said for his national security management. Some view the later years of Eisenhower's Pentagon in a favorable light. But the early years, under Charles Wilson, remain a source of contention. More importantly, his NSC system remains under a cloud. With a few exceptions, historians have largely discredited it and no Presidential administration after Eisenhower decided to re-adopt it. In very large part, this is because of Henry Jackson's work in 1960. His hearings effectively tore down the façade of functionality that Eisenhower constructed. Whatever his motivations, Jackson identified real issues. Even if the White House did not agree with him, had they been honest with themselves they would have admitted Jackson had a point. After all, the White House and PACGO spent years analyzing the system since they knew it could function better. But it was bad politics to admit as much.

Jackson's hearings continue to shape the legacy of these organizations. Jackson was hardly the only person to attack Eisenhower's NSC and Pentagon. The Hoover

⁴¹⁸ Paul Miller, "Organizing the National Security Council: I Like Ike's", *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (September, 2013), p. 592-606; Colin Dueck and Roger Zakheim, "Why We Like Ike", *National Review Online*; Evan Thomas, *Ike's Bluff* (Back Bay Books, 2012), p. 405-416; and Burke, p. 303. In many respects, this is not a new argument as can be seen in earlier works like Phillip G. Henderson, "Advice and Decision: The Eisenhower National Security Council Reappraised in *The Presidency and National Security Policy* R. Gordon Hoxie ed. (Center for the Study of the Presidency, 1984), p. 183-184 and I.M. Destler's, "The Presidency and National Security Organization" in *The National Security: Its Theory and Practice, 1945-1960* N.A. Graebner ed. (Oxford UP, 1986), p. 227.

Committee's 1955 report, the Senate Foreign Relation Committee's 1958 reports, and a host of others all pointed to flaws. Jackson's, however, received the most attention because it was the most public and the most dramatic. In no small part we can credit this to Jackson's impressive stage management, "Scoops Troops," and the Senator's own performance. His critiques set the standard assessment of Eisenhower's national security establishment for decades and can still be felt today.⁴¹⁹

But that was the important point: Jackson was a stage manager, not a showman. He created a tableau that took in a wide audience. In early 1960, he understood this, and instead of taking the stage himself, let others do the talking for him. The impressive list of Administration insiders seemed completely unable to deflect Jackson's assault. The botched response of the White House, and the near silence of many congressional Republicans, only added fuel to Jackson's argument, supported by a long list of Republicans, Democrats, scientists, diplomats, government insiders, business leaders, and a host of others who expressed deep concern about how Eisenhower made decisions. Of course, Jackson's primary aim was to embarrass the Administration, but his choreography hid the more politically biased elements of the investigation. Even without regard to the administration, the Jackson hearings demonstrated just how little support remained for the NSC itself. Jackson's critique was that people, rather than machinery, were the key to good foreign policy. For Jackson, this meant reinvesting power in the Secretary of State as opposed to White House committees.

⁴¹⁹ Nelson, p. 255.

In 1959 Jackson's idea seemed foolish and was opposed by both the White House and his own party's leadership. A little more than a year later, that had all changed. Jackson burnished his reputation as an important thinker on foreign and defense policy. The same leaders who had earlier questioned him now went on the Senate floor to denounce the NSC and Eisenhower's national security and defense decisions. Perhaps as important, Jackson's new reputation catapulted him to the upper echelons of Senate Democrats. He was rumored to be on John F. Kennedy's short list for Vice President. Jackson's keen mind, good staff work, and some luck brought him this success. The most searing critiques in the SNPM did not come from Jackson. As the committee's organizer, however, he reaped the political benefit. He could sit back and look like a dispassionate judge of the situation, gaining the public praise as others leveled the criticism. For a man who often found it difficult to share the spotlight with his larger than life senate colleagues, the first half of 1960 proved to be a very public victory for the Senator from Everett, WA.

Figure 2

An Ode on the Occasion of Our Chairman's 48th Birthday

The titans of the nation's GOP
Come to tell him where they think we ought to be
And forecast what will surely be our fate
If we should settle for the second-rate

Through hearings fine and wholesome
With Greenewalt, Perkins, and Folsom,
His subtle spectacular sallies to seek
And destroy every groan, every creak

With able help from Reston (Scotty)
Antidote for coverage spotty
With steadfast purpose, clearcut goals
He leads his band around the shoals
Of White House gags and guidelines vague
With Lovett, Baxter, Watson, and Sprague

With motive pure for all to see
He devastates the NSC
The chips have fallen where they may
Most notably on Gordon Gray

Our peerless leader we herewith salute
Non-partisan, objective his repute
Determined to outplan and outperform
The evil genius of the Cominform
His future we can well surmise
If he could only organize

5/28/60-D Fosdick probable author. HJ, Accn 35603, Box 256, SNPM General Correspondences, 1960, UW.

Chapter 3: Henry Jackson's Pyrrhic Victory

When historians examine Henry Jackson's work, it is commonly seen as an inflection point between two different phases—Eisenhower's large bureaucracy gave way to the small, presidentially empowered NSC staff that inhabited the Kennedy White House. In many respects, that is a fair assessment. Yet it is a teleological view that misses the very real fact that in 1960 it remained entirely unclear how John F. Kennedy would manage his national security team. Jackson's investigation had discredited Eisenhower's system, and Jackson spent the summer of 1960 tearing down its most plausible replacement, Rockefeller's First Secretary concept. When Jackson finally published the findings of the SNPM in late 1960 and early 1961, it had some concrete recommendations, but even the best were general in nature. After the election, Democrats had plenty of policy ideas they hoped to implement, but party officials at times seemed ambivalent about how they would be executed. They did not want Eisenhower's system, that much was clear, but like Jackson's findings the replacement often lacked details and specifics. Even the transition work done by Clark Clifford and Richard Neustadt did not answer many of the questions left now that Eisenhower's methods were so thoroughly discredited.

Jackson seemed to believe the Democrats stood a good chance of winning in 1960, and thought that either he or his allies would play a key role in the new administration. Publically Jackson ended 1960 on what seemed to be a high note: he was chair of the Democratic Party, appeared to have a close connection to the new President, and was in a position to effect significant change to both who ran American foreign

policy and how it was run. All of that, however, masked more problematic realities. Jackson lost some influence over the course of 1960. What looked on the surface to be a successful six months for the senator from Washington and his ideas instead masked the struggle Jackson, Richard Neustadt, and others faced as their chance to both reform and wield the levers of power approached.

The Very Public “Death” of the First Secretary

By June 1960, Eisenhower’s national security organization still stood, but it seemed mortally wounded. With the foreign policy elite from both parties turning against Eisenhower’s management of the NSC and Pentagon, the lame-duck President had been painted into a corner. Of course the Administration deserved some blame. The White House’s inability to craft a clear rebuttal contributed to the morass. For the Pentagon, the White House had a far stronger argument. People might disagree with Eisenhower’s military strategy, but the Administration could muster a coherent argument based on reasonable assumptions, to defend “The New Look.” For the NSC, they could not even do that. The irony, however, is that Eisenhower did have a plan to save the NSC: the long gestating First Secretary concept. In July 1960, he had perhaps the perfect chance to present that plan to Jackson. The White House, however, failed to take advantage of this opportunity. As a result, it lost the last, best chance, to save its national security reputation. In missing this opportunity, it also sacrificed Nelson Rockefeller in front of Jackson’s committee and may have hurt Richard Nixon’s campaign, as well.

Nelson Rockefeller officially quit PACGO in 1958. Despite his new job as Governor of New York he did not leave the foreign affairs scene. While he burnished his domestic credentials in Albany, Rockefeller launched his own study of US foreign policy. He did this through the Rockefeller Brothers Fund by convincing his brothers that their family foundation would be a good platform by which to study the domestic, economic, and foreign policy problems facing the United States. The study claimed to examine “midcentury” America. True, the ’60s marked “midcentury,” but the title was as much a shot at Eisenhower—president for most of the middle decade of the 20th century—as a look towards the future. Certainly, the study offered little praise for the President. While it did examine upcoming challenges, it spent as much time reviewing current issues facing the US.

Whereas Jackson had to work hard to establish a group to testify before the SNPM, Rockefeller easily assembled leading thinkers for his study. A variety of experts contributed to the six volumes of the report. Not only did Rockefeller want to prove he was a serious thinker, but he also hoped to learn from the endeavor. This type of review was standard operating procedure for Rockefeller. One observer quipped that if there were two words that perfectly described Rockefeller, they were “task force.”⁴²⁰ Rockefeller who suffered from dyslexia, used these opportunities to “learn by listening” and distill what he considered actionable ideas from complex recommendations.⁴²¹ It was not a perfect solution. One columnist observed with some snark that Rockefeller’s

⁴²⁰ Smith, p. 241

⁴²¹ Ibid, p. 241 and 256.

statements sometimes “read as though they came out of the Life-Time-Fortune factory.”⁴²² But it worked for Rockefeller and he was pleased with the results.⁴²³

The Foundation released its first report in January 1958. In a television appearance, Rockefeller promised free copies of the studies to anyone who wanted them. Over a quarter of a million people requested copies, and another 600,000 copies were sold.⁴²⁴ Not only were the studies widely read by the public, but they became important documents for the incoming Kennedy Administration. This had as much to do with their content as it did with the fact that many of those who participated in writing them joined the Democrat’s administration in 1961.⁴²⁵ While the studies contained some new ideas, others bore a similarity to those Rockefeller previously pitched to Eisenhower. The full set came out over a two-and-a-half-year period. Through this Rockefeller became associated with some of the greatest minds in America, and managed to keep his name in the news in the run-up to the 1960 election.⁴²⁶ Most importantly, these studies also added to the idea that large swaths of the political spectrum disagreed with Eisenhower’s policies, and this experience helped demonstrate just how much the public was interested in matters of reorganization and reform.

Jackson and Rockefeller bore striking similarities and dramatic contrasts. Jackson had to play his political cards exactly right to even get the SNPM formed. Moreover, he was lucky that he could tap into a group of highly disaffected Republicans to even out his core of Democratic party stalwarts. Rockefeller, by contrast, just called his brothers.

⁴²² George E. Sokolsky, “These Days...A Rule for the Strong” *Washington Post*, 6/29/60.

⁴²³ Smith, p. 241.

⁴²⁴ Ferguson, p. 394.

⁴²⁵ Smith, p. 260.

⁴²⁶ Ferguson, p. 395.

Officials almost lined up to join his study. Both the Senator and the Governor, however, worked within the system to advance their causes and both encountered considerable pushback. Both successfully brought their arguments into the public sphere, yet one was on the rise and the other was on the decline. Jackson was a rising star in the Democratic Party. It was a party that embraced his enthusiasm for fighting the Cold War. While it did not agree with everything Eisenhower did, it was also one that worked with the President to beat back the attempt of Congressional Republicans to restrict the powers of the Executive. Rockefeller, by contrast, was already a waning star in his party. Though he put up a spirited campaign in 1960, Richard Nixon won the contest. The study might have burnished his credentials, but it did little to help him at the ballot box. Moreover, he came from a party with an evolving fringe increasingly distrustful of the very institutions he so championed. That these two national security reformers faced each other during the SNPM's final hearing in 1960 lends a certain drama to the proceedings.

Rockefeller, ironically, might have been the last best hope for the Eisenhower Administration. They might have used Rockefeller to explain the work of PACGO and their own internal debates over the NSC structure. This would have shown a White House that learned from its mistakes and wanted to increase efficiency. It also would have forced the White House to admit that it had held major doubts about the NSC system since 1956, and did little to effect major structural changes. Time and again, Administration witnesses proved unwilling to make that argument and in doing so played into Jackson's hands. Given the circumstances, using Rockefeller to change the narrative might not have been the worst idea. After all, Rockefeller was a passionate and articulate

spokesman. That the White House chose not to, however, is equally understandable. In pushing his pet projects, Rockefeller had been a nuisance to Eisenhower. The Rockefeller Brother's Study Series further highlighted the White House's missteps. When Rockefeller made a major address in June 1960, Eisenhower grumbled to Republican Congressional leaders about Rockefeller's "readiness to plunge into foreign affairs" and twisting of facts.⁴²⁷ Rockefeller's statements proved so damaging Richard Nixon was forced to join him in criticizing Eisenhower's defense budget and military strategy.⁴²⁸ Therefore it is not surprising that, before his testimony, Eisenhower did not reach out to Rockefeller, nor did Rockefeller reach out to the White House.⁴²⁹ Indeed, the White House seemed to treat Rockefeller as a potential enemy in the matter. Gordon Gray wrote that "it had continued to be open season on the NSC...In this connection I pointed out to [Eisenhower] that Governor Rockefeller was scheduled to appear before the [SNPM] and asked [Eisenhower] whether [Rockefeller] had cleared with him the question of surfacing the First Secretary scheme."⁴³⁰ Despite the fact that six months prior Eisenhower had trumpeted the First Secretary idea to Republican legislative leaders, by the summer he only meekly admitted he "had indeed first suggested the concept."⁴³¹

⁴²⁷ Notes on Legislative Leadership Meeting, 6/9/60, Legislative Meetings Series, AW, Box 3, Legislative Leaders-1960 (3) [May-June], DDE.

⁴²⁸ Zelizer, p. 144.

⁴²⁹ Memorandum of Meeting with the President, 7/6/60, WHO, SANSA Records, SA Series, Presidential Subseries, Box 4, 1960-Meetings with the President-Volume I (1), DDE.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Notes on Legislative Leadership Meeting, 1/12/60, Legislative Meetings Series, AW, Box 3, Legislative Leaders-1960 (1) [January-February], DDE and Memorandum of Meeting with the President, 7/6/60, WHO, SANSA Records, SA Series, Presidential Subseries, Box 4, 1960-Meetings with the President-Volume I (1), DDE.

Perhaps Eisenhower would have been more enthusiastic had he known even some of Jackson's most fervent allies had considered First Secretary-like concepts. At the Council on Foreign Relations dinner hosted by Jackson earlier that year, two participants argued for the creation of a similar post.⁴³² Even Robert Lovett said that a "Minister of Foreign Affairs" might be a useful organizational invention.⁴³³ Yet, when Nelson Rockefeller took his seat on July 1, 1960, one would never have guessed that Lovett, the patron saint of the SNPM, had said anything kind about the First Secretary idea. Rockefeller attracted at least as much, if not more, interest than Lovett had five months previous. A "hearing room the size of a basketball gymnasium" was "jam-packed."⁴³⁴ The *New York Times* noted that Rockefeller "drew considerably more spectators and newsmen and Senators seeking to question him than any previous witness before the subcommittee."⁴³⁵ Some of the SNPM's hearings had as few as two senators in attendance. Eleven showed up to watch Rockefeller, the most in the entirety of the SNPM's investigations.

Rockefeller's appearance did not only focus on the NSC or the First Secretary, he also spent time going over many of the recommendations made by PACGO. The Governor took time to praise Eisenhower, while admitting, "The critical need is for a

⁴³² Ibid. Harriman, one of the people Eberstadt obliquely referenced, did attempt to clarify that "it had not been his duty to make decisions but to bring people and their ideas together."

⁴³³ Lovett Testimony, 2/23/60 in *Organizing for National Security*, Vol. 1.

⁴³⁴ "Rockefeller Criticizes Capitol Machinery" *Christian Science Monitor* 7/2/60; "Rocky Wants 2 Super Officials in Cabinet—Super-President, Too" *Boston Globe* 7/20/60.

⁴³⁵ "Rockefeller Wants Strong Presidency" *New York Times* 7/2/60.

revamped structure of government.”⁴³⁶ He warned that “excessive government by committee can be anything but constructive. In the field of executive action, it can reduce the level of Government action to the least bold or imaginative—to the lowest common denominator among many varying positions.”⁴³⁷ Without much prodding from Jackson, Rockefeller admitted that the nation could do more to defeat the Soviets. Indeed, Rockefeller and Jackson seemed to be in lock step over the need to raise taxes and increase the defense budget. With all his criticism, Rockefeller’s testimony often seemed to be a toned-down version of Lovett’s. In fact, Rockefeller’s ideas seemed to lean so far left, he took to the press to defend his criticism and dismiss rumors he might become Secretary of Defense in a Democratic administration.⁴³⁸ Like Lovett, Rockefeller could hide behind platitudes towards Eisenhower while still leveling criticism. As one paper noted, Rockefeller paid deference to the President while simultaneously highlighting the fact that Eisenhower seemed to imperil the nation by willfully ignoring important organizational reforms.⁴³⁹

Where Jackson and Rockefeller differed, of course, was on the First Secretary idea. When Jackson asked “If you have a strong Secretary of State and a strong First Secretary, it will take a superstrong President to keep them both strong.” Rockefeller shot

⁴³⁶ Rockefeller Testimony, 7/1/60, in *Organizing for National Security*, Vol. 1. In addition to the First Secretary Rockefeller also suggested further reorganization of the Pentagon, another special assistant to handle domestic matters, as well as an “Office of Executive Management.” Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Rockefeller Testimony, 7/1/60, in *Organizing for National Security*, Vol. 1.

⁴³⁸ “Rockefeller Bars Bolt from GOP” *New York Times* 6/30/60; “Statement by Rockefeller” *New York Times* 6/30/60. The Chairman of the Republican Party, Thurston Morton, even went so far as to accuse Rockefeller of, generally, “giving the Democrats political ammunition with his attacks on the Eisenhower Administration.” “Morton Says Rockefeller Gives Democrats Political Ammunition” *New York Times* 7/1/60.

⁴³⁹ “Rockefeller Criticizes Capitol Machinery” *Christian Science Monitor* 7/2/60.

back: “That is what our country needs.” Jackson might not have been convinced, but admitted “That is a good reply.” He, however, pinned down Rockefeller on another point. As he noted “The workability [of the First Secretary Plan] would certainly depend on the personalities.” When Rockefeller rejoined that the system would surely work, Jackson responded “We all agree that the key to any organization is the people...If you just change the chart and you do not get good people, you are not going to solve much.”⁴⁴⁰ Jackson was not the only one to question the First Secretary concept. Karl Mundt did as well. Edmund Muskie suggested a First Secretary should not be forced on the President and also that it unnecessarily confused an already crowded chain of command.⁴⁴¹ Only Jacob Javits sprung to Rockefeller’s defense. He praised the First Secretary idea and said it “is a most provocative suggestion. I will make it my business to see that it is before us in legislation. I hope to have the privilege of offering it.”⁴⁴²

Rockefeller’s testimony before the SNPM did not single handedly kill the idea of the First Secretary. It did, however, demonstrate just how few supporters existed for the concept. Besides Javits, only fellow New Yorker Kenneth Keating (R-NY) praised the idea that day.⁴⁴³ At the very least it showed a division in the Republican ranks. Even if they did believe in the idea, they clearly thought defending it before Jackson’s committee was a waste of time. For the Democrats it showed more a unified front on the matter, if not necessarily an intellectual consensus. When one Democratic senator seemed to be finding some merit in the idea, Jackson jumped in with questions that forced Rockefeller

⁴⁴⁰ Rockefeller Testimony, 7/1/60, in *Organizing for National Security*, Vol. 1.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid

⁴⁴² Ibid

⁴⁴³ Ibid

back onto the defensive, leading the senator to remark “I guess this is not going to be a profitable field for further development.”⁴⁴⁴

Rockefeller often seemed to be his own worst enemy in the discussion. At several points Rockefeller’s testimony and answers devolved into discussions of Constitutional law or complex organizational matters. Those were not inherently bad. After Rockefeller apologized for one long soliloquy, Jackson said the Governor should not act so contrite, “We ask questions that are not suggestive of one-sentence answers” and Rockefeller himself came across as an impressive speaker to those in attendance.⁴⁴⁵ On paper, however, Rockefeller’s solution to the confusion in the White House comes across as plausible, but hardly more streamlined. Despite the interest on Capitol Hill, Rockefeller’s testimony did not generate many headlines.⁴⁴⁶ While most of the major newspapers had some coverage, it generated far fewer comments than one might have anticipated. Perhaps this was because reporters expected more from Rockefeller than carefully worded political statements.⁴⁴⁷ The only editorial of note came from the *Chicago Daily Tribune*. The conservative paper took a shot at the centrist governor when it opined: “The best that can be said of Mr. Rockefeller’s proposal is that it is plausible until you start to think about it.”⁴⁴⁸

The idea of the First Secretary was a novel one. If it had been adopted it would have been the most major modification to the White House since the National Security

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁴⁵ Richard Page Interview

⁴⁴⁶ *The Washington Post*, for instance, noted he was scheduled to speak, but had nothing on his actual comments. “Policy Probers to Hear Rockefeller Friday” *Washington Post* 6/30/60.

⁴⁴⁷ “Rockefeller Explains His Revamp Plan” *Chicago Daily Tribune* 7/2/60

⁴⁴⁸ “Cabinet Straw Boss” *Chicago Daily Tribune* 6/26/60.

Act. The idea of creating an office in the White House specifically for the management of foreign policy was significant. People had performed similar roles in the past, but nothing so formal, and nothing with such direct and codified authority over other members of the government. The decidedly mixed track record of the National Security Act—its grab-bag of security bodies had been markedly thinned by a decade of service—and Eisenhower’s bloated executive staff seemed to inveigh against more bureaucracy. Before the idea had been made public, a PACGO staffer worried, “I am convinced that [the First Secretary idea] will not have much of a chance—largely because the manner of presentation will play into the hands of those who either actually do not understand it or are determined to misrepresent it.”⁴⁴⁹ Despite Rockefeller’s inability to communicate the plan effectively, it had a brief afterlife. In August, Javits enthusiastically sponsored a bill to implement the First Secretary idea. Not surprisingly, it received little support.⁴⁵⁰ He followed the same course in January, 1961, again to no effect.

Rockefeller’s concept did make an appearance on the 1960 campaign trail. Richard Nixon said that he expected his Vice President to have an expanded role in foreign policy, hinting at something akin to the First Secretary.⁴⁵¹ In June, 1960, a committee of congressional Republicans released a report advocating that the Vice

⁴⁴⁹ Keiffer to “The Secretary” 12/31/59, PACGO 12, Management and International Affairs (First Secretary and Office of Exec Management) (2), DDE.

⁴⁵⁰ Congressional Record, Senate, 8/30/60, p. 16996. It was drafted with the “technical assistance, though not policy backing,” of the White House. Memorandum on Javits Bill Re: S3911 n.d., Javits Paper Series 2, Box 49, S 477 Provide for a First Secretary of Govt. 1961, SB.

⁴⁵¹ “Nixon Advocated Regional Summits to Combat Soviet” *New York Times*, 10/15/60.

President essentially assume the First Secretary role.⁴⁵² A few months later, officials included a statement in the 1960 Republican Platform saying the party would seek the establishment of a First Secretary position if they won the election.⁴⁵³ Despite these nods, no Republican, other than perhaps Javits, actively advocated for the First Secretary concept. Mundt's reaction shows that Republicans were, at the very least, less than enthusiastic about the idea.⁴⁵⁴ Whatever the damage caused by Jackson, Nixon cited his role on the NSC as proof of his experience in the first presidential debate.⁴⁵⁵ For those following the SNPM, Eisenhower's famous quip about Nixon's contributions—"If you give me a week, I might think of one"—only reinforced whatever doubts they may have had about the system.⁴⁵⁶ It did little to provide reassurance in either the man or the intellectual value of an institution in which the President, supposedly, regularly consulted with his advisors.

One might be tempted to frame Jackson's opposition as a brake to the power of the president. Most of the newspaper accounts emphasized that Rockefeller wanted a "Superstrong President," actually Jackson's phrase.⁴⁵⁷ Perhaps, in some respects,

⁴⁵² American Strategy and Strength: A Special Task Force Report Prepared for the Republican Policy Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, 6/20/60, EP, Box 62, American Strategy and Strength Task Force Report, HI.

⁴⁵³ Republican Party Platform of 1960, 7/25/60, The American Presidency Project www.presidency.ucsb.edu

⁴⁵⁴ The aforementioned Republican Congressional Task Force wrote that the next President should "in utilizing the position of Vice President as a vital post in national security policy making" in some respects a coded reference to the idea that the Vice President might assume First Secretary-esque duties. American Strategy and Strength: A Special Task Force Report Prepared for the Republican Policy Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, 6/20/60, EP, Box 62, American Strategy and Strength Task Force Report, HI.

⁴⁵⁵ Transcript, 9/26/60 Debate, Commission on Presidential Debates Website

⁴⁵⁶ Transcript, 8/24/60 Press Conference, The American Presidency Project www.presidency.ucsb.edu

⁴⁵⁷ "Rockefeller Wants Strong Presidency" *New York Times* 7/2/60; "Rocky Wants 2 Super Officials in Cabinet—Super-President, Too" *Boston Globe* 7/20/60; "Rockefeller Calls for 'Superstrong President'" *LA Times* 7/2/60.

Jackson's showdown with Rockefeller was a challenge to the imperial presidency. But Jackson's overall argument seemed to come across as less an assault on strengthening the White House's powers than a stand against unnecessary bureaucracy. What Jackson wanted was to turn the clock back to the government under Truman. One did not need to create new methods to manage national security. One just needed to clear away the excess, and revert to tried and true methods of addressing these issues. Jackson cannot be viewed as purely partisan on this matter. The summer of 1960, with the failure of the Paris Summit and the U-2 incident, seemed an especially low point in presidential-decision making.

Rockefeller's testimony ended six months of SNPM hearings. Jackson originally claimed the SNPM would need roughly a year to run his investigation, and secured an extra eight months to run the study, meaning that the SNPM would technically expire in late January 1961. Jackson worked, and seemingly easily secured, another twelve-month extension for the SNPM, meaning it would now expire in January 1962.⁴⁵⁸ The subcommittee was easily reauthorized, though it took a nine-month break in its hearings. Even on break, however, it stayed in the headlines. Both Henry Jackson and the SNPM now aimed to shape the 1960 presidential election and, he hoped, the transition that would follow in the event of a Democratic victory. While the SNPM had been an effective pulpit for both the man and his cause, he searched for ways to cement both his political gains as well as the SNPM's findings.

⁴⁵⁸ S. Res 20, 87th Congress, 1st Session, 1/26/61.

The Triumph of Good People

One can attribute the SNPM's unusual pause to the 1960 election. Three of the five senators on the committee were otherwise occupied. Hubert Humphrey and Karl Mundt were standing for reelection. Henry Jackson was also campaigning to be John F. Kennedy's Vice Presidential pick. On the surface, he was in a perfect position. He was a young, bright, Cold War hawk who was on good terms with Kennedy. Public signals in the form of press reports and private communications from members of the Kennedy campaign, suggested that Jackson stood an above-average chance of securing the nomination.⁴⁵⁹ Robert Kennedy promised several Democrats that Jackson would, in fact, be the nominee.⁴⁶⁰ While some might view the Vice President's job as a political dead-end, Jackson by all accounts relished the idea.⁴⁶¹ How much electoral help Jackson would have provided in 1960 is, of course, open to debate. Jackson lacked Johnson's Senate power and electoral upside.⁴⁶² But, Jackson, apparently, at least made it to the final round of potential picks.⁴⁶³ After selected Johnson to be his running mate, Jackson was appointed chair of the Democratic National Party as a consolation prize. While it gave him another venue from which to spread his message, he found himself frozen out of campaign planning, and was blamed for a poorly attended campaign stop in Seattle.⁴⁶⁴ While Jackson's biographer presents this in a positive light, Columbia Professor Richard

⁴⁵⁹ Kaufman, p. 120-121.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 120.

⁴⁶¹ Richard Page Interview

⁴⁶² Even if Jackson could bring in both the neighboring states as well as Washington, that would have only been 19 electoral votes compared to Texas' 24.

⁴⁶³ Edmund Kallina *Kennedy v. Nixon* (UP of Florida, 2010), p. 76-77.

⁴⁶⁴ Kaufman, p. 123.

Neustadt had a different opinion.⁴⁶⁵ Two years later, while talking to McGeorge Bundy, Neustadt said that the Kennedy campaign had “chosen Scoop to be a patsy [but did not realize], he hadn’t understood.”⁴⁶⁶ Bundy himself did not realize that Jackson had wanted to run the party, not just be a figurehead. His own response to hearing of it was simply to say “Oh, dear.”⁴⁶⁷ In Bundy’s words, however, the SNPM was “about the only good thing that ever happened between Scoop Jackson and the President, as far as I can make out.”⁴⁶⁸ If Bundy’s response was overly harsh, it was further evidence of the growing gap between Kennedy and Jackson.

While Jackson was otherwise occupied Dorothy Fosdick, Robert Tufts, and Kenneth Mansfield began to summarize the SNPM’s findings. They aimed to publish these in the hope of influencing the incoming—hopefully Democratic—administration. All told, the SNPM published seven pamphlet-sized reports between the fall of 1960 and the fall of 1961 covering a range of issues.⁴⁶⁹ Altogether, the seven pamphlets totaled only sixty-seven pages of recommendations. One could be forgiven for thinking that after a year of study and six months of hearings, this was a very small return. Whatever the

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ McGeorge Bundy, recorded interview by Richard Neustadt, 3/64, p. 124 JFKL OHP.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 124-125. The transcript of the conversation reads:

NEUSTADT: Well, this was after they'd chosen Scoop to be a patsy and before they'd found out he hadn't understood.

BUNDY: Was that what happened, that they'd meant him just to be a pure figurehead, welcome tenants...?

NEUSTADT: Yes, you're a good clean....

BUNDY: And he wants to run the damn....

NEUSTADT: Yes, that's right.

BUNDY: Oh, dear.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 124.

⁴⁶⁹ The list is as follows: *Super Cabinet Officers and Superstaffs* (Nov 16, 1960); *The National Security Council* (Dec 20, 1960); *The Secretary of State and the National Security Policy Process* (Jan 28, 1961); and *The Private Citizen and National Service* (Feb 28, 1961).

faults of Jackson's approach, his reports were read. Politicians at the time and historians since still refer the reports.⁴⁷⁰ They do not talk about the reports issued by Fulbright's NSC review or many of the other independent reviews that took place around the same time. By contrast, a review by House Republicans, issued during the SNPM's investigations and led by Gerald Ford (R-MI) had no impact at the time and faded from memory. It also took a critical view of Eisenhower's security machinery, and suggested changes.⁴⁷¹ That Jackson's report survives and these others did not speak to his success.

Before the release of the reports, Jackson brought on Richard Neustadt, as a consultant. Several years later Neustadt seemed to disparage the SNPM when he referred to it as Jackson's "funny little committee," but in 1960 the professor seemed enthusiastic about Jackson's endeavors.⁴⁷² Several ideas for reports ended up on the cutting room floor. At least one was secretly passed to Kennedy's transition team.⁴⁷³ The Republicans on the SNPM staff had little say in any of this: Jackson, Fosdick, Tufts, and Mansfield managed to cut them out almost entirely of the drafting process. Thought Mundt was unhappy with some of the findings—which he learned about only days before their release—he also refused a request to append a minority report.⁴⁷⁴ Javits proved little help in any of this, giving Mundt little support when he did object.⁴⁷⁵ One of Mundt's staffers,

⁴⁷⁰ See chapter three's discussion of the legacy and historiography of the discussion of the committee.

⁴⁷¹ "Principal Recommendations in GOP Task Force Report", *Congressional Quarterly Almanac* vol. 16.

⁴⁷² McGeorge Bundy, recorded interview by Richard Neustadt, 3/64, p. 124 JFKL OHP.

⁴⁷³ Mansfield to Nitze, 11/11/60, PN, Box 210, Folder 2, LoC.

⁴⁷⁴ Mundt to Faber, 11/23/60, KM, RGIII, Box 570, Gov Ops Material 1957-1962, FF7, DU.

⁴⁷⁵ Mundt to Jackson, 8/9/61, JJ, Series 4, Subseries 4, Box 69, National Policy Machinery Subcommittee, SB; Javits, apparently, took two weeks to do this. See handwritten note on Ibid; Javits to Jackson, 8/21/61, JJ, Series 4, Subseries 4, Box 69, National Policy Machinery Subcommittee, SB.

out of frustration, simply complained that the SNPM had a “record of making trite statements about momentous and important matters.”⁴⁷⁶

Some of the SNPM’s findings were relatively innocent. They, for instance, believed that more should be done to integrate science into national security debates, advocating for the establishment of an Office of Science and Technology in the Executive Office of the President.⁴⁷⁷ As could be expected given the absence of a Republican voice, however, many of these final reports often took on partisan tones. For example, the SNPM staff devoted an entire report to discrediting Rockefeller’s ideas, in what Mansfield called “an ‘anti’ paper — a trash removal operation, so to speak.”⁴⁷⁸ A more nuanced example is the report on the NSC. Despite all the criticism the body received, the draft report begins with the line: “The NSC is basically a sound organization which has not been used to [its] best advantage.”⁴⁷⁹ Indeed, comparing this document to the final one issued by the SNPM suggests just how much Jackson’s staff struggled over the idea of presidential power. The early draft lays out a structure like that recommended at times by Rockefeller and close to what was developed under McGeorge Bundy.⁴⁸⁰ The SANSAs’ role would change, from running the NSC system to helping the President. While it clearly disagreed with much of the Eisenhower system, it did not actually recommend any of it be disbanded. The system was flawed, but not irreparably so. By contrast, the final published report reads more like an attack on the Eisenhower

⁴⁷⁶ Smith to Lilly, 11/22/61, KM, RGIII, DB534, Gov Opps Committee General, 1961-1962, FF3, DS.

⁴⁷⁷ Zuoyue Wang, *In Sputnik’s Shadow* (Rutgers UP, 2009), p. 196.

⁴⁷⁸ Mansfield to Nitze, 11/11/60, PN, Box 210, Folder 2, LoC.

⁴⁷⁹ “Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery-Tentative Staff Recommendations-The National Security Council” n.d. HJ, Accn 35606, Box 68, Staff Rough Drafts Re NSC, DoD, State, 1960, UW.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Administration, including jettisoning much of the NSC, with some helpful pointers tacked on: “[T]he President must rely mainly upon the Secretary of State for the initial synthesis of the political, military, economic, and other elements which go into the making of a coherent national strategy. He must also be responsible for bringing to the President proposals for major new departures in national policy.”⁴⁸¹

Many of Jackson’s points, however, came down to people. As Jackson observed in his final report, “The heart of the problem of national security is not reorganization—it is getting our best people into key foreign policy and defense posts... More often than not, poor decision are traceable not to machinery but to people—to their inexperience, their failure to comprehend the importance of information crossing their desk, to their indecisiveness or lack of wisdom.”⁴⁸² In part, Jackson and the SNPM staff blamed this on excessive personnel turnover, which was not a particularly partisan point.⁴⁸³ Under Truman and Eisenhower alone there had been seven secretaries of defense, nine deputy secretaries of defense, five secretaries of state, eight undersecretaries of state, six SANSAs, and five directors of the CIA. Jackson worried that such high turnover often meant that officials had little time to become proficient at their jobs.

In some respects, this is a problematic line of argument. Ferdinand Eberstadt had, in essence, designed the system to function this way. The “dollar-a-year men” he had in mind would only spend a few years helping the nation. Moreover, long service did not always mean good service. Jackson disagreed with many of the decisions made by

⁴⁸¹ “The National Security Council” in *Organizing for National Security*, Vol. III (GPO, 1961), p. 39.

⁴⁸² “Final Statement of Senator Henry M. Jackson” in *Organizing for National Security*, Vol. III, p. 4-6

⁴⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 4-6.

Charles Wilson, Eisenhower's long-serving first Secretary of Defense. Nor did Jackson think highly of six-year incumbent John Foster Dulles. The perpetually exhausted Robert Cutler had a combined tenure of three and a half years, all the while promoting a system Jackson hated. Their replacements, all of whom had shorter tenures, also brought improvements to these posts.⁴⁸⁴

One of Jackson's more interesting recommendations was the idea that Congress needed to take a more active role in shaping foreign and defense policy. He argued that "[o]ne major problem is fragmentation....The authorization process treats as separable matters that are not really separable...There is no place in Congress, short of the floors of the Senate and House, where requirements of national security and the resources needed on their behalf, are considered in their totality."⁴⁸⁵ He argued that Congress needed to develop better ways to review national security programs in total.⁴⁸⁶ The House Republicans, in their report, reached similar conclusions.⁴⁸⁷ These were both admirable conclusions, but hard to implement, as noted by William Y. Elliot. Commissioned by Rockefeller to examine the issue for the Mid-Century Study, Elliot acknowledged that something like Jackson's idea had merit, but thought "it is entirely unrealistic."⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁴ Specifically, Thomas Gates, Christian Herter, and Gordon Gray. Herter may not be remembered as one of the most famous Secretaries of State, but the nuclear sabre rattling did decrease under his watch.

⁴⁸⁵ "Final Statement of Senator Henry M. Jackson" in *Organizing for National Security*, Vol. III, p. 7.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ American Strategy and Strength: A Special Task Force Report Prepared for the Republican Policy Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, 6/20/60, EP, Box 62, American Strategy and Strength Task Force Report, HI.

⁴⁸⁸ William Y. Elliot, Memorandum for the Special Studies Group, Rockefeller Brother's Fund Subject: Improving the Executive's Relations with the Congress of the United States in the Formation of Foreign Policy, WHO, SANSAs Files, Box 5, Elliot, William Y (2) November, 1956, DDE. For those fearful of excessive executive power, Elliot's possible prescriptions for reform would induce nightmares. He suggests, among other things, that the President be given the authority to dissolve Congress once per term; that the House hold elections every four years to avoid mid-term Congressional defeats; and that up to 25

The SNPM's gist can be summed up in one quote: "Good people can triumph over faulty organization, but good policy machinery can never substitute for outstanding officials."⁴⁸⁹ Moreover, in Jackson's estimation, the government was full of good people since the Civil Service "are dedicated to their jobs; they are thoroughly skilled in their professions. They will hope and expect to put their knowledge and skill to work for the new administration, and their understanding and loyalty can be confidently expected."⁴⁹⁰ Eisenhower failed because he surrounded himself with bad people, and his organization froze out what good people remained. It also points out one of the major drawbacks in the SNPM's reports. Good people might be able to triumph over bad organization, but that triumph would be more difficult. Jackson's reports were clear that people, not organizations, make policy. As such, the organizational discussions took a back seat. The reports make clear that the Eisenhower Administration was over-organized, and that the First Secretary was not a good option. But the SNPM's actual advice on what should take its place was often vague. It seemed their recommendation was to give all the power accumulated by the White House back to the Secretary of State, or bring back Dean Acheson. The vagueness of their recommendations—except for what to get rid of—left plenty of ambiguity about how a future administration might organize and deal with competing personalities. That probably hurt the incoming Kennedy Administration. Often taking a page from the SNPM's findings, its transition advisors often seemed to be clear on what should not be done, but problematically fluid on what should be done. Richard

members of the White House staff be given seats in the House and Senate to ensure the President's policies receive proper representation. Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ "Final Statement of Senator Henry M. Jackson" in *Organizing for National Security*, Vol. III, p. 7.

⁴⁹⁰ Organization for National Security, Problems of the Transition Period, 10/26/60, PN, Box 210, Folder 2, Senate National Policy Machinery Subcommittee, June 1960 [2 of 2], LoC.

Neustadt, for one, warned Kennedy that Jackson, in his memos, “ducks the concrete question: What are you supposed to do about the NSC?”⁴⁹¹ Neustadt was correct, but he too bore some responsibility for the situation Kennedy faced when he entered office.

“This can wait until later”

Much of this debate took place against the background of the 1960 election, during which the issues discussed by the SNPM made an appearance in both the Nixon and Kennedy campaigns. In addition to Nixon’s aforementioned dalliance with the First Secretary concept, Jackson used his position as Party Chair to stump for Kennedy and to reiterate his message of Eisenhower and Nixon’s general weakness on all matters of foreign and defense policies. Kennedy campaign literature also highlighted the NSC’s problems. In *The Strategy of Peace*, a collection of Kennedy essays and interviews published in 1960, Kennedy ruminated on the problems with the NSC.⁴⁹² How this all played out in the election is, of course, difficult if not impossible to quantify. At the very least the SNPM added to the perception that during the Eisenhower-Nixon years American foreign and defense policy had been badly run. Democrats could also point to Republicans who endorsed Kennedy, like McGeorge Bundy and the Republicans of the Gaither Committee. That bipartisan support, on some level, must have been valuable. Perhaps the most value, however, came from Jackson himself. One could view the SNPM

⁴⁹¹ “Memo 6-National Security Council: First Steps” 12/8/60 in *Preparing to be President: The Memos of Richard E. Neustadt*. C.O. Jones, ed. (The AEI Press, 2000).

⁴⁹² John F. Kennedy, *The Strategy of Peace*, (Harper and Co, 1960), p. 209-210. He noted that, if he took office, “I would hope that there might be other groups, less committed to represent a particular department...that they also could bring to bear some views, some independent judgements...so that constant realistic alternatives, fully developed alternatives...could be presented to him rather than merely a consensus rising from the secondary staff level.”

as a year of practice where he sharpened the arguments he later deployed as Party Chair. After Kennedy's victory the problem now fell squarely into the court of the Democrats. After criticizing the system, they now had to replace it.

Two people shaped the intellectual atmosphere of the Kennedy transition by drawing on their experiences in the Truman Administration. One, Clark Clifford, approached the problem from the perspective of a party veteran and a master of practical solutions. The other, Richard Neustadt, came from a background of theory and history. Clifford took his job seriously, though he occasionally bent the rules to fit his mandate. He divided his time between memo writing, helping vet potential members of the Administration, and leading a policy review group for Kennedy. Clifford also served as Kennedy's representative in the White House during the waning days of the Eisenhower Administration.⁴⁹³ When the Brookings Institution set up a bipartisan advisory committee on transitions, Clifford joined.⁴⁹⁴ Clifford, perhaps more than anyone, had a good grasp of how policy and organization would mesh after the inauguration.

When it came to just how Kennedy should organize his White House, Clifford suggested a return to the Roosevelt/Truman style. Appealing to Kennedy's action-oriented nature, Clifford advised that "[a] vigorous President in the Democratic tradition of the Presidency will probably find it best to act as his own chief of staff."⁴⁹⁵ He argued for cutting the number of people in the White House, and that "[t]he organization of the

⁴⁹³ Henry Interview with Clark Clifford 12/13/60, Henry Interview with Brad Patterson, 1/12/61, and Henry Interview with Neustadt 12/22/60, Henry Papers Box 17, Interviews by Henry 1960-1961, DDE.

⁴⁹⁴ John Corson to Clarke Clifford 11/15/60, Clark Clifford Papers Box 1, Memorandum on Transition, JFK.

⁴⁹⁵ Clark Clifford "Memorandum on Transition" undated, Clark Clifford Papers Box 1, Memorandum on Transition, JFK.

staff should be simple, and its membership should be versatile.”⁴⁹⁶ He remained vague on both the role of the SANSAs and the organization of the NSC. For the Special Assistant, he merely commented that the person “serves as the liaison between the President and the [NSC] and he supervises the staff of the N.S.C.”⁴⁹⁷ As for the NSC, he noted: “Attention must be given to reorganizing this entire setup, but this can wait until later.”⁴⁹⁸

Neustadt joined Kennedy’s stable of celebrity academics via an introduction from Henry Jackson. Jackson, as Party Chair, had Neustadt pull double duty in late 1960. In addition to drafting the SNPM reports, the Senator commissioned the professor to write a series of memos directly for Kennedy. When Neustadt was finished, Jackson brought him along to a meeting with the President-elect. Kennedy was so impressed he essentially stole Neustadt from Jackson.⁴⁹⁹

Richard Neustadt’s *Presidential Power* became the intellectual textbook of the Kennedy White House and one should not underestimate just how much its concepts permeated the Administration. Neustadt’s book was hardly a polemic but, like the SNPM, its non-partisan argument took indirect aim at Eisenhower’s Administration. On the face of it, Neustadt’s argument is rather simple. While we might think that presidents have significant powers inherent in the office, in fact they do not. As Neustadt wrote, “powers are no guarantee of power.”⁵⁰⁰ The president’s “services are in demand all over Washington. His influence, however, is a very different matter.”⁵⁰¹ Neustadt observed

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁹ Richard Neustadt, *Preparing to be President* (AEI Press, 2000), p. 144-145.

⁵⁰⁰ Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power* (New York, 1964), p. 22.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid, p. 19.

that many people, including party officials, members of congress, other Executive branch bureaucrats, foreign allies, and private citizens, called on the president for his “power.” “Lacking his position and prerogatives, these men cannot regard his obligations as their own...As they perceive their duty they may find it right to follow him...or they may not. Whether they will feel obliged *on their responsibility* to do what he wants done remains an open question.”⁵⁰² The President “does not obtain results...merely by giving orders...no orders carry themselves out.”⁵⁰³

That Neustadt would attach so much weight to Truman’s words speaks, in part, to his own past as a special assistant in the Truman White House. During those years, Neustadt served as a jack-of-all-trades. While technically focusing on legislative issues, he also worked as a speech-writer, and a gatherer of political intelligence. Sometimes, he even executed policy.⁵⁰⁴ Truman’s small professional staff—the number fluctuated between seven and ten over the course of the Truman years—compelled each staffer to take on numerous duties.⁵⁰⁵ Truman’s White House was, of course, based in large part on Roosevelt’s own organizational set-up. Roosevelt might have had a “second-class intellect but a first-class temperament,” but he had serious ideas on what the president could and could not do.⁵⁰⁶ He believed that “[t]hat Presidents don’t act on policies, programs, or personnel in the abstract; they act in the concrete as they meet deadlines set by due dates—or the urgency—of documents awaiting signature, vacant posts awaiting

⁵⁰² Ibid, p. 21. Emphasis in the original.

⁵⁰³ Ibid, p. 23 and 29.

⁵⁰⁴ For instance, Neustadt had a role planning and executing the 1952 government nationalization of the US steel industry. Matthew Dickinson “Practicum on the Presidency, 1946-1952” in *Guardian of the Presidency* M.J. Dickinson and E.A. Neustadt eds. (Brookings Institution Press, 2007), p. 27-29.

⁵⁰⁵ J.C. Heinlein *Presidential Staff and National Security Policy* (U. of Cincinnati, 1963), p. 23

⁵⁰⁶ Quoted in Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*, (Free Press, 1990), p. 153.

appointees, officials seeking interviews, newsmen seeking answers, audiences waiting for a speech, intelligence reports requiring a response, etc., etc.”⁵⁰⁷ It would be hard to blame Neustadt for thinking this type of organization was ideal given the track record of these two administrations. Ferdinand Eberstadt essentially applied the same logic when he drafted the National Security Act.

Neustadt argued that Kennedy needed to be his own chief of staff. Using one person to funnel information to Kennedy would be too restricting. He believed that eliminating that job would distance Kennedy’s administration from the memory of Eisenhower Chief of Staff Sherman Adam’s gruesome political demise.⁵⁰⁸ He also believed that the President needed a close group of assistants he could trust.⁵⁰⁹ The group needed to be made up of people with a broad range of responsibilities and backgrounds. One of Neustadt’s main theories was that “generalists” were far more useful than “specialists.” Neustadt wanted Kennedy to keep his generalists “general” by giving them a rotating series of assignments.⁵¹⁰ This was also an idea that Jackson and the SNPM endorsed in their reports.⁵¹¹

All these points lay out an assault on the Eisenhower Administration that echoed Jackson’s own critique. First, overly-complicated committees would not work. If a president’s power is at best highly fluid, such an elaborate set-up would make any order

⁵⁰⁷ Neustadt, *Preparing*, p. 55

⁵⁰⁸ Neustadt, *Preparing*, 25.

⁵⁰⁹ Quoted in *Presidential*, p. 49-50

⁵¹⁰ Ibid, p. 55. In part, this kept the staff honest: the more they moved around, the less they might be tempted to become independent power brokers in one particular area. He also warned that titles fixed people into jobs and made it more difficult to shift them later. Ibid, p. 71.

⁵¹¹ See specifically the reports on “Super-Cabinet Officers and Superstaffs”, “The National Security Council”, and “The Secretary of State in the National Security Policy Process” all in *Organizing for National Security*, Vol. III, p. 23, 39, and 52.

easy to ignore and harder to follow. Second, one had to be careful about people in the White House gaining too much power—they should remember that they work for the president, not for themselves or in a cavernous committee and that personal responsibility matters. Lastly, Neustadt again raised the argument of the value of generalists over specialists. Eisenhower’s elaborate organization favored the specialists. Yet these people lacked big picture views of the problems they addressed. Specialized knowledge was not, by itself, bad. One of Truman’s advisors wrote: “[W]e were generalists who came from different areas of experience and brought, perhaps, a bit of extra perspective or depth of knowledge from our special area but generalists we rapidly became, and generalists we stayed while we were on the Truman staff.”⁵¹² This type of generalist knew enough about trees, but could still see the forest.

Neustadt’s recommendations to Kennedy not only shaped the President’s management techniques, but also informed McGeorge Bundy’s approach to operations. Neustadt told Kennedy he needed a small group of “jacks-of-all-trades, with a perspective almost as unspecialized as the President’s own, cutting across every program area, every government agency, and every facet of his work, personal, political, legislative, administrative, ceremonial.”⁵¹³ While Neustadt championed this “Rooseveltian practice” he admitted it came at a cost.⁵¹⁴ He cautioned Kennedy of the need to “oversee, coordinate, and interfere with virtually everything your staff was doing.

⁵¹² George Elsey Oral History Interview, Jerry N. Hess Interviewer, 7/10/69, OHP, HT, p. 181-182 and 186.

⁵¹³ Neustadt, *Preparing*, p. 56

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 40

A collegial staff has to be managed; competition has to be audited. To run a staff in Roosevelt's style imposes heavy burdens."⁵¹⁵

Kennedy enthusiastically embraced these ideas. While he cut the White House staff by almost a third—from around thirty at the height of the Eisenhower years to roughly twenty-one—the number of un-tasked Special Assistants roughly doubled.⁵¹⁶ While the White House staff grew slightly over the time, in late 1963 Theodore Sorensen still said that presidential assistants “are chosen...for their ability to serve the President's needs and to talk the President's language,” adding “[e]ven the White House specialists...are likely to see problems in a broader perspective, within the framework of the President's objectives and without the constraints of bureaucratic tradition.”⁵¹⁷ Kennedy remained surrounded by the flexible and responsive group of assistants Neustadt envisioned. Many took to describing this administrative system in a much more simplistic way: Kennedy's advisors were the spokes that connected him, at the hub, to the wheel of government.⁵¹⁸

Historians of foreign relations or the Kennedy Administration have commonly said that Kennedy was his own Secretary of State.⁵¹⁹ Experts on White House organization have commented that Kennedy was his own Chief of Staff. A contemporary observer noted that Kennedy had “a wholesome disregard for organization, chain of command, [and] niceties...Kennedy has shown a desire to immerse himself in the details

⁵¹⁵ Ibid, p. 40-41

⁵¹⁶ Heinlein, *Presidential Staff*, p. 39 and 55.

⁵¹⁷ Theodore Sorensen, *Decision-Making in the White House: The Olive Branch or the Arrows* (Columbia UP, 1963), p. 70-71.

⁵¹⁸ Stephen Hess, *Organizing the Presidency* (Brookings Institution, 1976), p. 78.

⁵¹⁹ For instance, see Schlesinger, p. 436, Halberstam, p. 26, Dallek, p. 315, Burke, p. 59 and Preston, p. 36.

of policy problems.”⁵²⁰ Kennedy wanted his hands on the levers of power and access to as many sources of information and direct control as possible. Neustadt’s gaggle of Special Assistants facilitated this, but his recommendations had a cost in that they encouraged Kennedy to embrace his own micromanaging, especially in the field of foreign policy. According to Neustadt, this was the only way Kennedy could ensure his orders were carried out, but also prove a dangerous and needless distraction. If Clifford remained vague about both the NSC and the SANSAs, Neustadt’s ideas were only slightly more defined. For the Council itself, he recommended Kennedy use it, but only “as vehicles for sharpening differences of view on major policy departures or on new courses of action.”⁵²¹ As for the staff, “that miscellany of staffs and interagency committees could be slimmed down, reoriented (and in part repopulated) into a tight group of very able general utility assistants to your assistant.”⁵²²

The actual job of the SANSAs, however, showed considerable fluidity in Neustadt’s mind. Initially, Neustadt questioned the necessity of the job, noting, “There will be no outside pressure for filling this post.”⁵²³ He even wanted to strip it of its title.⁵²⁴ For whatever reason, he quickly changed his mind and suggested the special assistant should be treated as a member of Kennedy’s inner circle.⁵²⁵ In Neustadt’s vision, the SANSAs could assume the responsibilities of five different members of

⁵²⁰ Hess, p. 55.

⁵²¹ Neustadt, *Preparing*, p. 79.

⁵²² *Ibid*, p. 78.

⁵²³ *Ibid*, p. 27.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 71.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 78.

Eisenhower's White House staff—actually six, since Neustadt miscounted.⁵²⁶ Neustadt believed this could happen easily since Eisenhower's set up was full of needless repetition and duplication. Combining these responsibilities would greatly enhance the role of the SANSAs, and the person holding that position could potentially accumulate significant new powers.⁵²⁷ Neustadt, however, wanted Kennedy to keep an ability to change the make-up of his staff at a moment's notice. As such, Neustadt advocated that foreign policy duties should actually be split among all the assistants since it was "the most important segment of government policy."⁵²⁸

Neustadt did include a nod to the SNPM when he wrote: "The Jackson Subcommittee favors using the [S]ecretary [of State] not just as a department head but as a principal assistant in the whole sphere of national security policy."⁵²⁹ The very suggestion, however, further indicates Neustadt's doubts about the SANSAs' role in the national security field.⁵³⁰ Though he was certain about many things, his wavering on the role of the SANSAs demonstrates just how fluid this position was. That said, it is difficult to be too hard on either Neustadt or Clifford. The Brookings Institution, which released a report on the transition around the time Neustadt and Clifford were writing their memos, admitted that the exact role of the SANSAs depended on too many organizational decisions to be neatly summed up. It was a decision best left until after the

⁵²⁶ Ibid, 149.

⁵²⁷ Ibid, 78.

⁵²⁸ Ibid, 78.

⁵²⁹ Ibid 29. Neustadt had, privately warned Jackson against pushing this line too hard. As he noted earlier that year in a letter to the SNPM staff "[L]et's not back State to the point of putting the President in a statutory corner. He may want to pull an FDR, or may have to because of the character of his Secretary (or the latter's capture by the Foreign Service.). Neustadt to Mansfield, 9/60, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 63, Neustadt, Richard 1960-68, UW.

⁵³⁰ Neustadt, *Preparing*, 78.

Administration took power.⁵³¹

Given that Clifford punted on what the SANSAs should do and Neustadt waffled as well, one should not be surprised that rank-and-file Democrats struggled with what to do with the position. The full-throated defense of the Eisenhower system mounted by his NSC staffers badly mischaracterized the actual responsibilities of the job.⁵³² How much enthusiasm could potential office holders really muster for a position had a dubious future and an unappealing past? As Neustadt later said, “Kennedy did not know he was creating the precursor of [Henry] Kissinger’s office.”⁵³³ Despite these questions, Kennedy decided the office needed an incumbent.

A quick review of some of the names floated for the job reveals a noticeable similarity: with one exception, all were professors. Some were pure intellectuals.⁵³⁴ One was from business.⁵³⁵ Others were veterans of the Policy Planning Staff, still considered by many the intellectual hub of the foreign policy bureaucracy. Included in this category were two Jackson allies: Paul Nitze and Robert Tufts. If Jackson did not actively encourage this recommendation, it was one he surely agreed with.⁵³⁶ This indicated there was no consensus on what the SANSAs should be or how it should function. They were certainly accomplished, but they were not the types of names that would ever come up in

⁵³¹ “Choosing a White House Staff” 10/27/60, Director’s Correspondence, August-October 1960, Entry 86, Brookings Institution.

⁵³² I.M. Destler “The Presidency and National Security Organization” in *The National Security* N.A. Graebner ed. (Oxford U.P., 1986), p. 239.

⁵³³ Neustadt Memo for James Baker, 12/1/80, in Neustadt, *Preparing*, p. 109.

⁵³⁴ The briefly considered Arthur Schlesinger and Max Millikan.

⁵³⁵ This was Vice President of the Carnegie Corporation James Perkins, an expert on science, technology, and foreign policy.

⁵³⁶ Indeed, a year later Jackson recommended Tufts himself. “People” 6/8/61, HJP-006, Box 83, Folder 19, National Security; Handwritten Note, HJP-006, Box 83, Folder 19, National Security, UW. The other person recommended was Robert Bowie, PPS’ head for part of the Eisenhower years.

discussions of who should be the Secretaries of State or Defense. In fact, Neustadt specifically suggested Tufts over Nitze because the job “seems to be ‘anonymous’ pure staff work, perhaps too confining for Nitze’s personal force and public standing.”⁵³⁷

Kennedy seemed to want personality over anonymity, and he offered the job to Nitze. Actually, he offered him three jobs: SANSAs, Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs, and Deputy Secretary of Defense. Nitze recalled in his memoirs that Kennedy gave him thirty seconds to choose which job he wanted, and Nitze chose Deputy Secretary of Defense, discovering afterward that the position had been promised to someone else. He ended up with a lower ranking Pentagon job instead. It seems that Nitze believed the SANSAs job would be powerless and largely administrative, especially because he believed the Secretary of State should play a larger role.⁵³⁸

It is hard to criticize Nitze for this decision, given what he knew. The eventual occupant, McGeorge Bundy, came with glowing reviews, and his eventual appointment received almost entirely positive coverage. One profile talked about his “steel trap mind” and described him as “keenly analytic and one of the best speakers Harvard has had anywhere, anytime.”⁵³⁹ Another said two adjectives best described him: aggressive and brilliant.⁵⁴⁰ Learned Hand called him “the brightest man in America.”⁵⁴¹ For Bundy, the transition was hardly an enjoyable time: “I had a long and painful process—as everybody

⁵³⁷ Neustadt, *Preparing*, p. 76.

⁵³⁸ Nitze speaking notes. “Organizing for National Policy Planning in the United States, American Political Science Association, September 10-12, 1959”, PN, Box 196 Folder 1, Speeches, July-December 1959, LOC; Gordon Goldstein, *Lessons in Disaster* (New York: 2008), p. 34. Bundy told this to Gordon Goldstein in 1996, see p.253n10; Paul Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost* (Grove Press, 1989), p. 181.

⁵³⁹ Associated Press. “Bundy a Hardy Doodler; Mind a ‘Steel Trap’.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1/1/61.

⁵⁴⁰ David Wise “Scholars of the Nuclear Age” in *The Kennedy Circle* (Luce: 1961), p. 31.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*

did that I know of, perhaps with the exception of Bob McNamara—while the President made up his mind how he was going to organize his Administration, because he first offered me a job which turned out not to be there, and there was quite a lot of gimmery and crackery before it got sorted out.”⁵⁴² Indeed for Bundy, the job search seemed to be a race to the bottom, not to the top.

Bundy had long been recommended for some type of government service. Members of the Eisenhower Administration briefly considered bringing him on in an advisory role in 1957.⁵⁴³ A registered Republican, though one openly disenchanted with the GOP during the Eisenhower years, he later admitted that, had it been a choice between Kennedy and Nelson Rockefeller instead of Nixon, his decision to side with Kennedy would have been much harder.⁵⁴⁴ In the end, however, his friend Arthur Schlesinger convinced Bundy to support Kennedy. Having the Republican Dean of Harvard join the administration would be a boon for Kennedy. He seemed to fit the bill for what Kennedy was looking for: an “Action Intellectual,” with sterling establishment connections who was more hawkish than Adlai Stevenson but not tied to the Truman/Acheson wing of the party. Thus, he possessed a certain independence that Kennedy appreciated. When he threw his support behind Kennedy, various Democrats

⁵⁴² Bundy OH #1, JFKLOHP, p. 13

⁵⁴³ K.M. Absher, M.C. Desch, and R. Popadiuk. *Privileged and Confidential* (U.P. of Kentucky, 2012), p. 22 and 23. While the list was a short one, the group also noted that Bundy was their least preferred candidate.

⁵⁴⁴ Kai Bird, *The Color of Truth* (Simon and Schuster, 1996), p. 150.

suggested a wide range of jobs for the professor, everything from Under Secretary of State to Secretary of the Army.⁵⁴⁵

Yet, Kennedy first offered him two jobs in the State Department, far from the White House. While this might indicate the President-elect's initial enthusiasm for Foggy Bottom, Bundy was depressed that he seemed to be saddled with more administrative posts.⁵⁴⁶ He regretfully turned down the President-elect. Kennedy, desperate to keep Bundy, finally offered him the SANSA job. Bundy accepted, though admitted the job itself remained vague.⁵⁴⁷ He later admitted he got the job because "bringing in a Harvard dean-type, who was an ex-Republican, [looked better than] other people who might have been better qualified."⁵⁴⁸ None of this is to say Kennedy did not see something in Bundy he thought would be useful.⁵⁴⁹ Despite all the fanfare that accompanied his appointment, he was one of the last senior officials appointed. Kennedy and Democrats wanted Bundy in the administration. He was not the first choice for SANSA. That he ended up in the White House seems to have been a happy coincidence for those planning the transition rather than the result of deliberate thought. There was a job opening that needed to be filled and he needed a job in the realm of national security. In late 1960, the job of Special Assistant for National Security Affairs proved hard to fill. Its future seemed

⁵⁴⁵ Bowles to Kennedy "State Department Personnel Suggestions" 12/1/60, Chester Bowles Papers, Part V, Series I, Box 210, Kennedy, John F. 11/60-12/60, YU; Nitze handwritten notes. PN, Box 141, Folder 10, Political Files, Presidential Campaign: 1960 Notes, LoC. Bundy's name also appears in a section of Nitze's notes on DoD staffing under "Top". Whether this means Secretary of Defense or not is unclear, but the other names listed are fairly well known individuals like John McCloy, William Foster, and William Draper, all of whom could potentially be candidates for Secretary of Defense.

⁵⁴⁶ Bird, p. 152-153.

⁵⁴⁷ Ivo Daalder and I.M. Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office* (Simon and Schuster, 2009), p. 16.

⁵⁴⁸ Bundy OH 1, p. 15.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

uncertain and, as Paul Nitze knew, it was not the obvious choice for someone with ambition.

Conclusion

The American presidential transition is a rushed process: a candidate has roughly twelve weeks—seventy three days in 1960—to form an entire administration and then has a few hours to transfer power.⁵⁵⁰ In many respects, the 1960 transition was the first modern transition. The Hoover-Roosevelt transition, thirty years before, bore little relevance to the world of 1961. The Roosevelt-Truman transition was sudden, and little changed between presidents. The 1952 transition was widely seen as poorly managed and “irrelevant” to the problems of 1960.⁵⁵¹ In 1960, however, officials feared what might happen during the transition. A consultant working with the Brookings Institution wrote that the transition was “[p]robably the most vulnerable transition of Administration in U.S. history for the reason that the continental U.S. has never been more exposed to enemy attack as she will be in early 1961.”⁵⁵² Others feared that the Soviets might use the

⁵⁵⁰ Memorandum 1, 10/26/60, Study of the 1960-61 Presidential Transition. Entry 26, Box 44, File 5, Brookings Institution Archives; Richard Neustadt, *Notes on the White House Staff Under President Truman*, 6/53, p. 51, Laurin Henry Papers Box 1, Supporting Tabs or Memos (Neustadt, Belsley, Henry, & Gange) (1), DDEL.

⁵⁵¹ Richard Neustadt, *Notes on the White House Staff Under President Truman*, 6/53, p. 51, Laurin Henry Papers Box 1, Supporting Tabs or Memos (Neustadt, Belsley, Henry, & Gange) (1), DDEL. Perhaps the two exceptions to this were the efforts between the Treasury Department and their Eisenhower replacements and Robert Cutler, who spent a fair amount of time in the White House, to the approval of Truman’s staff, before Eisenhower was inaugurated. Ibid and Meeting of Advisory Committee on the 1960-61 Presidential Transition, undated, Entry 86, Director’s Correspondence August-October 1960, Brookings Institute Archives.

⁵⁵² “Notes for Transition Study” 10/9/60, Entry 86, Director’s Correspondence August-October 1960, and Donovan Yeuell to George Graham, 10/10/60, Entry 86, Director’s Correspondence August-October 1960, Brookings Institute Archives.

turmoil created by the change in the administration to act against the US.⁵⁵³ One Democrat even suggested that the danger was so grave, that Kennedy “could and should take...part in decisions before the inauguration.”⁵⁵⁴ Richard Neustadt had a much grimmer prediction:

We deal as we have done in terms of cold war, of an arms race, of a competition overseas, of danger from inflation, and of damage from recession. We skirmish on the frontiers of the Welfare State and in the borderlands of race relations...Everything remains unfinished business...There even has been continuity in the behavior of our electorate; [a] “stalemate” in our partisan alignment...[W]hat distinguishes mid-century can be put very briefly: emergencies in policy and with politics as usual. “Emergency” describes mid-century conditions only by the standards of the past. By present standards what would once have been emergencies are now commonplace...In an era of the Cold War we have practiced “peacetime” politics. What else could we have done? Cold War is not a “crisis”; it becomes a way of life.⁵⁵⁵

One newspaper columnist wrote, “This country cannot afford an interregnum in the handling of its foreign policy.”⁵⁵⁶ Arthur Schlesinger later complained of this period that, “the obsession with crisis, the illusion of world leadership, the obligations of duty so cunningly intertwined with the opportunities of power carried forward the process...of elevating ‘national security’ into a supreme value.” That, in turn created a “mystique of national security.”⁵⁵⁷ The obsession with crisis and the mystique of national security, propelled the thinking of the incoming administration.

By contrast to these pronouncements, Henry Jackson seemed to have a much happier second half of 1960. As the party’s chair, he oversaw the election of John F.

⁵⁵³ Meeting of Advisory Committee on the 1960-61 Presidential Transition, undated, Entry 86, Director’s Correspondence August-October 1960, Brookings Institute Archives.

⁵⁵⁴ Meeting of Advisory Committee on the 1960-61 Presidential Transition, undated, Entry 86, Director’s Correspondence August-October 1960, Brookings Institute Archives.

⁵⁵⁵ Neustadt, *Presidential*, p. 17-18.

⁵⁵⁶ George E. Sokolsky, “These Days...A Rule for the Strong” *Washington Post* 6/29/60

⁵⁵⁷ Arthur Schlesinger, *The Imperial Presidency* (Mariner, 2010), p. 167-168.

Kennedy. The SNPM cast him as one of the leading foreign policy lights in the Democratic Party. Moreover, that body's work had swayed the opinion of Democrats and many Republicans that massive changes were needed in the management of national security. Behind Jackson's public victories, however, were at least three critical losses. The first was Jackson's loss of the vice presidency. Second, the transition team plundered several members of Jackson's staff for duties in the new Administration. He lost one of his most trusted lieutenants and several other aides to the incoming Administration. Like Nitze, however, few of Jackson's allies ended up in positions of high power in the Administration. Robert Tufts received no appointment, and Dorothy Fosdick, briefly courted for a White House job, decided not to leave Jackson's staff.⁵⁵⁸ This cost Jackson influence in the White House. Lastly, Jackson suffered a loss of leverage. He might have felt Kennedy was a close friend, but that friendship grew more distant once Kennedy entered office.

More importantly, but perhaps unwittingly, Jackson oversaw not only the destruction of Eisenhower's system, but also the dismemberment of the most concrete attempt at reform. Of course, some of this was a self-inflicted wound by Eisenhower's staffers themselves. The Democrats, Jackson included had an idea of how national security should be managed, but it remained vague—not that anyone expected a complete plan in place before Kennedy took office. Even Eisenhower's system took time to coalesce. But at this moment, when the Cold War threatened to go hot, the underpinnings of the management of national security had been ripped out. Even to those high in power,

⁵⁵⁸ McGeorge Bundy Interview, DS, Accen #4056003, UW.

it seemed unclear what would take their place. Surveying the political wreckage of 1960 Richard Neustadt wrote, “Truman...and Eisenhower...were the first two who had to fashion presidential influence out of mid-century materials. Presumably they will not be the last.”⁵⁵⁹ Neustadt was right, but the learning curve was steep.

⁵⁵⁹ Neustadt, *Presidential*, p. 18

Chapter 4: McGeorge Bundy's "Transitionitis"

If McGeorge Bundy had a rough time getting a job in the Kennedy Administration, the first few months of 1961 were hardly kinder to the former Harvard dean. A little over two weeks after agreeing to serve, McGeorge Bundy arrived at the EOB for a series of meetings with Gordon Gray and OCB Executive Secretary Bromley Smith. Gray explained how the NSC system operated and took pains to emphasize that the system did, in fact, work. He warned Bundy against abolishing the OCB by asking Bundy how he would respond to calls to abolish the Faculty of Arts and Science at Harvard? Bundy laughed and replied he would answer, "What have I been doing for the last several years?"⁵⁶⁰ The interaction between Gray and Bundy is representative of the early months of the Kennedy/Bundy NSC operations. Publically, they tore down the structures that supported and sustained Eisenhower's NSC. Privately, they kept most of the overall functions, but transferred them to a more informal system. It was a sprawling system and Bundy struggled with his own role in it. This was both the function of getting used to a new job and because, on Richard Neustadt's suggestion, Kennedy had combined in Bundy's job the responsibilities of six members of the outgoing administration.

To wrap so many jobs into one was a decision easily made given Henry Jackson's findings and the recommendations of Richard Neustadt and Clark Clifford. But managing the remaining constellation of foreign policy figures was a more complex issue. Neustadt and Clifford both, in their own way, punted that question. Jackson, via his own

⁵⁶⁰ Gray to Eisenhower, undated, FRUS Vol. XXV, Organization of Foreign Policy; Information Policy; United Nations; Scientific Matters, 1961-1963, Doc. 3.

suggestions and the SNPM's studies, slowly rolled out his own vision. Kennedy was confronted by the problems of a short transition period and having to organizing on the fly. Moreover, despite all the talk of organization, he cared less about academic debates over theoretical concepts of organization and more about finding a system that worked. The Administration gambled on an organizational set up that was found wanting in the decision to launch the Bay of Pigs invasion. Years later, Bromley Smith said that Bundy suffered from "transitionitis" during this period.⁵⁶¹ If so, it was a disease that afflicted many other members of the White House, State Department, CIA, and Pentagon, hobbling even the most talented members of the new Administration.

Deconstructing the NSC

The four hallmarks of the Eisenhower NSC system were the PB, the OCB, the NSC itself, and Eisenhower's relationship with his SANSAs and other national security assistants. Kennedy made significant changes, but did not raze this setup completely. As Richard Neustadt admitted, many of these interagency committees were merely "driven underground" instead of being abolished.⁵⁶² This gives a relatively clear view of what Kennedy believed to be the lessons of both the Eisenhower years and Jackson's study. It also shows a president far more cautious about both destroying what came before and unduly empowering the White House. Eisenhower's SANSAs played a range of roles in

⁵⁶¹ John Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, (W. Murrow and Co, 1991), p. 104 and Bromley K. Smith, *Organizational History of the National Security Council During the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations* (National Security Council, 1988), p. 90.

⁵⁶² Richard Neustadt to David Bell, 10/18/61, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 63, Neustadt, Richard, 1960-1968, UW.

that administration: from Robert Cutler's manager to Gordon Gray's policy executor. Each of them, however, could not do their job without knowing what the President thought. In the first four or five months of the Kennedy Administration, however, Bundy saw the President infrequently. Part of this was because Bundy was still something of an outsider in the close-knit Kennedy group. More practically, however, Bundy sometime could not find the President. Kennedy's schedule fell into disarray from the start since many officials had been granted permission to come in whenever they pleased. In warmer weather Kennedy avoided the constant interruptions by working in the White House garden.⁵⁶³ While Kennedy still read Bundy's memos, those did not take the place of personal contact with his SANSAs.⁵⁶⁴

In addition to meeting infrequently with his SANSAs, he held fewer meetings of the NSC proper. Neither Kennedy nor Bundy enjoyed large, formal meetings, and Kennedy's packed daily schedule gave him an excuse to let the time between meetings grow after the first meeting on February 1, 1961.⁵⁶⁵ Whereas Eisenhower met with the NSC approximately every week, Kennedy met with the NSC roughly every month, though more frequently in his first year in office.⁵⁶⁶ Kennedy believed his frequent, smaller, meetings with advisors made up for fewer large meetings. Because Eisenhower made many decisions with smaller groups of advisors outside the council, Kennedy's operating style does not actually seem that unusual. If one views the NSC as a way for

⁵⁶³ Bundy to Kennedy, White House Organization, 5/16/61 FRUS Vol. XXV, Organization of Foreign Policy; Information Policy; United Nations; Scientific Matters, 1961-9163, Doc. 13.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁶ Eisenhower had 343 meetings over 416 weeks. Kennedy had 45 meetings over 148 weeks. He had 25 meetings in 1961 but only 12 in 1962 and 1963.

Eisenhower to disseminate information and orders to the cabinet, Kennedy replicated that via a series of National Security Action Memoranda (NSAM). Not that Kennedy always hated longer meetings. During the Cuban Missile Crisis he used the Executive Committee of the National Security Council, or ExCom, to advise him. The ExCom continued to meet until March 1963, at which point Bundy wrote Kennedy that these big meetings “have not proved effective at all, except during the extraordinary week of October 16-22 [sic].”⁵⁶⁷

Kennedy also buried the PB and OCB. The PB never suffered the same level of hatred as was directed at the OCB, but it had few enthusiastic defenders. Current and former members of the PB staff admitted to incoming officials that it did not function as intended.⁵⁶⁸ Bundy first replaced it with an informal weekly luncheon group called the Planning Group. Like the PB, the Planning Group discussed events and contemplated contingency plans, just in a more informal atmosphere.⁵⁶⁹ Bundy lost interest in it after about six months.⁵⁷⁰ He was not alone. One staffer wrote, “these meetings seem awfully

⁵⁶⁷ Bundy memo quoted in Smith, *Organizational History of the National Security Council During the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations* (National Security Council, 1988), p. 50. Not surprisingly, Eisenhower thoroughly disagreed with these changes. When CIA Director John McCone visited the ex-President during the Crisis, Eisenhower told McCone that he felt the administration should hold more regular NSC meetings and even went so far as to suggest resurrecting the entire Eisenhower-NSC system.

⁵⁶⁸ See, for instance, Komer to Bundy 1/13/61, NSF Box 321, Staff Memoranda, Robert Komer, 1/1/61-3/14/61, JFK; C.E. Johnson to Bundy “Possible Actions to Simplify Policy Planning and Operations Coordination in the National Security Area” n.d., NSF Box 283, NSC Organization and Administration 1/26/61-1/30/61, JFK.

⁵⁶⁹ George McGhee from the Policy Planning Council, Paul Nitze and William Bundy from the Defense Department, and Roger Hilsman from State’s Intelligence and Research department were among the attendees. Bundy Memo, National Security Planning Problems, 2/24/61, NSF 442, Policy Planning Group, 1961-1963, JFK.

⁵⁷⁰ Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation* (Doubleday and Co, 1967), p. 23 and Walt Rostow, *Diffusion of Power* (Macmillan, 1972), p. 169.

disorganized. Though pleasant, are they really worth the candle?”⁵⁷¹ While the Group survived at a very low level, the archival record supporting its existence is threadbare.⁵⁷² Walt Rostow, then in the State Department, tried to revive the idea in late 1963, but Bundy shot it down. He worried it would become just “another large scale NSC type paper mill exercise which would inevitably waste a lot of time.”⁵⁷³

If there was one thing that Jackson, Nelson Rockefeller, and many members of the Eisenhower Administration could agree on, it was that the OCB seemed useless in its current state. Not surprisingly, Kennedy formally abolished it soon after entering office. Yet as he held fewer NSC meetings and Bundy all but abolished the PB, many in the Administration seemed to want an OCB-like coordinating body. At the very least, this suggests that Eisenhower’s belief in the principles of the organization was correct, even if his unwillingness to change it in light of its dysfunction was questionable. The fact is that by 1961 the sprawling organs dealing with foreign affairs proved difficult to oversee, let alone coordinate. That was not all: Kennedy found the job of the president overwhelming in general. With so much riding on each decision, and a feeling that decisions were necessary at every minute to keep the nation afloat, Kennedy teetered on the “edge of

⁵⁷¹ Komer to Rostow 10/19/61, NSF 442 Policy Planning Group, 1961-1963 [White House Memoranda], JFK.

⁵⁷² Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, p. 23; Rostow, *Diffusion of Power*, p. 169. Hilsman and Rostow both mention these meetings lasted from 1961 until at least 1963.

⁵⁷³ Komer to Rostow 11/8/63, NSF 442, Policy Planning Group, 1961-1963 [White House Memoranda], JFK. Bundy’s other attempt to replicate the PB, a deputies meeting, also failed. In mid-1962, he formed the NSC Standing Group. This group, led by him, was primarily comprised of the second-in-commands of the State and Defense Departments and other officials Bundy thought necessary. Twice Bundy began having meetings with this group—first in June 1962 and again in April 1963, right after Kennedy stopped EXCOM meetings—and twice the Standing Group met for a few months and then stopped meeting because Bundy did not find it a useful forum for decision-making. Smith, p. 51-53.

irritability.”⁵⁷⁴ As Neustadt detailed in *Presidential Power*, the President’s word alone was rarely enough to get the job done.

During the transition period Rostow, serving as Bundy’s deputy, encouraged Kennedy to devolve the OCB’s functions of policy coordination and implementation to the State Department. This fit quite well with Jackson’s belief that the State Department, rather than the White House, should handle most foreign policy issues. In the early months of the Administration many topics, like Latin America, Berlin, and Laos, were overseen by State Department run “Task Forces.” These fit a familiar pattern for many Administration officials. During the transition period, Kennedy’s team organized topic-specific “task forces” to summarize issues for Kennedy.⁵⁷⁵ These task forces served two purposes. First, they screened possible job candidates, and twenty-four task force members eventually took posts within the administration.⁵⁷⁶ Many of these officials had also participated in Nelson Rockefeller’s similarly organized study task forces just a few years earlier. Second, they provided Kennedy and his incoming team of advisors a detailed analysis and critique of current US policies. Over 100 people contributed to these reports, and while their reviews had critics—a few State Department officials criticized them as being neither factual nor realistic—they none-the-less gave Kennedy an appraisal of what he would be confronted with in January 1961.⁵⁷⁷ In fact, this process might be seen as Kennedy’s equivalent of Eisenhower’s “Project Solarium” on an even grander scale, given that Kennedy employed six times as many consultants in his reviews

⁵⁷⁴ Jeremi Suri, *The Impossible Presidency* (Basic Books, 2017), p. 185 and 195.

⁵⁷⁵ Hess, *Organizing*, p. 87.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 87.

⁵⁷⁷ David T. Stanley, *Changing Administrations* (Brookings, 1965), p. 10-12.

compared to Eisenhower's 1953 study. In that process, Eisenhower had wanted to develop a top down strategy for the management of foreign policy. Kennedy, by contrast, used the task forces to develop a bottom up approach that more properly fit his management style. These task force reports allowed administration officials to calibrate America's response to various problems, with tools ranging from information activities and foreign aid to military involvement. It may not have been an imposing singular statement developing an overarching national strategy, like an NSC-68 type exercise, but it helped administration officials frame their initial approach to foreign policy.

By employing these, there was a continuity of service: officials who had worked on the transition task forces often found themselves working on the same subjects in State's task forces. Bundy described these groups as "not [ones] in which everything is decided by vote, and still less a place in which unanimous concurrence is required for every action. [They] should be an instrument of cooperation and coordination."⁵⁷⁸ Because each committee was led by a chairman, Bundy hoped to avoid another problem seen during the 1950s. The proliferation of committees often seemed to rob anyone of real power or, more importantly, responsibility. Bundy, therefore, proposed that "the man in charge should be the chairman and his decisions should stand unless they are successfully challenged through appropriate channels to the Secretary of State or the President. The office would have authority to coordinate action in the field."⁵⁷⁹ [See Figure 3, p. 188]

⁵⁷⁸ Memo from Bundy to Merchant and Nitze 1/30/61, Doc 6, FRUS Vol. XXV.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

Who would these chairmen be? Kennedy said that he expected the State Department, specifically the Assistant Secretaries, to oversee these groups.⁵⁸⁰ Kennedy added that “[w]e of course expect that the policy of the White House will be the policy of the Executive Branch as a whole, and we shall take such steps as are needed to ensure this result.”⁵⁸¹ Kennedy and Bundy envisioned that orders would be outlined in NSAMs with coordination done via the Task Forces. For Kennedy, even the name was important: both NSAM and Task Force felt far more purposeful than Eisenhower’s “boards” and “committees.”⁵⁸²

The idea seemed to address the most significant issues within the old OCB. Yet it had no more success. The Task Force idea eventually failed for three reasons. First, one of the critiques of the OCB was that its subcommittees seemed to stay in existence far past their usefulness. By contrast, Kennedy’s task forces were designed to be disbanded as soon as the crisis or situation they oversaw ended. Some situations, however, like Berlin and Laos, evolved rather than ended. Thus, they stayed in existence as long as their OCB predecessors. Second, the task forces, unlike the OCB boards, were supposed to be small in size. They rarely were in practice. The Berlin Task Force, for instance, had roughly 30 members, judged unwieldy, by 1962.⁵⁸³ Third, some felt that instead of cleaning up the chain of command, the task forces instead made a muddle of management. Former TVA chief David Lilienthal, for example, turned down a job offer

⁵⁸⁰ “Statement by the President Upon Signing Order Abolishing the Operations Coordinating Board” 2/19/61, *Public Papers of the President: Public Papers of the President: John F. Kennedy January 20, 1961-December 31, 1961* (GPO, 1962).

⁵⁸¹ Ibid

⁵⁸² Smith, p. 21.

⁵⁸³ Monterieff J. Spear Oral History Interview, 4/6/93, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, p. 9.

for this reason. In early 1961, Undersecretary of State Chester Bowles asked Lilienthal to become Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America. But, Bowles added, Lilienthal would not run the Latin American task force. That would fall to Adolf Berle. Lilienthal questioned Berle's role, saying that "this would be a most difficult administrative set up.... As for the administrative problem of having Adolf Berle as Coordinator somehow 'over' me, this is a serious fogging on responsibilities."⁵⁸⁴ At the very least the task force concept shows the limits of institutional learning. It tried to address most of the critiques of the OCB and a major tenet of Jackson's investigation: that the State Department should run foreign policy. The initial results of the Task Forces clearly demonstrated that true reform was more complex than even the experts anticipated.

Bundy constantly worked "to hold [State] or the other departments responsible to force them to coordinate and come forward with policy."⁵⁸⁵ Responsibility is the key word in this sentence. Several weeks before the Bay of Pigs, Bundy wrote to Kennedy complaining that, when it came to coordinating policy, "[w]e [have] working groups with nobody in particular in charge, but we [do not have] clearly focused responsibility."⁵⁸⁶ He told Robert Kennedy that, ideally, he believed the State Department should coordinate policy between the departments unless there were compelling reasons not to do so.⁵⁸⁷ The problem was that Bundy felt "State is only beginning to seek good organizational forms for this responsibility, and it has nowhere near the group of topflight men it would need

⁵⁸⁴ Diary entries for 2/6/61 and 2/7/61, DL, Diary 1, Box 205, PU.

⁵⁸⁵ Smith OHP.

⁵⁸⁶ Bundy to Kennedy, "Crisis Command in Washington" 4/4/61, NSF 405, Memos to the President, 3/1/61-4/4/61

⁵⁸⁷ Bundy Draft to RFK, no date, NSF Box 405, Memos to the President, 4/5/61-5/5/61, JFK.

to do the job.”⁵⁸⁸ He wondered if State could ever fulfill this mission.⁵⁸⁹ This attitude was nothing new: in fact Bundy’s father had expressed the same concerns during a 1948 review of the State Department.⁵⁹⁰ Bundy outlined his reservations to Kennedy. He told the President he felt that many State Department officials were too busy with conflicting obligations. He also believed that the excessive bureaucracy of the Eisenhower years made them unused to “the acceptance of individual executive leadership...[and that] no one person felt a continuing clear responsibility.”⁵⁹¹ In fact, Bundy thought the two most effective Task Force leaders were Adolf Berle and Dean Acheson, men long retired from government, but temporarily brought back to the Department in an advisory capacity.⁵⁹² The Task Forces would, for the most part, be a victim of the Bay of Pigs: a novel concept in theory, but one that failed in practice.⁵⁹³

Dean Rusk, Chester Bowles, and the State Department

If one were to boil Henry Jackson’s philosophy down to two sentences, they would read something like this: “The excessive and counterproductive meddling of the White House mangled American foreign policy and national security. The easiest solution was to have a strong, competent, Secretary of State and State Department both

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁹ Smith OH, p. 5.

⁵⁹⁰ CFR Meeting on First Hoover Commission, PU

⁵⁹¹ Bundy to Kennedy, “Crisis Command in Washington” 4/4/61, NSF 405, Memos to the President, 3/1/61-4/4/61, JFK. Samuel Belk agreed with this view of State saying that members of the Department often felt “If it’s not in your job description, you’re not responsible for it.” Belk OH 2, p. 43.

⁵⁹² Bundy to Kennedy, “Crisis Command in Washington” 4/4/61, NSF 405, Memos to the President, 3/1/61-4/4/61, JFK.

⁵⁹³ Bromley Smith to Bundy 6/26/61, NSF Box 283, NSC Organization and Administration 5/5/61-7/25/61, JFK.

advise the president and manage policy.” In retrospect, Dean Rusk does not seem a good fit in light of these sentiments. Though he was the second longest serving Secretary of State in US history, the contemporary assessments of him do not make him seem like a particularly successful or powerful figure.⁵⁹⁴

There is, however, significant evidence that Kennedy wanted a strong Secretary of State and State Department. The President, of course, still wanted to make many of the important decisions, but that did not mean he wanted a weakened Foggy Bottom. In January 1960 at the National Press Club Kennedy stated that, “It is the president alone who must make the major decisions of our foreign policy.”⁵⁹⁵ While one could interpret this to mean Kennedy wanted to design his own foreign policy—at the expense of his Secretary of State—this statement might be read in two other ways. First, it is an obvious statement of fact: even John Foster Dulles would have admitted as much. Second, it can be read as a response to Eisenhower’s form of decision-making: the President, not a committee, made the ultimate decision. Whatever the case, Kennedy privately told his brother that he wanted his Secretary of State to be someone “wise in counsel, persuasive on the Hill, and effective in modernizing what he regarded as an unduly passive and conservative foreign service.”⁵⁹⁶

Rusk, admittedly, was not Kennedy’s first choice as Secretary of State. Kennedy initially hoped to appoint William Fulbright. But Fulbright’s support for segregation destroyed his chances. Kennedy apparently also considered Bundy, Averell Harriman,

⁵⁹⁴ Robert Dallek, *An Unfinished Life* (Little, Brown, and Co, 2003), p. 315 and Preston, *The War Council*, p. 44.

⁵⁹⁵ 1/14/60 Kennedy National Press Club Statement Transcript, American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25795>

⁵⁹⁶ Arthur Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy* (Houghton Mifflin, 2012), p. 222.

and Chester Bowles. He decided that Bundy was too young, Harriman too old, and Bowles too far to the left. Dean Acheson pushed for Paul Nitze—though both quickly agreed that Nitze was not ready for the job—but then recommended Rusk.⁵⁹⁷ Other prominent foreign policy experts, including Robert Lovett, Bowles, and Adlai Stevenson, not only supported Rusk’s candidacy but believed he would be a strong Secretary of State.⁵⁹⁸

Kennedy had only two short meetings with Rusk before the inauguration, but it seems fair to say that the President had confidence in Rusk.⁵⁹⁹ Charles Bartlett, a reporter with a close relationship with Kennedy later commented, “Rusk presented himself as a substantial man who was noncontroversial and was respected. He came from a good background [and] he knew the State Department.”⁶⁰⁰ A reporter noted that those skeptical of Rusk said others would take advantage of a vacuum in the field of foreign policy before noting, “Rusk is no vacuum.”⁶⁰¹ Rusk modeled himself on George Marshall’s secretary-ship, hardly known as a period of passivity at Foggy Bottom.⁶⁰² Arthur Schlesinger questioned “whether he has the inner confidence and security to make a fully effective Secretary” but considered him a sound addition to the administration.⁶⁰³ Whatever Rusk’s later faults, he seemed a good choice in December 1960. Indeed, when

⁵⁹⁷ Dean Acheson oral history interview with Lucius Battle 4/27/64, JFKLOHP, p.6.

⁵⁹⁸ Dallek, *Unfinished*, p. 315.

⁵⁹⁹ Francis Loewenheim. “Dean Rusk: Diplomacy of Principle” *The Diplomats* G. Craig and F. Loewenheim, eds (Princeton UP, 1993), p. 506.

⁶⁰⁰ *The Kennedy Presidency* K.W. Thompson ed. (University Press of America, 1985), p. 18.

⁶⁰¹ Michael J. O’Neill, “The Quiet Diplomat: Dean Rusk” in *The Kennedy Circle* Lester Tanzer ed. (Luce, 1961), p. 116.

⁶⁰² Francis Loewenheim. “Dean Rusk: Diplomacy of Principle” *The Diplomats* G. Craig and F. Loewenheim, eds (Princeton UP, 1993), p. 506.

⁶⁰³ Schlesinger to Kennedy, 11/14/60, in *The Letters of Arthur Schlesinger* A. Schlesinger and S. Schlesinger eds. (Random House, 2013), p. 234.

one considers Rusk's earlier tenure in State, as liaison to the UN and then Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs during the Korean War, he entered office with far more actual Cold War experience than either Bundy or Robert McNamara.⁶⁰⁴ In addition to this experience, Rusk had run the Rockefeller Foundation during the 1950s and served on Nelson Rockefeller's study group, where he dealt with issues of both foreign policy and government organization. Even if Kennedy's enthusiasm for Rusk waned over the course of his presidency, there is no concrete evidence that Kennedy ever seriously considered replacing him.⁶⁰⁵

In an April 1960 *Foreign Affairs*, article Rusk laid out how he saw the organization of foreign policy. He believed the President must be in charge and that, while the Secretary of State should take an active role, the buck stopped at the White House.⁶⁰⁶ In part this was a response to what he saw as John Foster Dulles' overly aggressive interpretation of the Secretary's job, though he did not name Dulles since the two had been close. Rusk probably did not mean that the Secretary of State should not have power. But it suggests that he, like many Democrats and Republicans, believed a lack of Oval Office leadership created a dangerous vacuum in the policy process.

As important as the relationship between the President and the Secretary was,

⁶⁰⁴ In his memoirs Roger Hilsman downplayed this experience by noting that a reporter once commented "There are two facts about Dean Rusk that are revealing... The first is that he was Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs during the Korean War. The second is that no one even remembers it." Roger Hilsman, p. 43. This anecdote clearly resonated with some: Chester Bowles also borrowed this comment when writing his memoirs. Chester Bowles, *Promises to Keep* (Harper and Row, 1971), p. 301n1.

⁶⁰⁵ Francis Loewenheim. "Dean Rusk: Diplomacy of Principle" *The Diplomats* G. Craig and F. Loewenheim, eds (Princeton UP, 1993), p. 506. Bundy personally said that he felt Kennedy was considering replacing Rusk, but agreed that the evidence was too thin for real speculation. Bundy OH 1, p. 17.

⁶⁰⁶ Dean Rusk, "The President" *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 38 no. 3 (April 1960), p. 354-355, 362.

equally important was how the new Secretary would reinvigorate the State Department. The 1950s had not been an easy decade for the State Department. Dulles might have been one of the more commanding Secretaries of State in US history, but his passion for the issues did not extend to the administration of the Department.⁶⁰⁷ Dorothy Fosdick wrote a 1955 *New York Times Magazine* article that called attention to some of the issues facing the Department. While she did not overtly attack Dulles for his style of management, she did criticize him for empowering a McCarthy ally who ran the internal security division of the Department.⁶⁰⁸ Aggressive security measures, supported by Dulles, drained the morale and confidence of the staff.⁶⁰⁹ In particular, the Far Eastern Bureau, manned by “China Hands,” suffered savage attacks at the hands of Joseph McCarthy. The Bureau received no support from higher-ranking officials. Its long-standing expertise evaporated as personnel resigned under McCarthy’s condemnations. These attacks also caused many potential candidates to question whether they wanted to be Foreign Service Officers (FSO). As one State Department employee mused, “[i]t is still prudent for anyone who enters the Foreign Service also to know another trade.”⁶¹⁰

Others in the Department suffered from the “Lavender Scare” as McCarthyites turned their focus to gays and lesbians working in the government. When Stewart Alsop asked a cab driver what was wrong with the State Department the driver responded, “Fruits and treachers [sic]. That’s what this place is full of.”⁶¹¹ Indeed, while the “Lavender Scare” might not have been as well publicized as the “Red Scare,” far more

⁶⁰⁷ Stuart, p. 246.

⁶⁰⁸ Dorothy Fosdick, “For the Foreign Service—Help Wanted” *New York Times Magazine*, 11/20/55, p. 13.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13-14.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14 and 18.

⁶¹¹ Stewart Alsop, “The Trouble with the State Department” *Saturday Evening Post*, 3/3/62.

Department employees seem to have been purged on suspicion of homosexuality than on suspicion of Communist sympathies.⁶¹² Though historians often focus on the high-ranking victims of these purges, most of those dismissed were lower-level staff. These two witch-hunts caused State Department officials to worry about its public image. With mixed success, they attempted to project a more masculine image for the Department.⁶¹³

Employee morale during the Dulles years suffered for other reasons, as well. Reform attempts effectively destroyed the difference between the Home Service—officials who spent their careers in Washington—and the Foreign Service. Long time Department FSO Charles Bohlen felt this further undermined collective morale, forcing some Home Service members to leave the Department while others were obligated to take overseas positions for which they had neither the training nor the desire.⁶¹⁴ In addition, in some of the geographic bureaus, the veteran personnel who had served through the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s began to retire.⁶¹⁵ Others simply left: in the first year of the Eisenhower administration alone 142 FSOs retired or resigned, and by 1954

⁶¹² David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (U of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 76. Approximately 1,000 employees were dismissed over charges of homosexuality during the 1950s and 1960s. As early as 1952, only 14 of the 147 fired employees had been accused of being communists and, by 1954, two employees had been dismissed over charges of homosexuality for every one dismissed over fears of communists sympathies. Johnson generally believed that this ratio went even higher after 1954.

⁶¹³ Ibid, p. 76. Johnson points out that the State Department's defense was made more difficult by the fact it had no domestic constituency to gather support from and that the argument against the Department often lacked in logic to an extreme extent: an effete, ineffective, and intellectual group of diplomats who could not negotiate successfully with the Soviets had, somehow, managed to gain complete control of US foreign policy apparatus. Ibid, p. 70 and 71.

⁶¹⁴ J. Robert Moskin, *American Statecraft: The Story of the U.S. Foreign Service* (Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Press, 2013), p. 457-458.

⁶¹⁵ Kenneth Weisbrode, *The Atlantic Century: Four Generations of Extraordinary Diplomats Who Forged America's Vital Alliance With Europe* (Da Capo Press, 2009), p. 157.

the number of FSOs was at its lowest point in five years.⁶¹⁶ Debates even raged over what basic training an FSO should receive. As Fosdick noted, they “emphasized the need for specialists—economic, labor, agriculture, commercial, promotional, area-language, and administration. But no narrow specialist could possibly be an acute observer of the ways of other countries, or communicate effectively with other Governments on complex political issues or give proper advice on such issues.”⁶¹⁷ In a telling anecdote, long-serving State official U. Alexis Johnson recalled his efforts to recruit staff members in 1961. He felt that “we could not locate a single Foreign Service Officer who was qualified for” the State Department’s Bureau of Political and Military Affairs.⁶¹⁸ This underscored Fosdick’s own criticism that the Department lacked the “generalists” who could think in wider terms. The State Department still contained a vast wealth of knowledge: Kennedy had no problem calling low ranking country Desk Officers when he had questions, and Bundy recruited some of his most trusted staff from the Department’s ranks.⁶¹⁹ But a decade of mismanagement, criticism, and attrition had taken a toll.

Into this milieu stepped Rusk and his new deputy, Chester Bowles. Bowles’ post was a consolation prize for the New Dealer. Though Bowles initially believed that Kennedy would prove too conservative a candidate, he eventually gained enthusiasm for and endorsed the Senator from Massachusetts.⁶²⁰ While Kennedy denied him the post of Secretary, which Bowles fervently wanted, serving as Rusk’s second-in-command

⁶¹⁶ Fosdick, “For the Foreign Service”, p. 13.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid, p. 16.

⁶¹⁸ U. Alexis Johnson, *The Right Hand of Power* (Prentice-Hall, 1984), p. 318. Johnson said this revelation inspired him to later “develop such expertise within our own [State Department] ranks.” Ibid.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid, p. 317.

⁶²⁰ 12/31/60 Diary Entry, CB, Part V, Series I, Box 210, Diary Entry 1960, December, 31, YU.

seemed like a decent prize. Initially, Rusk gave Bowles wide authority over a variety of issues. One of Bowles main efforts was to oversee the appointment of ambassadors. He recommended 70% of those in office in 1961 be replaced.⁶²¹ In part this was a response to criticism of the ambassadors selected during the Eisenhower Administration, a group made up of political donors and outsiders instead of professionals.⁶²² Replacing some ambassadors upon changes in administration was nothing new, but Bowles' choices proved controversial among some Department veterans. Bowles' recruits were a diverse and qualified group, largely selected from the lower ranks of the Foreign Service or outside of government and with little regard for Department seniority.⁶²³ Bowles had little sympathy when certain FSOs objected to the youth of some of the incoming ambassadors.⁶²⁴ While Bowles justified his actions as recruiting based on talent, this proved to be the last straw for at least some long serving FSOs and hurt Department morale.⁶²⁵

Overall, however, many looked positively on Rusk's appointment. Rusk was seen as someone sympathetic to the Department and its personnel.⁶²⁶ The *New York Times* reported that "[t]hose who have worked with him or know him have been frankly 'biased in his favor' for Secretary of State."⁶²⁷ Representatives from all over the world praised his appointment, with one saying that Rusk and his team "was the strongest ever to take

⁶²¹ Chester Bowles Oral History Interview with Dennis J. O'Brien 7/1/70, p. 73, JFKL OHP [hereafter Bowles Interview 2] and Chester Bowles Oral History Interview with Robert R. Brooks 2/2/65, p. 22, JFKL OHP [hereafter Bowles Interview 1].

⁶²² Ernest Hauser "Meet the Ambassadors" *Saturday Evening Post* 6/29/57.

⁶²³ Ibid and Schaffer, *Chester Bowles: New Dealer in the Cold War* (Harvard UP, 1993), p. 189-190.

⁶²⁴ Bowles Interview 2, p. 76.

⁶²⁵ Schaffer, *Chester*, p. 191.

⁶²⁶ Hess, p. 82.

⁶²⁷ "'Man of a Million Ideas' Dean Rusk" *New York Times* 12/13/60

office in any country.”⁶²⁸ The *Times* admitted Kennedy would try to insert himself in the foreign policy process, but felt Rusk up to the challenge of balancing the President’s interest while maintaining his own powers. It noted that he was “a figure of tremendous ability, character and intellect, an excellent choice,” explaining that “the toughness of character that Mr. Rusk is reputed to have may be put to the test.”⁶²⁹

But the first few months of Dean Rusk’s tenure did little, at least at the highest levels, to change perceptions of the Department. Specifically, Rusk’s relationship with Bowles quickly deteriorated, damaging the Department. In large part this stemmed from the fact that Bowles never properly understood how Rusk expected him to function. Bowles expressed considerable enthusiasm for tearing down the restraining bureaucracy of the Dulles years and for rebuilding the Foreign Service and the Department generally.⁶³⁰ Although he did engage in policy formation, management was his main activity.⁶³¹ Rusk bristled at Bowles’ method of operation and Bowles objected to Rusk’s more timid approach to new policy ideas. The two even disagreed on Bowles’ mandate to organize the Department: Bowles believed a good department produced good ideas, organization be damned. Rusk believed a good department was organizationally efficient.⁶³² Neither man fostered a collegial atmosphere in the Department during these early months and the disharmony was clear at several levels: Rusk even reassigned the

⁶²⁸ “Rusk Team is Praised” *New York Times*, 12/18/60; “UN Envoy Hails Kennedy Choice” *New York Times* 12/18/60; “Tokyo is Pleased by Post for Rusk” *New York Times*, 12/15/60; “3 Choices Please Asia-Africa Bloc” *New York Times*, 12/13/60

⁶²⁹ “Kennedy’s State Department” *New York Times*, 12/13/60; “Foreign Policy: Interplay of President and Three Key Men to Shape U.S. Program Abroad” *New York Times* 12/18/60.

⁶³⁰ Bowles to Kennedy, “The Problems of a New Administration” 11/5/60, CB, Part V, Series I, Box 210, Kennedy, John F. 11/60-12/60, YU.

⁶³¹ Schaffer, p. 187.

⁶³² Schaffer, p. 197.

Department's spokesperson after less than a year, citing poor performance.⁶³³ George Ball, usually a Rusk defender, admitted the Secretary was a hard man to work for early in the administration.⁶³⁴ As for Bowles, it probably did not help that he occasionally went behind Rusk's back in his hiring practices. Twice, for example, he attempted to recruit David Lilienthal for service in the administration, but both times mentioned that Lilienthal should keep the ideas private because Bowles had not discussed them with Rusk.⁶³⁵ The feud ended only in the fall of 1961 when Kennedy reorganized the Department and made Bowles a roving ambassador. The largely meaningless position removed him from Washington, but the Department remained mired in discord. Richard Neustadt commented, "it [is] depressing to hear [people] worrying this month about the State Department organization and personalities in almost the same terms we used last May—and last February, for that matter."⁶³⁶

Whatever Rusk's other issues, it seems fair to say that Rusk and Bundy got along reasonably well. Rusk, a restrained man even at his most casual, did not feel Bundy was trying to take his job, figuratively or literally.⁶³⁷ Rusk joined the near-universal agreement that Bundy, despite his handling of the NSC or relations with Johnson and Kennedy, remained an honest broker.⁶³⁸ Bundy felt Rusk was able, if sometimes too cautious, but respected Kennedy's relationship with the Secretary.⁶³⁹ The poor

⁶³³ Pierre Salinger, *With Kennedy* (Doubleday, 1966), p. 37.

⁶³⁴ George Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern: Memoirs*. (W.W. Norton and Co, 1982), p. 169.

⁶³⁵ Manuscript journal entries for 2/6/61 and 4/21/61, DL, Box 205, PU.

⁶³⁶ Richard Neustadt to David Bell, 10/18/61, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 63, Neustadt, Richard, 1960-1968, UW.

⁶³⁷ Dean Rusk, *As I Saw It* (W.W. Norton and Co, 1990), p. 519.

⁶³⁸ Burke, p. 59-60.

⁶³⁹ Bundy OH 1, p. 17.

relationship between Rusk and Bowles derailed any attempts by either to impose order on or to reform the Department in the first nine or so months of the Administration. Whether a better-run State Department could have saved the Administration from the Bay of Pigs is unclear. But a better-managed Department could only have improved its efforts to advise Kennedy.

The System in Action-The Bay of Pigs

McGeorge Bundy might have ignored almost all of Gordon Gray's advice, but he heeded one part: he kept NSC's covert action committee, the so-called 5412 Committee, intact. Gray apparently begged Bundy—saying, as Bundy recalled, “I want you to promise me just one thing”—to keep the committee. He claimed, “if there's one group that can save your President from grief, this is the group that can do it.”⁶⁴⁰ Like so much regarding the NSC, Kennedy's approach masked a more conservative attitude to reorganization behind the facade of dramatic action. Kennedy initially disbanded Eisenhower's committee. He then created another committee, unofficially called the 5412 Committee, with a similar membership.⁶⁴¹ The main difference was that Kennedy played a key role on this committee: Eisenhower rarely met with his 5412 group since it allowed him plausible deniability. Kennedy, by contrast, played a far greater role in discussing operations.⁶⁴² Gray's lofty promises, however, proved hollow. Kennedy's experience

⁶⁴⁰ A.K. Nelson and H. Hecló interview with A. Goodpaster, A. Whitman, R. Saulnier, E. Staats, A. Burns, and G. Gray, 6/11/80, OH #508, DDEL OHP,

⁶⁴¹ William Daugherty, *Executive Secrets* (UP of Kansas, 2006), p. 151.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 151-152.

with the reformed 5412 Committee highlight the limits of Eisenhower's belief in organization. Committees alone will not save you.

Eisenhower's covert operations followed a similar pattern: use the CIA to arm and organize local forces. Then, with varying degrees of operational support, turn those local forces loose. In Iran and Guatemala, it worked. In Tibet and Indonesia, it failed. The plans for a Cuba operation began in this vein. Train a group of guerillas to sneak into Cuba to fight Castro. The plan, however, evolved from a small group to a full-scale conventional invasion. While the White House knew the attack would be large, they apparently still thought of it as, primarily, a guerilla assault. Nor were they aware that the CIA doubted whether its own plan would succeed.⁶⁴³ No one on the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) thought to tell the White House that they were so convinced of the operation's failure, that they essentially washed their hands of the operation and turned over full control to the CIA.⁶⁴⁴ Despite the Latin American Task Force, the 5412 Committee, and other interagency groups, White House officials failed to grasp the military's worry, the CIA's skepticism, or the plan's inherent problems.

One cannot blame this all on recalcitrant soldiers or useless committees. Many State, Defense, and White House officials endorsed the operation despite their own doubts.⁶⁴⁵ Kennedy agonized over the decision and expressed uncertainty even when confronted by near unanimous support for the operation. Those officials who argued against the invasion might have contributed to the President's angst over making the

⁶⁴³ James Rasenberger, *The Brilliant Disaster* (Simon and Schuster, 2011), p. 391, Robert Amory OH #1, JFKLOHP, p. 30-32 and Robert Amory OH #2, JFKLOHP, p. 6-7.

⁶⁴⁴ Rasenberger, p. 118-119 and Howard Jones, *The Bay of Pigs* (Oxford UP, 2008), p. 51. They, at best, felt it had a 30% chance of success.

⁶⁴⁵ Rasenberger, p. 160-161.

decision, but that certainly did not win the argument.⁶⁴⁶ Even if their advice did weigh on Kennedy, it is possible he himself might have found it hard to back down given the resources already allocated to the operation. Defeat may be an orphan, but the defeat at the Bay of Pigs still had many fathers. Attorney General Robert Kennedy seemed especially intent on discovering who was at fault. Chester Bowles observed that the President “was really quite shattered” and, for the first time, “faced a situation where his judgment had been mistaken, in spite of the fact that week after week of conferences had taken place before he gave the green light.”⁶⁴⁷ Many of the other advisors displayed what Bowles said was “an emotional reaction of a group of people who were not use to set backs [sic] or defeats and whose pride and confidence had been deeply wounded.”⁶⁴⁸ Yet groups like the 5412 Committee and the Latin America task force were designed to highlight disagreements and bring them to the president’s attention. The Bay of Pigs was both a human failure and an organizational failure.

The response to the debacle addressed both issues. Richard Neustadt later confessed that he feared his organizational recommendations deprived Kennedy of valuable information prior to the Bay of Pigs saying, “[w]e aimed at Eisenhower and hit

⁶⁴⁶ This being said, looking at the list of those who opposed the invasion also makes one understand why the President might have been hard pressed to embrace their view. Adlai Stevenson already had the reputation of being soft on Communism, and Chester Bowles was developing the same reputation and, some suspected, was responsible for the problems in the State Department. Kennedy did not consider Arthur Schlesinger a serious foreign policy advisor, despite what the Special Assistant might have thought of himself in early 1961. The Kennedy’s unwillingness to embrace the skepticism of George Smathers, William Fulbright, and Dean Acheson is harder to explain. These officials, however, were on the outside of the administration. Because it was so early in the Administration, Kennedy may have felt unable to overrule his own handpicked advisors, the CIA, and the military.

⁶⁴⁷ “Notes on the Cuban Crisis” 5/61, CB, Series III, Part XI, Box 392, Folder 154, Diary Entries, YU.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid.

Kennedy.”⁶⁴⁹ Bundy and others feared that dismantling the NSC had been premature.⁶⁵⁰ Kennedy brought in retired general Maxwell Taylor to help conduct a review. Taylor, like Eisenhower, thought better organization could solve most things.⁶⁵¹ Taylor’s suggestion bore a striking resemblance to Nelson’s Rockefeller’s PCG ideas from seven years earlier. What was needed was a new committee, led by a new presidential assistant, to oversee all aspects of the Cold War.⁶⁵² They would be assisted by a 24-hour nerve center in the White House called the “Cold War Indications Center” which would liaise with the rest of the government. Taylor said Kennedy’s preference for *ad hoc* groups led to a situation where “committees...come and go without building up experience...and accumulating knowledge.”⁶⁵³ He also suggested that Kennedy needed to think more deeply about a unifying national strategy as well as his own powers. The strategy critique was, in some respects, not new. Eisenhower’s lack of a national strategy was a common refrain from Jackson, Paul Nitze, Taylor and others. While they could all agree Kennedy was a change for the better, Taylor felt he could do more. As Taylor wrote, the US must “recognize that we are in a life and death struggle which we may be losing, and will lose unless we change our ways and marshal our resources with an intensity associated in the past only with times of war.”⁶⁵⁴ Taylor also recommended that Kennedy reexamine the “emergency powers of the President as to their adequacy to meet the developing

⁶⁴⁹ Daalder and Destler, *In the Shadow*, p. 21-22. Quoted from author’s interview with Neustadt.

⁶⁵⁰ Prados, *Keepers*, p. 104 and Bromley Smith, p. 35.

⁶⁵¹ Douglas Kinnard. *The Certain Trumpet* (Brassey’s, 1991), p. 55.

⁶⁵² This group, called the Strategic Resources Group, would replace the 5412 Committee and take over paramilitary planning and operations. It would not replace the NSC proper. The Council would remain, though it and the SANSA would have a much reduced role. “Memorandum No. 4” 6/13/61, NSF 61, Cuba, Subjects, Para-Military Study Group, Taylor Report, Part I, Memoranda 1-4, JFK.

⁶⁵³ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid.

situation” and that Kennedy should “link these remarks to...the need to set up a governmental machinery for better use of our Cold War assets.”⁶⁵⁵ The general thought it crucial that, once “any Cold War operations [was started, they] must be carried through to conclusion with the same determination as a military operation.”⁶⁵⁶

Kennedy did not dismiss these ideas out of hand. He even moved a large organizational chart based on Taylor’s recommendations to his bedroom, where it stayed for several months.⁶⁵⁷ Three years later, Bundy commented that Taylor’s larger concepts were probably unacceptable to Kennedy no matter how the general sold them. More committees with more staffers seemed pointless when so many committees had just failed. Bundy derisively referred to one proposed Taylor aide as a “Vice President for the Cold War.” He also noted that Taylor’s other problem was that his proposal contained three words Kennedy did not like: “Cold”, “War”, and “Strategy.”⁶⁵⁸ Kennedy asked former OCB staffer Karl Harr if better organization would have saved him. Harr admitted that Eisenhower’s set up would not have prevented such a problem.⁶⁵⁹ As Bromley Smith acknowledged, the “[l]ack of a formal national security system had little to do with [Kennedy’s decision]” and instead blamed what he termed “Transitionitis.”⁶⁶⁰ Bundy later agreed with this assessment.⁶⁶¹

In the short term, Kennedy felt there needed to be a culling of people, rather than simply a reorganization. The CIA was dangerously inexperienced at mounting such a

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁷ Bundy, OH 1, p. 23.

⁶⁵⁸ Bundy OH #1, JFKLOHP, p 23.

⁶⁵⁹ Prados, *Keepers*, p. 104 and Bromley K. Smith, p. 35.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid.

large and complex amphibious invasion. This could have been remedied by a greater involvement by the JCS, but the JCS had decided to defer to the CIA. The entire process was hamstrung by Kennedy's obsession with plausible deniability, practically impossible with an operation of this size and complexity.⁶⁶² Kennedy himself took the blame publically, while also exacting a high bureaucratic body count. Allen Dulles and his top aide at the CIA both resigned within a year. Of the four members of the JCS, two were gone by December 1961, another by December 1962, while Taylor became chairman. Kennedy also rearranged the State Department in November 1961 in the "The Thanksgiving Day Massacre." The most public victim was Chester Bowles. After Bowles publically criticized the invasion, Kennedy removed him from Foggy Bottom and into a sort of exile via his symbolic roving ambassadorship.

The discussions of organization and personnel changes, however, all mask a larger trend. Within the White House there was a feeling that the rest of the government, either by omission or commission, had betrayed the new President. Bundy defended his own actions. As he later told a reporter, "[w]e were just freshmen, and as a freshman you don't just go in and say, 'Dammit, Mr. President, you're not getting the right information.'"⁶⁶³ Kennedy and Bundy also made moves to bring the control of covert operations under the White House. The 5412 Committee, now called the Special Group, began to assert tighter management over programs, and its authorization was needed to commence any covert action. Robert Kennedy played a key role in the group, looking out

⁶⁶² F. Jones, p. 147-148.

⁶⁶³ "JFK's McGeorge Bundy" *Newsweek* 3/4/63, and Bird, *Color*, p. 198.

for his brother's best interests. In the end the Group did prove much more conservative in what it authorized, approving less than 20% of the covert operations recommended.⁶⁶⁴

Kennedy also reactivated the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB), an Eisenhower era-group of civilian officials who monitored intelligence matters for the President on a part-time basis. Though it lay dormant for the first few months of the Administration, the catastrophe in Cuba accelerated the reactivation.⁶⁶⁵ Kennedy even recruited Gordon Gray to serve.⁶⁶⁶ Clark Clifford, a member, observed that its membership balanced technical experts with generalists, and served Kennedy well in its role as an intelligence ombudsman.⁶⁶⁷ Lastly, Kennedy took power away from the CIA overseas, putting ambassadors in charge of covert operations previously run by CIA Station Chiefs. Kennedy might have had doubts about the State Department, but clearly felt more comfortable with diplomats running the show.⁶⁶⁸ Kennedy never lost his fascination for covert operations. One has only to look at the escalation in covert operations in North Vietnam during the Kennedy years to see this. Yet his push for the expansion and development of Special Forces demonstrates that this was a sphere he

⁶⁶⁴ John Prados, *Safe For Democracy* (Ivan R. Dee, 2006), p. 292. These operations also included propaganda and other information operations, not just military actions. Even CIA insiders admitted that the oversight by non-CIA officials was useful. Robert Amory OH #2, JFKLOPH, p. 33. That being said, it still authorized "Operation Mongoose."

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 53.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 55. Also on the Committee was William Langer, the Harvard historian who successfully reformed the CIA's Office of National Estimates. See further discussion in Chapter 6.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 57. Absher, Desch, and Popadiuk give a generally positive view of Kennedy's use of the PFIAB. Ibid, p. 103-104. Among other issues it also reviewed the organization of the CIA in light of the Bay of Pigs and looked at the CIA's failure to anticipate the Soviet deployment of nuclear missiles to Cuba.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 292-293.

believed should be run primarily by the military with strict civilian, ideally White House, oversight.⁶⁶⁹

Much of this, however, was window dressing. The question in the White House was how to recover from a situation where the White House felt it had been the victim of hidden doubts or outright lies. One should be careful not to attribute all of this to paranoia. Taylor's report, after all, demonstrated that even if many people believed in the spirit of the operation, very few believed it would succeed. The White House, of course, bore responsibility, too. Bundy might have suggested that, as a "freshman," he was not solely responsible for telling the President to call off the operation. Kennedy's "spoke and wheel" advisory system might have made Bundy feel some justification for his reticence: after all, despite his title, he was merely one among many who advised the President on these matters. But even Bundy admitted the system was broken and said so in a letter to Kennedy.⁶⁷⁰ As Bundy noted, he did not even see the President on a daily basis. The SANSAs understood that he had to do something. This system, which had started with such promise, had been implicated in a disastrous mistake. If the CIA or the military could not be fully trusted, and the State Department seemed unable to overcome its organizational issues, the White House would need to fill the void.

Bundy's own survival in this matter is also remarkable. While many press accounts at the time, and historians since, have rightfully described Bundy's role as one

⁶⁶⁹ In the CIA history of its early activities of North Vietnam it is interesting to note that the operations they speak of as predecessors to US covert actions were the OSS operations in occupied France and US operations behind the lines in North Korea. In other words, operations in support of conventional military actions. T.J. Ahern, *The Way We Do Things*. (Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2005), p. 1-5 and p. 33.

⁶⁷⁰ Bundy to Kennedy 5/16/61, Doc 13, FRUS Vol. XXV. Bundy, however, frames the issues as those relating to time management more than the system actually being dysfunctional. But, reading between the lines, one can see the SANSAs' larger concerns.

of Kennedy's confidantes, he did not play a prominent role in the early months of the Administration. Bundy was merely one foreign policy adviser among many during the first months of 1961. He was smart and driven, but was hamstrung in his ability to do much with such a poorly defined role. It was the inability of others to earn Kennedy's trust, or to suggest a structure that would better manage policy, as much as Bundy's ability, that convinced the President to keep Bundy in Washington. Perhaps not surprisingly for a President whose White House ran on informal organization, Bundy was a beneficiary of circumstance, luck—Bundy himself took pains to emphasize how luck played a role in all this—skill, and Kennedy's whim.⁶⁷¹ As late as October 1961, Neustadt doubted whether Bundy would be SANSAs much longer.⁶⁷²

One might wonder how this would have been different if some of Kennedy's transition advisors had forced him to closely define the roles of his staff before April 1961. That he never did caused havoc with the process of making foreign policy by confusing lines of responsibility. Thomas Hughes, a member of the foreign policy transition team, commented that "McGeorge Bundy's role was not preordained."⁶⁷³ That was part of the bigger problem. Even after reforms, Kennedy remained interested in the minutia of foreign policy, sometimes to a distracting degree.⁶⁷⁴ But it is conceivable that, had someone like Neustadt or Clifford more heavily weighed in on the role of the SANSAs, Bundy might have felt more empowered in the months leading up to the invasion. That may not have made much of a difference: Bundy, after all, supported the

⁶⁷¹ Bundy OH #1, JFKLOHP, p. 15.

⁶⁷² Neustadt did not expect him to be fired, but considered it likely he would be moved to another post. Richard Neustadt to David Bell, 10/18/61, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 63, Neustadt, Richard, 1960-1968, UW.

⁶⁷³ Thomas Hughes OH, ADST OHP, p. 41

⁶⁷⁴ Bromley Smith Oral History interview with Dennis J. O'Brien 7/16/70 and 7/23/70, JFKL OHP, p. 12.

plan. Kennedy's system was, to a large degree, diffuse and distracted. Many eyes might be looking at a problem, but few seemed to be asking the right questions. As Neustadt commented, "The problem is how...you can avoid 'sparing' him details...which he...might find significant from where he sits in ways the rest of you...don't appreciate from where you sit."⁶⁷⁵ Moreover, there seemed to be few lines of communication leading back to the White House. The President needed someone who had the time and inclination to think seriously about these issues and to trouble shoot on his behalf.

Conclusion

While Bundy was considering his future, and the White House was assessing its weaknesses, Henry Jackson defended Kennedy in the Senate while simultaneously continuing to promote his own ideas. As Jackson had promised in late 1960, he continued to call witnesses and publish the last few reports issued by the SNPM. The witnesses Jackson planned to call were all members of the new Administration. Karl Mundt wrote to Eisenhower complaining that Jackson planned to use these witnesses to show "that the new Administration has been moving vigorously to handle 'inherited problems.'"⁶⁷⁶ Mundt asked Eisenhower who the committee should call to "counteract the propaganda sure to be entered into the record by the witnesses favorable to the present Administration."⁶⁷⁷ How Eisenhower responded, or if he did, is unrecorded.

⁶⁷⁵ Richard Neustadt to David Bell, 10/18/61, HJ, Accn 35606, Box 63, Neustadt, Richard, 1960-1968, UW.

⁶⁷⁶ Mundt to Eisenhower 7/12/61, RGIII, Gov Ops Comm General, 1961-1962, FF3, DS.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

Regardless, Mundt now displayed a verve he lacked during the SNPM's initial hearings. As Jackson exploited the U-2 incident, Mundt tried the same with the Bay of Pigs. Mundt referenced the SNPM's condemnation of Eisenhower's actions of June 1960 when he told Jackson that the SNPM should, "on our usual non-partisan basis," investigate the fiasco. Mundt highlighted that this was especially important since the Kennedy Administration seemed to have ignored some of the SNPM's suggestions.⁶⁷⁸ Mundt and Javits also argued that recently retired Admiral Arleigh Burke should testify before the committee.⁶⁷⁹ Burke, Chief of Naval Operations in August 1961, might have been a potent witness for the Republicans. He not only clashed with Kennedy, but also was a members of Maxwell Taylor's Cuba review committee. He also believed that Kennedy, in refusing air support to the anti-Castro Cuban forces, had effectively condemned them to defeat. In suggesting Burke as a witness, Mundt perhaps aimed to inflict on Kennedy the same damage that the Gaither Committee alums exacted on Eisenhower.

Jackson, a loyal White House ally, frustrated these efforts. Discussions of Cuba stayed out of the SNPM's investigations with only scattered references appearing months after the invasion. Indeed, when Jackson reconvened the committee in July 1961, he all but glossed over Cuba when he mentioned, "The Berlin crisis and the rising tempo of Communist activity in Asia, Africa, and next door in Latin America."⁶⁸⁰ Jackson avoided Mundt's other requests by, among other ways, ignoring Mundt's letters for two

⁶⁷⁸ Mundt to Jackson, 4/26/61, RGIII, Gov Ops Committee Misc 1957-1962, FF8, DS.

⁶⁷⁹ Mundt to Jackson, 7/24/61, Javits Papers, Subseries 4, Box 69, National Policy Machinery Subcommittee 1961-1962, SBU.

⁶⁸⁰ Introductory Comments to Charles Hitch Testimony, 7/24/61, in *Organizing for National Security* Vol. 1 (Washington, 1961).

months.⁶⁸¹ Mundt's angry insistence that Jackson respond to his queries did nothing to advance the Republican agenda.⁶⁸² The only witness Mundt suggested whom Jackson seemed interested in inviting was Eisenhower himself.⁶⁸³ Perhaps Mundt sensed Jackson laying yet another trap. It is hard to imagine Eisenhower, an uneven public speaker at the best of times, doing better with the same questions that frustrated his subordinates. Once again, Jackson stole a march on his Republican colleagues and Mundt quietly dropped the idea.

The SNPM's final eleven hearings allowed the Kennedy Administration to defend its record. Robert McNamara appeared to address the Administration's defense program. Dean Rusk spoke about the State Department's new approach to foreign policy. Other officials gave evidence that Kennedy was attempting to rectify the mistakes of the Eisenhower years. Former PACGO member Don Price, perhaps unintentionally, shielded Kennedy from charges he should resurrect Eisenhower's system. As he had in the late 1950s, Price suggested that the President should have freedom to set up any organization he wanted, and that large staffs hurt, not helped, the policy making process.⁶⁸⁴

If publically Jackson provide a shield for Kennedy, he privately expressed concerns over the Administration's organization after the Bay of Pigs. He combined these critiques with an attempt to place some political allies in positions of power. On May 31,

⁶⁸¹ Mundt to Jackson, 5/19/61, Accn 35606, Box 67, Mundt, Sen. Karl, 1959-1961, UW; Summary of Correspondence, N.D., Accn 35606, Box 67, Mundt, Sen. Karl, 1959-1961, UW.

⁶⁸² Mundt to Jackson, 5/19/61, Accn 35606, Box 67, Mundt, Sen. Karl, 1959-1961, UW.

⁶⁸³ Jackson to Mundt, 6/19/61 and Mundt to Jackson, 6/20/61 both in RGIII, Gov Ops Committee Misc 1957-1962, FF8, DS. Jackson to Mundt, 6/19/61, RGIII, Gov Ops Committee Misc 1957-1962, FF8, DS.

⁶⁸⁴ Price Testimony, 8/17/61, in *Organizing for National Security* Vol. I.

1961, he met with Robert Kennedy and delivered a list of recommended changes.⁶⁸⁵ Jackson's message was mixed. He returned to one of his favorite phrases when he suggested that a "[d]rastic overhaul of the national security set-up is not indicated. The present structure is basically sound; the problems cannot be solved by organizational tinkering but by [good] people."⁶⁸⁶ Yet, in getting these "good people" into place, he thought some changes were needed. Jackson recommended augmenting the foreign policy staff of the White House with special assistants to focus on intelligence and military issues. He recommended a new director of policy planning in the State Department as well as a new Under Secretary of State. He also hinted at the need to replace Allen Dulles.⁶⁸⁷ Like Taylor, Jackson also felt that the US required an overarching Cold War strategy, specifically calling for a new NSC-68.⁶⁸⁸ The continuing crisis in Laos, Soviet threats over Berlin, and a newly empowered Castro all seemed to demand that the administration draft some sort of overall Cold War strategy lest a piecemeal approach to crisis management doom the US to defeat in detail.

Jackson submitted these recommendations with his own list of "good people." The names on the list include some who had testified before the SNPM, as well as some of its staffers and consultants.⁶⁸⁹ Not surprisingly, Jackson championed Paul Nitze for a

⁶⁸⁵ Jackson to R. Kennedy 6/9/61, HJ, Accn 356006, Box 83 Folder 19, National Security, UW.

⁶⁸⁶ "Changes in the National Security Area" 6/9/61, HJ, Accn 356006, Box 83 Folder 19, National Security, UW.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid and "People" 6/8/61, HJ, Accn 356006, Box 83 Folder 19, National Security, UW.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁹ For instance James Perkins, Paul Nitze, Robert Tufts, and Robert Bowie. Included in this list were State official Mose Harvey, a former college of Nitze's from SAIS; Gen Charles Bonesteel, then a division commander in Germany but a former NSC official; Gen. Edward Roney, then deputy to the Chairman of the JCS; and Robert Murphy, who had extensive diplomatic experience in the Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower administrations. Ibid.

promotion, initially suggesting Nitze be CIA head, but eventually downgrading that recommendation to a post in the State Department.⁶⁹⁰ He also suggested that Robert Tufts take over the Policy Planning Staff.⁶⁹¹ Jackson recommended that White House aide Ralph Dungan, who had no previous intelligence experience, become the President's Intelligence assistant, and privately planned to push Richard Neustadt as Dungan's replacement.⁶⁹²

Robert Kennedy did not suffer fools lightly, especially during this early period of his government career. The younger Kennedy, however, forwarded Jackson's recommendations to his brother. Compared to Taylor's elaborate suggestions, Jackson's recommendations fell more in line with both John Kennedy's own thinking and the current organization of the Administration. Jackson's memo made it to the Oval Office and it seems that the President discussed these ideas with the Senator.⁶⁹³ Yet the President discounted almost all of Jackson's recommendations. Only one of Jackson's recommendations seems to have survived, and that was his idea for Kennedy to retain a military assistant who was "thoroughly familiar with the Pentagon and State and with the political aspects of unconventional warfare...to make sure the right questions are asked about political-military operations." This job went to Maxwell Taylor, though only after he refused to take over the CIA. For several months he served as the sort of "President's

⁶⁹⁰ Jackson considered, and then decided against, suggesting one of the Bundy brothers, though it is not clear which one, for the job. Ibid and Handwritten Note, Box 83 Folder 19, National Security, HJP-006, UW.

⁶⁹¹ "People" 6/8/61, HJ, Accn 356006, Box 83 Folder 19, National Security, UW; "People" 6/13/61, HJ, Accn 356006, Box 83 Folder 19, National Security, UW.

⁶⁹² Ibid and Handwritten Note, HJ, Accn 356006, Box 83 Folder 19, National Security, UW.

⁶⁹³ Jackson to J. Kennedy 6/13/61, POF 30, Jackson, Henry M. 12/6/60-6/4/62, JFK.

Military Representative” Jackson wanted.⁶⁹⁴ This posting lasted until Taylor became Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and might be the only legacy of Jackson’s pitch.

What Jackson privately thought is not recorded. The Administration took no steps toward reinvigorating the Policy Planning Staff, writing a new NSC-68, or, prior to the “Thanksgiving Day Massacre,” addressing the issues in the State Department. At least one Jackson confidant was happy, however. Writing to his friends on the SNPM staff—and possibly unaware of Jackson’s efforts—Richard Neustadt applauded Kennedy’s efforts. While he admitted there had been rough patches, he said the president was wise to “eschew Bobby’s organizational gimmickry.... Bobby’s reactions are those which reasonably ought to be expected from a frustrated new President. This makes his brother’s resistance more impressive to me.”⁶⁹⁵ Neustadt also believed Kennedy took a fresh look at issues that “the Achesons and Ascolis [had] long since made up their minds on” and had restored “to policy-making the ingredient of human judgment by visible, responsible officials.”⁶⁹⁶

Whatever Neustadt’s claims, though, the fact is that the Kennedy Administration suffered a major blow at the Bay of Pigs. The President no longer trusted the unfiltered advice of the JCS or CIA. The State Department was consumed by infighting at the highest levels and hobbled by a decade of neglect. While the President increasingly turned to his brother as counsel and troubleshooter, the Attorney General could not effectively function as the President’s day-to-day foreign policy advisor, just as the

⁶⁹⁴ “Changes in the National Security Area” 6/9/61, HJ, Accn 356006, Box 83 Folder 19, National Security, UW; Kinnard, p. 56-57, and Arthur Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy* (Mariner Books, 2002), p. 448-449.

⁶⁹⁵ Neustadt to Douglas Carter, 12/15/61, HJ, Accn 356006, Box 1 Folder 30, Neustadt, Richard 1961-1962, UW.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.* Ascoli refers to Max Ascoli, the left-leaning publisher of the newsmagazine *The Reporter*.

micromanaging President could not oversee the entire government. The President had to find other ways to manage foreign policy.

All of this pointed to another major issue. The Administration was full of Jackson's "good people," some might say the best and the brightest. Jackson might have been right that good people could overcome bad organization but, just as in the Eisenhower Administration, there were penalties for bad organization, borne out over the first few months of 1961. Whether the assemblage of good people prevented worse catastrophes is, of course, impossible to know. Yet we can know this: as in Eisenhower's Administration, organization had, accidentally, suppressed dissent. Kennedy's hope that he would have access to "independent judgements [and] realistic...fully developed alternatives, on which [to] make a final judgement...rather than merely a consensus rising from the secondary staff level" remained unfulfilled.⁶⁹⁷ Just because a President was handed such dissenting opinions did not mean he would heed them.

In some respects, however, the frustration of Kennedy, Bundy, and others, is remarkable. In 1958, a CIA attempt to overthrow the government of Indonesia was uncovered in a manner similar to what happened at the Bay of Pigs: the spectacular failure of a coup attempt. The capture of a CIA contractor further linked America to the disaster. The U-2 incident, like the Bay of Pigs, highlighted a flawed decision-making process and a poor response. The Bay of Pigs, of course, had components those other incidents lacked: an army of anti-communist freedom fighters was seemingly sacrificed on America's doorstep. Yet those previous two incidents, among other failures of the

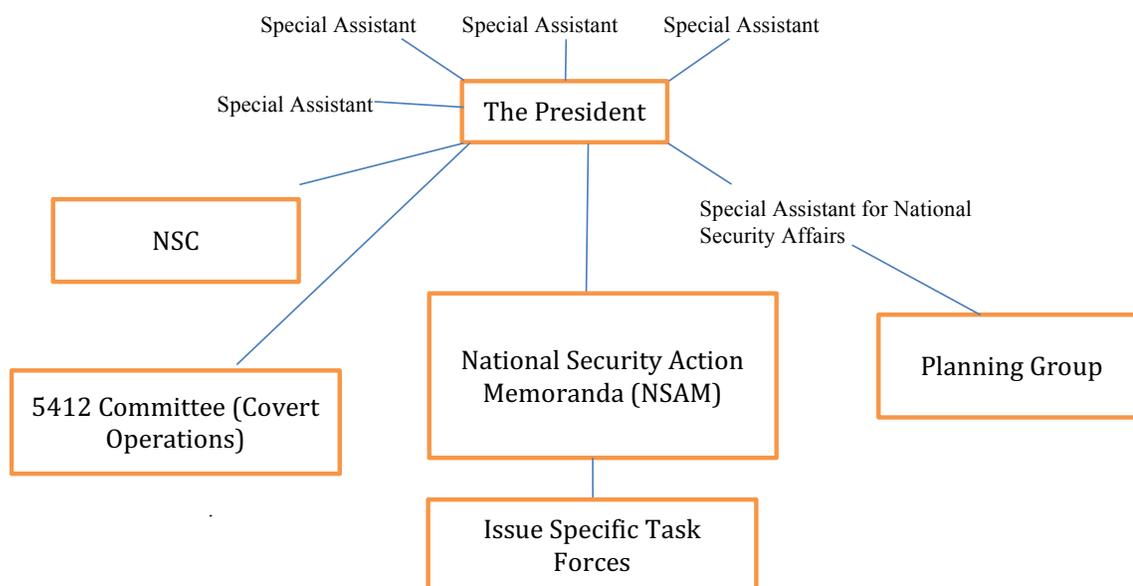
⁶⁹⁷ Kennedy, *The Strategy of Peace*, p. 210.

Eisenhower years, had not produced the same soul-searching. Eisenhower understood there were problems with his system that might have contributed to these failures, yet made few if any meaningful changes. One might correctly fault Kennedy for blaming the failure so heavily on organization while acknowledging so few of his own poor decisions. Kennedy knew that some people, including hawks like Dean Acheson, felt that the invasion was folly. But it still went forward. It is equally true that Kennedy did not know the extent of dissent in government. Kennedy's frustration with the organizational set-up should not be surprising, but the frustration was based on an acceptance and avoidance of problems that had been festering since the early Eisenhower years.

Whether it was as an attempt to assuage guilt or not, Kennedy and Bundy decided that, to avoid another Bay of Pigs, changes had to be made. Richard Neustadt argued that if the State Department did not work, the Administration should focus on building up those parts of the government that did.⁶⁹⁸ While Neustadt felt that State might eventually work its way through its problems, he also advocated that now was the time to turn to “[p]rocess-building, not department building.”⁶⁹⁹ There had to be a better way, both for the President to get information from the depths of the federal bureaucracy and simultaneously to make sure that the President's orders were executed. Their framing of this problem, however, was one that set the White House against the rest of the government.

⁶⁹⁸ Richard Neustadt to David Bell, 10/18/61, HJ, Accn 356006, Box 63, Neustadt, Richard, 1960-1968, UW.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid.

Figure 3Theoretical Proper Function of the NSC System (Early 1961: Spoke and Wheel)

The layout of the initial Kennedy national security apparatus looked different than the Eisenhower system even if its basic function remained, in spirit, unchanged.

Just like in the Eisenhower system, many day-to-day foreign policy issues were handled by the Special Assistants surrounding the President. The major difference was that their role was highlighted more in the Kennedy years.

Policy information would pass to the President through a variety of source like the NSC proper, his special assistants, other government officials, or private citizens. The SANSAs, in theory, drew some of his recommendations from his work with the Planning Group, like Eisenhower's old Planning Board. When the president had decided on a policy he wished to pursue, he would issue an NSAM. This would inform the government of his objectives. The Task Forces, largely administered by the State Department, drew their general policies from this document, similar to how NSC directives set policy for the OCB during the 1950s.

The President would also consult with his NSC and manage covert operations within the 5412 Committee. This is, perhaps, where we can see the most significant differences between the two presidents. Kennedy met with the NSC proper less, though made up for that with more frequent meetings with smaller groups of advisors. Eisenhower had these meetings as well, though he supplemented them with the larger NSC meetings. While Eisenhower's SANSAs ran the 5412 Committee during his Administration, Kennedy played a much more active role in the decisions of that body

Chapter 5: Robert Komer's Cure

In March of 1963, *Newsweek* published a story on McGeorge Bundy describing how, in addition to being a Presidential advisor, he ran the NSC “and...its high-powered staff.”⁷⁰⁰ Listing the key staffers, the article noted that the job of this so-called “Bundy Group” was to act as a “miniature State Department...[and] to ride herd...by frequent checks with the responsible officers in State, Defense, or [the CIA].”⁷⁰¹ Notably missing from the list of members of the group was the name Robert Komer. Komer, a CIA veteran, held a portfolio of responsibilities wider than any of the individuals mentioned. Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr, dubbed him “Blowtorch Bob.” Lodge said an argument with Komer was like having a blowtorch aimed at the seat of your pants. Komer, sitting in his EOB office, decided he could not let the *Newsweek* slight go unanswered. He wrote Bundy a memo displaying both humor and a bit of hubris asking, “My wife, my secretary, and my limited public all wonder if Newsweek is its usual reliable self in ranking your braintrust.... Have I lost out in a political power struggle? Am I in the dog house? Or was I really right in all my self deprecation in the past? As for me, my only embarrassed query is whether you are the source.”⁷⁰² Bundy sent a handwritten note back on the same memo stating that he had not been the source of this information, and that it was not based on what he actually thought, adding “I love you,” which he underlined twice.⁷⁰³

⁷⁰⁰William Tuohy, “JFK’s McGeorge Bundy-Cool Head for Any Crisis.” *Newsweek*, Vol. LXI No. 9 (March 4, 1963), p.20.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid, p. 23.

⁷⁰² Komer memo to Bundy, 2/27/63, NSF, Box 322, Staff Memoranda, Robert Komer, 1/63-2/63, JFK.

⁷⁰³ Ibid.

The growth of the NSC staff during the Bundy years is not a new story. *Newsweek* perhaps gave one of the few contemporary insights into the workings of the staff, but in the past two decades a number of scholars have reevaluated Bundy's role, shining much needed light on the transformation of an important if little understood job.⁷⁰⁴ During the first six months of the Kennedy Administration, Bundy struggled with his responsibilities as a SANSAs. During the next six months, Bundy transformed not only his job—taking him far closer to what we know think of as the job of National Security Advisor—but also fundamentally transformed the role of his staff. As with *Newsweek* article, those staffers have received varying degrees of attention.

What has received less attention is how those staffers helped Bundy develop his role. Bundy's own power was important but in many respects was little different from previous foreign policy advisors. Colonel House, Harry Hopkins, and other former presidential counselors would have identified with many aspects of Bundy's position. What made Bundy different was his cultivation and development of the NSC staff. For the first time, the president officially had a permanent, personal, foreign policy group working in the Executive Branch. While the Bay of Pigs sped up this transformation, the evolution of the NSC staff began long before and lasted long after that event. Like his confusion over his own responsibilities, it seems that Bundy had few definite ideas about

⁷⁰⁴ Another contemporary article mentioned "Bundy's 'Little State Department'" but did not even name any of the staffers. "Name in the Game" *Time*, 3/15/63. The best examples are Andrew Preston *The War Council: McGeorge Bundy, the NSC, and Vietnam* (Harvard UP, 2005) Kai Bird, *The Color of Truth: McGeorge Bundy and William Bundy-Brothers in Arms* (Simon and Schuster, 1998) Kasper Grotle Rasmussen *The Men Behind the Man: McGeorge Bundy, the NSC Staff, and the Making of American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963* PhD Dissertation, Aarhus University, 2012 and Christian Nünlist, *Kennedys rechte Hand: McGeorge Bundy Einfluss als Nationaler Sicherheitsberater auf die amerikanische Aussenpolitik 1961-1963* (CSS ETH Zurich, 1999).

how to shape his staff. For the first half of 1961, Bundy viewed their role as ancillary to his advisory efforts. As with the NSC machinery generally, Bundy seemed more hesitant to make changes than historians have commonly assumed. Komer took a leading role in advocating for these changes, yet his contributions remain largely unrecognized.⁷⁰⁵

Besides Bundy, Komer may have been the most important person in envisioning the staff's powers and prerogatives. In some respects, however, Komer's suggestions might also be viewed in a larger context. He might not have fully realized it, but he represented the foreign policy bureaucracy in striking back against an institution they, for over a decade, felt was poorly managed.

The transformed staff interpreted information for the president, recommended policy changes, and monitored the implementation and execution of policy. This change permanently altered the way the White House shaped and management of US foreign policy. Additionally, we can learn much about the NSC staff and how Bundy intended them to function from Bundy's hiring patterns. Far from filling the ranks of the NSC with outsiders, the vast majority of NSC staffers were either Bundy's long-time friends or highly-recommended government employees. While he took a chance in adopting Komer's recommendations, Bundy continued to display an attitude that was largely cautious—and conservative—in his changes to the NSC system. To understand Komer's role in the NSC, one has to understand his background in the CIA. Between 1947 and

⁷⁰⁵ Only recently has Komer received much attention. Frank Leith Jones' *Blowtorch: Robert Komer, Vietnam, and American Cold War Strategy* (Naval Institute Press, 2013) has a chapter on Komer in Bundy's NSC, but only a very brief reference to his organizational role and lacks the larger background. See Jones, *Blowtorch*, p. 49. Despite Jones' considerable scholarship Robert Rakove's *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* (Cambridge UP, 2013) has probably the best atmospheric description of Komer as a person. Rakove, p. 36-41.

1960, Komer faced several organizational challenges that mimicked the early months of the NSC. These early experiences directly led to the advice he gave Bundy in 1961.

The Trials and Tribulations of ONE

Robert Komer was present at the creation of the national security state. In 1947 he joined the CIA as a low-level analyst in its Office of Research and Estimates (ORE). ORE employed a large staff to create long-range predictions of political, military, and economic trends. Critics, however, questioned the staff's intellect and the very value of their reports.⁷⁰⁶ The onset of the Korean War, unanticipated by ORE, caused the CIA to disband the unit and form a new group called the Office of National Estimates (ONE). Much of ORE's staff was purged, though Komer survived, becoming the youngest ONE staffer.⁷⁰⁷

CIA Director Walter Bedell Smith drafted William Langer and Sherman Kent, both OSS veterans, to lead this new team.⁷⁰⁸ Though Langer and Kent took on a few survivors of ORE, most of their new hires had university and academic backgrounds.⁷⁰⁹ Langer wanted to keep the staff small, roughly twenty-five analysts, believing that fewer

⁷⁰⁶ L.L. Montague, *General Walter Bedell Smith as Director of Central Intelligence, October 1950-February 1953*, (University Park, PA, 1992), p. 120-123; Amy Zegart, *Flawed by Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC* (Stanford, CA, 1999), p. 191;

⁷⁰⁷ F. Jones, p. 19.

⁷⁰⁸ It took the personal intervention of Harry Truman to convince the Harvard board to grant Langer a leave of absence. William Langer, *In and Out of the Ivory Tower* (New York, 1977), p. 220; Barry M. Katz, *Foreign Intelligence: Research and Analysis in the Office of Strategic Services 1942-1945* (Cambridge, MA: 1989), p. 5.

⁷⁰⁹ Raymond Sontag, former chair of Princeton's History Department, was among the hires. Like Bundy's NSC, Ivy League degrees in ONE were more common than not. Raymond Garthoff, *A Journey Through the Cold War* (Brookings Institution, 2001), p. 40.

staffers would allow for better coordination.⁷¹⁰ To facilitate cooperation, there was no formal hierarchy outside a few senior officials, termed “generalists,” who oversaw ad-hoc teams assembled by Langer to address specific intelligence questions.⁷¹¹

Despite the new name, ORE and ONE had similar aims. They both produced annual updates on a wide variety of subjects and specific reports requested by policy makers. It was hard work on the analysts. One noted that the experience was like a “journey to hell and back” and compiling the drafts was “a combination of a PhD examination, a taste of the Spanish inquisition, and a dollop of...torture.”⁷¹² Langer and Kent demanded perfection. Kent obsessed over word choices and both men routinely lectured the staff on their “deadly prose.”⁷¹³ That attention to detail, however, was important: over 250 copies of each report were disseminated throughout the US government and occasionally, overseas.⁷¹⁴ The widespread dissemination of ONE’s product opened up the possibility that these relatively low-ranking analysts could have a significant impact on shaping US policy. Despite the hype over ONE’s reports, Komer discovered that upper level policy makers rarely saw the unit’s findings. Several years

⁷¹⁰ Langer, *In and Out*, p. 220-221 and Montague, *Walter*, p. 136-137. Langer says he hired between 50 and 60 staff total, while CIA censors removed the exact numbers of ONE staff from Montague’s account. Former ONE staffers, however, told Kai Bird that there were only 25 or so of them working at any one point. Bird, *Color*, p. 157.

⁷¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 137.

⁷¹² Chester Cooper, *In the Shadows of History: 50 Years Behind the Scenes of Cold War Diplomacy* (Prometheus Books, 2005), p. 98.

⁷¹³ Russell Jack Smith, *The Unknown CIA: My Three Decades with the Agency* (Washington, DC, 1989), p. 55. One analysts remembered his use of the word “limited” being challenged. When he asked why, he was told, “It doesn’t mean anything...Because *everything* is limited under God!”; Bird, *Color*, p.158 and Sherman Kent, “Words of Estimative Probability” *Sherman Kent and the Board of National Estimates: Collected Essays* D.P. Steury ed. (Washington, DC, 1994), p. 133-146.

⁷¹³ Bird, *Color*, p.158

⁷¹⁴ NIEs (National Intelligence Estimate) were normal analysis. SNIEs, or Special National Intelligence Estimates, were usually issued in response to specific crises. For circulation numbers see Komer Memorandum for the Board Subject: NIE Survey 5/14/56. Declassified Documents Reference System, Gale Digital Connections.

into his stint at ONE, Komer wanted to know more about who read their reports and commissioned a survey. It revealed that “[O]ur real readership may be at a level considerably below the top, even though the gist of key [findings] may filter up.”⁷¹⁵ In part, Komer learned that these reports were too long to be easily read by top officials, who confined themselves to summaries or conclusions, a problem the CIA continued to encounter years after Komer left the Agency.⁷¹⁶

There were also problems in Langer’s free flowing staff concept. A majority of the staff felt the office was rudderless, in part due to Langer’s loose organization. Even if staffers had expertise with a certain regions or topics, they could not work on material from a region unless assigned; many felt the senior “generalists” lacked the necessary knowledge for good interpretation.⁷¹⁷ Those senior officials in turn grew angry that they could not master subjects as they were quickly moved from topic to topic.⁷¹⁸ The staff rebelled. Langer and Kent responded by giving more responsibilities to individual analysts and allowing most staffers to focus on specific regions.⁷¹⁹ Kent, at least, believed that these changes significantly improved the quality of ONE’s output.⁷²⁰

Surprisingly, ONE became, surprisingly, a progressive voice in that it often challenged the Cold War orthodoxy, though questioning convention came at a price.⁷²¹

⁷¹⁵ Ibid.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid. In the late 1980s a similar CIA survey found almost exactly the same issue: officials praised the material they received from the CIA, but often spent little time reading the types of reports they most enthusiastically lauded. Author Classified, “Surveying Intelligence Consumers” *Studies in Intelligence* Fall, 1989, p. 12-13.

⁷¹⁷ Kent, “Words”, p. 137 and 139.

⁷¹⁸ Montague, p. 136-138.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid, p. 138-140.

⁷²⁰ Sherman Kent, *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy* (Princeton UP, 1966), p. 119 and 129.

⁷²¹ For instance ONE, to varying degrees, successfully forecast the general conduct of the Soviet Union and China, argued against the Bay of Pigs and Vietnam, anticipated the Sino-Soviet split, and argued for the

Several ONE staffers were suspected of being communists by officials in the CIA and Joseph McCarthy and this led to critical findings being “buried [in] Cold War boilerplate language.”⁷²² At the very least, this frustrated staffers like Komer, who saw their best ideas being ignored. Yet, Komer had gained another valuable lesson from his time in the CIA: ONE forced its analysts to work widely across government in compiling their reports. That interagency role was rare in government, and made him and other ONE veterans valuable in Bundy’s service.⁷²³ Service in ONE certainly gave them a wider understanding of how the policy process worked compared to officials in other parts of the government.

Long before gaining his “Blowtorch” moniker, Komer came away from ONE with a mixed reputation. His bosses believed “...analytical skill was more important than congenial manner.”⁷²⁴ His coworkers never doubted his skill, but questioned his

relative benevolence of Third World nationalism. Harold P. Ford, *Estimative Intelligence: The Purpose and Problems of National Intelligence Estimating* (UP of America 1993), p.97 and Evan Thomas, *The Very Best Men* (Simon and Schuster: 1995), p. 250. Kent admitted that ONE was better in predicting “quantifiable things like estimated growth in GNP, probable dates of initial operational capability of a new weapons system, etc. We were a lot less successful in our evaluations of our estimates of less tangible things.” Quoted in Jim Marchio, “How Good is Your Batting Average?” *Studies in Intelligence* Vol. 60 No. 4 (12/16), p. 7.

⁷²² Bird, *Color*, p. 158 and 175 and Ray C. Cline, *Secrets, Spies, and Scholars: Blueprint of the Essential CIA*. (Acropolis Books Ltd., 1976) p. 122. In Bird’s book William Bundy performs an interesting post-mortem on ONE’s early Cold War output and is remarkably frank about both its successes and areas where it failed. See Bird, *Color*, p. 175-176.

⁷²³ Author’s interview with Harold Saunders, 4/9/2014.

⁷²⁴ Cline, *Secrets*, p. 123. Cline may have also had personal reasons for supporting Komer. Cline was responsible for writing one of the more acclaimed volumes published by the Historical Division of the War Department, though Cline was attached to the OSS during the war. It seems possible Komer and Cline may have met, and possibly become friends, as Komer also wrote a volume for the Historical Division. This theory is further bolstered by the fact Komer claimed that the reason he joined the CIA was because (unfortunately unnamed) friends of his from World War II encouraged him to join. Komer Interview with Joe B. Franz, 1/30/70, Lyndon Banes Johnson Oral History Project, p.1. Jones, on the other hand, says that Komer merely submitted a job application. F. Jones, p. 18-19.

temper.⁷²⁵ Years later, Bundy said: “Komer isn’t everyone’s cup of tea, because he can be abrasive and impatient. . . . But underneath all this surface stuff [he] is a rare bird: extraordinarily hard working, bright, and devoted quite single-mindedly to the U.S. national interest.”⁷²⁶ He quickly rose in the ranks, and ended up having an unpleasant experience on Eisenhower’s NSC Planning Board.

After Kennedy’s election, Komer looked to get out of the CIA. The selection of Bundy as his SANSAs seemed to be an opening. Komer, on his own initiative, submitted a series of memos to Bundy recommending both foreign policy initiatives and NSC organizational changes. Bundy asked his brother William, who served in ONE, if he could recommend anyone for the White House staff. William responded that Komer was one of the best “middle-level doers” he knew.⁷²⁷ Bundy seemed impressed by both his brother’s recommendation and Komer’s memos. The CIA analyst became Bundy’s first hire and the two quickly developed a rapport.

The NSC Staff on the New Frontier

In some respects, Bundy’s rearrangement of the NSC staff mimicked what he and Kennedy did to Eisenhower’s overall organization. On the face of it, Bundy had most of Eisenhower’s NSC staffers reassigned to jobs outside the White House. This was not a simple task: the OCB alone had 71 staffers who needed to be moved elsewhere.⁷²⁸ One

⁷²⁵ Smith, *Unknown*, p. 121-122 and Cooper, *Shadows*, p. 209. Cooper does not identify the staffer by name, but it fits Komer’s description.

⁷²⁶ Edward Keefer, *Harold Brown* (OSD, 2017), p. 422.

⁷²⁷ Jones, *Blowtorch*, p. 30.

⁷²⁸ Bundy to Johnson, 8/2/65, Doc. 0240220005, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University. www.virtualarchive.vietnam.ttu.edu.

jokester claimed that Bundy's purge was so thorough that he fired the staff who sorted the mail.⁷²⁹ Despite the purge, Bundy kept on six of Eisenhower's NSC staffers, adding Komer to their number.⁷³⁰ These seven did the majority of staff work for Bundy during the first half of 1961. The surviving memos from the early months of the administration suggest Bundy fully intended to keep these men in service, not just use them as stopgaps until new staffers could be recruited.⁷³¹

Bundy's broad concept envisioned himself and his deputy, Walt Rostow, running the operations. Rostow was an accidental appointment to the NSC: like Bundy, he ended up in the White House after Kennedy promised him another position, only to see that job go to someone else.⁷³² Bundy and Rostow, however, complemented each other. One staffer observed, "Bundy... was primarily Western Europe, NATO, big Far East things, big power politics."⁷³³ Rostow, on the other hand, took "the underdeveloped world [as his] beat."⁷³⁴ Komer and the rump NSC staff would serve as Neustadt's "utility

⁷²⁹ Harold H. Saunders Interview, The Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training.

⁷³⁰ The six were veterans of the PB Special Staff, which was meant to "[analyze], summarize, and [probe], from an *unbiased* point of view, the work produced in the department and agencies." But, as a near contemporary analysis pointed out, this group also thought that, "The function of the special staff was a delicate one because it bore on the substantive content of a department's position. At the very least, its existence meant that there was available to the President (through the special assistant) an independent source of analysis." Moose "The White House National Security Staffs", p. 64. The others were Robert H. Johnson, George Weber, A. Sidney Buford, Samuel Belk, Phillip J. Halla, and Charles Haskins.

⁷³¹ Rostow to Bundy, 2/3/61, NSF Box 283, NSC Organization and Administration, 2/1/61-5/4/61, JFK; R.H. Johnson Memo "Key National Security Problems" 2/10/61, NSF Box 438, National Security Problems, 1961, JFK; R.H. Johnson to Rostow, 2/27/61, NSF Box 283, NSC, Organization and Administration, 2/1/61-5/9/61, JFK. Nünlist suggests he only used them to train his incoming staffers. Other accounts disagree, but provide little examination of the role of these staffers and suggest they served simultaneously with the new group Bundy brought in. Moose, "The White House National Security Staffs", p. 72, Prados, *Keepers*, 101, and Nünlist, *Kennedys*, p. 49

⁷³² David Milne, *America's Rasputin* (Hill and Wang, 2008), p. 100.

⁷³³ Samuel Belk Oral History Interview by William W. Moss, 6/1/74, p. 9. [hereafter Belk OH]

⁷³⁴ *Ibid.*

assistants,” providing support where needed.⁷³⁵ But Bromley Smith, late OCB Executive Secretary and later Bundy’s executive secretary, pointed out that Bundy “was so busy and active that he really had little time to address himself to organization...No one visualized how the new staff system was going to work out.”⁷³⁶ Even Bundy admitted, “I didn’t know [Kennedy]...I didn’t know Washington...I didn’t know what the job really was.”⁷³⁷

An early memo to Kennedy shows Bundy’s shaky grasp on his staff’s function:

NSC staff (*your* staff, really) will have other jobs than preparing for the [formal NSC] meetings... The jobs it can do for you are two: one is to help in presenting issues of policy, and the other is to keep in close touch with operations that you personally want to keep on top of. Both of these things were done, in theory, by a large, formal, paper-producing staff for President Eisenhower. I’m sure you don’t want that, and what you do want is what I need to ask you before the meeting. I have ideas, but I think it will be easier to talk about them than write [them].⁷³⁸

By contrast Rostow wanted to use the staff “to work intimately at the [State Department] desk level; to deal with policy makers at least at the assistant secretary level; and to argue and propose high policy with grace.”⁷³⁹ Yet he also believed that the staffers should be generalists, temporarily assigned where needed.⁷⁴⁰

It took Kennedy almost a month to encourage Bundy to bring in “a small group of senior officials able to work directly with him.”⁷⁴¹ Bundy called up friend and fellow Harvard professor Carl Kaysen, saying, “Carl, I’m having a lot of fun and I’m swamped

⁷³⁵ Bundy to Kennedy “The Use of the National Security Council” 1/24/61, Doc. 4, FRUS Vol. XXV.

⁷³⁶ Smith OH, p. 20 and p. 3. For Bundy’s assessment of Neustadt see Bundy to Kennedy “The Use of the National Security Council” 1/24/61, Doc. 4, FRUS Vol. XXV.

⁷³⁷ Bundy OH, p. 24.

⁷³⁸ Bundy to Kennedy, 1/31/61, NSF Box 405, Memos to the President 1/61-2/61, JFKL.

⁷³⁹ Rostow to Bundy, “OCB Functions” 1/27/61, NSF 284, Operations Coordinating Board, General, 1/27/61-7/27/61 and undated.

⁷⁴⁰ Rostow to Bundy, 5/4/61, NSF Box 290, White House, Administrative Matters, 3/1/61-5/15/61, JFK.

⁷⁴¹ Bundy to Macy 2/21/61, NSF Box 283, NSC Organization and Administration, 2/1/61-5/4/61, JFK.

and need help.”⁷⁴² Kaysen agreed, and Bundy made him a consultant until he could move to Washington full time that summer.⁷⁴³ Bundy also hired Marcus Raskin, a young, left leaning, former congressional staffer who had impressed many in the Washington foreign policy community. Like Kaysen, however, he required a security screening and could not start full time until mid-spring. Pressured by Arthur Schlesinger, Kennedy, and Rostow, Bundy also hired Henry Kissinger on a part time basis.⁷⁴⁴ Other than these new hires, the core of the NSC staff remained the Eisenhower staffers.

Despite Administration rhetoric to the contrary, the NSC staff basically functioned in these early months as it did during the Eisenhower Administration. As Bundy admitted to Kennedy, “How you [implement policy] is merely a problem in operations. In this part of the staff we only make plans.”⁷⁴⁵ While Bundy went off to act as a presidential adviser the staff, under Rostow’s direction, went to work reviewing and analyzing various US policies, writing lengthy draft reports, and pondering anticipated long-range problems.⁷⁴⁶ They were helpful assistants but they were anonymous

⁷⁴² *An Interview with Carl Kaysen*, MIT SSP [hereafter Kaysen MIT Interview], p. 6.

⁷⁴³ Bundy, who had been Dean only two months previous, seems to have forgotten the academic calendar. Kaysen remembered scolding Bundy by saying, “Mac...have you stopped being a dean so long that you don’t know Monday is the first day of term and I’m supposed to be teaching two classes?” Ibid. Komer’s oral history suggests he started consulting immediately. If he did, he made little initial impact on the NSC staff: his name does not appear on the initial division of assignments produced at the end of February. More probably, his consulting job started sometime in March 1961. See Johnson to Rostow 2/27/61, NSF Box 283, NSC Organization and Administration, 2/1/61-5/9/61, JFK; Bundy to Macy 6/5/61, NSF Box 398, Bundy Chron File, 6/1/61-6/18/61, JFKL and Kaysen MIT Interview, p. 6.

⁷⁴⁴ Shannon Mohan, “Memorandum for Mr. Bundy’: Henry Kissinger as Consultant to the Kennedy National Security Council” *The Historian* Vol. 71 No. 2 (Summer 2009), p. 237-238; Rostow to Bundy, 5/4/61, NSF Box 290, White House, Administrative Matters, 3/1/61-5/15/61, JFKL. Rostow also suggested Ernest May and a handful other academics.

⁷⁴⁵ Bundy to Kennedy, “Last Words on Nkrumah” 3/8/61, NSF 405, Memos to the President, 3/1/61-4/4/61, JFK.

⁷⁴⁶ See, for instance, the large breakdown of planning and review responsibilities drafted by Robert Johnson in February, 1961. “Key National Security Problems” 2/10/61, NSF Box 438, National Security Problems, 1961, JFK.

bureaucrats who lacked influence in the White House or around Washington.⁷⁴⁷

Moreover, the “Presidential staff” Bundy promised Kennedy never saw the President himself. Komer, for purely personal reasons, even begged Bundy, “sometime—do haul me along when you see the man next door. It isn’t me—it’s my kids—they keep asking if I’ve met the President (he’s susceptible to this argument, isn’t he).”⁷⁴⁸

Bundy seemed to be dissatisfied with this arrangement, and solicited ideas from within the NSC—including Komer personally—and elsewhere about possible improvements.⁷⁴⁹ Most of the memos Bundy got back were good, if dry documents.⁷⁵⁰ By contrast, Komer sent back punchy, attention-grabbing notes inspired by what he learned from his time at ONE: brevity and style count. Komer complained that Bundy did little loop in the staff, writing “Dammit [the NSC staff] cannot function as your left arms unless we at least know what’s going on.... I knew more about... activities at the CIA than here. Who knows, we may have an idea to contribute, or at least should know what’s decided so we don’t grind our gears.”⁷⁵¹ Despite the fact they worked for the President, Komer complained they were out of the communication loop. After three months of working in the White House he noted that he had not even seen a single cable from the

⁷⁴⁷ Komer to Rostow 5/1/61, NSF Box 438, NSC Staff 1961-1963, JFK; Komer to Bundy, 5/16/61, NSF Box 321, Staff Memoranda, Robert W. Komer, 5/16/61-6/14/61, JFK.

⁷⁴⁸ Komer to Bundy 3/16/61, NSF Box 321, Staff Memoranda, Robert W. Komer, 3/15/61-3/29/61.

⁷⁴⁹ See for instance, memos from James Lay, George Weber, and even John Macy, head of the Civil Service Commissions, in NSF Box 283. Andrew Preston offers an alternate theory, suggesting that the memo from George Weber was one of the documents that pushed Bundy to change the staff. Andrew Preston “The Little State Department: McGeorge Bundy and the National Security Council Staff, 1961-1965” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* Vol. 31 No. 4 (December 2001), p. 644.

⁷⁵⁰ See, for instance, Johnson to Rostow “Development of Staff Support” 2/27/61, NSF Box 283, NSF Box 283, NSC, General, 2/1/61-5/4/61, JFKL Johnson to Bundy and Rosotw “Brookings Paper on Political Development” 5/2/61, NSF Box 283, NSC, General, 5/61-12/61, JFKL, and Rostow to Bundy, 5/4/61, NSF Box 290, White House, Administrative Matters, 3/1/61-5/15/61, JFKL.

⁷⁵¹ Komer to Bundy 3/13/61, NSF Box 442, Policy Planning Group, 1961-1963 [White House Memoranda, JFKL.

State Department.⁷⁵² He also advocated firing all the Eisenhower holdovers except two since most, “of the old staff won’t fit the new pattern [and are] waiting and hoping [that they would not be fired] rather than either pitching in or actively looking elsewhere.”⁷⁵³

Most importantly, Komer said the staff needed to be more active. He argued:

In sum, what you seem to want (amen from me) is a small top-notch team of idea men, expeditors, and high grade liaison types who will work intimately with you and the President to see that the right things get done. My long disused [Harvard Business School] training tells me that this can be done only by the closest teamwork, with full and free interchange of ideas and info. If we don’t measure up, fire us.⁷⁵⁴

Bundy and Rostow considered Komer’s suggestions, but only acted on one: except for the two staffers Komer said Bundy should retain, the remaining Eisenhower staffers were phased out by the end of March.⁷⁵⁵

A month later, the Bay of Pigs renewed questions about what the staff should be doing. The State Department seemed to be flailing. Kennedy seemed to have little confidence in the Pentagon’s rank-and-file or CIA. The pressing question was how could the White House staff more effectively carry out Kennedy’s wishes while also monitoring the rest of the government? One change was the creation of the President’s Daily

⁷⁵² Komer to Bundy, 3/1/61, NSF Box 438, NSC Staff 1961-1963, JFKL.

⁷⁵³ Komer to Bundy 3/1/61, NSF Box 438, National Security Council Staff, 1961-1963, JFKL.

⁷⁵⁴ Komer to Bundy 3/1/61, NSF Box 438, NSC Staff, 1961-1963, JFKL and Johnson to Rostow 2/27/61, NSF Box 283, NSC Organization and Administration 2/1/61-5/4/61, JFKL. Komer was not the only staffer recommending this. As Andrew Preston notes, another staffer suggested a staff that could “persuade and cajole” the Departments. Preston, *War*, p. 40; Hirsch to Bundy 4/28/61, NSF Box 283, NSC, General, 3/61-4/61, JFKL.

⁷⁵⁵ “Staff Charged to NSC Appropriations Pending Transfer Out” n.d., NSF Box 283, NSC Organization and Administration, 1/30/61-1/31/61, JFKL. Though this undated document exists in a folder containing items from late January, other undated items in this folder clearly come from the late winter and spring. Thus, given this evidence, it appears likely this document, too, was created as early as March or as late as June, 1961. It seems that, to make up for the short fall in staffers, Bundy temporarily brought in Henry Owen from State’s Policy Planning staff to work on Berlin issues, at least until either Kaysen or Kissinger could be brought up to speed. Komer to Bundy and Rostow 5/5/61, NSF Box 438, NSC Staff, 1961-1963, JFKL. On Owen see Komer to Rostow 5/1/61, NSF Box 438, NSC Staff, 1961-1963, JFKL.

Intelligence Briefings, initially a symptom of Kennedy's micro-managerial instincts and now a sacred rite of the president.⁷⁵⁶ Another was that Bundy moved from the EOB to the White House. Bundy's access changed practically overnight, and he now saw the president four or five times a day.⁷⁵⁷ He also wrote Kennedy a mea culpa, saying he and the NSC staff had failed the President by not alerting him to questions over the Bay of Pigs operation.⁷⁵⁸ Kennedy, Bundy said, was "entitled to feel confident that (a) there is no part of the...national security area that is not watched closely by someone from your own staff, and (b) there is no major problem of policy that is not out where you can see it and give a proper stimulus to those who should be attacking it."⁷⁵⁹

After that, Bundy and Rostow set to work slowly transforming the NSC staff, including asking Komer for more suggestions. Komer prepared a memo that reads like a blueprint of how Bundy's NSC later functioned. He reiterated much of what he wrote months earlier. In the shadow of Cuba, however, this took on a new urgency and relevance. Komer observed that Bundy and Rostow took too much responsibility on themselves, with "the rest of us helping out a bit here and there, offering a few ideas, but largely only grinding our gears... In short, you're spread too thin."⁷⁶⁰ This was not just hurting Bundy and Rostow, but also the staff. Komer added, "Take me for example," he wrote, "[a]fter two months here after the glowing sales job you and Mac did on me...I have no feeling yet that I'm a real member of your team."⁷⁶¹ He recommended that the

⁷⁵⁶ David Priess, *The President's Book of Secrets*, p. 16-17.

⁷⁵⁷ McGeorge Bundy, recorded interview by William Moss, 11/70, p. 10 JFKL OHP.

⁷⁵⁸ Bundy to Kennedy 5/16/61, NSF Box 405, Memos to the President, 5/6/61-5/28/61, JFKL

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁰ Komer to Rostow, 5/1/61, NSF Box 438, NSC Staff, 1961-1963, JFKL.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid.

staff be decentralized and given power to pursue their own policy initiatives. Harkening back to his early complaints about ONE he added, “I am also afraid there is no alternative to giving out regional and functional assignments. We can’t all be universal scholars.”⁷⁶² At the same time, he argued the NSC needed a visible central staff structure. They could pursue their own tasks, but there needed to be something to hold them together.⁷⁶³ Bundy and Rostow liked Komer’s arguments and asked Komer to draw up a plan to assign areas of responsibility to the staff. With minor variations, Bundy followed Komer’s recommendations for the remainder of the Kennedy Administration.⁷⁶⁴ The NSC staff became organized in a fashion similar to that of the State Department. While Bundy encouraged staffers to comment and help out with problems unrelated to their areas of expertise, senior staff members primarily took charge of divisions that corresponded roughly to the geographic desks at Foggy Bottom. Komer, for instance, monitored South Asia and the Middle East, as well as foreign aid. Rostow kept the Far East, counterinsurgency, other aspects of aid, and parts of Africa. Bundy largely kept the Europe brief, but split parts of it with Kaysen and, for a period, Kissinger. Of course, none of this would have happened without Bundy’s support. Bundy saw the value in Komer’s suggestions and moved to adopt them. Despite the credit due to Komer, we might instead view him as merely lucky, instead of prescient. Harold Saunders, later one

⁷⁶² Komer to Rostow, 5/1/61, NSF Box 438, NSC Staff, 1961-1963, JFKL.

⁷⁶³ See Johnson to Rosotw, 5/3/61 NSF Box 438, NSC Staff, 1961-1963, JFKL and Bundy to O’Donnell 7/26/61, NSF Box 283, NSC Organization and Administration, 7/26/61-9/9/61, JFKL.

⁷⁶⁴ Komer to Bundy and Rostow 5/5/61, NSF Box 438, NSC Staff, 1961-1963, JFKL

of Komer's staffers, said that "Policy isn't made on paper; it's a continuously changing mix of people and ideas."⁷⁶⁵ The same could be said of organization.

It took one other staffer to complete the transformation of Bundy's NSC. If we can view Komer as the high-minded theorist, Bromley Smith was the practical administrator. Indeed, Smith personifies Bundy's handling of the NSC. A former Executive Secretary of the OCB he, like so much of the old NSC system, was retained in a less public role rather than fired. When things began to go wrong, Kennedy and Bundy turned to people like Smith, government insiders, to help solve the problem. The President and the SANSAs might have outwardly displayed disdain for the over-organized Eisenhower White House, but they also realized that career government officials often were their best allies in improving the system. Smith's long experience in the White House made him a skilled insider who could carry out the day-to-day activities of the NSC.

Smith began government service as a Foreign Service Officer, later working as an assistant to both George Marshall and Dean Acheson, including a stint as Acheson's secret liaison to the press.⁷⁶⁶ Smith entered the NSC during the last year of the Truman administration and served throughout the Eisenhower years, rising to first analyst and then Executive Secretary of the OCB. Smith admired parts of the Eisenhower system, but understood its workings were not perfect and acknowledged that these shortcomings had as much to do with Eisenhower's management style as any particular organizational flaw.⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁶⁵ Harold H. Saunders Interview with author.

⁷⁶⁶ Smith OH, DDEOHP, p. 5.

⁷⁶⁷ Smith OH, p. 2 and 16.

Smith failed in his efforts to convince Bundy to save the OCB, but blamed Neustadt rather than Bundy. Smith “had rather a dim view of the Professor ” because he “recommended dismantling the NSC machinery [t]hen he took a sabbatical and left all the broken crockery around the White House...He was happy in England while we were trying to sort out the pieces.”⁷⁶⁸ Smith’s survival in the system was almost accidental: Bundy realized he was losing track of memos, and retained Smith to follow up on his paperwork.⁷⁶⁹ Even Smith’s promotion to NSC Executive Secretary in July, 1961, was done more for show than efficiency. Bundy promoted Smith to Executive Secretary of the NSC in July, 1961.⁷⁷⁰ Under Eisenhower, this position had significant statutory powers, but Bundy made the appointment simply to make sure no one else got the job.⁷⁷¹

Smith, however, continued to take on more tasks and increasingly oversaw Bundy’s communications. Bundy in turn praised Smith’s effort, saying he was “completely loyal to this Administration, which is much more to his personal taste than the last one.”⁷⁷² Komer, for one, complained to Bundy that he misused Smith: “[Smith] is logically a [cable] customer not a cable screener” and “[is] far too senior to be saddled” with an administrative job.⁷⁷³

But Smith flourished in his new job. If Bundy wanted his staff to oversee foreign policy from the White House, the infrastructure needed to exist for them to do so. Smith

⁷⁶⁸ Bromley Smith Oral History Interview 1, p. 13, LBJL OHP. [hereafter Smith OH, LBJL OHP] and Smith JFKLOHP, p. 2.

⁷⁶⁹ Smith OH 1, p. 2, LBJL OHP.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷⁷¹ Ibid

⁷⁷² Bundy to Kenneth O’Donnell 7/26/61, NSF Box 283, NSC Organization and Administration 7/26/61-9/9/61, JFK.

⁷⁷³ Komer to Bundy 3/1/61, NSF Box 438, NSC Staff, JFK.

oversaw this process, including one of the most important innovations of the Kennedy years: the White House Situation Room. This simple concept changed how the White House conducted policy. Like with so much else, the idea was hardly new—William McKinley had a “War Room” during the Spanish-American War, and Franklin Roosevelt had his “Map Room” during the Second World War. Rockefeller had essentially recommended a similar concept in 1954. Maxwell Taylor did the same when he submitted the Taylor Report. The State and Defense Departments already had their own message centers they used to gather information from around the government.⁷⁷⁴ Bundy, Rostow, and other members of the Administration discussed similar ideas shortly after the inauguration.⁷⁷⁵ Bundy initially dismissed the suggestions, perhaps because a Situation Room would merely duplicate similar arrangements in other Departments.⁷⁷⁶

After the Bay of Pigs, an NSC staffer urged Bundy to reconsider such a plan.⁷⁷⁷ Bundy quickly commandeered a former bowling alley in the White House basement and supplied it with teletypes.⁷⁷⁸ Media portrayals of this complex often emphasize it as a place where Presidents consulted with their advisors, but Kennedy rarely, if ever, used

⁷⁷⁴ Garthoff, *A Journey*, p. 121; Paul Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost: At the Center of Decision* (Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), p. 181-182.

⁷⁷⁵ Halla to Lay 11/16/60, NSF Box 283, NSC Organization and Administration 1/26/61-1/30/61, JFK, Rostow to Bundy 2/3/61, NSF Box 283, NSC Organization and Administration 2/1/61-5/4/61, JFK, McHugh to JFK 4/7/61, POF 64, McHugh, Godfrey, JFK, and Belk to Bundy 4/18/61, Belk Box 1, 4/61-6/61, JFKL.

⁷⁷⁶ Anna Kasten Nelson said of the Situation Room, “Although some messages and reports are sent between agencies, only the White House sees them all.” That might be correct in a literal sense, but the existence of ISA, the POLADS, and Political-Military Affairs gives both the State Department and the DoD built-in connections that, at least in part, make up for any documents not transmitted between Foggy Bottom and the Pentagon. Anna Kasten Nelson “The Evolution of the National Security State: Ubiquitous and Endless” *The Long War: A New History of U.S. National Security Policy Since World War II* A.J. Bacevich ed. (Columbia UP, 2007), p. 281.

⁷⁷⁷ It seems that around this time Kennedy’s USAF aide Godfrey McHugh passed the info to the President as Belk noted “McHugh is especially devoted to the plan and wishes very much that someone would tell the President how good it is.” Belk to Bundy 4/18/61, Belk Box 1, 4/61-6/61, JFK.

⁷⁷⁸ B. Smith, p. 37.

the room.⁷⁷⁹ In fact its communications links proved far more crucial than its use as a meeting room. The cables and reports that came off its teletypes were forwarded to the appropriate NSC staffers who, in turn, synthesized the staggering amount of material received and passed it either to Bundy or directly to Kennedy. Managing the room took up almost a third of Bundy's entire staff, plus a rotating group of seconded CIA officials.⁷⁸⁰ Smith worked closely with the State Department, the CIA, the Pentagon, and the NSA to define roughly what needed to be sent to the White House.⁷⁸¹ Even after Smith's winnowing process, NSC staffer Michael Forrestal found the amount of messages overwhelming and claimed that on average, the room sent him seven pounds of paper per day.⁷⁸² He lamented that keeping up with the flow of information was "the most burdensome part of the whole job," quite the statement given that he oversaw US policy in Vietnam.⁷⁸³ Forrestal did find one redeeming feature of the Situation Room: Smith made sure the White House received a steady stream of updates from news services. Forrestal appreciated having such up-to-date news.⁷⁸⁴ Komer supposedly enjoyed calling up State Department staffers and quizzing them on cables.⁷⁸⁵ This communication link gave the NSC staff new access to and a new role in the policy process.⁷⁸⁶ They saw

⁷⁷⁹ Michael K. Bohn, *The Nerve Center* (Potomac Books, 2003), p. 1 and 8.

⁷⁸⁰ Bundy to Johnson, "The Organization of the National Security Staff", 8/2/65, Doc. 0240220005, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University. www.virtualarchive.vietnam.ttu.edu.

⁷⁸¹ B. Smith, p. 38. Komer helped here, too. He spoke to his former ONE boss, then Deputy Director of the CIA, and convinced him to send over copies of an documents they gave to the State Department. Komer Memo for the Record 4/27/61, NSF Box 321, Staff Memoranda, Robert Komer, 4/17/61-5/15/61, JFKL.

⁷⁸² MVF OH, p. 21

⁷⁸³ Ibid. Coups are easy. Cable reading is hard.

⁷⁸⁴ Forrestal felt these news services did a better job of summarizing events than some professionals in the US government. Ibid, p. 21-22.

⁷⁸⁵ Destler, Gelb, and Lake, *Our Own*, p.246-247.

⁷⁸⁶ FDR's use of the "Map Room" in part constitutes a forerunner of the Situation Room. But the use of that room was to keep FDR and a handful of aides informed of the events of the Second World War and it was a

incoming reports and information and orders distributed to posts overseas—effectively allowing the NSC staff to look over the shoulder of the Departments. As Smith said, “[f]or the first time the White House was on the main line. The previous attitude was to hold down information going to the White House on the grounds that the political types would not know how to handle it.”⁷⁸⁷ It allowed far faster reaction times from the White House than previously were possible. Before, State, Defense, and other agencies could decide what went to the White House. With the Situation Room, however, the President could not only receive messages directly from the field, but also respond in kind.

For those in the line agencies, it could be a help or a headache. One can only imagine the fate of State staffers fielding a phone call from Komer. Ambassador to India John Kenneth Galbraith wanted Kennedy to see his reports which were sent to the State Department, but believed Dean Rusk was not passing them on to the White House. Rusk hated the personal connection between the Ambassador and the President and felt Galbraith should not be communicating his ideas and policy initiatives straight to the Oval Office. Galbraith famously quipped “communicating through the State Department is like fornicating through a mattress.”⁷⁸⁸ Galbraith used the Situation Room to his advantage, passing cables straight through to Kennedy around the State Department. In fact, the NSC staff became the clearing-house for communications with ambassadors,

feature abandoned under Truman and Eisenhower when it came to dealing with foreign policy more generally.

⁷⁸⁷ Smith OH p. 8.

⁷⁸⁸ John Kenneth Galbraith, *Letters to Kennedy* James Goodman ed. (Harvard UP, 1998), p. 4.

letters to foreign leaders, and other cable traffic.⁷⁸⁹ After all these changes, Smith truly felt that the NSC staff became “The Little State Department.”⁷⁹⁰

The development of the NSC staff and the creation of the Situation Room show an important aspect of this process of institutional growth. Bundy might have been the conduit through which these ideas entered the White House, but neither Bundy, Komer, nor Smith can take credit as the creator. These ideas had a long gestation period. The idea of the active NSC staff, for instance, went back to the early 1950s. In 1952 Bundy, Arthur Schlesinger, and William Elliot did not question the need for a White House foreign policy staff, they just wondered how powerful it should be.⁷⁹¹ In 1954 Nelson Rockefeller and his PCG staffers called for a foreign policy staff. PACGO made similar recommendations. Some of these ideas even appeared in Maxwell Taylor’s report. Jackson and the SNPM staff also pushed for some sort of White House foreign policy group. These officials could observe foreign policy “in the round,” unencumbered by departmental issues.⁷⁹² Being “outside the system” they could be used more effectively to spot trouble and be “sensitive to the President’s own information needs.”⁷⁹³ The SNPM staff believed that the White House should have a set of “highly able aides who can help prepare the work of the council, record its decisions, and trouble-shoot spot assignments.”⁷⁹⁴

⁷⁸⁹ Preston, *War*, p. 42.

⁷⁹⁰ Smith OH, p. 5.

⁷⁹¹ *United States Foreign Policy: Its Organization and Control* William Y. Elliot ed. (Columbia UP, 1952), p. 88-92 and 181-182.

⁷⁹² “Super Cabinet Officers and Superstaffs” *Organizing for National Security* Volume III

⁷⁹³ Ibid and “The National Security Council” *Organizing for National Security* Volume III.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid.

William Elliot believed that “no department can, of itself, be expected to exercise the necessary self-criticism to make a fair assessment of its programs...or to be really aware or frank enough about [its own] shortcomings.”⁷⁹⁵ These staffers should be “broadly experienced in high governmental responsibilities [and having] training at the top policy posts in several agencies.”⁷⁹⁶ Elliot wrote “They should be able to assist the President first of all in his own formulation, and then in his control and follow-up of policies by really comprehensive, critical and simple reporting of the main issues with which the President must be concerned.”⁷⁹⁷ Others made similar recommendations.⁷⁹⁸

Komer’s ideas, however, were against the spirit of what Jackson recommended via the SNPM. As noted above, Jackson thought the White House should have some staff to deal with foreign policy issues, but he worried that a White House foreign policy staff would be so removed from every day operations that they might engage in useless “Ivory tower thinking.”⁷⁹⁹ He worried that this would be “the worst of two possible words” since the staff would lack “enough power to give the President effective assistance, but [would be] sufficiently powerful...to meddle in the affairs of the great departments.”⁸⁰⁰ After all, in Jackson’s view it was State, not the White House, who should run policy.

Kennedy always wanted more advice. During the transition he told George Kennan that “he [thought] he should...have around him...a small staff of people who

⁷⁹⁵ William Y. Elliot, “An Extension of National Security Council Machinery: The Creation of a High-Level Continuing Advisory Body to Review National Security Programs for Policy Priority Treatment” WE, Box 112, National Security Council, HI.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁸ “The Need for a National Staff”, 3/3/59, HJ, Accn 356006, Box 70, Hovell, Bergen B, “The Need for a National Staff”, UW.

⁷⁹⁹ “Super Cabinet Officers and Superstaffs” *Organizing for National Security* Volume III

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid.

worked just for him and did not represent other departments. He said that he did not want to be put in a position where he had only one or two people to whom he could turn for certain types of advice.”⁸⁰¹ Kennan agreed, noting that “it...had been for long...my emphatic view that the President should have staff of his own and should not be dependent merely on advice that came up through the various departments and agencies.”⁸⁰² It seems unlikely that Kennedy was referring directly to an NSC-like staff in this statement, more like the group of Special Assistants recommended by Neustadt. But it also demonstrated he was open to the idea, even if it took almost a year before he began to interact directly with anyone on the NSC staff besides Bundy and Rostow.⁸⁰³ But Kennedy’s comments indicate his interest in involving the White House directly in foreign policy-making.

Previously no one had been willing to act on these recommendations. Eisenhower had said “no” for a variety of reasons discussed in previous chapters. In early 1961 neither Kennedy nor Bundy showed much interest in adopting these proposals. It is completely possible that, at some point during his CIA service, Komer heard some of these ideas, but if so he never referenced them specifically. The same thing could be said for Smith. He was, after all, serving in the OCB when Rockefeller suggested his own Cold War Situation room in 1955. The constellation of bureaucrats and academics who identified these issues and recommended these solutions during the Eisenhower

⁸⁰¹ Kennan diary entry 1/10/61, GK, Box 234 Folder 2, PU.

⁸⁰² Ibid.

⁸⁰³ Michael V. Forrestal Oral History Interview with Joseph Kraft 4/8/64, p. 18, JFK OHP [hereafter MVF OH], Carl Kaysen Oral History Interview with Joseph E. O’Connor 7/11/66, JFKL OHP [hereafter Kaysen OH] p, 3-5, Komer to Bundy 3/16/61, NSF Box 321, Staff Memoranda, Robert W. Komer, 3/15/61-3/29/61, JFKL and Komer to Bundy 7/19/62, NSF Box 322, Staff Memoranda, Robert Komer, 7/62, JFKL.

Administration deserve significant credit, even if Eisenhower proved unwilling to adopt them.

Running the World

After these initial decisions, Bundy began to develop the staff and put it to work. Bundy did not exclude himself from his Bay of Pigs post-mortem; he began to meet more regularly with Kennedy, ensuring the President had more information at his disposal and time to ask questions. In late June 1961, Bundy wrote a memo to Kennedy describing the transformation of his office. While he acknowledged room for improvement and denied claims that the NSC staff was supplanting the State or Defense Departments, Bundy said that his staff should ensure “that all great issues are controlled and coordinated.”⁸⁰⁴ Bundy began to take on a role that bore a striking resemblance to PACGO’s First Secretary concept. Though he lacked the statutory powers, he acted as the President’s foreign policy coordinator. He asserted that what he called “the White House-NSC group” did “not distinguish between ‘planning’ and ‘operations’ and resistance to this distinction is fundamental to our whole concept of work.”⁸⁰⁵ Bundy realized that his own efforts would only take him so far if he did not recruit an able staff. Kennedy summed up his view of problem solving when he said of Bundy, “you can’t beat brains, and with brains, judgment.”⁸⁰⁶ But Bundy realized you needed more than just brains. He

⁸⁰⁴ Bundy to Kennedy 6/22/61, NSF Box 283, NSC Organization and Administration 5/5/61-7/25/61, JFKL. This interesting, and occasionally awkwardly worded, memo seems as if it was partially written for submission for Jackson’s Committee. While Bundy’s letter to them (dated 9/4/61) has some of the same information, this is a much more honest and open memo.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁶ Tuohy, “JFK’s McGeorge Bundy”.

remembered that prior to the Bay of Pigs Kennedy said it “was bound to be all right because all of his advisors were professors.”⁸⁰⁷ Bundy never lost confidence in his intellectual abilities, but the Bay of Pigs caused him to cast a wider net.

The nature of the NSC staff also changed in response to Komer’s recommendations. The traditional view is that Bundy’s NSC and Kennedy’s administration generally drew heavily from the faculty of the Ivy League.⁸⁰⁸ After May 1961, Bundy’s NSC hires increasingly came from within the government and the NSC largely dispensed with its use of outside and part-time contractors. Bundy primarily drew staff from the State Department, but also hired a number of former CIA officials and staffers from other agencies.⁸⁰⁹ At the very least, this seems to indicate that Bundy felt a need for experience in government over outside insight. He also added a rotating representative from the Joint Chiefs to ensure a military representation on his staff.⁸¹⁰

⁸⁰⁷ Bundy OH, p. 27.

⁸⁰⁸ Carnes Lord, *The Presidency and the Management of National Security* (Free Press, 1988), p. 71 and Robert Dallek, *Camelot’s Court: Inside the Kennedy White House* (Harper Collins, 2013) p, 93.

⁸⁰⁹ The following breakdown gives a general, though not comprehensive, overview of the background of the major and minor figures in Bundy’s NSC hired after mid-1961.

CIA: Chester Cooper, Harold Saunders Cooper, Peter Jessup, and Donald Ropa. Cooper, like Komer, came from ONE.

State: David Klein, William Brubeck, James Thomson, Gordon Chase, Ulric Haynes, and William Bowdler.

Defense: Lawrence J. Legere and Richard Bowman.

Bureau of the Budget: Edward K. Hamilton

Outside Government: Michael Forrestal, Francis Bator, and Clifford Alexander.

Other White House Special Assistants and officials like Ralph Dungan, Arthur Schlesinger, and Myer Feldman sometimes functioned as NSC staffers in all but name. Bundy also had several staffers who worked part time for him while also working for another department. Spurgeon Kenney, for instance, largely took over the role of Bundy’s disarmament advisor after Kaysen left but, officially, Kenny worked for first Jerome Weisner and then Donald Hornig in the Office of the Science Advisor.

⁸¹⁰ Bundy, for some reason, never hired a staffer to focus solely on military matters, though the concept was floated in early 1961. He expected his staffers to be fluent enough in these matters that he may have decided a dedicated military staff member would be superfluous. See Owen to Bundy 4/6/61 and Bundy to Kaysen 4/10/61 both in NSF Box 322, Staff Memoranda, Henry Owen, 1961 and Undated, JFKL.

After mid-1961 only three major officials came from outside government.⁸¹¹ Two were friends of Bundy and the third, Forrestal, was initially brought on to liaise with the State Department.⁸¹²

Bundy's staffers might have been assigned to monitor specific areas, but Bundy agreed with Jackson in the debate over specialists versus generalists. Theodore Sorensen reiterated the White House's general belief in generalists: "the very intensity of that expert's study may prevent him from seeing the broader, more practical perspective which must govern public policy."⁸¹³ Bundy told one new hire he expected him to use his "lawyer-politician" kind of training in approaching problems.⁸¹⁴ He pushed his staff, conducting his staff meetings in a manner similar to a graduate seminar—a tactic that enthralled some and bored others.⁸¹⁵

The vast majority of NSC staffers attended an Ivy League institution at some point in their lives, but, as an official from that time remembered, "there was a natural tendency to form and then perpetuate an Ivy League cadre."⁸¹⁶ Bundy's staff was remarkably varied for the early 1960s. His staffers might have mostly shared an Ivy League background, but they came from a diverse set of socio-economic backgrounds and religions.⁸¹⁷ He also hired two African-American for prominent positions.⁸¹⁸ A

⁸¹¹ These being Kaysen, Michael Forrestal, and Kaysen's eventual replacement, Francis Bator.

⁸¹² MVF OH, p. 5-6.

⁸¹³ Theodore Sorensen, *Decision Making in the White House: The Olive Branch or the Arrows* (Columbia UP, 1963), p. 65.

⁸¹⁴ Alexander interview I, p. 2, LBJL OHP.

⁸¹⁵ Haynes Oral History, ADST OHP, p. 41; Forrestal found these meetings painful, taking up valuable time and often degenerated into banter between Bundy and Kaysen. Forrestal OH, p. 15-16.

⁸¹⁶ Garthoff, p. 40

⁸¹⁷ For instance, all four of Bundy's deputies were Jewish.

⁸¹⁸ These were the Ulric Haynes from the State Department and the aforementioned Clifford Alexander. Both remembered their time on the staff fondly. Haynes OH, p. 41 and Clifford Alexander Interview I,

shocking lowly number, it was significant for its time considering that State Department only employed 17 African-Americans out of almost 5,000 FSOs.⁸¹⁹ Women also played an important, if largely clerical role in Bundy's NSC.⁸²⁰ It seems likely that Dorothy Fosdick would have changed that if she had accepted Bundy's job offer.⁸²¹ The NSC staff eventually grew to roughly 48 people.⁸²² Of those, only 17 were Bundy's "doers." Probably half the remaining 31 were secretaries.⁸²³ Though most historians portray Bromley Smith as the man who held the NSC together, the archival records show that Bundy depended as much on secretaries and assistants as he did on his more famous staffers.⁸²⁴ Bundy's staff is rightly portrayed in the literature as independent operators roaming over the Capitol doing the Kennedy's bidding. They all would have been lost, however, without the administrative support.

Bundy made one last major change in 1961 when he allowed Kennedy to ship Walt Rostow to the State Department. Bundy and Rostow had a fine professional

11/1/71, LBJL OHP. While Bundy's racial views were considerably better than many of his contemporaries, they were not perfect by any means. In late 1961 Bundy got in trouble after it became public he had joined the prestigious, and segregated, Metropolitan Club in Washington. While Bundy defended the decision as a personal choice and remained in the Club, it did not help his case that Robert Kennedy quit the club shortly before precisely because of the Club's racial views. David Wise, "Bundy Joins Exclusive Club Robt. Kennedy Quit in Bias Row." *Boston Globe*, 10/5/61 and No Author. "Untitled." *Time*, 10/31/61.

⁸¹⁹ Moskin, p. 488.

⁸²⁰ One researcher, Ruth Nicalo, had served on the NSC continuously since the Truman Administration. Truman Appointment Calendar for 9/27/47, Truman Presidential Library website, www.trumanlibrary.org and U.S. Civil Service Commission, *Official Register of the United States 1952*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952, p. 16, and "NSC-2", NSF Box 283, NSC Organization and Administration, 1/30/61-1/31/61, JFKL; Bundy to Rusk, 11/30/65, Doc. 0240309027, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University. www.virtualarchive.vietnam.ttu.edu.

⁸²¹ McGeorge Bundy Interview, Donald A. Schmechel Oral History Project #4056, University of Washington Archives.

⁸²² Ibid.

⁸²³ Ibid.

⁸²⁴ National Security Files Finding aid, JFKL. Many researchers who have worked in the NSF at the Kennedy Library will recognize the names Alice Boyce, Pauline Yates, Mildred Zayac, and Lois Mook. These four women were the core of Bundy's key secretarial team.

relationship, but Rostow seemed unwilling to adopt Bundy's new operational approach.⁸²⁵ Rostow remained focused on long-range planning and big, sweeping ideas that he hoped would revolutionize US diplomacy. This big picture thinking could be enthralling at times, but it had drawbacks.⁸²⁶ Kennedy, for one, grew frustrated at Rostow's lengthy planning papers: he found they contained interesting ideas, but had few timely answers about how to solve the day's problems.⁸²⁷ As a State Department staffer commented, "I quickly learned that...an analytical study...not geared to any action recommendation, even if cogent, was not very useful."⁸²⁸ Rostow, at the time, did not learn the same lesson. Kennedy also grew pained with Rostow's bellicose attitude towards South East Asia.⁸²⁹ Bundy and several staffers did not think Rostow's projects were worth the time.⁸³⁰ Bundy did not push Rostow out, but probably did little to stop his transfer and in his place put his friend Carl Kaysen. Bundy later recalled it took until the

⁸²⁵ Dallek, recently, has suggested that "Bundy, the Brahmin with a birthright to dominate" did not naturally mesh with "Rostow, the ambitious ethnic with the talent to make his way in a comparative world." This seems to be both an unfair slam at Bundy, who even Halberstam admitted, was open minded when it came to intellectual talent, and a serious misreading of the Bundy/Rostow relationship. Dallek, *Camelot's*, p. 92-93; David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (Random House 1972) p. 393; Milne, p. 82, Bird, p. 186.

⁸²⁶ Belk OH, p. 18.

⁸²⁷ Bundy OH 1, p. 4, Kaysen OH, p. 99-101, and Smith OH 1 p. 7.

⁸²⁸ Garthoff, p. 125.

⁸²⁹ Quoted in Milne, p. 99.

⁸³⁰ Kaysen OH 1, p. 98-102 and Bundy OH 4, p. 6-7; Bundy OH 1, p. 133. In Bundy's defense, this is a conundrum with which proceeding SANSAs/NSAs, even Rostow himself, have also struggled. Carnes Lord, one of Carter's NSC staffers complained that, under Kennedy strategic planning became seen as an inherently futile exercise and called for it to be reinstated. Carnes Lord, *The President and the Management of National Security* (Free Press, 1988), p. 88.

Only in 2005 did Stephen Hadley form the Strategic Planning and Institutional Reform cell in the NSC. Even members of this group concluded that, while this was an important addition, Hadley's decision to limit the cell to only two staffers put significant limits on how much the NSC staff could really participate in such planning. P. Feaver and W. Inboden "A Strategic Planning Cell on National Security in the White House" in *Avoiding Trivia: The Role of Strategic Planning in American Foreign Policy* D.W. Derezner ed. (Brookings Inst, 2009), p. 98-99, 108.

fall of 1961 before he felt comfortable with the operations of the administration.⁸³¹ A surviving NSC staffer agreed with that assessment.⁸³² The transfer of Rostow seems to be connected to this.

What did all these changes mean in reality? Komer, for one, managed to heavily influence America's policy towards South Asia. As part of this he initiated a diplomatic opening to India arguing that, in the Cold War battle for hearts and minds, democratic India, not dictatorial Pakistan, should be America's main ally in South Asia. While Komer himself often remains a shadowy background figure, scholars of US-South Asian relations have recognized his importance.⁸³³ Less explored is Carl Kaysen's role in the 1961 Berlin Crisis. Though Kaysen was relatively new to the staff, it demonstrates how quickly the power of the staff grew when it came to making and shaping policy.

When Kaysen joined the NSC staff, the Berlin Crisis threatened to devolve from a war of words to an actual war. The problem Kennedy faced was that he had no good options at his disposal. As tension grew, Paul Nitze presented Kennedy with a series of options; if the Soviets decide to blockade Berlin, the first response would be a show of force. If a show of force failed, the next step was a conventional attack into East Germany. If that, too, failed to produce the desired outcome, or Warsaw Pact forces responded with nuclear weapons, the United States would have to deploy its own nuclear forces.⁸³⁴ Unfortunately, the only nuclear war America was capable of launching was an

⁸³¹ Bundy OH, p. 85-86.

⁸³² Harold H. Saunders interview with author, 4/9/14.

⁸³³ For instance, the previously mentioned Ravoche work, Robert McMahon, *Cold War on the Periphery* (Columbia UP, 1996) and, of course, Frank Jones' aforementioned *Blowtorch*.

⁸³⁴ Fred Kaplan, "JFK's First Strike Plan" *The Atlantic* 10/2001. Nitze outlined an earlier version of this approach in July 1961. Document 69, Memcon, 7/14/61, FRUS 1961-1963, Vol. XIV.

all-out strike that experts believed would kill 54% of the population of the USSR and destroy 82% of the structures in the nation.⁸³⁵ Despite years of training for just such an eventuality, however, Nitze and others feared this sort of all-out nuclear assault would take too long to enact, giving the Soviets time to strike back at the US and Europe.⁸³⁶ Kaysen believed that it was worth studying the possibility of a more limited strike and with Bundy's approval took it upon himself to do so.⁸³⁷

Kaysen was an expert in economics by academic training and during the Second World War he worked for the OSS selecting targets for Allied bombers in Europe.⁸³⁸ Using that wartime background, Kaysen identified targets that would quickly cripple the Soviet ability to respond without the US having to use a full nuclear strike. Using around 60 aircraft, Kaysen argued that American forces could, effectively, destroy the majority of Soviet offensive nuclear weapons. Even allowing for a loss rate of 25% of the attacking force, the remaining bombers could inflict enough damage to have “eliminated or paralyzed the nuclear threat to the United States...”⁸³⁹ Kaysen admitted this plan made several important assumptions concerning the attack, but confidently stated it would still kill “less than 1,000,000 and probably not much more than 500,000” Soviets in the process.⁸⁴⁰

Kaysen received blowback on this study from the military, who felt his estimates were off, and some coworkers, who believed his statements were bloodthirsty and

⁸³⁵ Kaplan, “JFK’s”

⁸³⁶ Ibid.

⁸³⁷ Kaysen MIT Interview, p. 9.

⁸³⁸ Frederick Kempe, *Berlin 1961* (Berkeley, 2011), p. 431.

⁸³⁹ Strategic Air Planning and Berlin, 9/5/61, Electronic Briefing Book No. 56 (Frist Strike Options and the Berlin Crisis, September 1961), Document 1, NSA.

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid.

cavalier. The Air Force's attitude, Kaysen remembered, was "very unpleasant, very hostile," adding that the Air Force officers seemed to have "You bastards, its none of your business" ... just written over all their faces."⁸⁴¹ Privately, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs admitted that the Air Force's war plan "is not the ultimate in strategic planning [but] it is far better than anything previously in existence."⁸⁴² One military officer perhaps spoke for much of the Pentagon when he expressed confusion about who Kaysen actually was. Kaysen, as he noted, had cultivated "considerable status and influence," but also believed his work was on a "presumably temporary basis."⁸⁴³ Clearly, the power and function of the NSC staff was so new it continued to elude some in government. Several of Kaysen's coworkers in the White House reacted in horror. Ted Sorensen told Kaysen "You're crazy! We shouldn't let guys like you around here."⁸⁴⁴ NSC colleague Marcus Raskin went even further, saying Kaysen's report "makes us [no] better than those who measured the gas ovens or the engineers who built the tracks for the death trains in Nazi Germany."⁸⁴⁵ Raskin and Kaysen argued until both men were in tears, and the argument, effectively, ended their friendship.⁸⁴⁶ In this plan, Kaysen assumed that the attack would stun the Soviets, who would not be able to respond. If they chose to attack, however, they would still have roughly 800 small nuclear warheads. Estimates suggested the use of those would kill 40% of NATO troops in the Federal Republic of Germany, paralyzing

⁸⁴¹ Kaysen MIT Interview, p. 12.

⁸⁴² Lemnitzer to Taylor, 10/11/61, Electronic Briefing Book No. 56 (Frist Strike Options and the Berlin Crisis, September 1961), Document 5, NSA.

⁸⁴³ Trussell to Lemnitzer 9/8/61, Electronic Briefing Book No. 56 (Frist Strike Options and the Berlin Crisis, September 1961), Document 1, NSA.

⁸⁴⁴ Quoted in Kempe, p. 434.

⁸⁴⁵ Quoted in Bird, p. 207. Kaysen argued that he did not, in fact, cry, but agreed the argument was an emotional one. Bird p. 434n87.

⁸⁴⁶ Ibid.

the West German government in the process.⁸⁴⁷ The continental United States might be saved, but perhaps at the cost of Western Europe.

In spite of all these issues, Kaysen saw his plan as less of an actionable alternative than a bargaining chip. Kaysen admitted that his plan was full of assumptions and that answers to these “cannot be obtained without the most careful and detailed operational studies and exercises.”⁸⁴⁸ He added separately that Kennedy’s next step “is to call now for negotiations.”⁸⁴⁹ Kennedy never came close to using the plan, and Kaysen justified the exercise by saying, “I just thought it was a good idea to have a plan...Having a plan is different from recommending its use.”⁸⁵⁰ Henry Kissinger, still an NSC consultant when Kaysen wrote his memos, put the exercise in a wider perspective. He claimed, the White House needed more “than assurances by the JCS that they have matters well in hand. [Military] plans must be such that the President understands their implications [and] can have confidence in them.”⁸⁵¹ He added that, “Civilian control over military operations may become illusory even if only conventional weapons are used under present circumstances. The President’s hand may well be forced...[I]t is essential that the military understand now what the President is prepared to countenance and what he will not agree to.”⁸⁵² Kennedy used Kaysen’s plan to rein in the military and say that he

⁸⁴⁷ Matthias Uhl, “Soviet and Warsaw Pact Military Strategy from Stalin Brezhnev” in *Blueprints for Battle* (UP of Kentucky, 2012), p. 35, 37-38.

⁸⁴⁸ Strategic Air Planning and Berlin, 9/5/61, Electronic Briefing Book No. 56 (Frist Strike Options and the Berlin Crisis, September 1961), Document 1, NSA.

⁸⁴⁹ “Thoughts on Berlin” NSF, Box 320, Kaysen, Carl 1961: June-August, JFK.

⁸⁵⁰ Quoted in Bird, p. 207, Kaysen MIT Interview, p. 9n15.

⁸⁵¹ Kissinger to Bundy, 9/8/61, NSF, Box 320, Kissinger, Henry, 1961: September-October, JFK.

⁸⁵² Ibid.

would not countenance all out nuclear war, unless it was the last possible option.⁸⁵³

Moreover, it showed the military that the White House would not be beholden to plans they were offered: they would look for their own solutions if necessary. As Kissinger hoped, Kennedy used the information provided by the document to press military officials on how they would, or could, respond to the Soviets short of full nuclear war.⁸⁵⁴

It was a discussion that frustrated and angered the Generals, but they could not ignore Kaysen's findings. Of course, none of this should hide the fact that members of the Kennedy Administration, albeit briefly, looked approvingly on a plan for a surprise nuclear first strike. But, for a President stung by military obfuscation (or worse) during the Bay of Pigs, Kaysen's document served as a shot across the bow of the services. By using the new powers of the NSC staff, Kennedy and Bundy were able to muzzle the military while they simultaneously worked on a diplomatic solution. Kaysen's report also contributed in part to Robert McNamara's own review of US nuclear strategy later in 1961.⁸⁵⁵ He also proved that the NSC staff could provide Kennedy with the information needed to make an informed decision and, if needed, challenge the thinking in the rest of the government.

Conclusion

After 1961, the NSC staff functioned as Bundy's collective right arm. It freed him to pursue his dual role as "honest broker" between the department chiefs and advisor, a

⁸⁵³ Kaplan, "JFK's"

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁵ Kaysen MIT Interview, p. 10.

balancing act that, by all accounts, he performed well.⁸⁵⁶ Observing from afar, Richard Neustadt expressed some concern. Bundy ran a tight ship, to be sure, but Neustadt observed, “Bundy, in particular, is an accomplished juggler of many balls at once. He juggles while he skates, and skates so fast that even in close-up...he himself remains a blur—which is as it should be with a staff officer. But sometimes one ball or another crunches through the ice; recovery is costly. One wonders whether Bundy might not need a Bundy of his own.”⁸⁵⁷ Smith, who helped shape the NSC system, still felt it lacked something. In an interview in 1970 he remembered an instance in which Kennedy and his advisors talked about who should be in the Laotian cabinet. When Smith said the President did not have time to deal with such a minor matter, the interviewer pressed him on whether this was a sign of Kennedy being too involved. Smith snapped back: “I’m saying that a staff ought to allot a president’s time to be spent on national security problems so that he doesn’t get into this kind of situation.”⁸⁵⁸ The NSC staff was a double-edged sword. It kept track of events for Kennedy, yet also let him sink into the minutia.

Bundy expected his staff to work for Kennedy, but also encouraged them to develop their own initiatives. In addition to Komer’s work in South Asia, he became a leading advocate for using foreign aid. David Halberstam, who rarely had a good word for members of the Kennedy White House, rather inelegantly called Komer “the most

⁸⁵⁶ Preston, *War*, p. 248.

⁸⁵⁷ Neustadt, *Report*, p. 120.

⁸⁵⁸ Smith OH, p. 12.

articulate White House spokesman for the dark of skin.”⁸⁵⁹ Just before Kaysen left government service in 1963, his last project focused on an idea almost exactly opposed to where he started: instead of planning for nuclear war, he helped shape the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty, a first step towards Détente. Kaysen later remembered, “It made me feel good.”⁸⁶⁰ The NSC staff were supposed to function as free thinkers. Unlike Eisenhower’s NSC, which seemed to shut down new ideas, part of the reason Bundy hired his staffers was because they could turn their new ideas into actions. That, however, had limits. Many members of the NSC staff, for instance, were drawn to Vietnam and could neither understand the consequences of a war nor think their way to victory. A former ONE analyst observed of Bundy’s staff, “the simple fact was that each of them in some way and to some degree was committed to the existing policy, and none of them was intellectually free at that point or in those circumstances to stand back and look at the situation in its broadest aspects.”⁸⁶¹ This might be an exaggeration, several members of Bundy’s staff were all too aware of the pitfalls of conflict in Southeast Asia, but it spoke to the mindset of Bundy, Komer, and Forrestal. While Bundy’s system remained and flourished, it too has had its successes and failures.⁸⁶²

⁸⁵⁹ Halberstam, p. 161.

⁸⁶⁰ Carl Kaysen Interview, 2/28/86, *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age; At the Brink*, WGBH.

⁸⁶¹ Willard C. Matthias, *America’s Strategic Blunders: Intelligence Analysis and National Security Policy, 1936-1991* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), p. 189.

⁸⁶² Today’s NSC staff has expanded from Bundy’s four or five geographical desks to eighteen geographic and functional units and from Bundy’s 10-20 staffers to 200. Ivo Daalder and I.M. Destler “How National Security Advisors See Their Roles” *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy* E.R. Wittkopf and J.M. McCormick eds (Rowman and Littlefield Pub., 2007), p. 185 and Bradley H. Patterson, *The White House Staff* (Brookings Institution, 2000), p. 45. The previously mentioned SIPR cell, if counted separately, would increase this count to 19.

The NSC staff remains a surprisingly invisible organization, even if the profile of the SANSAs, now the National Security Advisors, has grown. That anonymity also has its roots in the Kennedy years. Bromley Smith thought that under Bundy's system the perfect NSC staffer was a "castrated martyr who visualizes his task as nothing more than helping the president."⁸⁶³ Some might dispute the castrated part: both Komer and Kaysen developed reputations for being fearsome operators.⁸⁶⁴ They also continued to have ambition: both Komer and Rostow wanted to be SANSAs, though Rostow eventually won that battle.⁸⁶⁵ Kaysen left the White House in part, Bundy surmised, because he did not like being a deputy.⁸⁶⁶ Yet the second part of Smith's quote continues to hold true. Whatever their personal peccadillos or ambitions, they understood that the NSC staff worked for the White House. As Komer noted, "Kennedy made it very clear we were his men [and] we operated for him."⁸⁶⁷

⁸⁶³ Smith OH, p. 18.

⁸⁶⁴ Belk OH 2, p. 2-3.

⁸⁶⁵ F. Jones, p. 96.

⁸⁶⁶ Bundy OH, p. 120. Bundy and Kaysen had a very close personal friendship. Bundy thought that "nevertheless, the President was dealing with the Bundy office when he was dealing with Kaysen, and for a man with Carl's enormous gifts you can only do that for so long."

⁸⁶⁷ Komer OH 4, p. 22.

Chapter 6: Charles Wilson's Questions

Late in his tenure as Secretary of Defense, after a particularly difficult period, Charles Wilson contacted a senior White House advisor and asked, "Do you think I ought to resign?" The staffer he asked, no fan of the Secretary, shot back, "I think you should have done it six months ago."⁸⁶⁸ Wilson's tenure was a strange combination of peace and war. On one hand, he was the first secretary to serve out a full term, coinciding with Dwight Eisenhower's first term. The world was hardly a calm place during his tenure. Wilson oversaw the continued buildup of US nuclear forces, managed the last few months of the Korean War, and countered continued Soviet military growth. Yet, this was a remarkably stable period in many respects. America largely enjoyed a lull between "shooting wars." Even if he was not fighting a war overseas, he experienced plenty of political combat at home. He dealt with generals and admirals who disagreed with his spending priorities, and congressmen who doubted his abilities, while also suffering the fallout from a series of public gaffes.

At times, Wilson could be his own worst enemy. He was also a hostage to fortune. In the early 1950s the Pentagon was far from a fully formed institution. It was less than a decade old and the 1947 National Security Act did little to address rivalries between the services. As originally envisioned, the Secretary of Defense was, in effect, a coordinator. Yet the Secretary lacked the power to perform much coordination. That meant that the Pentagon's managers often took the blame for events far outside their control. The personnel turnover in that office did little to encourage any sort of stability. It also

⁸⁶⁸ Robert J. Watson, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Volume IV: Into the Missile Age 1956-1960* (OSD, 1997), p. 10.

suffered from an exaggerated reputation. Eisenhower promoted his Administration as one run as efficiently as the Army—perhaps an oxymoron—staffed by executives picked precisely because of their business background, competence, and managerial skill. Those promises quickly ran into the realities of the office.

Eisenhower's first two secretaries, Charles Wilson and Neil McElroy, struggled with the demands of the office. McElroy was unlucky enough to start the job only days after Sputnik. Pressure from Congress caused Eisenhower to take seriously the need to enact reforms. Eisenhower turned to a familiar source for help: Nelson Rockefeller. At times Rockefeller had to work against McElroy in the efforts to restructure the department, a set of plans Eisenhower then pressed through Congress. It was a difficult fight, but Eisenhower eventually managed to win Congressional support for the majority of these reforms. The Administration's final secretary of defense, Thomas Gates, was by far its least controversial. A product of seven years working in the Pentagon, he proved a remarkably competent and well-liked official who started many of the reforms that Robert McNamara later finished. But neither Gates nor Eisenhower could do anything to change the opinion that despite attempts at reform the Department of Defense was an unruly organization.

Engineer Charlie

The job of the Secretary of Defense has never been easy and it is hard to overstate the pressures during the Department's its early years. They killed James Forrestal. George Marshall, who seemed to excel at every other job he held in government, left

little impact on the office. If Robert Lovett, Truman's last secretary, might be remembered for his quiet competence, Louis Johnson, Truman's second secretary, excelled at making enemies. Even Congress attempted to fix the office, through an amendment in 1949, it left the basic structure remarkably intact. The Secretary had few powers of coordination or oversight. These issues plagued two of the unluckiest and maybe unhappiest secretaries of defense in American history, an irony given they only briefly had to deal with a shooting war and mostly served in times of peace. Though their terms encompassed the height of the Cold War and they approved plans that would have destroyed nations, their unhappiness stemmed almost entirely from domestic sources. The root of Charles Wilson and Neil McElroy's unhappiness and bad luck began with a confluence of events outside their control and ended with the transformation of their jobs.

In 1953, the organization of the Pentagon seemed orderly in theory. Each branch of the military had a military and civilian head. The civilian head, the Service Secretary, controlled much of the service, including both day-to-day issues as well as higher level questions of strategy and force planning.⁸⁶⁹ When the Secretary of Defense wanted something done, the Service Secretaries gave the orders and had leeway in executing those orders. In many respects, this was unchanged from the 19th century. The top military official in each service sat on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. While they wielded some influence, they were primarily an advisory body focused largely on planning.⁸⁷⁰ Overseeing all of this was the Secretary of Defense, who theoretically played a coordination and oversight role. The Secretary could overrule the Service Secretaries, but

⁸⁶⁹ Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 16.

⁸⁷⁰ Zegart, p. 134.

the Services retained significant power. In 1949, for instance, Louis Johnson cancelled a new class of aircraft carrier, directing funds instead towards a new generation of Air Force bombers. The resulting “Revolt of the Admirals” brought this all to the public’s attention, as high-ranking officers broke ranks and expressed their anger. This type of event would have been difficult, perhaps impossible, to replicate in the State Department or CIA. It demonstrated that the Secretary of Defense had to be wary of his constituents lest they publically display their displeasure. In many respects, this organizational set-up was the last remnant of the Navy’s push for power in the mid-and-late 1940s when the Secretary of the Navy and his admirals argued for a minimum of oversight and coordination, letting each service retain significant power. It was messy and, at times, far from effective, but it preserved the direct powers of the individual services. While the system could cope with a Korea-type conflict, Lovett warned Truman that the system “will prove inadequate in [the] event of war” and would require “drastic reorganization.”⁸⁷¹

During the 1952 election, Eisenhower not only attacked Truman’s use of the NSC system, but also his management of the Pentagon. Given that Eisenhower oversaw the liberation of Europe, it is not surprising that he sought to institute some reforms based on his own experiences. More surprising, perhaps, was how this came about. As with so many issues of government organization during the 1950s, its origins lay with Nelson Rockefeller. After the 1952 election, Rockefeller self-financed a series of organizational studies with the help of Temple University. They were, in effect, his résumé and calling

⁸⁷¹ Summary, Tab B, 2/9/53, Series O, Subseries 5, Box 53, Folder 467, RAC.

card. He took these to Eisenhower, who liked them enough that he not only adopted several of the recommendations, but also used them as the rationale to establish PACGO.⁸⁷² Defense reorganization was one of the first issues PACGO examined. As Rockefeller embarked on the study, an associate admitted that the organization of the Pentagon was a mess. He notes, “We have lashed ourselves down to incompetence.”⁸⁷³ He also warned, “Please be careful [because] centralized military management does well at the start but loses its wars.” Its supporters were “committed to the German system which captured civilian authority, lost two wars, and ruined Germany. Modern management has created our world leadership through the greatest possible decentralization... Many secretaries, otherwise able and sincere, have become captives of their military associates.”⁸⁷⁴ This was not an isolated fear: In his 1952 campaign Robert Taft accused JCS chairman Omar Bradley of being a partisan tool of the Truman Administration and needlessly advocated for a large Army and further unification of the Armed Forces.⁸⁷⁵ This only added to the fears that empowering the Secretary or JCS would lead to the “Prussianization” of the Pentagon.⁸⁷⁶ The exact same arguments used against the Army in the early 20th Century when the War Department attempted reforms were now used against the Department of Defense.

Warnings like these might explain some of Rockefeller’s approach. While he advocated a stronger role for the Secretary, he did so in vague terms. His 1953 committee supported the idea that, in the final analysis, the Secretary of Defense had complete

⁸⁷² Smith, p. 218.

⁸⁷³ R.W. Johnson to Rockefeller, 3/10/53, Series O, Subseries 5, Box 49, Folder 438, RAC.

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁵ Robert J. Watson, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1953-1954* (OSD, 1998), p. 14-15.

⁸⁷⁶ Leighton, p. 34.

control over the department. The report bemoaned that the “the so-called bureaucratic beavers” in the Pentagon occasionally challenged “the authority of the Secretary through technical interpretations of the” 1947 National Security Act.⁸⁷⁷ While Rockefeller argued that Eisenhower should remove “all doubt as to the Secretary’s over-riding authority,” he also admitted that some dissent in the department was healthy.⁸⁷⁸ Part of the problem, Rockefeller argued, was that the Secretary of Defense had a very small staff. This placed very practical limits on oversight and coordination. Rockefeller wanted a number of Assistant Secretary positions created to help the Secretary and oversee various matters.⁸⁷⁹ Eisenhower agreed with many of Rockefeller’s recommendations. At the time it was thought that getting them implemented, however, might be difficult. One staffer noted that some would believe the plan “fails to go far enough,” while others “will probably hold that the plan goes too far.”⁸⁸⁰

In the end the reorganization passed. Unfortunately for Rockefeller, neither Eisenhower nor his first two secretaries of defense, seemed enthusiastic about exploiting the post’s over-riding authority. In part, this stemmed from Eisenhower’s wish to serve, essentially, as his own secretary of defense. Eisenhower probably knew more about the military than Charles Wilson or Neil McElroy could ever learn. Like Kennedy and Rusk years later, Eisenhower wanted a competent manager who could back up his ideas, but

⁸⁷⁷ Defense Draft, 4/8/53, RG 4, Series O, Subseries 5, Box 50, Folder 449, RAC.

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁹ The ten positions were the Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, Assistant Secretary for Research and Development, Assistant Secretary Applications Engineering, Assistant Secretary for Legislation and Public Affairs, Assistant Secretary for Health and Medical, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Personnel

Assistant Secretary (Comptroller), Assistant Secretary for Atomic Energy, Assistant Secretary for Properties and Installations, Assistant Secretary for Supply and Logistics. Watson, p. 31.

⁸⁸⁰ Persons to Eisenhower, 4/16/53, RG 4, Series O, Subseries 5, Box 49, Folder 438, RAC.

planned to serve as his own defense minister when it came to strategy.⁸⁸¹ Despite this, the system could have worked if Eisenhower, consulting with the Service Secretaries, set the strategy. The Secretary would oversee the budgetary aspects of the strategy. The Service Secretaries would manage their respective branches.

Yet three issues developed, which should have been easy to anticipate. The first was that Eisenhower had a tendency towards micromanagement.⁸⁸² That, in turn, often caused his Secretaries of Defense to abdicate their responsibility on important issues. The structure of the Pentagon might have made for a nice organizational chart, but it also isolated many departments that in the post-war years benefited from coordination. This was most obvious in the case of scientific research and weapons development. By 1960, for instance, each service had fielded its own nuclear-capable ballistic missile. On one hand, that allowed redundancy in a very young field: if one system failed others could take its place. On the other hand, it also threw money at programs that on some occasions seemed to be needlessly overlapping, ill-conceived, or both. Lastly, there was the notion of the public perception of the Department and its Secretary. Between 1953 and 1958 a series of events took place that made the management of the Department seem questionable at best.

Charles E. Wilson, in some respects, perfectly personifies a Washington tradition: the successful business executive overcome by the intricacies of government. As Wilson himself admitted: “[O]rganizing the Pentagon and keeping it manned is a somewhat

⁸⁸¹ Leighton, *Strategy, Money, and the New Look*, p. 6.

⁸⁸² Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 9.

bigger job than I thought it would be.”⁸⁸³ Wilson was hardly a neophyte, having run GM during the Second World War.⁸⁸⁴ He was a details man and interested in efficiency. Once, when visiting an ordnance plant during his tenure in the Pentagon, he listed off everything he noticed that reduced effectiveness.⁸⁸⁵ He gained the nickname “Engineer Charlie” for the reason that he had a keen grasp for engineering and delved into manufacturing schedules and efficiency problems.⁸⁸⁶ Eisenhower believed that this sort of details-oriented managerial expert would be ideally suited to run the Pentagon. Just like GM, the Pentagon in 1953 was a decentralized organization where the heads of the manufacturing divisions—in this case the Service Secretaries—were allowed to exercise considerable leeway.⁸⁸⁷ It was a structure in which Wilson felt comfortable, and he tried as closely as possible to run the Pentagon like GM.

Yet, Wilson hewed so closely to that model that it caused problems. His nomination was almost scuttled after he told a Senate panel that he did not have to divest himself from his GM stocks. His reasoning was that “what [is] good for our country [is] good for General Motors, and vice versa.”⁸⁸⁸ Wilson seemed unable to understand how these comments were controversial. Though a friendly fellow, he also was a one-man gaff generator. The press loved him for his jokes, and because his slip-ups created headlines.⁸⁸⁹ At one point he seemed to say anyone who argued for a larger defense budget was a liar. Later, he accidentally endorsed Joseph McCarthy at the height of his

⁸⁸³ Quoted in Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 6.

⁸⁸⁴ Leighton, *Strategy, Money, and the New Look*, p. 6.

⁸⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁸⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁸⁸⁷ Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 3.

⁸⁸⁸ Leighton, *Strategy, Money, and the New Look*, p. 10.

⁸⁸⁹ Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 7-8.

attack on the Army.⁸⁹⁰ Many of his colleagues in the Administration, among them John Foster Dulles, thought Wilson was a poor manager. Sherman Adams considered him an “unalloyed and incorrigible bore, whose long-winded bromides were an unfair ordeal for those forced to listen to them.”⁸⁹¹ Wilson came in knowing little of military strategy or national security. Once in office, he did little to correct that deficit, even sometimes skipping his briefings before NSC meetings.⁸⁹² These did little to endear him to fellow cabinet members. Wilson’s embrace of his manufacturing persona also led to problems with the White House. Given the experience of Eisenhower, the Service Secretaries, and the JCS, Wilson often seemed to feel he could outsource most other matters of strategy, often looking to Eisenhower. The President complained that Wilson asked too many questions and sometimes took too long to make up his mind, noting, “I have got a man [as secretary of defense] who is frightened to make decisions.”⁸⁹³ Rockefeller’s reorganization had, theoretically, given Wilson extensive powers. Though he enumerated these capabilities to his subordinates, he did little to embrace them.⁸⁹⁴ The gaggle of Assistant Secretaries created by PACGO’s reform plan proved a mixed bag, largely depending on who held the position. Some embraced their powers.⁸⁹⁵ Others did not: the Assistant Secretary of Property and Installations, for instance, spent time developing regulations on how often the grass was mowed on military bases.⁸⁹⁶

⁸⁹⁰ Leighton, p. 627-628 and 15.

⁸⁹¹ Leighton, p. 13-14.

⁸⁹² Gordon Gray Oral History Interview with Maelyn Burg, 6/25/75, DDEL OHP, p. 5.

⁸⁹³ Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 9.

⁸⁹⁴ Leighton, p. 19-20.

⁸⁹⁵ Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 12-13.

⁸⁹⁶ Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 15.

Wilson's powers and managerial skills did nothing to stop the bitter conflict between the services within the Pentagon, which was exacerbated by Eisenhower's "New Look" strategy. The "New Look" aimed to keep the defense budget down by investing heavily in America's nuclear forces. The budgeting process during those years was messy. Even though the amount of money allocated to each service remained essentially unchanged regardless of circumstances, the services contested the budget with a fiery fervor.⁸⁹⁷ Wilson could hardly eliminate these rivalries, but there were two areas where he could have made an impact. The first was in the manner by which the Pentagon's budget was determined. Every year the services were instructed to provide their ideal operating budget for the next year. Lawrence Korb, who served in Reagan's Pentagon, wrote that, in constructing their budgets, each service could emphasize the "programs which contributed most to organizational health or organizational essence. Moreover, each service could legitimately claim that it alone had to provide for [America's] security."⁸⁹⁸ The individual service appropriations barely changed during the Eisenhower years, yet the budgets submitted to Wilson were gigantic and the services complained to Congress or in the press when their budgets were predictably cut. If the Eisenhower Administration had based its funding on these requests, America would have spent three times as much on defense as much as it actually did during the 1950s.⁸⁹⁹

In part, this was a self-inflicted wound caused by Wilson's management style.

The services crafted such lofty budgets because Wilson gave them little guidance on what

⁸⁹⁷ Lawrence J. Korb, "The Budget Process in the Department of Defense, 1947-77: The Strengths and Weaknesses of Three Systems" *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 37 No. 4 (July-August 1977), 335.

⁸⁹⁸ *Ibid*

⁸⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 336.

they should be buying. This led both to duplication on projects as well as unwise spending.⁹⁰⁰ Given “New Look” the excess and duplication was particularly noticeable in the field of nuclear weapons. As mentioned, all three services designed and deployed their own nuclear armed ballistic missiles. Indeed, when Alan Shepard was launched into space in 1961, he did so on top of an Army missile. The Navy, in hoping to steal some of the Air Force’s monopoly on the budget, developed nuclear capable bombers for service on aircraft carriers. The Army redesigned the organization of its ground forces to fight a dual conventional and nuclear conflict developing a range of nuclear weapons to support their strategy.

By 1956 one could legitimately question Wilson’s tenure. His management of the budget corresponded to Eisenhower’s requests: the Pentagon’s expenditures only rose by 12%. Yet, Wilson’s budgetary success could not be divorced from his bumbling persona, his frosty relationship with many members of the Administration including Eisenhower, or the infighting among the services. This was graphically displayed during Stuart Symington’s investigation of Air Force readiness in 1956. Given that the Air Force regularly received almost 50% of the defense budget, one might find it hard to sympathize with the Senator’s argument that the Air Force was underfunded.⁹⁰¹ But Wilson struggled in front of the committee, and fought openly with both Symington and Henry Jackson during the hearings. When asked during a press conference what he thought of the Democrats’ argument, he said their objections were “phony.” Though he admitted it was a poor choice of words, he backed the idea that these were politically

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid

⁹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 335. Symington was, of course, a former Secretary of the Air Force.

motivated and baseless attacks.⁹⁰² Moreover, the Air Force used the testimony to appear a neglected service, despite the fact they received the largest share of the defense budget. Curtis LeMay painted a bleak picture of what might happen to the nation if the Air Force did not get more aircraft. The officer charged with continental air defense admitted that a variety of aging systems “downgrades our capability to achieve full organizational effectiveness.”⁹⁰³ The 1956 investigation did nothing to help the Democrats win the 1956 election, but the ideas discussed before the committee lingered. Wilson based the defense of his tenure on the fact that the battle against the national deficit was as important as the battle against the Soviet Union. Even those initially won over by Wilson’s arguments struggled a year later to reconcile that argument with the report of the Gaither Committee’s and, more importantly, the launch of Sputnik. Luckily for Wilson, he left the Pentagon shortly before Sputnik’s launch. He joined the administration planning to serve for only four years. Increasingly unhappy, he did nothing to alter that plan.

“It is impossible for him not to act”

Neil McElroy was only in office for four days before the Soviet Union launched Sputnik. That event, in effect, derailed his entire term in office and caused the Administration to spend two years involved in a bitter battle over preparedness and the proper organization of the Pentagon. While that battle resulted in a victory for the Administration—in the form of the Defense Reorganization Act of 1958—it came at a

⁹⁰² Bruce Geelhoed, “Executive at the Pentagon: Re-Examining the Role of Charles E. Wilson in the Eisenhower Administration” *Military Affairs* Vol. 44 No. 1 (Feb, 1980), p. 3 and 4 and Leighton, p. 627.

⁹⁰³ Earle Partridge Testimony, 4/30/56, *Hearings before the Subcommittee on the Air Force of the Committee on Armed Services, United State Senate, Part III* (GPO, 1956).

cost. As America ramped up its efforts to build new missiles, Eisenhower seemed to admit that the Pentagon's organization was a problem. McElroy did not always handle events well, but his was a difficult situation. Like Wilson, he was a coordinator expected to work under a President who knew more about the subject than he did while occupying a somewhat undefined managerial role. Like Wilson, he was also new to government.

Eisenhower quickly decided that in addition to managing the Pentagon McElroy would also have to troubleshoot its reorganization. Eisenhower initially had reservations about launching into another reorganization effort, but eventually relented. He did so in part because of advice from Nelson Rockefeller. Rockefeller argued that the White House had to act and that, if it did not, someone else would.⁹⁰⁴ Rockefeller did not suggest this merely for the good of the Republic: he was motivated at least in part by personal ambition. Rockefeller rushed the first volume of his Rockefeller Brothers funded studies to the publishers earlier than anticipated so that he could advance his ideas in the public discussion, while burnishing his credentials.⁹⁰⁵ Rockefeller was hardly alone: others calling for a Pentagon reorganization after Sputnik included Eisenhower's own Science Advisory board, the Joint Chiefs, and, more troublingly, members of the Senate.⁹⁰⁶ An associate lamented to Rockefeller that Eisenhower clearly wished to avoid the idea "that his action is prompted by panic...or that the Administration is admitting to an error or giving into strong domestic pressures....While it is difficult for the President to act under

⁹⁰⁴ Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 248.

⁹⁰⁵ Smith, p. 258.

⁹⁰⁶ Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 248-249.

these conditions, it is impossible for him not to act.”⁹⁰⁷ Rockefeller himself concluded that the organization he had helped to develop, no longer seemed “good enough under the present conditions of rapid change for informed rapid decisions.”⁹⁰⁸ Eisenhower’s concern that Congress would interfere or act first intensified after a difficult meeting between legislative leaders and Pentagon officials.⁹⁰⁹ Meanwhile, McElroy did his best to buy time. As late as December 1957, he told Rockefeller he wanted to conduct a “long, detailed study” before he made any decisions.⁹¹⁰ Eisenhower would have none of it, and forced McElroy to immediately start working with Rockefeller on a reorganization plan.⁹¹¹

Those making the reorganization plan asked what exactly needed to be done to make the Secretary of Defense more effective at his job? One PACGO analysts answered they should “distinguish between the legal authority of the Secretary to give orders... (which is relatively unlimited) and his authority to deal with organization and personnel system (which is very sharply limited).” The same question might be asked about research and procurement. “The issue” the analyst continued, “is whether operating agencies are to be set up in the office of the Secretary of Defense, or directly responsible to him.”⁹¹² Rockefeller himself observed that the financial management of the Department and its approach to research were among the most urgent matters to

⁹⁰⁷ Anna M. Rosenberg to Rockefeller, 10/14/57, RG 4 Series O, Subseries 5, Box 51, Folder 454, RAC.

⁹⁰⁸ NAR Notes, Meeting, 2/19/58, PACGO 18, Defense Reorganization (2), DDE.

⁹⁰⁹ Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 250.

⁹¹⁰ Minutes-Department of Defense Reorganization (Hoover Comm.), n.d., RG 4, Series O, Subseries 5, Box 51, Folder 453, RAC.

⁹¹¹ Smith, p. 258.

⁹¹² Don Price to Rockefeller, telephone dictation of letter, 1/20/58, PACGO 18, Department of Defense Reorganization (3), DDE.

examine.⁹¹³ Extensive consideration was given to how to reorganize the individual services and reorient the Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁹¹⁴ One of the participants lamented that it would be easier to just combine all the services into a single, unified, service, “but not now – it is too big a step from the viewpoint of disruption, regardless of political considerations.”⁹¹⁵ Rockefeller and PACGO quickly identified three major areas needing reform: the roles of the Secretary and his assistants, the oversight of research and development, and lastly, the chain of command had between the Joint Chiefs, Service Secretaries, and the Secretary of Defense.

Improving scientific research and development fields was perhaps the easiest goal to accomplish. Wilson had been unenthusiastic about research and development, saying “people hide behind [research] and go ahead with a lot of boondoggling.... Just because somebody calls it research doesn’t mean it’s wonderful.”⁹¹⁶ One of PACGO’s consultants observed that research in the Pentagon was hampered by “Inadequate national guidance on technological potential; Inadequate communications to higher levels [of authority]; Poorly defined requirements; Committee over-emphasis [one assumes this meant too much of an emphasis on committees]; [and] Decision[s] retardation through discontinuity [or, lack of a clear chain of command].”⁹¹⁷ PACGO suggested that all research functions be grouped under the supervision of an Assistant Secretary for Research and

⁹¹³ Rockefeller to Eisenhower, 1/16/58, PACGO 18, Department of Defense Reorganization (3), DDE.

⁹¹⁴ Ibid.

⁹¹⁵ Charles Coolidge to Eisenhower, 2/27/58, PACGO 18, Department of Defense Reorganization (1), DDE.

⁹¹⁶ Quoted in Geelhoed, p. 3.

⁹¹⁷ NAR Notes, Meeting, 2/19/58, PACGO 18, Defense Reorganization (2), DDE.

Engineering.⁹¹⁸ It also argued that the Pentagon needed its own technological and scientific development group, an idea which evolved into the Defense Advanced Projects Research Agency.

PACGO's findings on the Secretary were somewhat counterintuitive: Rockefeller and PACGO suggested that the Secretary of Defense had so many oversight powers, he was actually spread far too thin.⁹¹⁹ The extensive network of subordinates set up by Rockefeller and PACGO in 1953 enveloped the Secretary in minutia, while simultaneously giving too many people duplicative oversight into matters unrelated to their jobs. Thomas Gates, the Secretary of the Navy complained that there was "too much veto power at all echelons in hands of people who don't have any responsibility for action."⁹²⁰ PACGO recommended culling the number of Assistant Secretaries of Defense dramatically. The few that remained would have enlarged offices to more tightly control business. That would, PACGO hoped "strengthen the positive leadership of the Secretary" by "freeing [him] and the Deputy Secretary to consider and make the important decisions necessary for unified direction of the Department of Defense."⁹²¹ As if to emphasize the centrality of the Secretary, one organizational chart in the report included a large arrow pointing to the Secretary's place on the chart, reading: "The power of decision is reserved for the Secretary of Defense."⁹²² Service Secretaries would further

⁹¹⁸ The position was later made into that of a slightly higher-ranking Undersecretary for Defense for Research and Engineering.

⁹¹⁹ Organization for Defense: A Tentative Proposal, 2/19/58, PACGO 18, Department of Defense Reorganization (1), DDE.

⁹²⁰ NAR Notes on Meeting, 1/21/58, PACGO 18, Department of Defense Reorganization (1), DDE.

⁹²¹ Organization for Defense: A Tentative Proposal, 2/19/58, PACGO 18, Department of Defense Reorganization (1), DDE.

⁹²² Ibid.

see their role degraded under this plan.⁹²³ Instead of being in charge of strategy and, effectively, in command of their services, their job became more administrative in nature. Command of the services effectively fell to the uniformed members in the Joint Chiefs, who would also become the prime military advisors to both the Secretary and President.⁹²⁴

One participant used the reorganization exercise to address the problems of inter-service fights going public. He suggested that the number of legislative liaisons and public relations personnel be slashed, and that those remaining be placed under the strict supervision of the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Presumably the idea behind this was that such an action would cut back on leaks and enable the Pentagon to, more forcefully, shape its public image. The author of the proposal adopted a less totalitarian frame: he merely suggested it would reduce “the problem of lobbying and propaganda” from the services.⁹²⁵ Despite the headaches this caused during both the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations, this suggestion did not make it into the final plan.

Both the Pentagon and White House endorsed PACGO’s reforms.⁹²⁶ But, it would take an act of Congress to make such major changes, however. Congressional leaders seemed impressed when Eisenhower announced the plan. The President said that, as long as the Secretary of Defense had increased powers, the minute details did not matter that

⁹²³ Though, interestingly, it recommended they return as statutory members of the NSC. Ibid.

⁹²⁴ Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 258.

⁹²⁵ Charles Coolidge to Eisenhower, 2/27/58, PACGO 18, Department of Defense Reorganization (1), DDE.

⁹²⁶ Ibid, p. 252-257.

much.⁹²⁷ The ideas were quickly developed into potential legislation. The veneer of agreement, however, masked deep differences.

Neil McElroy caused the first problem. Just before the bill went to Congress McElroy proposed a significant rewrite. It was, in Rockefeller's words, "a weak watered down version." McElroy did this, it seems, to win support from the Service chiefs, despite the fact he effectively agreed they should be stripped of power. McElroy told Rockefeller, "We want to get your substantial help on wording and then let it roll at the White House. They are going to rewrite the whole thing [anyway]." Rockefeller complained "what was needed was a clear statement [of the new organization of the Pentagon] and a clear statement of the organizational and legislative changes needed to carry it out." When Rockefeller warned McElroy about changing language to merely placate the Service Secretaries and JCS, McElroy responded "Well, the President will use what he wants and eliminate what he doesn't want." Rockefeller objected to the fact that McElroy wanted to rewrite the legislation "for his own protection within the Department. Whatever the President does beyond this is OK [sic] with him, but he will always be able to say to the Service people that he stood...and fought for [them]. [W]hat the President did beyond that was not his responsibility."⁹²⁸ Rockefeller and other PACGO staffers seemed to doubt McElroy's own understanding of just what powers he did or did not

⁹²⁷ Ibid, p. 257.

⁹²⁸ Notes by Nelson A. Rockefeller-Defense Meeting, 3/26/58, PACGO 18, Defense Reorganization (1), DDE.

poses.⁹²⁹ Whether this assessment was correct, it emphasized the poor relationship between the two.

That action delayed the legislation, but paled in comparison with the hearings about the bill in the House. Despite the ostensible agreement of House leaders with Eisenhower, Democrats, led by Carl Vinson (D-GA), submitted their own bill two months before the White House sent its reorganization plan to Congress. Vinson and others heavily criticized Eisenhower's plan. The old arguments against centralization that were enumerated in the early 1900s, 1946, and 1953, returned. The gist of the dissent focused on the centralization, or "Prussianization," of the military and argued that the expanded powers of the JCS would threaten civil control over defense. While the House bill paid lip service to increasing the Secretary's power, it effectively reinvested authority in the Service Secretaries. More vexingly to Eisenhower, the bill received significant support.⁹³⁰ Republican amendments to align it more with Eisenhower's vision were stripped out. Yet, in Sputnik's shadow, the pressure on many Republicans to vote through some set of Pentagon reforms was so great that the bill still received nearly unanimous support. Despite being stripped of what the White House wanted most, it sailed out of the House on a 402-1 vote.⁹³¹

In the Senate, the bill fared better. But at that point the Administration made an important error. Despite the fact that Eisenhower claimed that all he cared about was the Secretary's power, he was also tired of the services taking their cases to the Congress or

⁹²⁹ Role and Authority of the Secretary of Defense, n.d., PACGO 18, Defense Reorganization (3), DDE.

⁹³⁰ Brian R. Duchin, "The Most Spectacular Legislative Battle of That Year: President Eisenhower and the 1958 Reorganization of the Department of Defense" *Presidential Studies Quarterly* Vol. 24 No. 2, p. 252-254.

⁹³¹ *Ibid*, p. 254.

the public to complain about the Pentagon's budget. The White House wanted to include stipulations in the reorganization plan stating that once the Pentagon's budget was decided high ranking officers could not publically criticize it. They could express their personal opinions as much as they wanted before its release, but had to toe the line after it became public. This frustrated many in Congress and seemed to inflame fears that Eisenhower was creating a powerful Prussian system to rule the Pentagon. Eisenhower's fears over this were not unwarranted. The White House suffered criticism from Air Force at the beginning of his first term, and the Navy in the middle of his second. The Army proved to be a continuous problem. A troika of former paratroopers—Matthew Ridgeway, James Gavin, and Maxwell Taylor, criticized the New Look from both inside the Army and after they retired. At one point Charles Wilson ran an investigation to root out a cell of Army officers in Maxwell Taylor's office who were leaking material to the press. Taylor escaped without censure, but the officers were reassigned to lower level jobs and their files burned.⁹³² Having such experts question Eisenhower publically on an issue in which he claimed to have authority looked bad. As with events like Sputnik and the Gaither Committee, it reinforced the view that the Pentagon was badly managed in spite of the president's involvement. Shutting down these leaks produced poor optics, but was an understandable priority of the Administration. This came to a head when Arleigh Burke, Chief of Naval Operations, went before a Senate Committee and expressed his concerns not over the Pentagon's budget, but over Eisenhower's reorganization plans. McElroy responded to this by saying he was disappointed in Burke. He said that the

⁹³² Geelhoed, 5-6.

Pentagon would not punish the Admiral, but subtly hinted that Eisenhower might not be as forgiving.⁹³³ The uproar from senators was predictably intense. It seems unlikely Eisenhower would have sacked Burke, but McElroy's misstep forced the Administration to perform major damage control.

This turn of events availed the administration of an opportunity. In a moment of amazing legislative jujitsu—or calculated desperation—the White House leveraged Democratic fears into a victory. At this point, the Democrats had heavily committed to allowing military officers to express their concerns before Congress. Eisenhower came back to the Democrats and said that the gag provision could be removed from the bill if, in return, the White House got several other concessions it wanted. The Democrats agreed. Eisenhower had forced their hand—they could hardly say no after arguing against the gag—but criticism from the current and ex-military officials continued to take a toll on the White House, including Maxwell Taylor's testimony before the SNPM two years later.

Those Senate concessions allowed Eisenhower to bury Vinson's House bill. The 1958 plan to reorganize the Pentagon struggled out of Congress, but did so in a form close to Rockefeller's original. In the end, Eisenhower could be reasonably happy with the Defense Reorganization Act of 1958. The Secretary of Defense was granted more powers, including over budgeting, which were boosted by a newly enhanced group of Assistant Secretaries. These powers largely came at the expense of the Service Secretaries who lost not only much of their budgetary powers but also their places in the

⁹³³ Duchin, p. 254-255.

chain of command. As one colonel later observed “the solution to deficiencies in the Pentagon lay in reorganization to suppress Service perspectives in favor of those representing a joint or unified point of view.”⁹³⁴ The Joint Chiefs assumed that responsibility while also retaining their role as the prime military advisors to the President. The research and development arm of the Pentagon was also strengthened.⁹³⁵ In the end, Neil McElroy had little time to enjoy his new responsibilities. He left the Pentagon in early December 1959.

The Twilight Secretary

McElroy’s replacement was thrust into an unenviable situation: he faced an entirely new and untried organization that, publically, seemed to be failing the nation. Yet that man, Thomas S. Gates, led something of a charmed life in his role as secretary. Gates’ career before the Pentagon was far closer to that of someone like Robert Lovett than it was Charles Wilson. Like Lovett, Eberstadt, and a host of others, Gates was an investment banker by trade. After a stint in the Navy during the Second World War, he joined the Department of Defense in 1953, serving in the two top civilian jobs in the Naval Department and becoming McElroy’s second in command in June 1959. It was a short apprenticeship: a little over six months later Gates ran the entire Department. He was generally perceived as intelligent, hardworking, and friendly.⁹³⁶ Carl Vinson even

⁹³⁴ Andrew J. Bacevich, *The Pentomic Era* (Washington, DC: 1986), p. 147.

⁹³⁵ Duchin, p. 257.

⁹³⁶ Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 732.

said Gates was, “the best appointment President Eisenhower has made.”⁹³⁷ Gates seemed to work well with almost everyone in the Eisenhower Administration. One of his subordinates thought, if he held the post of Secretary longer, he would “have ‘gone down as one of the great ones.’”⁹³⁸

Gates seemed the perfect person to embrace the new powers afforded the Secretary. His long service in the Department made him uniquely equipped, compared to his predecessors, to carry out his job. While Eisenhower remained engaged in matters of defense, Gates had the confidence to work with the President, not merely take orders from him. He set about reforming the Department. Much of that was easier since he was able to delegate matters to his new subordinates instead of having to manage them. He reached out to the State Department, believing the work of the departments was “almost indivisible.”⁹³⁹ That meant an increased role for the Office of International Security Affairs (ISA). ISA was technically the Pentagon’s foreign policy arm. It administered the Pentagon’s mutual aid program and coordinated the Pentagon’s response to foreign policy issues.⁹⁴⁰ Under Wilson and McElroy, the office was something of a backwater.⁹⁴¹ That began to change under Gates, who expected the Pentagon to take a far more active role in shaping matters traditionally considered diplomatic rather than military.⁹⁴² Gates also engaged closely with the newly-empowered JCS. While Wilson had good relations with Admiral Radford, neither Wilson nor McElroy felt it necessary to spend much time

⁹³⁷ Quoted in Ibid.

⁹³⁸ Quoted in Ibid.

⁹³⁹ Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 734.

⁹⁴⁰ Geoffrey Piller, “DOD’s Office of International Security Affairs: The Brief Ascendency of the Advisory System” *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 98 No. 1, p. 60

⁹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 62.

⁹⁴² Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 734.

with the Chiefs. Gates took to meeting with them almost every week.⁹⁴³ He also did more to include them in talks on matters of both policy and budget.⁹⁴⁴ Far from being a nuisance, Gates viewed them as an important part of the job.

Whereas Wilson and McElroy had established monetary ceilings for the services, Gates took a new view on the budget. Samuel Huntington, in his 1957 review of civil-military relations, noted, “So long as the Secretary of Defense [is] unable to arrive at an independent balancing of military and fiscal demands, the basic decisions on military policy were inevitably the result of the political battle between the Comptroller versus the Chiefs.”⁹⁴⁵ Gates, for the first time in the history of the Pentagon instituted programs to give the Secretary the ability to assess that balance. He first asked the comptroller to determine the simple “dollar value” of military programs.⁹⁴⁶ Though far simpler than what Robert McNamara later instituted, it was an important start. He also advocated for an increase in the defense budget. Gates felt comfortable in doing this after getting encouragement from an usual source: Dwight Eisenhower. Despite spending the past seven years arguing against a larger defense budget, in 1960 Eisenhower hinted the department might get more funding.⁹⁴⁷ The budget Gates submitted also hewed far closer to the budgets submitted later by McNamara, rather than those under Eisenhower. It

⁹⁴³ Ibid, p. 736. The volume notes that, as compared to Gates, dealing with the JCS had “reduced [McElroy] to despair” because of their infighting. Ibid, p. 734.

⁹⁴⁴ James Roherty, *Decisions of Robert S. McNamara* (University of Miami Press, 1970), p. 32.

⁹⁴⁵ Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Belknap, 1957), p. 440.

⁹⁴⁶ Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 737.

⁹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 751. Eisenhower, apparently, wanted to keep the total budget around the same \$80 billion, largely unchanged from previous years. The extra money for the Pentagon would come from Eisenhower’s effusive call for departments to eliminate waste, bad programs, and “unnecessary research.” As part of this pitch he “ridiculed the idea of cradle-to-grave security,” and perhaps expected more money would be available for defense once these programs were pruned. Ibid, p. 751.

increased funding for nuclear missiles, while eliminating funding for new bombers. It looked to finance the development of a new transport aircraft, increased research throughout the Pentagon, and, for the first time in years, gave the Army money to procure conventional weapons systems.⁹⁴⁸ More importantly, Gates commissioned two studies to define exactly what new powers he had thanks to the 1958 reorganization. As a result of these studies—which he passed on to McNamara—he made other changes to the structure and operations of the Defense Department.⁹⁴⁹ He instituted a new personnel policy, one that closely resembled ideas Henry Jackson espoused, that forced officers to have more diverse postings as they moved up the ranks.⁹⁵⁰ He also established both the Defense Communications Agency, which, as the name implied, oversaw the Pentagon's communications network, as well as gave the Pentagon its own unified intelligence service with the Defense Intelligence Agency.⁹⁵¹

Not surprisingly, Gates had a remarkably easy time when called to testify before of the SNPM in 1960. Jackson was smart in how he structured the first few rounds of testimony. While they were critical of the NSC and its process, they primarily focused on questions of defense. Robert Lovett's blistering statement to the committee, for instance, barely mentions the NSC by name. The two Gaither Committee alums and CEO who followed his testimony—Baxter, Sprague, and Watson—also talked, in large part, about how a lack of coordination over science and technology, and the unwillingness of Eisenhower, Wilson, and McElroy to raise the defense budget, all threatened the nation's

⁹⁴⁸ Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 757-758.

⁹⁴⁹ Douglas Kinnard, *The Secretary of Defense* (UP of Kentucky, 1981), p. 86.

⁹⁵⁰ Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 735. That being said, it seems highly unlikely that Gates' ideas were in any way influenced by Jackson's.

⁹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 739-740.

security. In this environment, one might expect Gates to feel the brunt of the SNPM's anger. But Jackson seemed almost fawning at times and Gates escaped largely unscathed. Despite the fact that this all took place in late June of 1960 and in the aftermath of the U-2 incident, Jackson began his questions by saying "As I indicated in my opening statement, I think you have set a fine example for the kind of person we need in the Department of Defense, both from the standpoint of know-how and a willingness to stay on the job."⁹⁵² Jackson's whole line of questioning with Gates was remarkably cordial. When Jackson said that it was important to get the best people in the right jobs now, Gates answered "I live with a sense of urgency in the Department of Defense, so I share that point of view." Jackson responded, "I am happy to hear you say that."⁹⁵³ He even compared Gates to the hero of the SNPM's investigations, Lovett: "I want to commend you highly for what you have said here. It is certainly in accord with what Mr. Lovett had to say and, in my judgement, Mr. Lovett has set an example that all Secretaries can well live up to."⁹⁵⁴ About the only thing Gates did that drew the ire of the SNPM's Democrats was in his defense of the NSC system. Nonetheless, Jackson's treatment of Gates demonstrates how much the Secretary had done to rehabilitate the image of his office.

Jackson's positive assessment of Gates makes perfect sense. Jackson was deeply critical of Eisenhower's military priorities, but this was not the fault of the Pentagon, but rather that of the NSC and White House. The SNPM staff even praised the 1958 reorganization in their final report. While it noted: "one must guard against seeking

⁹⁵² Gates Testimony, 6/13/60 in *Organizing for National Security* Vol. I

⁹⁵³ Ibid.

⁹⁵⁴ Ibid

organizational solutions to problems which are not really organizational” it added, “Yet there are reforms which are promising of results. They point in the direction of a more vigorous employment of the broad authority already invested in the Secretary of Defense.”⁹⁵⁵ The SNPM said the reorganization of scientific research in the Pentagon was a model for other government agencies.⁹⁵⁶ More importantly, Jackson and the SNPM staff saw the Secretary of Defense as one of the two main cabinet members who should be overseeing the nation’s national security. The SNPM’s final report said the Secretaries of State and Defense, “speak for the requirements of national safety and survival.”⁹⁵⁷ Replacing an ineffective NSC system, Jackson wanted a strong Secretary of Defense to take an active role in decision making.

The Pentagon’s official history of the period states that “Gates's forceful grasp of his responsibilities, his interest in policy both military and diplomatic—and his aggressive leadership style, emphasizing anticipation of issues...all marked him as unique among Eisenhower's secretaries of defense and as a man of the same stamp as his successor, McNamara.”⁹⁵⁸ Despite all he had accomplished, Gates was worn out by his year in the spotlight. As he remembered, Congressional relations could be tricky because “I had [Stuart] Symington running for president. I had Kennedy running for President. I had Lyndon Johnson running for President. I had Scoop Jackson who had ideas that he might be President... We had a very, tough, tough, tough year.... There was no personal animosity...but there was a big political ballgame going on, and everybody was

⁹⁵⁵ “Super-Cabinet Officers and Super Staffs” in *Organizing for National Security*, Vol. III.

⁹⁵⁶ “Science Organization and the President’s Office” in *Organizing for National Security*, Vol. III.

⁹⁵⁷ “The Secretary of State in the National Security Policy Process” in *Organizing for National Security*, Vol. III.

⁹⁵⁸ Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 737.

involved[.]”⁹⁵⁹ Despite all this, Gates managed to make it to January 1961 with his reputation intact and having restored some prestige and stability to an office that, for years, seemed to struggle.

Conclusion

Despite the problems in the Pentagon during the Eisenhower years, Wilson, McElroy, and others had genuine successes that should not be overlooked. They made major advances in developing America’s nuclear weapons, modernized other parts of America’s armed forces, and kept the Defense budget within limits prescribed by Eisenhower. Yet, they did so at a price. There is an irony that Eisenhower, the model soldier, had so many headaches when it came to the management of defense. There is also some irony that Gates, least in the mold of Eisenhower’s ideal secretary, proved the best. In part this might merely have been a product of Gates’ 14 months in office: he just did not have time to get in trouble or make waves.⁹⁶⁰ Yet the Secretary still made remarkable advances in a short time. Gates, admittedly, benefitted from practical experience that his predecessors did not have. Only Wilson spent anything near the amount of time Gates did in the Pentagon, and Gates still beat him by four years. Yet Wilson never wanted to utilize his power in the same way Gates did. He felt overawed by Eisenhower in ways Gates seemingly did not. That hampered his effectiveness. McElroy did not seem to have the inclination to stay in the job for very long.

⁹⁵⁹ Gates OH, p. 31-32. Gates said that one of the few things that got him through was when C. Douglas Dillon invited him to his house for a vacation. Gates said, “I just sat on the edge of his swimming pool and sat in the sun for four days.” Ibid, p. 32.

⁹⁶⁰ As the Pentagon’s official history noted, even McElroy also had a “honeymoon” period. Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 737-738.

Eisenhower made mistakes, but they were not as serious as his opponents claimed. He greatly increased the reconnaissance capabilities of the US, which allowed him to say that the Missile Gap was a myth even if no one believed him. But the issues in the Pentagon made this charge far more believable. While neither Eisenhower nor Pentagon officials were responsible for the early failures of the US missile program, the Pentagon's scattershot approach to programs reinforced the perception that the nation was falling behind. Diffuse responsibilities for science and technological research, warring service secretaries and generals, and a lack of direction from the Secretary did not help the situation.

Eisenhower considered an attempt at short circuiting much of this criticism. At the heart of Eisenhower's approach to defense management was a simple goal: to prevent the Pentagon's budget from bankrupting the nation. The reforms of 1958 were, in part, about a larger set of issues, but giving the Secretary increased powers was a first step at creating greater budgetary controls. Wilson once said that his goal was "security with solvency."⁹⁶¹ Eisenhower repurposed it into a warning about the military-industrial complex. Though he made the phrase famous in his farewell speech, two years earlier he considered deploying it when invited to speak before the American Association of Newspaper Editors. At that time, Eisenhower had considered delivering a speech that in part called attention to the "appalling cost" of security.⁹⁶² In the end, he modified that talk to focus more narrowly about Pentagon reorganization.⁹⁶³ For the President, however,

⁹⁶¹ Geelhoed, p. 2.

⁹⁶² James Ledbetter, *Unwarranted Influence* (Yale UP, 2011), p. 104-105.

⁹⁶³ *Ibid.*

fears of the runaway spending of the military-industrial complex found a place in his wider public relations effort over the Pentagon reforms.⁹⁶⁴

The President's experience with Pentagon reforms also make it more understandable why Eisenhower never took similar steps to reform the NSC. Indeed, we might be able to see patterns in Eisenhower's handling of Pentagon reforms that hint at why he did not take more action in his own White House. There is no doubt that the legislation helped the Pentagon, but Eisenhower seemed largely unwilling to make these changes while Wilson was in charge. When McElroy took over, the President was far more insistent on those changes being made. Even if we accept a more complex "hidden hand" style of management, it still seems Eisenhower was a hands-off leader, at least in terms of internal organization, once a subordinate had established himself. To new subordinates, however, he seemed either willing to either let them change an organization or to force changes on them. He allowed Gordon Gray to change the NSC structure and forced McElroy to do the same. But the process of modifying the Pentagon was brutal. Though the Administration emerged from it intact, it exposed it to months of negative press and an awkward and messy battle through Congress. With less than two years left on his term in office, it makes more sense why Eisenhower might not have repeated this with the organization of the White House during the run-up to the 1960 election. Despite Gates' glowing reputation, the Pentagon, like the NSC, entered 1960 as a questionable institution. If not openly damaged, it seemed to be making poor policy choices. Jackson's work via the SNPM did not necessarily present anything new on this front, but it

⁹⁶⁴ Duchin, p. 250-252.

highlighted the Pentagon's problems only two years after Eisenhower had supposedly fixed them. While the Democrats promised to do better after the 1960 election, few had yet defined what "better" really meant.

Chapter 7: Robert McNamara's Answers

When Robert Kennedy called Robert McNamara in 1960 to see if the Ford CEO wanted to serve in his brother's Administration, McNamara had no idea who the younger Kennedy was.⁹⁶⁵ Three years later, when John F. Kennedy was assassinated, then-Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara acted, in some respects, more like a member of the family than a cabinet secretary. He first escorted Robert Kennedy to Andrews Air Force base to meet Air Force One. Over the next few days, he played a key role in orchestrating the funeral, and even found Kennedy's eventual resting place in Arlington National Cemetery.⁹⁶⁶ Between 1961 and 1963 McNamara developed a close relationship to both Kennedys. His personal relationship with Robert Kennedy perhaps bordered more closely on a friendship. Jackie Kennedy said he was the most attractive man in the Pentagon, saying that "Men can't understand his sex appeal."⁹⁶⁷ Even if John Kennedy had problems understanding Robert McNamara's appeal to women, he considered McNamara a key advisor. McGeorge Bundy, for one, believed that Kennedy spent more time talking to McNamara than almost anyone else in the Administration.⁹⁶⁸

If time were to somehow stop in early 1964, Robert McNamara might be remembered as one of the greatest cabinet secretaries of the 20th Century. Lest that seem like hyperbole, one must only consider what had come before. No one would argue McNamara was perfect—his reputation for arrogance remains legendary—but he had almost done the impossible. Three different attempts at reforms and a revolving door of

⁹⁶⁵ Robert McNamara, *In Retrospect* (Vintage, 1996), p. 13.

⁹⁶⁶ Bundy OH #1, JFKLOHP, p. 104.

⁹⁶⁷ Bradlee, p. 230.

⁹⁶⁸ Bundy OH #1, JFKLOHP, p. 149.

secretaries—Forrestal, Johnson, Lovett, Marshall, Wilson, and McElroy—all failed to tame the Department of Defense. The Democrats had used this chaos, to sell a story, one that Henry Jackson perfected during the SNPM hearings in 1960. America was falling behind militarily. Running the Pentagon looked like a thankless job. Yet when writing the official history of the McNamara years, the Pentagon’s own history team admitted that while he might be the most controversial Secretary of Defense, he was also “arguably the most successful in administering the Defense Department.”⁹⁶⁹

At first glance, McNamara’s revolution in the Pentagon might not appear as revolutionary. Many of McNamara’s most significant improvements built on work begun by Thomas Gates. McNamara’s budgeting policies, though more advanced than what Gates envisioned, fit a similar pattern. His use of statistical controls and analysis often dovetailed with work long embraced by the services. His tight control of systems development, the TFX program being one example, was foreshadowed by some of Gates’ own activities. He also took the position in directions Gates might not have imagined, or simply did not have time to explore, including playing a leading role in diplomacy such as the Skybolt Crisis in 1962 and 1963. During the Eisenhower Administration the question about the Defense Department seemed to be, could it be managed? By the time of Kennedy’s assassination, one could debate how McNamara was managing the Pentagon, but one could not deny that the Pentagon was being managed.

The School for Cabinet Secretaries

⁹⁶⁹ Lawrence Kaplan, Ronald Landa, and Edward Drea [hereafter Kaplan et. al.], *The History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vol V: The McNamara Ascendancy, 1961-1965* (OSD, 2006), p. i.

The new president announced his pick for Secretary of Defense. The man he picked was the CEO of an auto company. He had come up through the ranks of his company where he had overseen impressive advances in managerial control. He had a background in maximizing efficiency, much of it gained from wartime experience. This was not, however, Charles Wilson in 1952, this was Robert McNamara in 1960. One might be forgiven for confusing the two. It says something, however, about the length of political memories that the same background used to justify Wilson only eight years earlier could so quickly be turned around and used to justify the choice of McNamara in 1960.

If John F. Kennedy looked fresh and young compared to Dwight Eisenhower, the same could be said of McNamara and Wilson. “Engineer Charlie” came up through Westinghouse and General Motors and knew his way around a factory floor. McNamara, by contrast, was educated in management theory at Harvard Business School and, instead of knowing the ins and outs of an assembly line, was schooled in how to use data to achieve results. McNamara was the New Frontier. Moreover, McNamara had a pedigree that made Democrats salivate, including an undergraduate education at UC Berkeley and a teaching stint at Harvard Business School after he graduated. He also possessed the real-world experience that seemed to define action intellectuals.

McNamara’s service during the Second World War choosing targets as part of a Statistical Control Unit (SCU) helped shape his career.⁹⁷⁰ At the very least, during this time he met future Air Force General Curtis LeMay. LeMay used the analysis of

⁹⁷⁰ Daniel Schwabe, *Burning Japan* (Potomac Books, 2015), p. 115.

McNamara and others as the justification to switch to low-level, nighttime, firebombing. He did this despite McNamara's warning that the tactic might cost him 51% of his crews over time.⁹⁷¹ The move proved brutally effective, and did so without the losses McNamara feared.⁹⁷²

The SCU also set him up for a promising career in business. Ford Motor Company hired a group of SCU vets en masse as they hemorrhaged profits in the years after the war.⁹⁷³ McNamara and his fellow "Whiz Kids" discovered that Ford did not even know how much it cost to build one of their vehicles. This included both the individual pieces as well as the cost of labor.⁹⁷⁴ They helped turn Ford around, and McNamara made a name for himself as an astute, if sometimes arrogant, leader.⁹⁷⁵ That arrogance and some enmity led several colleagues to largely shut him out of what they were convinced was Ford's next money maker: a car called the Edsel. That car proved a disastrous failure. But McNamara, largely untainted by the debacle, moved in to contain the damage, winning praise from the company.⁹⁷⁶ In 1960, only a little more than a decade after he joined the company, Henry Ford II selected McNamara to be the next CEO, the first non-family member to hold the job.

⁹⁷¹ James Blight and Janet Lang, *The Fog of War* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), p. 119-121.

⁹⁷² Schwabe, p. 176.

⁹⁷³ McNamara, p. 8-12; Deborah Shapley, *Promise and Power* (Little, Brown, and Co, 1993), p. 44.

⁹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 46.

⁹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 66.

⁹⁷⁶ McNamara, p. 150 and Shapley, p. 58. He ran into problems, however, as he argued that Ford should make smaller, cheaper cars. He also was a firm advocate of car safety. The man who analyzed the efficiency of firebombing of Tokyo, oversaw nuclear war planning, and managed Vietnam was a firm believer in developing seatbelts, collapsible steering wheels, and padded dashboards. *Ibid*, p. 59 and 71; Blight and Lang, p. 195.

Although this sort of track record gained him a national reputation, he was not John F. Kennedy's first choice as Secretary of Defense. Apparently, Kennedy and others thought so highly of Thomas Gates that they wanted to keep him.⁹⁷⁷ Gates, a Republican, would add a sheen of bipartisanship to the new cabinet. Yet, how could Gates stay on after the blistering critiques employed against Eisenhower's defense mismanagement during the campaign? Even if Gates was a reformer, there were limits to what might be acceptable. Both Robert Lovett and John Kenneth Galbraith suggested Kennedy contact McNamara.⁹⁷⁸

Compared to Bundy, Nitze, and Rostow, who all lost their first choice jobs during the transition, McNamara had an easy time. As Bundy quipped, "[E]verybody that I know [had a long and painful process] ... with the exception of Bob McNamara."⁹⁷⁹ The Kennedy campaign already had a file on McNamara. The endorsements by Galbraith and Lovett helped, but McNamara was already a bright prospect. In addition to his business background and military service, McNamara had the support of the United Auto Workers, supported the American Civil Liberties Union, chose to live in Ann Arbor to be near the University of Michigan, and was a Republican, though in name only.⁹⁸⁰ Initially, the campaign offered McNamara the job of either Secretary of the Treasury or Secretary of Defense. McNamara immediately turned down the Treasury job, but seemed intrigued by the Pentagon. He traveled to Washington to meet with Kennedy, who finally sold him on the job after he promised McNamara he would have free rein to staff the Pentagon as

⁹⁷⁷ Kaplan et. al. p. 5; Shapley, p. 85.

⁹⁷⁸ Shapley, p. 83 and Kaplan et. al., p. 3-4. Lovett, as Secretary of Air during World War Two, played a role in establishing the SCUs.

⁹⁷⁹ Bundy OH #1, JFKLOHP, p. 13.

⁹⁸⁰ Shapley, p. 82; McNamara, p. 12, 15; Kaplan et. al., p. 4.

he chose. McNamara left his \$400,000 a year job for one that only earned him \$25,000.⁹⁸¹

In some respects, Kennedy and McNamara were more open with each other during this process than Kennedy might have been with other appointees. McNamara told Kennedy that he felt underprepared for the task, saying there was no school for cabinet officials. That prompted Kennedy to respond that, as far as he knew, there were not any schools for presidents either.⁹⁸² A few weeks later, and after talking to Gates, McNamara told the president he felt confident he could handle the job. In response, Kennedy responded, “I talked over the presidency with Eisenhower, and after hearing what it’s all about, I’m convinced I can handle it.”⁹⁸³ McNamara had done his homework. In addition to his discussions with Gates, he also read the SNPM’s reports.⁹⁸⁴ While Jackson called for a “more vigorous implementation of the broad powers already vested in the Secretary of Defense” McNamara admitted, “I knew full well this view was not unanimously shared either in or out of the Pentagon.”⁹⁸⁵ That might have been true, but after the 1958 reforms and under Gates, the Pentagon had moved firmly in the direction of a more powerful Secretary. McNamara was not necessarily pushing dramatically new ideas, just accepting process already underway.

Theodore Sorensen claimed that the President “was impressed but never overwhelmed by McNamara's confident, authoritative presentations of concise

⁹⁸¹ Ibid, p. 15-16.

⁹⁸² Dallek, p. 313.

⁹⁸³ Quoted in Dallek, p. 313.

⁹⁸⁴ McNamara, p. 15 and Samuel Tucker, ed. *A Modern Design for Defense Decision* (Industrial College of the Armed Services, 1966), p. 12.

⁹⁸⁵ Ibid.

conclusions.”⁹⁸⁶ That might have been true, but perhaps that was because McNamara showed the President a humanity and perspective that he revealed to few others. Kennedy commented that he liked McNamara because, “He’s one of the few guys around this town who, when you ask him if he has anything to say and he hasn’t, says ‘No.’ That’s rare these days.”⁹⁸⁷ McNamara was not just a friend or confidant, he was a “doer.” McGeorge Bundy also noted that Kennedy valued McNamara “because within the limits of the possible he offers a president more leverage with the Pentagon than any other instrument available.”⁹⁸⁸ Bundy admired McNamara’s managerial capabilities and the two maintained an impressive working relationship despite the fact their bureaucratic bailiwicks overlapped. Bundy’s group engaged in some military planning, but mostly attempted to stay out of serious military discussions.⁹⁸⁹ One account suggests that initially Kennedy viewed McNamara as a political prop—he looked good on paper and in the words of Robert Lovett, “he can’t do that much damage. Not that he can do much good, but he can’t do that much damage.”⁹⁹⁰ Even if this reflected Kennedy’s initial view of McNamara, that respect that developed between the two was real.

Kennedy largely kept his promise to McNamara about staffing the Pentagon. At all levels, he got some of the appointments he wanted but was forced to accept others.⁹⁹¹ Importantly, however, he was allowed to select the staff of the Pentagon’s Comptroller General, perhaps the most transformative piece of his Pentagon restructuring. He picked

⁹⁸⁶ Quoted in Kaplan et. al., p. 6.

⁹⁸⁷ Bradlee, p. 63.

⁹⁸⁸ Bundy OH #1, JFKLOHP, p. 110.

⁹⁸⁹ McGeorge Bundy, *The Strength of Government* (Harvard UP, 1968), p. 37.

⁹⁹⁰ Quoted in Dallek, *Camelot’s*, p. 88.

⁹⁹¹ Schlesinger, p. 153.

RAND economist Charles Hitch, one of the nation's leading thinkers in analyzing defense spending, to run this post. The management of the Pentagon's budget took a dramatic turn under McNamara. Previously, the services had decided what programs they would like to pursue and effectively set their own budgets. In budgeting, the main role of the Secretary of Defense was dolling out money, not analyzing programs. Rockefeller's study and McNamara's own analysis suggested that the Secretary of Defense and the Comptroller needed to play a more active role in program management and oversight. In part this was to counteract not only needless duplication, but also to promote better systems and programs and eliminate dead-end programs. Previously, the Pentagon worked on twelve-month funding cycles. Under McNamara and Hitch the Pentagon would instead forecast out budgets five years in advance. In part this was to more accurately assess how much money the Pentagon would need in coming years to maintain critical programs.

McNamara called this "quantitative common sense."⁹⁹² As two analysts commented, such budgeting is "essential if there is to be a comprehensive and consistent policy."⁹⁹³ In some respects, this was a revolutionary concept. In others, it merely tapped into and magnified trends that long existed in the Pentagon. During his year in office, for instance, Gates tried employing a similar funding structure as a method to analyze programs.⁹⁹⁴ This attempt was far less sophisticated than what McNamara used, but it shows a wider acceptance of these methods. Moreover, it tapped into a method of

⁹⁹² Tucker, p. 15.

⁹⁹³ Alain Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much is Enough* (RAND Corporation, 2005), p. 45.

⁹⁹⁴ Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 731.

analysis long used by some of the services. McNamara himself is an example of this. The Army's interest in "scientific analysis" had roots in the Progressive Era.⁹⁹⁵ In 1956 Maxwell Taylor urged the Army to look "to improved management to ensure that not a dollar is wasted or diverted."⁹⁹⁶ The Air Force founded the RAND Cooperation to perform just this sort of management oversight, albeit on a contract basis. This did not mean these reforms were enthusiastically embraced, but they engaged a logic the services themselves supported.

For the first time, Hitch and his staff gave the Secretary an analytical staff which could analyze projects and, it was hoped, maximize the cost effectiveness of US defense spending. The most significant introduction was a process known as the Planning, Programing, and Budgeting System (PPBS). Remarkably, Hitch had the system up and running in only nine months. PPBS aimed to improve "decision making based on explicit criteria of the national interest...as opposed to decision making by compromise among various institutional, parochial, or other vested interests...[and] to develop explicit criteria...that could be used by the Secretary of Defense, the President, and the Congress as measures of the need for and adequacy of defense programs."⁹⁹⁷ In essence, the questions were what did you need and how much of it did you need? Did the Air Force need hundreds of bombers and hundreds of nuclear missiles? Were some types of weapons more cost effective than others? Some of these answers were, of course, impossible to determine. PPBS also sought to assess, as Gates had during his brief tenure,

⁹⁹⁵ History of Operations Research, p. 66-67

⁹⁹⁶ Maxwell Taylor, "The Army Era of Management" *Armed Forces Magazine* (October 1956)

⁹⁹⁷ Enthoven and Smith p. 33.

how much a system actually cost. When the Eisenhower Administration budgeted money for a weapons system, that system was budgeted a new tranche of funds every year starting with development, leading to production, and ending with deployment. For the System's Analysts, this made little sense. An aircraft was not just an aircraft: it was the endpoint in a long equation used to calculate its real expense. You had to look at every aspect: Would bases need to be modified to fit these new aircraft? How much fuel would they consume? Would crew training have to be significantly modified or would the military need more recruits to use the aircraft? How many spare parts would need to be budgeted into its yearly upkeep? All of these elements added to the real cost of a weapons system.

Emulating his president, McNamara was a micromanager, and often threw himself into the work alongside Hitch and his analysts, making “clear his belief in active management from the top.”⁹⁹⁸ As one Army officer recalled, “When McNamara came into the Pentagon...[a]ll of the services were found wanting.”⁹⁹⁹ He was shocked by the lack of standardization. For instance, there were “three different kinds of women’s athletic bloomers—Marine Corps, Army, Navy, or something. It was absurd...Same for belt buckles.”¹⁰⁰⁰ Standardization was not a panacea. As he explained, however, “Standardization doesn’t save a lot of money, but it saves some, and the fact the

⁹⁹⁸ Alain Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, p. 32.

⁹⁹⁹ Romie Bownlee and William Mullen, eds. *Changing an Army* (US Military History Institute and US Army Center of Military History, 1979), p. 171.

¹⁰⁰⁰ McNamara Oral History interview with DoD Staff, 4/29/94, RMP, Series II, Box 118, Folder 1, LoC.

department would tolerate non-standard specifications for no advantage simply shows...they didn't have the proper objectives in mind.”¹⁰⁰¹

If McNamara ruffled some budgetary feathers, the Services grew to respect some of his innovations. One officer recalled that in the Department of the Army McNamara, established “a small group of people who became a special information channel through the Secretary of the Army to Mr. McNamara...I came out of that assignment fairly well educated in the techniques of program management, and to this day I am an ardent and enthusiastic believer in program management as the way to go for any large organization.”¹⁰⁰² Yet this all had a purpose. Kennedy wanted to spend more on defense, but did not want to ruin the budget. If McNamara did his job, the Pentagon could eliminate projects, encourage standardization, and find savings that would allow for more efficient defense spending at only slightly higher levels.

Outside the realm of budgets and belt buckles, however, McNamara oversaw a transformation of US strategy. In 1956, Col. William DePuy, who two decades later helped rebuild the Army in the aftermath of Vietnam, wrote to a friend: “There are those of us who believe that the whole subject of the so-called limited war [or non-nuclear] deserves much more attention from an analytical standpoint.... The level of provocation which the Soviet Union and United States would tolerate short of unleashing mutual destruction would seem, on the basis of pure logic, to be high now and going even

¹⁰⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰² DePuy OH p. 171-173.

higher.”¹⁰⁰³ To another colleague, he argued “I do not advocate [for a limited] war and I hope it does not take place, but I feel...that we are losing instead of gaining ground.”¹⁰⁰⁴ He even charged that the service would find it “difficult to perform its mission on the atomic or non-atomic battlefield.”¹⁰⁰⁵ DePuy was a relatively low-ranking officer in the 1950s. He represented a line of thinking similar to that which Maxwell Taylor, Matthew Ridgeway, and James Gavin argued on the national stage. Democrats, like Jackson in the SNPM and Kennedy’s 1960 campaign, and Republicans who feared that America suffered from both the conventional gap and a missile gap, amplified that argument.

If America planned to “support any friend” and “oppose any foe” it had to be ready to respond along the full spectrum of force codified in the Administration’s “Flexible Response” doctrine. Even if Kennedy, McNamara, and others exaggerated some of the improvements that took place on their watch, the conventional capabilities of the US did grow.¹⁰⁰⁶ McNamara oversaw the Army’s development of helicopter borne, airmobile, forces starting in 1962. The idea was not new, but languished in the final year of the Eisenhower Administration.¹⁰⁰⁷ When it came to McNamara’s attention, he fired off a series of memos directing the Army to investigate the subject. The general who ran the study said of McNamara’s directives, “[T]here may have been in other fields other

¹⁰⁰³ DePuy to Richard Stilwell, 10/2/56, WD, Box 3, File “S” (56), CMH. One of the problems the Army faced, he thought, was that the term “limited war” was misleading. As he wrote, that there is a disadvantage in encouraging synonymy between the Army and the words ‘small’, ‘limited’, ‘peripheral’, ‘brush-fire’, etc. I am not too sure, personally, that we have thunk [sic] this through enough. Short of actuality, the question will be argued endlessly and we ought to argue it well.”

¹⁰⁰⁴ DePuy to George Forsythe, 8/9/57, WD, Box 3, “F-G-H” (57), CMH.

¹⁰⁰⁵ “General Taylor Re: Proposed Article for ‘Army’” WD, Box 3, File “D” (57), CMH.

¹⁰⁰⁶ See, for instance, Francis Gavin’s argument in “The Myth of Flexible Response” *International History Review* Vol. 23 No. 4 (Dec 2001), p. 847-875.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Hamilton Howze, *A Cavalryman’s Story* (Smithsonian, 1996) p. 235-236.

directives as good as those...but [if so,] none ever came to me for action.”¹⁰⁰⁸ McNamara also oversaw a massive expansion of the Army’s Special Forces as well as a complete reorganization of that service’s structure.¹⁰⁰⁹ For Navy, he invested in new aircraft carriers and new aircraft, as it also stepped away from its focus on nuclear warfare.

In some cases, these changes in spending priorities resulted in projects that sounded boring but had significant implications. One of these was McNamara’s role in growing the Air Force’s fleet of transport. The Eisenhower Administration had come under fire in 1960 and had been subject to yet another congressional subcommittee investigation over the poor ability of the US to rapidly deploy troops overseas.¹⁰¹⁰ Gates started to invest in this program, but McNamara ramped up the funding for an entirely new generation of US transport aircraft.¹⁰¹¹ The changes arguably made the US military stronger, yet it also gave it an unreasonable sense of what might be possible. The Colonel DePuy of the 1950s became General DePuy in the 1960s and in 1962 he became heavily involved in the development of the Army’s special warfare capabilities. As he later recalled

[C]ounterinsurgency was all the rage in Washington because the Kennedys had come into office...The Army was trying to find, as were the other services, a role in this new and exciting high-priority national endeavor... [American doctrine] was premised on the assumption that if we were smart enough...we could somehow thwart the efforts of the communists to subvert the Third World...There was a great deal of confidence in Washington, naïve confidence, that we could do anything we set our minds to.¹⁰¹²

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 236.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Kaplan et. al., p. 38; Bacevich, p. 143.

¹⁰¹⁰ Robert C. Owen, *Air Mobility* (Washington, DC: 2013), p. 145-155.

¹⁰¹¹ Ibid, p. 154.

¹⁰¹² DePuy OH p. 117-118.

That explanation equally applied to McNamara's own style of management. McGeorge Bundy argued that McNamara "enthrones this thing they teach in the business school [where] you take your problem, you take it apart, you measure all the pieces, you get them in order, you put them together, and you have your answer. And of course some things aren't like that."¹⁰¹³ That method of operation could work well, as in the case of PPBS. PPBS in turn helped McNamara to gain a measure of control over the Pentagon by more closely controlling the service's programs.¹⁰¹⁴ Yet it also had a drawback that McNamara would run into multiple times during the early 1960s. While McNamara would become a skilled operator, the tendency to value reason and shun other views that did not line up with his own, led him into trouble.

The Best Secretary of Defense We Have Ever Had

Perhaps the most publically controversial decision McNamara made unrelated to Vietnam was his decision in the TFX program. In the late 1950s the Air Force and Navy began ruminating on a new generation of aircraft. Air Force wanted a low-altitude, all-weather, nuclear strike aircraft that could also perform other tasks. Simultaneously, the Navy decided it needed a new fighter to defend its aircraft carriers. These ideas developed in parallel during the Eisenhower years. The Director of Defense Research and Engineering, a position created after the 1958 Defense Reorganization Act, believed these requirements could be combined into one aircraft. Thomas Gates thought the idea

¹⁰¹³ Bundy OH #1, JFKLOHP, p. 106-107.

¹⁰¹⁴ In addition to PPBS, inter-service infighting perhaps made it easier for McNamara to divide and conquer. H.R. McMasters, *Derelection of Duty* (Harper, 1997), p. 20.

possible, but decided to halt the program in late 1960 so as not to commit the incoming administration to such an advanced concept.¹⁰¹⁵ McNamara restarted the program, envisioning it as a shining example of how the services could combine requirements to save money.¹⁰¹⁶

That might have been the only easy decision in the entire TFX process. Almost from the start, neither the Navy nor Air Force seemed enthusiastic about sharing a program.¹⁰¹⁷ For an aircraft that supposedly had common attributes, each service imposed major requirements. For instance, the Navy aircraft could not be over 55,000 pounds, while the Air Force aircraft could not be under 65,000.¹⁰¹⁸ McNamara sided with the Navy, but problems remained. McNamara tried to solve these by immersing himself in the design process. When a question came up over aircraft weight, he threw the plans for the TFX on the floor of his office and started listing off parts that could be lightened.¹⁰¹⁹ With each new design, the prices quoted by the companies seemed to be going up and the project seemed no closer to reality.¹⁰²⁰

After two years of study, two competing designs made it to the final round of evaluations, one built by Boeing, another by General Dynamics. Both services believed the Boeing design was marginally better. Yet, to the shock of almost everyone, McNamara and his advisors chose the General Dynamics' entry. According to the

¹⁰¹⁵ Kaplan et. al., p. 466.

¹⁰¹⁶ Quoted in Shapley, p. 223. Shapley believes McNamara was less than enthusiastic about the TFX in total, and quotes a source saying he accepted the project because, "I'll take the first airplane that comes along to make [the point]."

¹⁰¹⁷ Kaplan et. al., p. 467.

¹⁰¹⁸ Ibid, 467-468.

¹⁰¹⁹ Shapley, p. 222.

¹⁰²⁰ Kaplan et. al., p. 468.

Secretary, his main consideration was cost. The Boeing design had several advanced design features that might delay its production.¹⁰²¹ The General Dynamics design also had an 80% commonality of parts between the Air Force and Navy versions. The Boeing design had just 60%.¹⁰²² The General Dynamics design would save money and stood a better chance of being delivered on time.¹⁰²³ Yet McNamara's argument that costs matter had a painful flaw: he made many of the decisions regarding TFX without Hitch's PPBS system, introduced six months after McNamara restarted the TFX program. Decades later, McNamara complained that "[n]either I nor my officials could monitor the underlying day-to-day change-orders that the two services put in their version of the TFX. That's what screwed it up."¹⁰²⁴ That is a problematic excuse, especially because he was well aware of the climbing costs of the program. Hitch and his staff were supposed to provide the very oversight that McNamara claimed he could not. As two of his analysts later commented McNamara was overwhelmed. He "had many other decisions to make at the time. In short, the problem was not 'too much McNamara'; it was too little."¹⁰²⁵

Almost immediately the TFX decision came under fire. Some believed it was an example of civilian overreach into military affairs. Others saw the selection of Texas-based General Dynamics as proof Lyndon Johnson had meddled in the process.¹⁰²⁶ Into this fray stepped Henry Jackson. Jackson's main concern was that Boeing, based in

¹⁰²¹ Ibid, p. 469.

¹⁰²² Ibid.

¹⁰²³ Walter Poole, *Adapting to Flexible Response* (Historical Office Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2013), p. 218-223.

¹⁰²⁴ Robert McNamara Oral History Interview with DoD Staff, 4/29/94, RMP, Series II, Box 118, Folder 1, LoC.

¹⁰²⁵ Enthoven and Smith, p. 266. Admittedly, that might be a horrifying thought for some people.

¹⁰²⁶ Shapley, p. 211.

Seattle, had been denied the contract due to fraudulent decision-making on the part of McNamara. Jackson, via his seat on the GOC, decided to launch an investigation into the TFX. It came at something of an awkward time in Jackson's relationship with the White House. The bond between Jackson and Kennedy never regained the apparent closeness the two had during their tenure in the Senate. Jackson was hardly an enemy of the White House, but Kennedy did little to reach out to him in spite of Jackson's organizational suggestions after the Bay of Pigs and the SNPM hearings he commissioned to bolster the Administration's reputation after the Bay of Pigs.¹⁰²⁷ While the White House gladly accepted Jackson's support, the official communication between the two groups was thin.¹⁰²⁸

The Kennedy-Jackson relationship took a turn in March 1962, when Jackson launched an unexpected attack on Adlai Stevenson and Kennedy's UN strategy. Foreshadowing his later neoconservative views, Jackson worried that America was too willing to subsume its vital interests to those of the UN.¹⁰²⁹ As he said, "The hope for peace with justice does not lie with the [UN]. Indeed the truth is almost exactly the reverse. The best hope for the [UN] lies in the maintenance of peace...Peace depends on the power and unity of the Atlantic Alliance and the skill of our direct diplomacy."¹⁰³⁰ Many liberals in Congress were surprised that Jackson would make such an attack, and

¹⁰²⁷ Agenda for Meeting With McGeorge Bundy, n.d. HJP, Accn 35606, Box 72, Folder 9, UW.

¹⁰²⁸ Ibid; Charles Johnson to Jackson, 11/20/61 and Charles Johnson to J. Mansfield, 11/20/61, HJP, Accn 35606, Box 67, Folder 37, UW; See also correspondence between NSC staff and SNPM Staff, HJP, Accn 35606, Box 78, Folder 8, UW.

¹⁰²⁹ Kauffman, p. 133.

¹⁰³⁰ Quoted in Kauffman, p. 133.

many conservatives applauded his speech.¹⁰³¹ Among the shocked liberals was Stevenson himself. Stevenson, perhaps correctly, believed that Jackson's speech had been ghost written by former Stevenson paramour Dorothy Fosdick and former Stevenson assistant Robert Tufts. The White House had its own reservations about Stevenson, but the biting, public feud between Stevenson and Jackson did not help.

The TFX investigation was far worse. As a CBS reporter said at the time, "Robert McNamara, called by many here the best Secretary of Defense we have ever had, this week began a new phase in his eminently successful life. He is under attack from what had been an adoring Congress an admiring press and a pleased public."¹⁰³² For some, the bar for forgiving McNamara was surprisingly low. *The Washington Star* wrote in an editorial, "Congress just wishes [McNamara] would be more human and just once in a while say he was sorry or wrong or [not] smarter than they are."¹⁰³³ Initially, Kennedy thought the matter was a joke and would disappear quickly.¹⁰³⁴

The hearings got off to a rocky start when, during a private meeting, Jackson felt McNamara insulted him.¹⁰³⁵ A newspaper, perhaps with Administration backing, took a shot at Jackson when it claimed the investigation was "to help [him] get off the hook with his constituents in the State of Washington."¹⁰³⁶ This helped give rise to Jackson's unwanted moniker "The Senator from Boeing." Then there was the strange story of the two Air Force officers, who were called in for a background interview with the GOC, and

¹⁰³¹ Ibid, p. 133-134.

¹⁰³² Transcript of "Washington Report", CBS, 3/17/63, HJP, Accn 35603, Box 247, Folder 14, UW.

¹⁰³³ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁴ J. Kennedy and R. Kennedy, 3/4/63, Dictabelt 9A.6, POF, JFKL.

¹⁰³⁵ Shapley, p. 210-211.

¹⁰³⁶ Quoted in Kaufman, p. 143-144.

suffered such rough treatment at the hands of that committee they had to be treated by Pentagon doctors after suffering undue emotional duress.¹⁰³⁷ For McNamara, he could not understand why these Senators who seemed to have little understanding of the real issues at stake subjected him and his deputies to such scrutiny.

The GOC's hearings on TFX stripped away at McNamara's reputation. While Jackson could not prove anything, McNamara looked obstinate. Kennedy complained, "It's a goddamn outrage [that] the *Washington Star* gives [so much] space to the TFX hearings where there is no funny business going on."¹⁰³⁸ The President, however, never lost faith in his Secretary. He told McNamara that no one outside Washington cared about the TFX.¹⁰³⁹ McNamara, however, knew that was a lie. At one point in Executive Session, McNamara broke down in tears, saying bullies at his son's school were telling the younger McNamara his father was a liar.¹⁰⁴⁰ Years later Jackson said he "found McNamara's demeanor appalling, an unsavory mix of arrogance and weakness unacceptable for a secretary of defense."¹⁰⁴¹ A Navy official warned Kennedy that the hearings were causing a "psychotic atmosphere" to descend on the Pentagon.¹⁰⁴²

In the end, two Pentagon officials resigned over TFX. Neither was accused of wrongdoing, but both had ties to General Dynamics that were deemed suspicious. The GOC called a halt to hearings in November 1963, admitting there was no evidence the

¹⁰³⁷ Shapley, p. 214-215; Bradlee, p. 162. Kennedy called off an internal investigation to find the leaker since, as he said "Whoever leaked the report was trying to do us a favor." Ibid.

¹⁰³⁸ Bradlee, p. 152.

¹⁰³⁹ Telephone Conversation Between J. Kennedy and McNamara, 3/26/63, Dictabelt 16A, POF, JFKL.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Kaufman, p. 142,

¹⁰⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴² J. Kennedy Meeting with Anderson, 5/8/63, Tape 85, POF, JFKL. Anderson, admittedly, liked neither McNamara nor Kennedy, and might have had reason to embellish this.

decision had been made for fraudulent reasons. By contrast, many of Jackson's liberal colleagues worried about the extent of the investigation, the damage it seemed to be causing with McNamara, and the conservative allies he had recruited.¹⁰⁴³ Kennedy was frustrated and grew concerned about McNamara when he heard about the crying episode, though his anger was directed at Jackson and others.¹⁰⁴⁴ In a moment of frustration, he told his bother that he would threaten to cancel one of the defense programs that Jackson most prized to "Scare ol' Scoop." Robert Kennedy cheered him on.¹⁰⁴⁵

Even among allies, there was doubt about how the decision over the TFX was made. Columnist Drew Pearson, who initially thought Johnson ordered the switch, later wrote confidently that "Lyndon had nothing to do with it."¹⁰⁴⁶ Instead, a source told him that Kennedy had ordered McNamara to make the switch because Boeing was getting too many contracts "so the contracts had to be passed around" especially since work for the TFX might be done in Massachusetts.¹⁰⁴⁷ Even McGeorge Bundy privately admitted that McNamara "took the heat on the TFX. I would suppose that when you finally get to the bottom of the TFX that it was not an entirely technical decision... And not entirely his. And I would suppose that no one will ever be able to know that, and this is very important."¹⁰⁴⁸ It seems unlikely McNamara did anything wrong, but he did little to demonstrate that. His hubris painted him in a corner. In his haste to prove he was correct,

¹⁰⁴³ Kaufman, p. 148. As Kaufman recounts, "In a reception room of the national Democratic headquarters where the pictures of all the former DNC chairmen hung on a wall, a Democratic politician had pointed to Jackson's and said: 'That's one picture they ought to turn to the wall.'"

¹⁰⁴⁴ Shapley, p. 214.

¹⁰⁴⁵ J. Kennedy conversation with McNamara, 3/26/63, Dictabelt 16A.4, POF, JFKL. McNamara later did cut funding to the program in question.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Peter Hannaford ed. *Washington Merry-Go-Round* (Potomac Books, 2015), p. 369.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 370.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Bundy OH #1, JFKLOHP, p. 105.

he decided to stake his claim on TFX. It was a poor choice and a poor project over which Congress flayed him.

There is no way to view McNamara's handling of the TFX program as a success. The General Dynamics design might have been the best, but it appeared haphazard and questionable. Though, some of Jackson's attack might have been motivated by pique, the "Senator from Boeing" had justification to question McNamara's ideas. This appeared even more the case later in the 1960s. First, the Navy dropped out of the program in 1964. Second, the Pentagon ordered fewer aircraft than initially planned. Lastly, when finally introduced into the Air Force as the F-111, it had a disastrous combat debut in Vietnam.¹⁰⁴⁹ From the perspective of 1968, the TFX appeared to be a disaster of McNamara's making.

Yet with slightly more perspective, the program looks much better. The aircraft itself quickly overcame its teething troubles and became a superb aircraft, so good that the Pentagon considered restarting production in the mid-1980s. Moreover, even today the Air Force has still not managed to fill the gap left by the type's retirement over two decades earlier.¹⁰⁵⁰ McNamara successfully applied the mixed requirement methodology when he forced the Air Force to adopt two Navy aircraft. Both proved highly successful and saved money for the Pentagon. McNamara demonstrated that if properly applied this type of standardization can have its benefits, too. Moreover, it set the standard for future procurement efforts. Unlike Wilson and McElroy, no one could complain that Robert McNamara was not involved enough in the Pentagon.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Peter Davies, *General Dynamics F-111 Aardvark* (Osprey, 2013), p. 46.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Gilles Van Nederveen, *Sparks Over Vietnam* (US Air Force, 2000), p. 89-93; Davies, p. 61.

The Trial and Tribulations of Skybolt

If the TFX showed the limits of McNamara's foresight and analytical capabilities, another situation demonstrated both how PPBS should ideally function as well as McNamara's role as a diplomat. It also involved cancelling a major weapons system, in this case Douglas Aircraft Company's GAM-87 missile, also known as the Skybolt. Like TFX, the Skybolt crisis made international headlines. Unlike TFX, it also threatened American relations with Great Britain, one of its closest allies, who chose Skybolt as their primary nuclear weapon. When McNamara decided to cancel the system he effectively removed the British from the nuclear club. McNamara's budgetary decisions exacerbated the problem, even though his diplomacy also paved the way for positive ending to a potentially explosive problem.

Skybolt began in 1959 as an attempt to prolong the life of America's nuclear armed bombers. In the late 1950s manned bombers remained the mainstay of America's nuclear deterrent. While the introduction of intermediate range and intercontinental ballistic missiles (IRBM and ICBM) suggested a diminishing need for bombers, several arguments existed for sustaining America's force. Teething troubles with the new generation of missiles raised questions about when they might actually be deployed and the new missiles were far less accurate than a manned bomber.¹⁰⁵¹ Lastly, and most fundamentally, a missile could not be recalled. A bomber, however, could be turned around in midflight if nuclear war could be avoided at the last minute. Skybolt was an

¹⁰⁵¹ Enthoven and Smith, p. 254

attempt to square this circle. It was essentially a small ICBM, that a B-52 could carry. While still outside Soviet airspace, and safe from Soviet interceptors and missiles, it could launch its Skybolt. With a range of over a thousand miles, the Skybolt could hit most targets in the Soviet Union. Skybolt was never meant to be the centerpiece of the US nuclear arsenal, merely one part of the nuclear toolbox.¹⁰⁵² The British quickly became interested in the weapon, too. For them, however, it would be the center of their nuclear arsenal.¹⁰⁵³ They reached a deal with the Eisenhower Administration whereby the United States would foot the bill for Skybolt's development, but Britain would buy hundreds of missiles once it became operational.

In theory, it was a great solution to a pressing problem. In practice, it was a troublesome weapons system in part because it was expected to do things asked of no other missile.¹⁰⁵⁴ Two of McNamara's systems analysis officials referred to it as "the most complex ballistic missile system" developed by the US.¹⁰⁵⁵ Over two years, the cost of the program grew to almost three times the original estimate.¹⁰⁵⁶ Analysts warned that what started off as an \$800 million project could actually cost \$3 billion.¹⁰⁵⁷ Twice members of the Eisenhower Administration recommended that it be cancelled. Perhaps as

¹⁰⁵² In addition to a new manned bomber, a project McNamara also cancelled, the US employed a variety of stand-off weapons to increase the survivability of the bomber force.

¹⁰⁵³ Bob Clarke, *Four Minute Warning* (Tempus, 2005), p. 34-35.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Skybolt had to perform in ways expected of no other IR, IC, or SLBM. It would have to be robust enough to survive many take-offs and landings, to say nothing of being subjected to flight at hundreds of miles of hour, since missiles would be carried on aircraft even in peacetime. More importantly, after being fired from anywhere in the world from an unknown altitude, its guidance system would have to find its location and send it to its target. Normal IRBMs and ICBMs had it easy by comparison. They lived in protected shelters and with their exact coordinated preprogrammed. Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) had to be able to quickly ascertain their firing location, but their firing altitude would always be the same, and they were equally sheltered until firing.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Enthoven and Smith, p. 252; Kaplan et. al. p. 376.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Enthoven and Smith, p. 255.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 256.

a face saving measure, Thomas Gates overruled those suggestions while simultaneously balking at increasing funding.¹⁰⁵⁸ McNamara had doubts, but for the sake of the British continued the project. He admitted before Congress “it was a costly project and presents some unusually complex development problems.”¹⁰⁵⁹ Yet he also acknowledged, “On balance, [however] we feel that the advantages of this weapons system warrant an effective development effort.”¹⁰⁶⁰ Other changes made by McNamara threatened the system. Those changes would not have happened if he did not have the powers granted to the secretary back in 1958.

Much of this dealt with US nuclear strategy and continued a process begun by Carl Kaysen during the Berlin Crisis. As noted in Chapter 5, America’s nuclear strategy was an “all or nothing” gambit. Speaking of trains in World War One, Barbara Tuchman, noted: “From the moment the order was given, everything was to move at fixed times according to a schedule precise down to the number of train axels that would pass over a given bridge within a given time.”¹⁰⁶¹ If one replaces “train axles” with “nuclear bombers” and bridges with “tanker aircraft” or “targets” one gets a good idea of how US nuclear war plans worked in the 1950s and early 1960s. Launching a strike required coordinating over a thousand bombers with dozens of tanker aircraft all over the world to drop over 1,700 nuclear weapons on between 700 and 1,000 targets.¹⁰⁶²

¹⁰⁵⁸ Edward Kaplan, *To Kill Nations* (Cornell UP, 2015) p. 205; Richard Neustadt, *Report to JFK* (Cornell UP, 1999), p. 29.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Robert McNamara Testimony, 4/4/61, *Military Procurement Authorization Fiscal Year 1962, Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services, United State Senate, April 4,5,6,7,11,12,17, and 19, 1961* (GPO, 1961), p. 10

¹⁰⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶¹ Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (Presidio Press, 1962), p. 89.

¹⁰⁶² E. Kaplan, p. 114; Elliot Converse, *Rearming for the Cold War* (Historical Office

Half measures did not exist. America's nuclear war plan aimed to saturate Communist nations. If done properly, America would suffer limited retaliatory damage—though what characterized limited was not at all clear.¹⁰⁶³ A 1959 study estimated that if America did not send its full force a Soviet attack would kill roughly a third of the US population.¹⁰⁶⁴ The stakes were high, and Air Force officials cared little for inflicting collateral damage. Official US policy admitted “the peoples of the Bloc countries other than the USSR and Communist China are not responsible for the acts of their governments” and aimed to “avoid non-military destruction and casualties” in these nations.¹⁰⁶⁵ In a briefing early in McNamara's term the Chief of the Air Force admitted US nuclear war plans “make no... distinction among the USSR, Communist China, [text classified], and apparently dictates that the [nuclear war plan] provide for the attack of a single list of Sino-Soviet Bloc targets.”¹⁰⁶⁶ When the Commandant of the Marine Corps heard the implications of this and asked how the Air Force might avoid killing millions of innocent civilians, the Air Force chief of staff said, “Well, yeh [sic], we *could* do that, but I hope nobody thinks of it because it would really screw up the plan.”¹⁰⁶⁷

At best, McNamara had a mixed relationship with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. While the Army, to a greater or lesser extent, was happy with his budgetary priorities, other

Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2012), p. 514n103; JCSLG to JCS, 4/28/61, Doc 27, Electronic Briefing Book No. 130 (Creation of SIOP-62), *National Security Archives*

¹⁰⁶³ At a JCS meeting in 1971 the then-Air Force Chief of Staff said, seemingly approvingly, that America “could lose 200 million people and still have more than we had at the time of the Civil War.” At least according to the written minutes, no one in attendance seemed to take any issue with this statement. Memo for the Record, JCS Meeting, 1500, Friday, 10 September, 1971” Doc 6, Electronic Briefing Book No. 580 (“Top Air Force Official Told JCS..”), *National Security Archives*

¹⁰⁶⁴ E. Kaplan, p. 114.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Notes By the Secretaries to the JCS on Review of the NSTL/SIOP-62 and Related Policy Guidance, 2/11/61, Doc 25, Electronic Briefing Book No. 130 (Creation of SIOP-62), *National Security Archives*

¹⁰⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Quoted in Fred Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon* (Stanford UP, 1991), p. 270.

services found him arrogant and unwilling to heed their advice.¹⁰⁶⁸ Though there might have been an extra edge in their relations with McNamara, this was not significantly different than their attitude during the Eisenhower years. In two years, for instance, the Kennedy Administration went through two Chiefs of Naval Operation where as Eisenhower went through five Army Chiefs of Staff in his two terms.¹⁰⁶⁹ McNamara's relations with the Air Force was perhaps the most challenging. Here McNamara came up against his former boss, Curtis LeMay, then the Air Force chief of staff. For a service that had been lavished with funds during the Eisenhower years, the Air Force received a rude awakening during the Kennedy era. Not only did the President chafe at LeMay almost every time the two met, but McNamara cancelled some of the Air Force's favorite programs.¹⁰⁷⁰ While the service got the TFX as well as a bevy of new Minuteman ICBMs, it lost its new manned bomber and several of its other missile and aircraft programs. Perhaps most importantly, however, McNamara decided he would insert himself and his office into the debate over nuclear strategy. He was frustrated by the constant request for more weapons, and shocked at the callousness toward casualty numbers. The same general who worried about the plan being screwed up also horrified McNamara with a joke about a possible nuclear war: "Well, Mr. Secretary, I hope you don't have any friends or relations in Albania, because we're just going to have to wipe it out."¹⁰⁷¹ McNamara questioned whether the Air Force's focus on targeting multiple

¹⁰⁶⁸ Matthew Moten, *Presidents and Their Generals* (Belknap, 2013), p. 271.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Kaplan et. al., p. 11, 48; Joint History Office, *Organizational Developments of the Joints Chiefs of Staff* (Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2013), p. 92.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Moten, p. 282; Poole, p. 31.

¹⁰⁷¹ Quoted in F. Kaplan, p. 272.

weapons on a single target was a sensible, or even cost effective, strategy.¹⁰⁷² All of this was done to ensure destruction in case one weapons failed. This thinking drove the Air Force's decision behind Skybolt.

For several years analysts had spoken about a better way to conduct a nuclear war. After his early experiences, McNamara adopted these ideas as policy. In 1962, McNamara gave a major speech at a NATO conference in Athens in which he laid out a new policy:

our principal military objectives, in the event of a nuclear war: stemming from a major attack on the Alliance, should be the destruction of the enemy's military forces while attempting to preserve the fabric as well as the integrity of allied society. Specifically, our studies indicate that a strategy which targets nuclear force only against cities or a mixture of civil and military targets has serious limitations for the purpose of deterrence and for the conduct of general nuclear war.¹⁰⁷³

Buried in this somewhat technical language was a major announcement: America would no longer target Soviet cities in a first strike. Its targets instead would be Soviet nuclear forces. Theoretically knocking out Soviet forces would save America cities and preserve enough of the Soviet Union and its leadership to allow its them to commence negotiations. Analysts claimed it would also save lives. It was a bold departure from previous strategy. Previous Secretaries of Defense had only had a marginal impact on US nuclear strategy. McNamara made it clear that LeMay and others, instead of being able to determine their own strategy, would now take their planning orders from the Secretary.

¹⁰⁷² F. Kaplan, p. 269-271.

¹⁰⁷³ Kaplan et. al., p. 305-306.

Barley lasting two years, the “Counterforce” doctrine was replaced by the strategy of mutually assured destruction.¹⁰⁷⁴ McNamara realized that counterforce strikes did little to save lives and that a nation only needed a small number of nuclear weapons to make an attack costly.¹⁰⁷⁵ Mutually assured destruction might have been a terrifying prospect, but it admitted nuclear war was effectively unwinnable. This reflected not just his thinking, but that of Kennedy as well. The President, for all his Cold Warrior instincts, never had much of a stomach for nuclear war. He quickly curtailed many of the civil defense initiatives started by Eisenhower.¹⁰⁷⁶ As an official in the Pentagon noted, Kennedy eventually decided nuclear weapons “had a very small chance of being used....[N]either side was going to use [nuclear weapons] under any reasonable circumstances [and] you couldn't count on [them] to help you in anything else.”¹⁰⁷⁷

The brief existence of the counterforce, however, doctrine put another nail in Skybolt’s coffin. The system was never particularly accurate—in many respects, it never needed to be. Large cities were its main target. It was not accurate enough, however, to hit smaller targets like airfields or missile silos. Indeed, the Air Force already had a cheaper, more accurate, and more versatile weapon that could do all of this.¹⁰⁷⁸ For America, its nuclear arsenal was already full better alternatives to Skybolt.¹⁰⁷⁹

¹⁰⁷⁴ E. Kaplan, p. 215

¹⁰⁷⁵ Robert McNamara interview, 2/20/86, *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age; At the Brink*, WGBH. As McNamara said, “I define parity as a condition ... of mind, a condition of the holder of nuclear weapons that believes he cannot initiate the use of those nuclear weapons against his opponent with advantage to himself, and that his opponent feels exactly the same way.”

¹⁰⁷⁶ F. Kaplan, p. 314.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Harold Brown Oral History Interview 1, n.d. JFKL OHP, p. 62 and 63.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Harold Brown, Oral History Interview 6, 7/9/64, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 3.

More worryingly Skybolt suffered a series of embarrassing engineering setbacks, including the fact it could not do the most basic thing asked of it: fly. It failed its first five test flights.¹⁰⁸⁰ McNamara's predecessors had involved themselves in programs, but with far different results.¹⁰⁸¹ When, during a Congressional hearing, Neil McElroy was asked why the Pentagon was building two different missile systems to do the same job, McElroy admitted "This is one area where we have not done very well in making a decision. As far as I am concerned, it would not bother me if you held our feet to the fire and forced us in connection with this budget."¹⁰⁸² Asking Congress to make the decision for the Pentagon was anathema to the entire PPBS system. Indeed, two of McNamara's analysts cited the Skybolt case as an example of why the Secretary of Defense needed an independent budgetary analysis staff. Throughout this period the Air Force repeatedly claimed that Skybolt was both cost effective and a better alternative to other weapons.¹⁰⁸³ For almost anyone in the Pentagon other than the Air Force, however, Skybolt's flaws were increasingly apparent. As the nation's nuclear arsenal grew the justification disappeared.¹⁰⁸⁴

The British, however, still depended on Skybolt. A colleague told Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, "the strength of the [nuclear] deterrent must be the heart of our

¹⁰⁸⁰ Kaplan et. al., p. 381.

¹⁰⁸¹ Watson, *Into the Missile Age*, p. 141 and 147.

¹⁰⁸² Ibid, p. 426.

¹⁰⁸³ Enthoven and Smith, p. 260.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Robert S. Norris, *The Cuban Missile Crisis: A Nuclear Order of Battle October/November 1962* presented at the Woodrow Wilson Center, 10/24/12, Wilson Center Website (www.wilsoncenter.org); Vol. 5, Table 10, p. 496.

defence policy.”¹⁰⁸⁵ Few British officials worried about the niceties of nuclear warfighting strategy. One member of Parliament said, “Britain can knock down twelve cities in the region of Stalingrad and Moscow...and another dozen in the Crimea... We did not have this power at the time of Suez. We are a major power again.”¹⁰⁸⁶ Britain could also not risk the possibility that America’s nuclear umbrella would be unavailable. Having been in the Cabinet during Suez, Macmillan understood what it was like to be abandoned by America. He put tremendous faith in the Anglo-American relationship but, as the Foreign Secretary noted, faith was not enough in this case.

Macmillan would have even more to worry about had he known about the Kennedy Administration’s internal discussions about the future of Britain’s nuclear weapons. McNamara watched as his colleagues in the White House and State Department quietly advocated America’s push for its abolition. Under Secretary of State George Ball felt that it was better for the US to withdraw support for Skybolt, especially since America had refused to help either France or West Germany in their development of nuclear weapons. Ball feared that US support for a new British nuclear deterrent would lead to bitterness. Moreover, it might stymie Britain’s then attempt to join the European Economic Council, a move which Washington hoped would help shore up Europe. Instead Ball and others wanted McNamara to promote the Multilateral Force (MLF), a plan to place nuclear weapons under NATO control on ships manned by multinational

¹⁰⁸⁵ Quoted in Peter Hennessy, *The Prime Minister: The Office and its Holders Since 1945*. (St. Martin’s Press, 2000), p. 111.

¹⁰⁸⁶ John Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations in the Cold War and After* (Palgrave, 2001), p. 126.

NATO crews.¹⁰⁸⁷ This idea stretched back to the Eisenhower years, and Kennedy was briefed on it during the transition.¹⁰⁸⁸ It gained traction during the early 1960s and NSC officials even produced two documents which advocated stripping Britain of its nuclear deterrent. The first, an April 1961 NSAM-backed Policy Directive stated, “Over the long run, it would be desirable if the British decided to phase out of the nuclear deterrent business. If the development of Skybolt is not warranted for U.S. purposes alone, the U.S. should not prolong the life of the V-Bomber force by this or other means.”¹⁰⁸⁹ A year later, a draft of the Basic National Security Policy argued for a reduction in the nuclear relationship with the UK.¹⁰⁹⁰ Both papers believed that denying Britain its nuclear weapons would help bring Western European nations together to form a more effective bulwark against the Soviets.

If McNamara the strategist felt the justification for Skybolt was thin, McNamara the analyst could hardly ignore the rising costs of the system and its inability to even fly. Almost until the end, however, he seemed willing to give the program every opportunity to work. As late as September 1962, McNamara approved more funds, and even reached an agreement with the Air Force to fund the program month-to-month, an unusual set-up for a department that planned its funding years in advance.¹⁰⁹¹ Yet within three months the cost increased again.¹⁰⁹² Even though the JCS, with the exception of Maxwell Taylor, were in favor of keeping Skybolt, few others were. Both the Treasury

¹⁰⁸⁷ George Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*. (W.W. Norton and Co, 1982), p. 260-263.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Dallek, p. 302.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Ibid, Doc. 100, 4/20/61 Policy Directive: NATO and the Atlantic Nations p. 289.

¹⁰⁹⁰ US Government. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1961-1963 Vol. VIII, National Security Policies* (GPO, 1996), editorial note, p. 245.

¹⁰⁹¹ Neustadt, *Report*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁹² Enthoven and Smith, 255-256.

Department and the Bureau of the Budget suggested that Skybolt be cancelled on cost measures alone.¹⁰⁹³ When added to the voices in the White House and the State Department and the decreasing military utility of the system, the choice seemed obvious. McNamara recommended that Kennedy cancel the system and Kennedy approved the termination on November 23, 1962.¹⁰⁹⁴

Now came time for McNamara the diplomat to take the stage. The next few weeks proved so chaotic that Kennedy later recalled Richard Neustadt to the US to investigate just what happened. Under the auspices of PACGO, recommissioned briefly and seemingly for the only time during the Kennedy years, Neustadt studied the Skybolt story and wrote a report he delivered to Kennedy just before the President's assassination.¹⁰⁹⁵ The British argued that they had been blindsided by McNamara's decision. Neustadt, however, showed the British deserved some of the blame since they suffered from a certain amount of confirmation bias. The British believed everything they heard about Skybolt from the Air Force and Douglas Aircraft, while minimizing the missile's problems and ignored their only source close to McNamara's office.¹⁰⁹⁶ Throughout Skybolt's development, McNamara was candid about his own cautious optimism, while still being realistic about its chances.¹⁰⁹⁷ While some of McNamara's

¹⁰⁹³ Kaplan et. al., p. 121.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Neustadt, *Report*, p. 36-37. This meeting produced two of McNamara's greatest headaches since it was also in this meeting that Kennedy approved the General Dynamics design for the TFX.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Neustadt, *Report*, p. 17 and 21.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Neustadt, *Report*, p. 32.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Kaplan et. al., p. 378.

deputies remained cagey about the increasingly dire state of the program, they did not conceal the truth.¹⁰⁹⁸

Realizing the damage this could do, McNamara offered to visit London to discuss the matter in person with his British counterparts.¹⁰⁹⁹ At the same time, he went against the prevailing mood in Washington and was prepared to offer the British ways to preserve their independent nuclear capability. He offered them a series of alternatives that included joining the MLF, independently fund Skybolt themselves, adopt another US air launched nuclear weapon, or opt-in on the Polaris submarine launched ballistic missile (SLBM) program.¹¹⁰⁰ Rusk, Ball, and other factions at State objected to McNamara's generous offer, but Kennedy authorized McNamara to float the idea if prudent.¹¹⁰¹

The Prime Minister had mixed emotions about the cancellation of Skybolt. As he noted in his diary, "it is clear that [McNamara and Kennedy] have decided—on wider grounds—to concentrate on [ICBMs and SLBMs]. It is also clear to me that they are determined to kill Skybolt on good general grounds—not merely to annoy us or drive [the UK] out of the nuclear business. But, of course, they have handled things in such a way as to make many of us very suspicious."¹¹⁰² Objectively, one can argue with that claim. McNamara informed Britain's Ambassador to the US David Ormsby Gore and others weeks before its cancellation that Skybolt's future was bleak.¹¹⁰³

¹⁰⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 379.

¹¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 381; Andrew Priest, *Kennedy, Johnson, and NATO* (Rutledge, 2006), p. 42.

¹¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰² Peter Catterall, ed. *The Macmillan Diaries* (Macmillan, 2012), p. 527.

¹¹⁰³ Neustadt, *Report*, p. 37 and 39.

If McNamara made one misstep, it was in how he timed his announcement to the British. McNamara knew that if Kennedy decided to cancel the system in late November, he would have approximately two weeks before the news became public. McNamara expected to be in London at that time and wanted to break the news personally. Yet word slipped out earlier than he anticipated and his trip was delayed.¹¹⁰⁴ Thus the Secretary of Defense became a scapegoat in the British press. According to Ormsby Gore, officials in Britain's Ministry of Defense leaked anti-McNamara stories to smear McNamara and sow "maximum distrust of American motives[. It] made the situation as difficult as possible for the Prime Minister as well as the President."¹¹⁰⁵

Perhaps lower-level Ministry of Defense officials had additional reasons to be angry at McNamara. Only a few months earlier, McNamara announced that the US was pulling funds for Britain's Thor IRBMs. The Thor was actually an American missile developed prior to the deployment of America's ICBM force. Its short range, however, meant it could not be launched from the US. To overcome this, America loaned it to the British who, with American financial support, deployed it beginning in 1960.¹¹⁰⁶ The US promised to subsidize the deployment until late 1964 and made similar deployments of Jupiter IRBMs to Italy and Turkey.¹¹⁰⁷ These, with the Thors, all concerned the Soviets and helped contribute to their 1962 efforts to put missiles in Cuba. In May 1962, only a few months before the Skybolt Crisis, McNamara announced America would not renew Thor funding after 1964. The British would either need to return the missiles or continue

¹¹⁰⁴ Kaplan et. al., p. 381.

¹¹⁰⁵ Lord Harlech, "Suez SNAFU, Skybolt SABU" *Foreign Policy* No. 2 (Spring 1971), p. 49.

¹¹⁰⁶ John Boyes, *Project Emily* (The History Press, 2008), p. 129.

¹¹⁰⁷ Philip Nash, *The Other Missiles of October* (U of North Carolina Press, 1997), p. 9-26.

to deploy them with the associated financial burden. McNamara's decision was not all that controversial. For the Americans, the Thor was an aging system with a short range made redundant by the new ICBM and SLBM force. The British thought that the Thor was almost obsolete.¹¹⁰⁸ While McNamara's decision in this matter did not provoke the same anger, it did little to help. The removal of the Thors left one more hole in Britain's nuclear arsenal—a situation exacerbated by Skybolt's cancellation.¹¹⁰⁹

McNamara's own diplomacy hit a further wall when he finally had a chance to sit down with Britain's Defense Minister, Peter Thorneycroft. McNamara knew the meeting would be tough, but was shocked by Thorneycroft's attitude. The Minister of Defense called Skybolt's cancellation a betrayal.¹¹¹⁰ The two quickly reached an impasse.

McNamara expected Thorneycroft to ask for alternatives to Skybolt before he explicitly offered any. Thorneycroft expected McNamara to offer the British Polaris. McNamara finally offered the British Polaris if they agreed to commit their missiles to NATO's—essentially America's—overall nuclear strike plan.¹¹¹¹ This was not a push to get the UK into the MLF. Indeed, it merely replicated what already existed: Britain's nuclear strike plan was integrated into SAC's own plan.¹¹¹² Thorneycroft responded to that suggestion harshly. Perhaps seeking to clarify McNamara's point, ISA chief Paul Nitze asked if the UK would accept some sort of collaborative arrangement with the Americans.

Thorneycroft's response was that “Yes, we could make [a] collaborative arrangement of

¹¹⁰⁸ Boyes, p. 129.

¹¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹¹⁰ Neustadt, *Report*, p. 71. Thorneycroft told McNamara said that the Labour Party would use this to assault the Conservatives since the Conservatives “always said you would never let us down...Now [Labour] will be able to say that they were right and we were wrong.”

¹¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 74.

¹¹¹² Donette Murray, *Kennedy, Macmillan, and Nuclear Weapons* (Macmillan, 2000), p. 17.

that kind” though he also said Britain would need to know it could also act independently if needed.¹¹¹³ Despite that positive ending neither side felt encouraged. McNamara suspected Thorneycroft had not even prepared for the meeting. When McNamara tried to engage the British minister on whether the UK could even manufacture submarines that could carry Polaris, Thorneycroft seemed dangerously ignorant of the specifics.¹¹¹⁴ Moreover McNamara was distressed to read press reports that night about how badly the meeting had gone.¹¹¹⁵

Yet McNamara, Nitze, and Thorneycroft had stumbled on the eventual solution. They just lacked the power to make it possible. Regardless of McNamara’s power, he could not unilaterally offer nuclear weapons to the British; Kennedy would have to agree to the plan.¹¹¹⁶ Kennedy and Macmillan met in Nassau to discuss the problem. Richard Neustadt helped popularize the idea that, in the end, David Ormsby Gore sat with Kennedy on the flight down and explained the situation to him. As Neustadt wrote,

for the first time, [Kennedy]...got to the heart of the British problem, saw beneath the surface of “disaster” for the Tories to the point that there were but two ways to ward it off: by hailing [US] generosity or by assailing our bad faith. The “British problem” was *his* problem; he held the key to *their* resolution...The point was pure politics, not policy, not strategy, not diplomacy, not cost.¹¹¹⁷

Perhaps this is too simple an explanation or perhaps it does too much to talk up “The Special Relationship” between the two nations. In the end, however, Kennedy and Macmillan decided that Britain would get everything it needed for Polaris, except the

¹¹¹³ Neustadt, *Report*, p. 74.

¹¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹⁶ Kaplan et. al., p. 383.

¹¹¹⁷ Neustadt, *Report*, p. 88.

warheads, which the British would have to design themselves. Britain's submarines would be committed to NATO's nuclear reserve, though they reserved the right to operate independently if needed. McNamara was at Nassau and helped smooth out the details to the deal. While he did not play the starring role in the final treaty, his vision of the deal clearly won out over that advocated by other like Rusk, Ball, or even Bundy.

In the end, of course, Kennedy made the final decision to give Polaris to the British. What is remarkable is that this decision did not cause major faults within his Administration. In part, McNamara's good working relationship with Rusk and Bundy must have played a role in this. In the years after the Nassau Conference, McNamara continued to work on State's preferred solution, the MLF. The MLF remained a serious idea for years after, even if NATO eventually shelved the concept.¹¹¹⁸ McNamara received a black eye when just after the Nassau Conference the Air Force proudly announced a successful guided flight of Skybolt.¹¹¹⁹ Despite all his comments that Skybolt was unworkable, some latched onto this event as another of example of McNamara's willingness to cancel a good program. The successful flight, however, really meant little. The system was still too expensive and lacked a clear role. Lest one think otherwise, Britain's response is telling. Despite having invested over a decade into developing their own bomber force, they quickly jettisoned Skybolt and their aircraft in favor of the more survivable and cheaper Polaris SLBM. Months later, rumors surfaced that someone in Britain had leaked Skybolt's plans to the Soviets. When he heard this,

¹¹¹⁸ Priest, p. 113.

¹¹¹⁹ E. Kaplan, p. 206-207.

almost certainly erroneous report Kennedy replied, “If the Russians want to build Skybolt, good luck to them.”¹¹²⁰

Conclusion

According to Eisenhower’s critics, the Pentagon suffered from sins large and small. The secretaries were too passive; the services were clearly upset; the strategy tied the hands of the nation; there was no coordination over research and needless duplication among programs. Robert McNamara’s appointment was meant to change all of that. In searching for a Secretary of Defense, Kennedy wanted someone who he could entrust to run the department without needing much oversight. Unlike Eisenhower, Kennedy would not be his own Secretary of Defense (a wag might opine that was because he was too busy being his own Secretary of State). Especially coming into office after a respected general, Kennedy wanted to show that his Administration could efficiently manage the nation’s security. One might criticize McNamara’s team for including so many technocrats at the expense of officials with military or diplomatic experience. In fact the only civilians in the Pentagon’s upper echelon that had significant government experience were Paul Nitze and his deputy, William Bundy. JCS chair Maxwell Taylor, a Kennedy ally, added to this group, but it was a small cadre in a large department.

Quickly, however, McNamara changed how the Defense Department worked. From strategy, to budgeting, and diplomacy, McNamara held the reins. PPBS was so successful that in 1966 Lyndon Johnson attempted to mandate its use in all federal

¹¹²⁰ Bradley, p. 203.

agencies.¹¹²¹ It was also so controversial that as soon as the Nixon Administration took office in 1969 they discontinued its use. Neither the PPBS system nor McNamara's own judgement were flawless. In addition to the TFX, several other programs supported by the Secretary collapsed. Perhaps most strikingly was McNamara's attempt to set up the "McNamara Line" a string of electronic sensors designed to monitor the movement of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces.¹¹²² McNamara's review process also curtailed some of the flights of fancy seen during the Eisenhower years, including nuclear powered aircraft, radioactive cruise missiles, or worse. Nuclear weapons, never a completely safe system, became more stable under McNamara as proven systems were increasingly refined. Especially in the months after the Bay of Pigs, Kennedy's distrust of the military grew. He looked for a group of civilians who would control a military that seemed to want to deceive him. That certainly was an exaggeration, even if the Joint Chiefs were suspicious of both the President and his Secretary.¹¹²³ In McNamara, Kennedy had a trusted ally who successfully could run roughshod over the entire department if needed. This is also what Eisenhower had sought in his three secretaries. McNamara of course, made many enemies in the process. But he achieved something that no one else had and did so with a streak of ruthless efficiency—or at least the appearance of such—that continues to have repercussions and influence the office.

¹¹²¹ Jack Hooper "Planning, Programing, Budgeting System" *Journal of Range Management* Vol. 21 No. 3 (May, 1968), p. 123.

¹¹²² Ann Finkbeiner, *The Jasons* (Viking, 2006), p. 62-89.

¹¹²³ Moten, p. 276-77, 278, 280, 282-283.

Conclusion-The Strength of Government

“The United States [needs a] government strong enough, at all levels, and in all branches, to meet explosive needs that no other force can handle.”¹¹²⁴

History has not been particularly kind to the people who populate this dissertation. In advancing what they perceived to be the nation’s interests, many of them enabled America’s descent into Vietnam. In part, this work is meant to demonstrate an alternative series of events that does not necessarily end in Saigon. The strengthening of the NSC staff and Secretary of Defense contributed, but did not lead, to the decisions surrounding that war. But the people involved in making those decisions came to personify the offices in which they served. That often overwhelmed the scope of the changes they made.

The most obvious examples of this are Bundy and McNamara. They oversaw much of this transformation, yet never escaped the shadow of the war. Nelson Rockefeller escaped Vietnam, but never achieved the goals he wanted. Publically rejected by his party in 1964, he briefly becoming Vice President after Watergate, only to suffer the indignity of being jettisoned from the 1976 ticket by Gerald Ford. His reputation further suffered when he died in the arms of his mistress. If Rockefeller personified a liberalism slowly disappearing from the Republican Party, Henry Jackson embodied an increasingly hawkish wing of the Democratic Party. His ambitions for higher office were also frustrated, in part because he moved increasingly right. The SNPM ran well into the late 1960s, though it never again made the news as in 1960. He expressed subtle frustration that Kennedy and Johnson continued to use the NSC staff rather than investing

¹¹²⁴ Bundy, p. xi.

more power in Dean Rusk. The man who had almost been Kennedy's Vice Presidential choice in 1960, had moved far enough across the political spectrum that, in 1968, he was a potential pick as Richard Nixon's Secretary of Defense.

Many of the lower level figures faded into relative obscurity. Dorothy Fosdick remained on Jackson's staff until he died in 1983. She continued to have an outsized role managing "Scoops Troops" and helped foster a generation of neo-conservatives, including staff alums like Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, and Douglas Feith.¹¹²⁵ After Jackson's death, Fosdick tended his legacy and papers, until her own death in 1997. Robert Komer's reputation survived his role in Vietnam, where he began a series of initiatives that led, after his departure, to the atrocities of the Phoenix Program. He returned to government service during the Carter Administration, and built the underpinnings of US strategy in the Middle East, leading later to the Carter Doctrine and the establishment of US Central Command. Bromley Smith, Carl Kaysen, and others never again achieved the same status they had during the Kennedy years.

Perhaps the most intact reputation is that of Paul Nitze. Fired by Dulles, accidentally demoted by Kennedy, he never had a warm relationship with Robert McNamara. His participation in the Committee on the Present Danger against Jimmy Carter mimicked his actions as a member of the Gaither Committee in 1957. Unlike Jackson, he got a job in the Nixon Administration working on nuclear arms reduction, a role he continued in the Reagan Administration.

¹¹²⁵ Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), p. 566.

The institutional changes they envisioned, promoted, or implemented have proven far more durable than their personal reputations. This might have surprised them had they known it at the time. We can debate the effectiveness and even wisdom of the individuals mentioned above, but it is hard to argue about their resilience of their ideas. While Nixon instituted a more formal, and larger NSC staff, its function mimicked Kennedy's far more than Eisenhower's. That trend continued under Ford and Carter. If McGeorge Bundy's relationship with Dean Rusk was, at times, very formal, it looked positively ideal compared to bureaucratic disputes between Henry Kissinger and William Rogers, or between Zbigniew Brzezinski and Cyrus Vance. These showdowns demonstrated that the National Security Advisor, and the NSC staff could overwhelm State, often to the personal gain of the SANSAs, and to the political detriment of the administration in question.¹¹²⁶

Reagan's stated goal of reining in both the SANSAs and NSC staff created a hollow institution. But the powers instilled by Bundy two decades earlier returned once a series of more ambitious National Security Advisors took over. They used the powers of the office to help plan and execute the Iran-Contra Affair. While the Tower Commission highlighted issues with the organization, there was little structural change to address the powers of the office. The Council staff regained some normality under Brent Scowcroft's tenure in the George H.W. Bush years, and it continued to gain strength and size, in the Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama years. While the outright infighting between the NSC staff and line agencies that often characterized the Council's early years may have

¹¹²⁶ The official title of the SANSAs technically changed to the APNSAs, or Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

been brought under control, tensions remained between the President's foreign policy staff and the rest of the government.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense has gone through a process similar to that of the NSC staff and the National Security Advisor. While Nixon's first Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird, attempted to walk back some of McNamara's reforms—including abandoning PPBS—he also kept many of the powers associated with the office. Given the war raging in Southeast Asia, one can understand this. Even if PPBS was gone, McNamara's five-year budgeting horizon remained and guided American defense spending during the return of Cold War tensions in the late 1970s through the 1980s. No Secretary of Defense in the pre-McNamara years, for instance, could have wielded the influence of a figure like Casper Weinberger. The growth of the Pentagon's powers was probably most clearly manifested during the George W. Bush years, during which the Office of the Secretary of Defense effectively ran the war, and tried to build the peace, in Iraq. Donald Rumsfeld developed the same reputation for self-assurance—overinflated some might argue—that McNamara had in the 1960s. The job does not guarantee power or influence: one might be forgiven for not remembering that Barack Obama had as many Secretaries of Defense as did Truman during the tumultuous early years of that office. But in the current administration, James Mattis might once again be demonstrating that the defense and foreign policy powers established by Thomas Gates and Robert McNamara still play a key role in shaping policy.

Yet, much of this growth came at the expense of the military. It is important to remember that the National Security Act of 1947 was driven by the military in part so

that they could gain more control in the creation of national policy. They lost their seats in the NSC within a few years of its creation and struggled for influence in the Pentagon. They had little official presence in Eisenhower's NSC. The most prominent service member in that group, Andrew Goodpaster, served in a capacity divorced from his military background. If the Defense Reorganization Act of 1958 gave direct command authority back to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it also put more power in the hands of the civilian Secretary of Defense. This was a trend that seemed to be accelerated during the Kennedy Administration, which even went so far as to put an Administration loyalist, Maxwell Taylor, in charge of the JCS. During this period, the national security state became one increasingly composed of civilians, often with very few military voices.

These American institutional changes have also had an impact overseas. Just as Richmond Hobson at the turn of the last century looked to foreign nations for institutional ideas, both Japan and Great Britain have created their own, practically American, National Security Councils. Japan calls this an attempt at a "new centralized approach to national security" in a system "dogged with inefficiencies caused by information silos and bureaucratic red tape."¹¹²⁷ In Great Britain, after initial effort by Gordon Brown, David Cameron established a British NSC, which "at a stroke...created a mechanism to force interaction between intelligence leaders and the most senior policymakers in the land."¹¹²⁸ The head of Britain's signals intelligence agency said it was "one of the best

¹¹²⁷ *Defense of Japan (Annual White Paper) 2014* (Japan Ministry of Defense, 2014), p. 106.

¹¹²⁸ R.J. Aldrich and R. Cormac. *The Black Door* (William Collins, 2016), p. 459.

things this government has done,' because it 'takes the sentiment in the room and translates it into tasking for each organization.'"¹¹²⁹

The decisions made by Eisenhower and Kennedy also give us a better understanding of their approach to management. Eisenhower did not make organizational changes without careful consideration. Both the 1953 reorganizations of the Pentagon and NSC came after months long research initiatives. Once he adopted these plans, however, he was resistant to major changes in both organization and personnel. Eisenhower had little confidence in Charles Wilson and probably should not have let Robert Cutler come back for a second stint on the NSC. Yet his personal loyalty, perhaps an honorable trait in a cut-throat political climate, seemed to overrule these concerns. About the only significant move considered was appointing John Foster Dulles as First Secretary, but he did this only to keep the increasingly frail Dulles in Washington. Two years before his death, Rockefeller claimed that Eisenhower's problem was that he let himself be "dominated by these strong personalities in his cabinet."¹¹³⁰ That is probably an overly harsh analysis but the fact remains that only outside events were able to force Eisenhower to make major organizational changes.

Kennedy, by contrast, seemed much more open to experimentation. In keeping with his informal style, he gave his subordinates significant freedom in building their respective fiefdoms. His relatively short time in office makes it difficult to determine how concerned he was about relieving officials from office. But he effectively fired Allen Dulles (and might have been prepared to fire John McCone), sent Chester Bowles into

¹¹²⁹ Peter Hennessy, *Distilling the Frenzy*, p. 95 and Aldrich and Cormac, p. 459.

¹¹³⁰ Nelson Rockefeller Oral History Interview, 10/4/77, RG 4, Series Q, Box 1, Folder 11.

internal exile, and imprisoned Walt Rostow in Foggy Bottom. Perhaps his foreign policy needed more of a guiding hand and less of a micromanager, but he was willing to accept and enforce change when needed.

There was something special about the late 1950s and early 1960s it seems that made these changes possible. Even if the managerial moment of the Eisenhower years was shunned by the Kennedy clique, both Administrations shared a belief in expertise and deliberation, with the “Action Intellectuals” replacing the “Corporate Board” of the 1950s. Kennedy’s academic advisors replaced Eisenhower’s boards of consultants, combining industrialists and financiers, but even that distinction is suspect. Eisenhower tapped academia on several occasions, especially in matters relating to science. Similarly, Kennedy did not ignore the business world. His Assistant Secretary of State for the Far East, for example, founded his own Wall Street investment firm. An aide once said of Kennedy that he believed “a consensus could be formed...if only enough energy [and] brains were put into the effort.”¹¹³¹ That comment applies to both leaders.

Kennedy placed an emphasis on leaner organization, and was much more willing to insert himself into fixing a problem. It is hard to imagine Eisenhower calling up a desk officer in the State Department, as Kennedy sometimes did. One recent author has posited that Kennedy sought to take government away from the gray organization man and his military counterpart, the organization general, and replace both with bold new thinking that engaged the world.¹¹³² Perhaps, both Eisenhower and Kennedy were united in a common approach, even if they did so with radically different aims. Both presidents

¹¹³¹ David Bell handwritten note, 14 June 1981, DEB 23, Clay Committee Dec, 1962, JFK.

¹¹³² Steven Watts, *JFK and the Masculine Mystique* (St. Martin’s Press: 2016), p. 263.

made it their business to tame the bureaucracy. One could argue that every president tries to do that in one fashion or another, but the Cold War seemed to add a level of urgency to that effort. We might be able to decouple the urgency they felt from the Cold War and replace it with something else: starting in the late 1940s—or, perhaps even the Second World War—American officials had to deal with foreign and military affairs during so-called peace time in a way they had not done before. This is not to suggest America was an isolationist power prior to the 1930s, but, starting in the Second World War, the nation was so embroiled in world events that it had to have the means to react quickly to an ever-changing world. That, of course, took on new meaning when one added the potential of nuclear Armageddon to the mix.

Part of the reason these changes happened is that the ideas involved were appealing, and the figures pugnacious. The broad concepts outlined by Nelson Rockefeller, among others, as early as 1956 came into being under a completely different Administration only a few years later. The idea for the White House Situation Room floated around Washington for almost a decade. The strengthening of the powers of the Secretary of Defense was also a process that, but for circumstances, might have appeared much earlier in the Eisenhower Administration. Even when these ideas seemed to be defeated, advocates kept raising them. It was probably only a matter of time before someone in power decided these ideas were worth a try. If the circumstances of the time proved ripe for their adoption, it was not because they were born of the moment, merely because their various proponents had spent so much time wearing down their opponents. These changes were not created simply by issuing orders from above, rather they

represented an agreement, express or tacit, between political appointees and long serving staffers.

Perhaps the national discussion on organization was not necessary. The concentration of policy in the both the NSC and in the office of the Secretary of Defense was, at heart, one of broad bipartisan agreement. Much as Jackson complained about the difficulty of getting the best people into office, most agreed it was the strength of the institutions, the strength of government, that would ultimately ensure the nation's security. Big government was not the problem: the absence or weakness of institutions was. That did not stop Democrats and Republicans from arguing over all aspects of these ideas. For Democrats, the First Secretary concept was a wasteful exercise in bureaucratic restructuring. A group of both Republicans and Democrats worried that the Secretary of Defense would become "a man on horseback" if given too much power. Robert McNamara might never have crossed the line into dictatorship, but his powers led to objections from many on the right and left, even before Vietnam. Nevertheless, whether or not the result of the seemingly dire conditions of, members of the left and right all seemed to agree that a change was needed.

One change Jackson failed to achieve was that "The Congress should put its own house in better order."¹¹³³ Jackson had hoped that the House and Senate could jointly, or separately, meet annually to review America's national security situation and how the White House was budgeting to meet threats to the nation's defense. While Congress was hardly just a bystander on foreign policy during the remainder of the 20th Century, even

¹¹³³ "Final Statement of Senator Henry M. Jackson" in *Organizing for National Security*, Vol. III, p. 7.

the passage of the War Powers Act failed to stop White House adventurism. The restrictions in that Act could not curb the powers consolidated in the Executive Branch, many of which dated from the Eisenhower-Kennedy era.

While all of these reforms were important, 1960 saw a decisive and permanent change in the makeup of both the Pentagon and the NSC. As discussed, the origins and implementations of these reforms are far more complex than just Jackson's hearings and report. In many cases, they may not even have been the motivating influence behind the decisions to change existing structures. Yet, to use a cliché, there was something in the water in the late 1950s and early 1960s exemplified by Jackson's recommendations. Those recommendations were unevenly adopted and sometimes completely ignored, but the organizational changes they introduced have survived the Cold War and the War on Terror. This is not to suggest they are perfect or should not be modified. Evolution is constant. The tools that worked for the last fifty years may not be appropriate for the next fifty. What is missing is the type of sustained dialog that occurred around the time of the SNPM in 1960.

This is not for lack of trying. Other Congressional investigations, including the Tower and 9/11 Commissions, have examined the state of the nation's national policy machinery. In 2006, George W. Bush commissioned a bipartisan study group to examine how America made national security decisions. It found, the "system did work well enough to achieve its principal aim of victory in the Cold War," but also said:

the national security of the United States of America is fundamentally at risk. The U.S. position of world leadership, our country's prosperity and priceless freedoms, and the safety of our people are challenged not only by a profusion of new and unpredictable threats, but by the now undeniable fact that the national

security system of the United States is increasingly misaligned with a rapidly changing global security environment.¹¹³⁴

Jackson came quite close to saying this in 1960 when he wrote, “Can free societies outplan, outperform, outlast—and if need be, outsacrifice—totalitarian systems? Can we recognize fresh problems in a changing world—and respond in time with new plans for meeting them?”¹¹³⁵ Indeed, Jackson, Dorothy Fosdick, Robert Tufts, or another member of the SNPM probably could have written the 2006 panel’s major conclusions. It argued that the White House staff in its current configuration did a poor job at integrating policy from other parts of the government, in part because there was just too much to do.¹¹³⁶ It complained about the lack of long range planning and strategy, and said there had to be better integration between those making policy and officials controlling the budget.¹¹³⁷ Most importantly, it recommended disbanding the NSC and its staff and replacing it with a new body and, in an un-Jackson like move, putting it under the jurisdiction of a First Secretary like figure called the Director of National Security.¹¹³⁸ It broke with the SNPM in advocating the adoption of a Kennedy-like Task Force process.¹¹³⁹ It also advocated finally abandoning the Eberstadt staffing system and creating a permanent National Security Professional Corps to staff these organizations.¹¹⁴⁰ Like Jackson’s report, the document spends considerable time focusing on the needs at the State Department and the White House as opposed to the Defense Department. And, like Jackson’s reports, it

¹¹³⁴ *Project on National Security Reform: Forging a New Shield* (Center for the Study of the Presidency/PNSR, 2008), p. i.

¹¹³⁵ “Final Statement of Senator Henry M. Jackson” in *Organizing for National Security*, Vol. III, p. 3.

¹¹³⁶ p. vi.

¹¹³⁷ p. xi and xii

¹¹³⁸ p. xi

¹¹³⁹ p. xi.

¹¹⁴⁰ p. xii.

ends with a plea for better coordination between the White House and Congress.¹¹⁴¹ Yet this report made little impact after its release. Surely, it will not be the last report to recommend some sort of massive institutional change. The United States retains a system of governance envisioned in the 1950s, implemented in the 1960s, and refined ever since. It is also a system that, despite some modifications, remains basically unchanged. Jackson unintentionally wrote a defense of this system in 1960 when he said, “Democracies headline their difficulties and mistakes; dictatorships hide theirs.”¹¹⁴² We like to believe that maybe the system is not quite as inefficient or messy as it seems. Even so, the question they debated fifty years ago, about whether and to what extent organization can affect outcome, is a concept we still feel the need to wrestle with today.

¹¹⁴¹ p. xiii and xiv.

¹¹⁴² “Final Statement of Senator Henry M. Jackson” in *Organizing for National Security*, Vol. III, p. 3.

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Rasmussen, Kasper Grotle. *The Men Behind the Man: McGeorge Bundy, the NSC Staff, and the Making of American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963* PhD Dissertation, Aarhus University, 2012

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- “Mobilizing A (Divided) Nation: The Union and Confederate War Efforts and Home Fronts” for Prof. Katherine Brownell, HI328, Boston University, Fall 2012
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- The Civil War Era (HI328)
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America in the World: United States History in Transnational Perspective (HI309)
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 History of US Foreign Relations Since 1898 (HI287/PO381)
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