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The national security assistant: Three role conceptions and their implications

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THE NATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANT

- Three Role Conceptions and Their Implications -

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the National Security Assistant as an actor in the national security decisionmaking process. The Assistant has performed many different roles since 1947. This leaves a confusing picture and raises several analytical questions: 1) What was the role of National Security Assistants in respective administrations? What factors determined their role performances? What are the implications of certain role patterns?

Based on the analysis of the eight post-World War II administrations, three role conceptions are cristalized and made explicit: 1), the subordinate Assistant who is a policy-neutral process coordinator/facilitator, 2) the equal Assistant who manages the decisionmaking process and is also a substantive actor, and 3), the dominant Assistant who is the principal policymaker under the President and performes 'outside' functions.

The three role conceptions have, respectively, advantages, but also shortcomings and limitations. Each of the three conceptions appears to be a viable organizational option an incoming President can choose. The chosen conception should be compatible with his executive style and interests. The Assistant must remain a flexible aide. Formalistic or legalistic statutes would be counterproductive.

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1. Introduction

This thesis is about the National Security Assistant[1] as an actor in the national security decision-making process. The Assistant's modus operandi has varied significantly during the last four decades. In the absence of any binding legal or formal prescriptions he has performed roles ranging from that of a mere 'paper-pusher' to that of an influential--even predominant--policymaker. Thus, the record of the eight post-World War II administrations gives a complex and confusing picture as to what the National Security Assistant 'is,' what determines his modus operandi, why he is used in different ways, and what his 'proper' role and function ought to be.

What makes the position National Security Assistant particularly interesting as a subject for examiniation is:

a) its central location at the very focal point for the making of U.S. national security policy; and

b) its disputed existence, as reflected in the heated professional controversy about it which is as old as the position itself.

Public and Scholarly attention especially began to turn to the National Security Assistant when Kissinger's role accumulation and gain in functional authority became apparent in the early 1970s. Brzezinski's following of the precedent set by Kissinger led to a Congressional investigation about the 'role and account-

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1 The term 'National Security Assistant' is used synonymously throughout this study for the various formal and informal titles this official has been given since 1947.

ability' of the Assistant in 1980. The recent Iran/contra Affair and the activities of President Reagan's Assistants has again shed light on the problem potential that is inherent in the position. A systematic analysis of the position National Security Assistant appears to be urgent.

Examining the National Security Assistant from the Truman through the Reagan Administration, I am guided by several analytical questions:

1) What has been the role of the National Security Assistant?

The basic task of my study is to analyse what roles and functions the individual Assistants performed under their respective Presidents. On a case-by-case basis, the Assistants' activities are examined and his key roles and functions identified. The obtained information--which is predominantly descriptive in nature--is indispensable for my further research on the subject matter.

2) What determines the role of the National Security Assistant?

The second analytical question goes hand-in-hand with the first one. While examining the roles of individual National Security Assistants, attention is also given to the factors that influence or determine the respective role performances. These role determinants are certainly complex and different in each case. My focus is on four major factors (without excluding others):

- presidential style
- performance and responsiveness of the Secretary of State and the State Department
- nature of the international demands challenging the U.S. at respective periods

- abilities and ambitions of the National Security Assistants themselves

Thus, the role performance of the individual Assistants is regarded in the context of major individual and situational determinants.

3) Can the role performances of the individual National Security Assistants be categorized into distinct role conceptions?

The research effort under questions 1 and 2 produces a large amount of predominantly descriptive information about 'many' idiosyncratic cases. Question number 3 addresses the consideration whether some of these cases show such a similiarity as to allow a categorization into a 'few' distinct role conceptions. The categorization reduces the complexity of the subject matter and allows, on a more abstract level, a more systematic and conceptual analysis.

Some scholars have offered suggestions about categorizing the Assistant's role performance, mostly in connection with distinct organizational arrangements for national security policymaking. I.M. Destler, for example, tried to make a "semi-articulated" professional consensus about the Assistant's scope explicit by differentiating three modes of what the Assistant should do, what he might do in moderation, and what he must not do.[2] Zbigniew Brzezinski derived two distinct role conceptions from the 'Secre-

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2 I.M. Destler, "National Security Managament: What Presidents Have Wrought," Political Science Quarterly 95 (Winter 1980-1981), pp. 573-88.

tarial' versus the 'Presidential' mode of national security policymaking.[3]

Most of these ideas seem to go back to Richard M. Moose's suggestion of a triplicative differentiation of the Assistant's modus operandi.[4] Moose first considered three basic organizational options for national security policymaking--based on the factor of policy initiation and formulation:

- an organizational arrangement which assigns primary responsibility to the Secretary of State and the State Department for directing the interdepartmental conduct of national security affairs in Washington as well as overseas (hereafter referred to as 'State-centered system')
- one which distributes the main functions among the White House, State, and other departments and agencies (hereafter referred to as 'intermediate system')
- a system in which the President and the NSC staff assume central initiative and active control of the national security process (hereafter referred to as 'White House-centered system')

Moose then goes on to say that each of the three systems implies different requirements and roles for the National Security Assis-

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3 Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981 (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1983), pp. 532-39; and "Deciding Who Makes Foreign Policy," New York Times Magazine (18 September 1983), pp. 56-74.

4 Richard M. Moose, "The White House National Security Staff Since 1947," in the IDA Report; Keith C. Clark and Laurence J. Legere, ed., The President and the Management of National Security (New York: Praeger, 1969), pp. 102-14.

tant and his staff that can be summarized as follows:

1) In the State-centered system, the National Security Assistant is a 'subordinate' actor who focuses on process-related activities and has a low-profile
2) In the intermediate system, the National Security Assistant is an 'equal' actor who shares process- as well as substance-related duties with other actors
3) In the White House-centered system, the National Security Assistant is a 'dominant' actor who is the President's principal subordinate for the form and substance of national security policy

These three role conceptions lead to the fourth analytical question.

4) What are the implications of these three role conceptions?

The final task of the thesis is to consider why the Assistant performed specific roles and functions in the respective settings, what his 'proper' role ought to be in different organizational arrangements, and what might be done to assure that he performs his tasks properly. Additionally, the question as to what seems to be feasable and advisable when it comes to the future of the controversial position of National Security Assistant will be addressed. This will include an analysis of the pluralistic professional criticism of different role conceptions and the many suggestions of what ought to be done about the position.

2. The National Security Assistant as Subordinate Actor in the State-centered National Security System

Several National Security Assistants had a subordinate standing relative to the department and agency heads and the President's other close foreign affairs advisers. While the substantive elements of national security decision-making were provided by others, the Assistant focused on the policy-neutral transmission, aggregation, and facilitation of these inputs within the NSC system. Below the President, the Secretary of State was the predominent actor. Supported by the Department of State, he was the leading force in the initiation, formulation, and execution of foreign policy and national security affairs.

The Truman and Eisenhower Administrations deliver examples of this role conception in practice.

2.1. Souers and Lay under Truman

2.1.1. Preliminary Role Determinants

The position of National Security Assistant originated in the context of the fundamental reorganization of the executive branch's structure for the conduct of foreign and defense policy in the immediate post-World War II period.

Based on their experience during World War II, several officials came to a critical assessment of the decision-making process of the U.S.. While the international order and U.S. security were existentially threatened, the Roosevelt Administration had

operated with an informal and basically ad hoc Cabinet committee consisting of the Secretaries of War, Navy, and State. Policy coordination and integration between the respective departments had been poor and the confused and overlapping lines of responsibility had strengthened the jealous postures between the military departments and between the latter and State.

Recognizing the totality of the threat imposed by the Axis Powers, War Department Secretary, Henry L. Stimson, and Navy Department Secretary, James L. Forrestal, became early proponents for a senior-level national security planning body that would foster the coordination and integration of domestic, foreign, and defense policies. The formal establishment of the State-War-Navy Coordination Committee (SWNCC) in 1944 was an early, yet insufficient, success of their effort.

However, the conditions of the post-World War II period made a further, more fundamental move towards reorganization inescapable. With the old balance of power system in shambles the U.S. emerged as a great power with global commitments. The Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union and the dilemmas resulting from the new weaponry of nuclear weapons made urgent an inprovement of the decision-making process towards a sounder integration of such elements as diplomacy, economics, intelligence, military, and technology.[5]

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5 The most comprehensive source on the prehistory and formation of the NSC is the collection of hearings, studies, and reports, complied by Senator Henry M. Jackson and published as U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, Subcommittee on National Security Machinery: Organization for National Security, 3 Vols. 86th and 87th Congress. Washing-

After a heated controversy between the military departments, State, and the White House about the specifics of the reorganization effort and the distribution of competence among the institutional actors, Congress finally signed into law the National Security Act on 26 July 1947. Beside creating a national military establishment with the Army, Navy, and Air Force Departments under a Secretary of Defense, a Central Intelligence Agency, and a National Security Resource Board, the legislation authorized the establishment of a National Security Council (NSC).

The NSC, whose statutory members were the President, the Secretaries of State, Defense, Army, Navy, and Air Force, and the Chairman of the National Security Resources Board[6], was instructed to

> advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to the national security so as to enable the military services and the other departments of the Government to cooperate more effectively in matters involving the national security.[7]

Additionally, the NSC was charged with long-range planning and preparing coordinated national security recommendations.

The Act also called for the recruitment of a staff headed by

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ton, U.S. GPO (1961): (hereafter referred to as Jackson Report). For a brief summary, see Mark Lowenthal, "The National Security Council: An Organizational History," in U.S. Congess, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings: The National Security Adviser: Role and Accountability, 96th Congress, 2nd Session, pp. 52-69; (hereafter referred to as The National Security Adviser: Role and Accountability).

6 The National Security Act amendments of 1949 dropped the three service secretaries from the NSC, while the vice-president became a new statutory member.

7 Public Law 80-253, section 101[a]; see also section 101[b].

performed by this executive secretary.[8] Thus, the position of National Security Assistant was born, but its actual molding was left to the subsequent administrations.

While President Harry S. Truman endorsed the NSC as "a badly needed new facility to the government ... where military, diplomatic, and resources problems could be studied and continually appraised"[9], he was anxious to prevent the creation of a decision-making body a la the British Committee of Imperial Defense. This would have impinged upon his presidential decision-making prerogative. He sought "one top-level permanent setup in the government to concern itself with advising the President on high policy concerning the security of the nation" and insisted that "the policy itself has to come down from the President, as all final decisions have to be made by him."[10]

Accordingly, the White House rejected the creation of a 'Director of National Security Council', as had been suggested in the early Sherman-Norstad-Murphy draft of the National Security Act, and instead chose to name the national security aide 'executive secretary'. In addition, Truman decided that the executive secretary and the NSC staff be housed in the Executive Office Building, thus making it a supplement of the presidential staff.[11]

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8 Section 101[c] only authorized him "to appoint and fix compensation of such personell as may be necessary to perform such duties as may be prescribed by the Council in connection with the performance of its functions."

9 Harry S. Truman, Memoirs: Vol. II, Years of Trial and Hope (New York: Doubleday, 1956), p. 59.

10 Ibid., pp. 58-59.

11 This was suggested to the President in a Budget Bureau memo-

After having discussed the genesis and preconditions of the position National Security Assistant it is necessary to have a look at the main features of the Truman Administration as further determinants of the Assistant's role performance.

Harry S. Truman entered the Presidency surprised and unprepared. President Roosevelt had not taken the vice-president into his confidence on the conduct of war and diplomacy and Roosevelt's sudden death prevented an orderly transfer of duties and responsibilities. During one of the most challenging periods of U.S. history at the crossroads of the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, the country obtain a chief executive who lacked any significant experience in external affairs.[12]

However, his experience as captain in World War I, county judge in Missouri, and U.S. Senator led Truman to develop an explicit executive style that would help him cope with his new tasks. Truman's approach to decision-making was basically formalistic in nature. While relying on orderly procedures and careful staff work, he used to delegate substantial responsibility to subordinates he perceived as loyal. As Alexander George has put it:

> When faced with large policy issues that required the participation of heads of several departments, Truman attempted to deal with them by playing the role of chairman of the board, hearing sundry expert opinions

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memorandum titled "Suggestions Regarding the National Security Council and the National Resources Board," 8 August 1947, Papers of George Elsey, Harry S. Truman Library.

12 Richard T. Johnson, Managing the White House (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 39-41.

> on each aspect of the problem, them making a synthesis and then announcing the decision.[13]

The Secrertary of State was assigned a key role in this decision-making mode. Truman held his Secretaries of State, James F. Byrnes (1945-47), General George C. Marshall (1947-49), and Dean Acheson (1949-53), in personally high esteem and deemed their expertise and experience as indispensable for the successful conduct of foreign and security policy.[14] Among the Cabinet and NSC members, the Secretary of State was the senior-most actor and the President's principal adviser, operator, and diplomat. Although the Secretary of Defense, the three military service secretaries, the Secretary of the Treasury, and other institutional players contributed substantially to policy formulation and often challenged the guidance of the State Department, the latter remained the predominant power. Dean Acheson testifies in his memoirs that

> President Truman looked principally to the Department of State in determining foreign policy and--except where force was necessary--exclusively in executing it; he communicated with the Department and with foreign nations through the Secretary. [...] The Secretary saw his role as Chief of Staff to the President in foreign affairs, directing and controlling the Department, keeping the President abreast of incipient situations that might call for his decision or action, acting as principal assistant in making the decisions and assuring action upon them."[15]

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13 Alexander L. George, Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advise (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1980), p. 151; see also Margeret Truman, Harry S. Truman (New York: Marrow, 1973), pp. 322-23.

14 See Truman's comments in his Momoirs: Vol. I, Years of Decisions (New York: Doubleday, 1956), p. 330, and Years of Trial and Hope, pp. 112-13 and pp. 428-29.

15 Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation: My Years at the State Department (New York: Norton, 1969), p. 734-35; of interest is also Sidney W. Souers' account of the operation of Truman's NSC in "Policy Formulation for National Security,"

In order to remain responsive to the President and to be able to cope with the challenges of the Cold War, the State Department underwent some significent organizational changes. After Marshall had installed the Policy Planning Staff, headed by George Kennan, in 1947, Acheson created a new effective device with the assistant secretaries of state for regional affairs in 1949.

In short, with the State Department and its head, Truman had an effective tool for the necessary redefinition of U.S. foreign policy and the stabilization of the shaken world order. State played a major role in producing the Truman Doctrine and the strategy of containment, European political and economic reconstruction (Marshall Plan!), the formation of the North Atlantic defense alliance, NATO, and in conducting the Korean War.

Therefore, when it came to the position of National Security Assistant, the President sought someone who would manage the interagency process and the orderly flow of information and directives within the NSC; a neutral broker between divergent views of departments or officials and a coordinator of their ideas and proposals. Truman's choice fell on Rear Admiral Sidney W. Souers, a successful business manager from Missouri who had served as first Director of Central Intelligence after he had initiated a sweeping intelligence reorganization and coordination effort in 1945-46.

The American Political Science Review 43 (June 1949), pp. 534-43.

2.1.2. Roles and Functions

As a by-product of the extensive struggle within the executive branch over the distribution of power and authority in the new decision-making structure, the position of National Security Assistant was given a formal definition. A 'Memorandum to the Executive Secretary. National Security Council' specified a broad spectrum of roles and functions:

a. Furnishing the Secretariat for the Council with the following duties:
   (1) Circulating papers for information or consideration after ensuring that they are appropriatly of concern to the Council and that they are properly prepared and adequatly coordinated.
   (2) Preparing agenda, briefing the presiding officer, and arranging for and attending all meetings.
   (3) Recording and filing the minutes for reference only by Council members or their authorized representatives.
   (4) Initiating and reviewing the implementation of approved recommendations.
   (5) Keeping the Council advised of all current and pending items of business, and expediting their submission to the Council.
b. Developing a program of studies and recommendations for consideration by the Council, and arranging for their preparation by other appropriate departments and agencies of the Government or by his staff.
c. Acting as the official channel of communication and liaison between the Council and other departments and agencies of the Government.

In addition, the Assistant was authorized to "employ a staff of not over thirty individuals, which may include officers detailed from the Foreign Service, Army, Navy or Air Force."[16]

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16 Quoted are points 8 and 9 from the "Memorandum to the Executive Secretary. National Security Council." The documents is contained in the papers of Clark M. Clifford, National Military Establishment-National Security Council, in the Harry S. Truman Library.

The available evidence suggests that Souers agreed with this role assignment. President Truman recalled, for example, that Souers rebuffed pressure from Secretary Forrestal and others to play a more forceful role within the NSC and to function as an assertive national security supervisor.[17]

During his testomony before the Jackson Subcommittee on National Security Machinery, Souers explained that he refused being the 'Director of National Security Council' who would "say what the policy should be, [because] that would be a different form of government."[18] Elsewhere he stated:

> The executive secretary, an anonymous servant to the Council, operates only as a broker of ideas in criss-crossing proposals among a team of respectable officials. His proper function demands that he be a nonpolitical confidant of the President, and willing to subordinate has personal views on policy to his task of coordinating the views of responsible officials. As a staff assistant to the President, he maintains the President's files on Council business and briefs him daily on the progress of work at hand.[19]

In congruence with this role understanding, Souers would concentrate his activities on the day-to-day operation of the NSC.

Usually, the NSC machinery got activated when the National Security Assistant would transmit a policy request from the military departments, other government agencies, the President or himself to the State Department. The Secretary of State and his department , with the Policy Planning Staff as the main instrument, would prepare a draft outlining their viewpoint of the issue and their preferred course of action. The Assistant would than take the draft to the NSC staff where it would be enriched

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17 Harry Truman, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 60.
18 Jackson Report, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 572.
19 Sidney Souers, op. cit., p. 537.

with military comments, estimates, and implications. Souers further describes that:

> After the senior staff had completed its paper, I would send it out to the members of the Council by stating that the senior staff had prepared NSC so and so, which would be considered at the meeting on such and such a date. I would at that time, the very next morning, submit a copy to the President, and we would discuss it. I would give him the benefit, as best as I could, of the views of the military, the views of State, and their reasons for their views, so that he would have a little background on the paper. He was then just as familiar with one of those papers as the other members were.[20]

After the President had studied the paper the Assistant notified all appropriate department and agencies of its approval or disapproval and of the possible directions for action.

Essentially, this system was State-centered. All major papers originated in State's Policy Planning Staff and, while supplemented with information from the military, continued in the direction predetermined by State. Additionally, the NSC staff, although recruited from different departments, was dominated by State. A Foreign Service Officer acted as 'staff coordinator' and when the NSC staff initiated studies the State representative usually submitted the first draft.[21] In the President's absense, the Secretary of State would preside at NSC meetings. This was particularly significent because before the outbreak of the Korean War, Truman had made his absense the rule rather than the exception.

In the course of his tenure, Souers became an essential part

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20 Jackson Report, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 573

21 For a detailed description of the NSC's and the NSC staff's operation, see Souers testimony before the Jackson Subcommittee, Jackson Report, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 569-77; and Sidney Souers, op. cit.

of the NSC machinery under Truman. The President depended on him as a confidential informant and the Council members appreciated him as a useful broker of inderdepartmental disputes and as a fair channel to the President.[22] Indeed, when Souers intended to resign after roughly two years in office, Truman urged him to continue his service as 'Special Consultant to the President' for national security matters.

Souers' deputy, James Lay, became executive secretary in 1950. While he basically followed the precedent set by Souers[23], the atmosphere within the NSC underwent some change. The intensification of the Cold War and especially the outbreak of the Korean War increased the significence of military and intelligence aspects of national security vis-a-vis diplomacy and foreign policy. Consequently, while the role of the military departments and intelligence agencies increased within the Council, the State Department's preeminent status and its policy guidance were weakened.

These developments obviously enhanced the demands put upon the National Security Assistant. With the diminution of State's predominence, the coordination and integration of policy proposals became more complex and challenging. In order to strengthen Lay's institutional position, the President decided in 1950 to make the Assistant chairman of the newly created 'Senior Staff' of the NSC. The Senior Staff replaced 'The Staff' which was the

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22 See, for example, Dean Acheson, op. cit., p. 348 and 373.
23 James S. Lay, "National Security Council's Role in the U.S. Security and Peace Program," World Affairs (Summer 1949).

original NSC policy planning staff, headed by a State representative as staff coordinator. This restructuring was deemed appropriate because

> over time the feeling grew that other departments and agencies would cooperate more effectively in the work of the Council in matters directly affecting their own responsibilities if the major interdepartmental staff groups were chaired by someone without departmental ties.[24]

The Senior Staff can be regarded as the predecessor of President Eisenhower's Planning Board.

2.2. Cutler under Eisenhower[25]

2.2.1. Preliminary Role Determinants

Although Republican presidential candidate Dwight D. Eisenhower repeatedly focused his campaign attacks against Truman's executive style and criticized his NSC as being a "shadow agency [rather] than a really effective policymaker"[26], he shared some basic characteristics with the incumbent President.

Like Truman, Eisenhower had developed a formalistic approach to decision-making during his career that would strongly influ-

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24 From the official "Organizational History-National Security Council," Jackson Report, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 432.

25 Robert Cutler served for roughly four years (March 1953-March 1955 and January 1957-July 1958) as Eisenhower's National Security Assistant and shaped a role understanding that was basically followed by the other three Assistants: Dillon Anderson (April 1955-August 1956); William Jackson (September-December 1956); Gordon Gray (July 1958-January 1961).

26 A campaign speech by Dwight D. Eisenhower, printed in the New York Times (26 September 1952).

ence the organization of his foreign policy presidency. In the course of his remarkable military career he had aquired a keen sense for the development and control of highly structured organizational machineries. Therefore, facing his upcoming presidency, Eisenhower concluded:

> Organization in the Execuritve Branch provides the means for performing systematically, promptly, and accurately the research and related work essential to the orderly presentation to the President of all the pertinent facts and calculations which he must take into account in a sound decision on any issue. Thereafter, it assures that his decision is communicated to and that essential action is coordinated among the appropriate agencies.[27]

Through formal procedures and a military general-staff like organization , Eisenhower sought to create an institutional substructure that would funnel aggregated information and the 'big' decisions to the chief executive, while saving him as far as possible from the flood of details, from minor and day-to-day decisions, and from bureaucratic politics.[28] Compared to Truman, Eisenhower's formalistic style was more mechanical in its nature and much more rigid in its application.

A second characteristic Eisenhower shared with Truman was the custom of delegating substantial authority to his subordinates. Richard T. Johnson observed that "the former General viewed his Cabinet members as theater commanders. He invested them, like field generals, with broad responsibilities and expected them to take the initiative."[29]

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27 Dwight D. Eisenhower, Waging Peace (New York: Doubleday, 1965), p. 631.
28 Alexander George, op. cit., pp. 152-54; Richard Johnson, op. cit., pp. 81-120.
29 Richard Johnson, op. cit., p. 84.

Although Eisenhower strengthened the Cabinet and the NSC significantly as collective advisory and policy formulation bodies, the State Department and the Secretary of State kept their preeminent status when it came to foreign policy and security matters. Early in his tenure, Eisenhower had clearly expressed his position:

> I personally wish to emphasize that I shall regard the Secretary of State as the Cabinet officer responsible for advising and assisting me in the formulation and control of foreign policy [...] It will be my practice to employ the Secretary of State as my channel of authority within the executive branch on foreign policy [...] Other officials of the executive branch will work with and through the Secretary of State on matters of foreign policy.[30]

The President later wrote in his memoirs that the choice of John Foster Dulles as Secretary of State was "an obvious one," given the latter's background and experience as a longtime U.S. diplomat.[31] When it came to the major foreign policy and security issues challenging the U.S. in the 1950s--such as the ongoing Cold War with the Soviet Union, the U.S. effort to buildup an arc of security alliances around the world (NATO, CENTO, SEATO, ANZUS, Rio Pact), and the various international crises--Eisenhower relied heavily on the expertise and wisdom of his Secretary of State and on the supporting function of his department.

Dulles' performance as the initiator, architect, and implementer of foreign policy made Eisenhower later emphasize that

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30 Dwight D. Eisenhower as quoted by Secretary of State, Christian S. Herter, during his testimony before the Jackson Subcommittee , Jackson Report, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 697.

31 Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mandate for Change (New York: Doubleday, 1963), p. 86.

this was only possible because of a confidential Presidential-Secretarial relationship--based on mutual agreement about the issues and an unambiguous understanding of who was President.[32]

As it was mentioned above, this informal Eisenhower-Dulles channel went hand-in-hand with the highly structured organizational arrangement Eisenhower had called for. The President-elect instructed Robert Cutler to undertake a comprehensive examination of the NSC as it was used under Truman and to develop proposals for improvement. Cutler, a respected lawyer and banker from Boston, had gained some personal insight into Truman's NSC while attending meetings of the Senior Staff in 1951. Prior to his call to Washington as Administrative Assistant by the President-elect in 1952, he had become increasingly active in Eisenhower's election campaign.[33]

In March 1953, Cutler delivered his report on the NSC and would soon, as presidentially appointed 'Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs', "elaborate the skeletal NSC structure of the Truman era into a comprehensive 'NSC system'."[34]

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32 Ibid., p. 142; and Eisenhower, Waging Peace, pp. 362-67. Some revisionist observers of the Eisenhower era recently called the Eisenhower-Dulles relationship 'collaborative' and compared it to the devision of labor bwtween a client and his attorney; see Fred I. Greenstein, "Eisenhower as an Activist President," Political Science Quarterly 94 (Winter 1979-1980), pp. 575-99.

33 Cutler's background and his early relationship with Eisenhower are presented in his 'memoirs': Robert Cutler, No Time for Rest (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1966), pp. 268-92.

34 Richard Moose, op. cit., p. 60.

2.2.2. Roles and Functions

Essentially, the new NSC system was based on a more regular and systematic use of the interagency machinery and the NSC staff, rather than on a sweeping formal modification of the Council as constituted by the preceding administration. As Richard T. Johnson put it, Eisenhower's NSC "resembled Truman's in form, but went considerably beyond it in refinement."[35]

Taking Eisenhower's demands on the NSC and the experience from the Truman Administration into account, Cutler had concluded that the process coordinator/facilitator had to play a much more aggressive and effective role within the framework of the NSC. Thus, not least in remembrance of the dispute over the title 'Director of National Security Council' during the early Truman Administration, he had suggested that the executive secretary be renamed 'Special Assistant to the President of National Security Affairs', giving him more leverege. The National Security Assistant became the

> principal executive officer of the Council and Chairman of the NSC Planning Board. This change represented the designation by the President of a member of the White House Staff as his principle staff officer for national security affairs.[36]

The new 'Planning Board' replaced the Senior Staff and took over its major task of policy coordination and long-range policy planning. While the Board's members were still nominated by the respective agency heads, their final appointment by the President

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35 Richard Johnson, op. cit., p. 60.
36 From the official "Organizational History-National Security Council," op. cit., p. 443.
37 Ibid., pp. 443-44.

was made dependent upon the Assistant's approval.

The official "Organizational History-National Security Council" summarizes the roles and functions the Assistant was to perform within the system in detail and is worth being quoted at lenth:

> The Special Assistant was made responsible for determination, subject to the President's desires, of the Council agenda, for briefing the President in advance of Council meetings, and for presenting matters for discussion at the Council meetings. As Chairman of the Planning Board he was responsible for scheduling Planning Board work and for the manner of presentation and quality of such work. He was to appoint (subject where necessary to the President's approval) such ad hoc committees, such consultants from outside the Government and such mixed governmental-non-governmental committees as might be required. He supervised the work of the NSC Staff through the Executive Secretary.
> Finally, the Special Assistant was charged with bringing to the attention of the President, with recommendations for appropriate action, lack of progress by an agency in carrying out any policy assigned to it; provided it was not possible to expedite performance at the Planning Board level. [However], responsibility for implementation rested with the agency head concerned.[...] The role of the Special Assistant was, on behalf of the President, to inspect, not to evaluate or to direct.[37]

The Council itself was the focal point of Eisenhower's NSC system. Usually, it met regularly once a week for a two or three hours session with Eisenhower presiding. It is noteworthy that, in the President's absense, Vice President Nixon--and not the Secretary of State--would preside in his stead.

Cutler compared the system to a 'policy hill' with the Council sitting on top of two subsidiary and supporting entities: the Planning Board, which would provide the input to the Council, and the Operations Coordination Board (chaired by the under secretary of state), which would subsequently handle the output of the Council:

> On one side of the hill, policy recommendations travel upward through the Planning Board to the Council, where they are thrashed out and submitted to the President. When the President has approved a policy recommendation, it travels down the other side of policy hill to the departments and agencies responsible for the execution. Each department or agency with a function to perform under such approved policy must prepare its program to carry out its responsibility. Part way down this hill is the Operations Coordination Board, to which the President refers an approved national security policy as its authority to advise with the relevant departments and agencies as to their coordinating the interdepartmental aspects of their respective programs.[38]

As Chairman of the Planning Board, the National Security Assistant played a major role in the interagency policy planning process and the production of national security papers which would serve as guidelines for the Council's agendas. Upon assuming office, Cutler initiated a sweeping review of all inherited national security policies and commenced producing a series of comprehensive regional and functional national security studies. Acting as an aggressive broker, the Assistant would ensure that the studies were adequately prepared and that all relevent views of the various Board members were reflected. His particular concern was to make divergent bureaucratic views explicit and to take the 'splits' as clearly and acurately as possible to the Council; if they could not have been resolved within the Board. Although these procedures differed decisively from the Truman NSC, the State Department retained its preeminent status in respect to the substance of the studies. It continued to prepare

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38 Robert Cutler, "The Development of the National Security Council," Foreign Affairs 34 (April 1965), pp. 448-49.

the first drafts and had a strong voice during the Board meetings.[39]

The Planning Board, which operated on the assistant secretary level, usually assembled two to three times a week for three to five hours sessions and was quite productive. Eisenhower's National Security Assistants pressed harder on the relevant bureaucracies in order to achieve a sound coordination of diplomatic, military, intelligence, and budgetary considerations and were quite effective managers.[40] Board members later praised Cutler's

> leadership in guiding and mediating discussion; his zeal for flushing out issues, his insistence on a well-stated problem and set of views, his thorough knowledge of agency positions and motives, his encouragement of iconoclasm on the part representatives who did not enjoy high status, and his criticism when he felt members were defending departmental interests. On rare occasions, Cutler would carry forward to the National Security Council a personal conviction, clearly identified as such, for which he failed to find a departmental sponsor.[41]

While he was active as an effective broker and coordinator, Cutler is said to have "rarely sought to impose his own judgement", not least because he "lacked foreign policy experience.[42]

In order to strengthen the national perspective vis-a-vis parochial interests within the Planning Board, Cutler created a

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39 Richard Moose, op. cit., p. 68.

40 See the official "Organizational History-National Security Council," op. cit., pp. 447-53.

41 David K. Hall, "The 'Custodian-Manager' of the Policymaking Process," in Alexander George, "Towards a More Soundly based Foreign Policy: Making Better Use of Information," Appendix D (Volume 2) to the Murphy Commission Report, p. 106.

42 William P. Bundy, "The National Security Process: Plus àa Chance...?," International Security 7 (Winter 1982-1983), p. 98.

small 'Special Staff' that would check critically and without bias the analytical performance of the departments and agencies and would provide independent analysis and review of all papers produced. In addition, Cutler made frequent use of expertise and experience provided by non-governmental consultants and ad hoc advisory groups.[43]

Thus, equipped with high quality policy papers and supported by his small Special Staff, the National Security Assistant was in a position to prepare the Council meetings and to determine their agendas. He would circulate a 'forward' agenda to the Council members so as to allow them enough time to study and prepare the topics of meetings months ahead. Before each Thursday Council session, he would distribute a detailed agenda and the respective policy recommendations. Immediately after the sessions, the Assistant would draft a record on the deliberations and, after having circulated the draft among the relevant departments and agencies for further comments, would submit a final paper to the President. If approved, the papers constituted authoritative U.S. foreign and security policy documents.[44]

As Cutler later Wrote, Eisenhower looked to his National Security Assistant at Council meetings to introduce the agenda, to brief the members on the background of papers and on 'splits' that were not resolved within the Planning Board, and finally, to act as moderator and 'animator'. Cutler notes:

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43 Robert Cutler, "The Development..," pp. 453-54.
44 Ibid., pp. 445-46.

> In fact, it is the particular task of the Special Assistant to the President to sharpen and make more precise and provocative any divergencies that may exist so that the pros and cons can be accurately discussed and explored before the President at the Council meeting.[45]

It is important to keep in mind that Eisenhower's NSC carefully seperated policy planning and operation. Thus, while the National Security Assistant played a decisive role in the Council and the Planning Board, the Operations Coordinations Board, responsible for overseeing the smooth and effective implementation of decisions by departments and agencies, was chaired by the under secretary of state. Essentially, the Operations Coordination Board superceded the Assistant's responsibility for follow up of the implementation of decisions which had been assigned to him in the Cutler report from 1953. Throughout most of Eisenhower's tenure, the Assistant functioned simply as an observer. In 1960, however, he was suddenly made Chairman of the Operations Coordination Board--in addition to his Chairmanship of the Planning Board and his other duties.[46]

Another consequence of the distinction between policy planning and operation was that Eisenhower used his staff secretary, General Andrew J. Goodpaster, as a channel for the day-to-day flow of operations and as a source for information. Goodpaster, not the Assistant, gave Eisenhower his daily information and intelligence briefing. However, there is no indication that Goodpaster and the National Security Assistants competed for this

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45 Ibid., p. 443.
46 "Organizational History-National Security Council," op. cit., pp. 453-68.

important function. Rather, it appears as if they complemented each other in order to keep the President informed and involved.[47]

Under Eisenhower, the National Security Assistant assumed broad managerial leadership and, as his final assignment of the Operations Coordination Board indicates, the demands on the position tended to increase. However, the Assistant was aware of his limits and did not attempt to intrude into the sphere of substantive leadership. And, as Goodpaster remembers, he was not allowed to do so:

> By specific instruction of the President, positions such as mine and that of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs were limited to 'staff' responsibilities, and were denied executive authority, the line for which ran directly from the President to the secretaries of the departments concerned, and the heads of the agencies concerned.[48]

2.3. Implications of the National Security Assistant as Subordinate Actor in the State-centered National Security System

2.3.1. Role Conception I

The role performance of Souers and Lay under Truman and Cutler under Eisenhower have demonstrated a number of similiar characteristics. These common characteristics can be made explicit in a more abstract role conception.

The National Security Assistant has a clearly subordinate standing within the organizational arrangement for national

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47 Richard Moose, op. cit., pp. 60-62; Dwight Eisenhower, Waging Peace, p. 319 [incl. fn. 6].

48 Andrew J. Goodpaster, in The National Security Adviser: Role and Accountability, p. 148.

security decisionmaking. The relevant department and agency heads and some non-institutional advisers the President trusts provide the substantive policy input for the decision-making process. Among this group, the Secretary of State, supported by his department, has a preeminent status. He has a special relationship to the President and is the predominant force in the initiation, formulation, and execution of national security policy. The President looks to the Secretary of State as his principal foreign policy adviser, diplomat, negotiator, and spokesperson, and delegates substantial authority to him.

The National Security Assistant plays a policy-neutral role. While others deliver the substance for decision-making, he functions as a non-political conduit within the NSC system. He transmits information and requests between the various substantive actors and coordinates their policy inputs. Additionally, he manages the day-to-day business of the NSC and links it with the chief executive.

In the context of this role conception, the National Security Assistant performs a number of distinct functions. The following list summarizes, with inevitable insufficiencies, his regular functions in respect to A), the day-to-day operation of the NSC machinery, B), Council meetings, and C), the President:

A) - collecting information and substantive policy inputs by Council members and other sources
- identifying issues that require attention by the NSC
- coordinating information and substantive policy inputs into comprehensive policy recommendations or policy studies
- facilitating aggregated information and analysis among

Council members

- reviewing the implementation of decisions by the departments and agencies

B) - preparing Council meetings;

  a. circulating relevant information and papers among Council members in advance of meetings

  b. determining the agendas of Council meetings

  c. briefing the President and other senior officials in advance of meetings

- acting as moderator during Council meetings
- keeping records of Council meetings
- circulating the results of Council meetings among Council members

C) - acting as informant to the President;

  a. informing him about pressing foreign policy and security issues

  b. informing him about the substantive policy inputs by Council members and about the work of the Council

  c. informing him about the implementation of decisions by the departments and agencies

  d. informing him about bureaucratic and interpersonal conflicts and other informal problems in the decision-making process

- offering confidential and cautious advise if requested

2.3.2. What Factors Determine this Role Conception?

Although the National Security Act of 1947 authorized the creation of the NSC and the position of a national security aide--executive secretary--by statute, the actual use and molding of the new organizational arrangement was left to the President. It is, indeed, the executive style and the interest of the chief executive that are the main determinants for the structure of the NSC machinery and the distribution of roles and authority within it.

While Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, and Ford used the NSC machinery as an important instrument for interagency coordination and as a central source of information and advice, they assigned their Secretaries of State the role of principal foreign affairs official. Truman had his Marshall and Acheson; Eisenhower his Dulles. In these close Presidential-Secretarial connections, the Presidents were anxious to set the grand design for foreign and security policy, but they trusted the experience and expertise of their Secretaries of State when it came to the conduct of external affairs. For this reason, they delegated substantial authority of policy initiation, formulation, and execution to their Secretaries of State and made them their principal foreign policy advisers, diplomats, negotiators, and spokespersons.

The historical evidence suggests that Truman and Eisenhower perceived their Secretaries of State by-and-large as responsive, effective, and overall succesful. Marshall, Acheson, and Dulles were strong personalities, able conceptualizers and diplomats, and--without exaggeration--statesmen. They infused exceptionally talented people into the State Department and mostly understood

how to use it as an effective instrument while coping with foreign policy and security challenges.

During Marshall's, Acheson's, and Dulles' tenures, the external demands challenging the U.S. were quite different from those that emerged in the 1960s. The world was in relative calm and with some 50 state actors still comprehensible. The major U.S. concerns focused along the axis from London to Moscow, ranging from the adversarial relationship with the Soviet Union to West European political and economic recovery and military security. The Secretary of State, whom Walt Rostow once called a "super-assistant secretary of state for Europe"[49], was able to handle these challenges largely with the skills of classical diplomacy.

At first glance, all this appears to have little to do with the National Security Assistant. However, what was analysed above are the main factors that determine role conception I:

- a President who does not seek to be in personal control of foreign policy but designates the Secretary of State as his principal official for exterior affairs and delegates substantial authority to him
- a Secretary of State who takes up the charge and provides leadership in foreign and security matters
- a world that does not overtax the Secretary of State and his department

In the context of this kind of setting, Zbigniew Brzezinski

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49 Walt W. Rostow, The Diffusion of Power: An Essay in Recent History (New York: MacMillan, 1972), p. 164.

noted, "the office of the Assistant for National Security Affairs should be deliberately downgraded. The Secretary of State should be seen as fully in charge, and the President must then make certain that potential rivals to the Secretary of State accomodate themselves to his primacy."[50] Thus, the Assistant is limited to function as a nonpolitical manager of interdepartmental coordination within the NSC system. He is forced into a clearly subordinate standing.

The National Security Assistants that were discussed in this chapter appear to fit into this pattern. Their personalities and role understanding rounds off the factors that determine role conception I. Souers, Lay, and Cutler were neither conceptualizers with strong policy views nor did they have the ambition to enforce their judgement in the decision-making process. It is striking that Truman's, and Eisenhower's National Security Assistants became ardent defenders of role conception I in various articles they published or during Congressional testimony.[51] Souers remark that it would be a "different form of Government" if the Assistant played a more forceful role in the national security decision-making process represented the consensus among this group of National Security Assistants.

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50 Zbigniew Brzezinski, op. cit., p. 533.

51 In addition to the sources quoted throughout chapters 2.1. and 2.2., see Dillon Anderson, "The President and National Security," Atlantic Monthly 97 (January 1956), pp. 42-46; Gordon Gray, "Role of the National Security Council in the Formulation of National Policy," delivered to American Political Science Association, September 1959; and his testimony to the Jackson Subcommittee, Jackson Report, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 608-19.

2.3.3. What is Wrong with this Role Conception?

The role performances of Souers, Lay, and Cutler had, of couse, idiosyncrstic tendencies and it would be pointless for this study to speculate about the success and/or failure of each of them individually. However, their common role conception suffers from some general weaknesses that are worth looking at.

Despite the fact that the National Security Assistant is situated at the focal point of the national security decision-making arrangement and has important process-related duties, he is a clearly subordinate actor without much authority. His principally policy-neutral and non-substantive position makes him a weak force vis-a-vis the department and agency heads and their buraucracies. This has a number of consequences:

a) policy coordination is highly dependent on the good-will and cooperation by the various departments and agencies
b) policy coordination tends to be predominantly the resultant of a vague bureaucratic consensus, based on the fusion of parochial interests between departments and agencies
c) the President does not receive all essential information and comprehensive policy options he might need for his final decision
d) the Presidential--or national--perspective is not adequately represented in the interdepartmental process
e) the implementation of decisions by the departments and agencies is not sufficiently monitored

These shortcomings of role conception I were already anticipated during the founding period of the NSC. The struggle between Forrestal and the White House over the proper title of

the National Security Assistant and his necessary functional scope can be seen in exactly this light. After a decade of experience with this role conception, it seemed as if it had to be reconsidered.

2.3.4. What Can be Done About this Role Conception?

During the final years of the Eisenhower Administration word spread in Washington that a major change of the national security arrangement was due. The direction of this change, however, was disputed. Whereas one school of thought sharply criticized the excessive bureaucratization of national security policymaking and advocated a relative downgrading of the NSC machinery while enhancing the leadership role of the Secretary of State and the State Department, a second school concluded that quite the opposite was required to overcome the insufficiencies: namely a tilt towards centralization in the White House.

The most prominent proponent for a shift of the 'center of gravity' to the White House was no one less than President Eisenhower himself. In his memoirs, he talks about his discontent with the opration of his NSC machinery and suggests that a strong and central subordinate is needed in order to improve the situation. This subordinate, who would get the title 'Secretary for International Coordination' or 'First Secretary', would

> have to be knowledgeable in international affairs, capable as leader, and intimately familiar with all activities of the relevant departments and agencies so as to achieve the maximum of willing and effective cooperation. He would become, in a practical sense, the Deputy Chairman of the National Security Council.[...]
> In behalf of the President, he could keep under close scrutiny [...] foreign policy operations.[...] He could, without denigrading the positions of other Cabinet offi-

> cers, make certain that public addresses on various phases of international affairs by high officials conformed to the President's views. In short, he could help insure that the President's policies were scupulously observed and that the actions of one department would not negate those of another.[52]

Another interesting, and a bit more precise, proposal came from William R. Kintner, a former Planning Board assistant. He suggested in 1958 that a strengthened staff in the Executive Office of the President for the conduct of national security affairs was the only feasable solution. Thus he made the following proposal:

> A Presidential Assistant for National Security Affairs with Cabinet rank would be provided, by Congressional act, in the Executive Office of the President. He would be approved by the Senate and supported by an administrative structure, to be established by act of Congress. [He] would sit on the National Security Council as a full-fledged member by act of Congress, and would be chairman in the absense of the President and the Vice President.[53]

The major intention behind this was to give

> the Presidential Assistant for National Security Affairs Cabinet status, a central position, and an adequate generalist staff, and thus providing him with every opportunity to use his time, objectivity, independence, and perspective to best advantage.[54]

Yet, these proposals were not implemented by the Eisenhower Administration. The President did not press hard on it and besides, Dulles resisted these ideas vehemently.[55]

The first school organized itself into expert study groups and published articles that called any attempt to further

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52 Dwight Eisenhower, Waging Peace, op. cit., pp. 634-35.
53 William R. Kintner, "Organization for Conflict: A Proposal," Orbis 2 (Summer 1958), p. 170.
54 Ibid., p. 172.
55 Dwight Eisenhower, Waging Peace, op. cit., p. 637.

strengthen the NSC structure or to create national security 'czars' fatal.[56] In addition, the school received prominent support from the Jackson Subcommittee on National Security Machinery. The series of reports that were made public by it in late 1960 and throughout 1961 rejected the notion of further centralization and argued against the creation of "super-Cabinet" officers and "superstaffs". Rather, it was recommended, the NSC system should be used in a more flexible and informal fashion, while the role of the departments and agencies, and particularly that of the Department of State, should be enhanced.[57]

Although the incoming administration strongly leaned towards the first school of thought, the second school would subsequently see its proposals partially implemented anyway. The stronger National Security Assistant managed to enter through the back-door.

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56 Roger Hilsman, "Planning for National Security: A Proposal," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists 16 (March 1960), pp. 93-96.
57 Jackson Report, Vol. II, pp. 1-27; Vol. III, pp. 1-41.

3. The National Security Assistant as Equal Actor in the Intermediate National Security System

With respect to the second role conception, the National Security Assistant is an actor in his own right among the President's senior officials. Being personal national security aide to the President, he has far-reaching leverage as manager of the national security decision-making process and acts as an independent and substantive adviser and advocate within it. In the intermediate system, the Secretary of State and the State Department have lost their preeminent status and are instead more or less equal players within a collegial decision-making setting.

Examples of the second role conception are found in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. The Ford Administration is also analysed in this chapter, but with strong qualification. Ford's organizational arrangement clearly does not fit into the pattern that was briefly outlined. However, the role performance of his Assistant, General Scowcroft, appears to have decisive traits in common with that of Kennedy's and Johnson's Assistants.

3.1. Bundy under Kennedy

3.1.1. Preliminary Role Determinants

John F. Kennedy was concerned about the accumulation of unresolved foreign policy and security issues and viewed it as a result of Eisenhower's passivity and his petrified NSC machinery. He did not share his predecessor's formalistic approach to decision-making that was based on highly structured and hierachical organization, formal distribution of competence among

officials, regular meetings with fixed agendas, and much paperwork.

Kennedy sought to be surrounded by a group of intellectual and independent-minded advisers who would provide a free and informal flow of ideas, recommendations, and advocacy. Whereas Eisenhower's organizational arrangement had been compared to a pyramid or a policy hill, Kennedy's system was "like a wheel, with himself at the hub and the spokes connecting him to his individual aides."[58] With the aides revolving around the President, influence would be determined by the ability to deliver, and not so much by formal protocol.

In addition, Kennedy wanted to be an activist President who would put his personal mark on foreign policy. When it came to decision-making, he focused on action, and not so much on the organization and planning for action. Thus, he sought to be involved in all stages of foreign and security policymaking and was interested in the details and complexity of issues in order to stay in personal control.[59]

This collegial organizational setting with an activist President at its center would certainly put different demands on the President's senior officials and their bureaucracies. However, in contrast to the formalistic systems with their prescribed and formal structures, the collegial arrangement is

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57 Richard Johnson, op. cit., p. 125.

58 For the contrast between Eisenhower's and Kennedy's styles, see Theodore Sorenson, Kennedy (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 281-85; Richard Johnson, op. cit., pp. 124-34; Alexander George, Presidential Decisionmaking.., pp. 157-59.

more dynamic in nature and develops its features over time. In other words, Kennedy did not have a precise vision as to how the collegial system would actually function. Instead, the system would be shaped during its exposure to practice.

In order to fully understand decision-making during Kennedy's tenure, it is important to keep in mind that in the 1960s the U.S. had to face a totally different world. Decolonialization had doubled the number of state actors in international relations. This 'diffusion of power' was often accompanied by regional instabilities and crises which the U.S. could not regard with indifference. The Soviet Union became a truly global challenge because it increasingly 'meddled' in the developing world and build up its military capacities. The introduction of missle technology by the two superpowers made the nuclear age even more complicated and dangerous. In short, the U.S. was challenged by a more diverse and dynamic world. Consequently, the focus of decision-making would shift from grand design diplomacy to short-term and micro management.

Although it was sometimes asserted that Kennedy wanted to be his own Secretary of State from the beginning and that he chose Dean Rusk for the position--after rejecting such authorities as J. William Fulbright, Averell Harriman, and Dean Acheson--because he sought an "easygoing person with whom he could get along,"[59] there is evidence that the President-elect had originally envisioned the State Department and the Secretary of State to be

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59 Richard Johnson, op. cit., p. 126.

his principal foreign policy instruments and 'first' among equals. McGeorge Bundy, Kennedy's choice as National Security Assistant, for example, explained to the Jackson Subcommittee that the President wanted no question to arise as to

> the clear authority and responsibilty of the Secretary of State, not only in his own Department, and not only on such large-scale related areas as foreign aid and information policy, but also as the agent of coordination in all our major policies towards other nations.[60]

Roger Hilsman later quoted Kennedy announcing his intention to return the power of foreign policy planning, coordination, and execution back to the Secretary of State and his department where it properly belonged. Eisenhower's NSC machinery with its boards and committees would thus be dismantled.[61] However sincere this intention might have been initially, once the administration got started, it was never implemented. One reason for this can certainly be found in the personality of Secretary of State Rusk.

Dean Rusk, an experienced bureaucrat, had served seven years in the Pentagon and the State Department. Before his appointment to Secretary of State he had been President of the Rockefeller Foundation for eight years. Although recognized for his first-rate intellect and disciplined working style, Rusk had the reputation of being underspoken, uncomfortable in small groups, and often detached from the dynamics around him. Intimate observers described him as 'extremely cautious', 'reserved and acutely shy', 'in some way afraid of being involved with people',

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60 Jackson Report, op. cit., pp. 1337-38.

61 Roger Hilsman, To Move a Nation: The Politics of Foreign policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy (New York: Doubleday, 1967), pp. 22-24.

'a superb counselor, but unable to bring himself to be an advocate'. In the State Department, his subordinates were puzzled "how rarely he expressed his own conclusions on policy, much less issue directives."[62] These attributes seem to be almost detrimental to the demands of the collegial setting and to Kennedy's dynamism.

McGeorge Bundy was a very different personality. Descending from a wealthy and influential Boston family, Bundy personified essential traits of an aristocratic elitist. The combination of ambition, assertiveness, and an outstanding intellect made him dean of the faculty at Harvard at the age of 34. In contrast to Rusk, Bundy was said to have had "an air of impatience, a brusque, no-nonsense manner, and a way of speaking shortly and sharply."[63] Although Kennedy did not know Bundy well prior to his election victory, he recognized the latter's intellectuality and brilliance. Had it not been for his youthful age, Bundy might have become Secretary of State in 1961. Yet, Kennedy's suggestion that he should take the position closer to the President, namely that of 'Special Assistant for National Security Affairs', was an offer he would not reject. Bundy's appointment gave "the White House an infusion of energy on foreign affairs with which the State Department would never in the next three years [...] quite catch up."[64]

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62 Ibid., pp. 40-43 and 58; see also Theodore Sorenson, op. cit., pp. 70-71.
63 Roger Hilsman, op. cit., p. 45.
64 Arthur M. Schlesinger, A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 150.

3.1.2. Roles and Functions

President-elect Kennedy stated before his inauguration that Bundy's role would be "greater than that of the present Presidential assistant for national security affairs [Gordon Gray],"[65] but he did not specify what this enhanced role assignment would actually look like.

He was impressed by the conclusions of the Jackson Subcommittee Report--which had called for a more 'flexible' use of the NSC and its machinery--and was especially influenced by its consultant Richard Neustadt, who "had taken great pleasure during the interregnum in introducing Bundy to the Eisenhower White House as the equivalent of five officers on the Eisenhower staff."[66]

As soon as the Kennedy Administration came into office, National Security Assistant Bundy began to dismantle the complex NSC machinery inherited from Eisenhower. With the abolition of the Planning Board and the Operations Coordination Board more than forty-five interdepartmental committees died immediately. Some forty more would follow in the subsequent weeks. Arthur Schlesinger comments:

> Bundy slaughtered committees right and left and collapsed what was left of the inherited apparatus into a compact and flexible National Security Council staff. With Walt Rostow as his deputy and Bromley Smith [...] as the NSC's

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65 From a campaign speech by John F. Kennedy, reprinted in The New York Times, (1 January 1961).

66 Arthur Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 210; see also Jackson Report, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 1-57; Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership From FDR to Carter (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1980), especially chapters 3 and 8.

> secretary, he was shaping a supply instrument to meet the new President's distinct needs.[67]

Although the NSC staff was reduced in number, its analytical and operational strength was increased because Bundy began recruiting such exeptionally talented men as Carl Kaysen, Robert Komer, and Henry Kissinger. While, prior to 1961, the NSC staff consisted mainly of career officials from the departments and agencies, Bundy's men were mostly academicians from outside the government. The old staff served the President as an institution; the new one served him as a person.[68]

Walt Rostow later noted that the National Security Assistant and the NSC staff were indispensable for the Kennedy system. They were needed:

1. to keep the President fully informed;
2. to watch over the linkages between State, Defense, AID, the Treasury, Agriculture, and other departments increasingly involved in foreign affairs;
3. to follow closely the development of issues within the bureaucracy so that the President would know what lay behind recommendations coming forward--notably the objections rejected or washed out by bureaucratic compromise and the precise reasons why other were proposed;
4. to assist the President in his expanded personal role in diplomacy: speeches, visitors, and foreign correspondence; press contacts and trips abroad; briefing for meetings with his advisers;
5. to make sure that the President's decisions were executed.[69]

Indeed, foreign policy decision-making under Kennedy was a different business compared to his predecessors. NSC meetings

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67 Arthur Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 210.

68 I.M. Destler, Presidents, Bureaucrats, and Foreign Policy: The Politics of Organizational Reform (Princeton: University Press, 1974), pp. 100-1; Richard Moose, op. cit., pp. 72-73.

69 Walt Rostow, op. cit., pp. 167-68.

were held less regularly: 21 in 1961 and only 12 more during the remainder of the Administration. They consisted of informal deliberations among the small group of Kennedy's key advisers--notably: Dean Rusk (State), Robert McNamara (Defense), Robert Kennedy (Attorney General), Allan Dulles and later John McCone (Intelligence), Douglas Dillon (Treasury), Maxwell Taylor (Chairman JCS) and in addition Theodore Sorenson, George Ball, Alexis Johnson, and Edwin Martin.[70]

With the old NSC machinery--especially the Operations Coordination Board--dismantled, the State Department sought, as intended by the President, to take up the leadership in the initiation and formulation of foreign policy and to be in charge of interagency coordination. In addition, the distinction between policy planning and operation, which was a main feature of the Eisenhower system, was eliminated. For Kennedy's informal and action-oriented decision-making mode these two elements were inseperable.[71]

Above all, Bundy soon came to develop activities that could not have been anticipated in advance, but, as Walt Rostow observed, resulted from "brute necessity."[72] Kennedy's desire to be involved in all stages of decision-making and to be familiar with the details and complexities of issues soon led to a severe information gap. He not only requested a lot of information on

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70 These individuals would later form the Executive Committee (ExCom.).

71 These are the major changes Bundy explained to the Jackson Subcommittee in 1961, Jackson Report, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 1336-38; see also Roger Hilsman, op. cit., pp. 22-25.

72 Walt Rostow, op. cit., p. 168.

many diverse problems, but he also wanted it immediately. Bundy took the initiative and began supplementing Kennedy's daily briefings by his defense liaison officer with background material and specially prepared memoranda. His speediness and sense of initiative made him an asset the President would increasingly trust and rely on.[73]

The April 1961 Bay of Pigs fiasco was a crucial determinant for the further evolution of Bundy's role performance. The National Security Assistant moved from his quarters in the Executive Office Building to the West Wing of the White House and soon gained Cabinet-level status.[74] With the creation of the 'Situation Room'--where teletype machines received all essential diplomatic, military, and intelligence cables going in and out the Departments of State and Defense and the CIA twenty-four hours a day--the Assistant obtained the adequate means to satisfy Kennedy's need for quick and comprehensive information and to keep him on top of fast-breaking events.[75]

Besides, Schlesinger recalls:

> The Bay of Pigs made [the White House aides] more aggressive in defending the interests of the President and therefore in invading on his behalf what the foreign affairs bureaucracy too often regarded as its private domain.[...] We tried to become the President's eyes and ears through the whole area of national security, reporting to him things he had to know.[...] The White House staff, in addition to offering the President independent comment on proposals from the departments, served as a

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73 Richard Moose, op. cit., p. 73.

74 Arthur Schlesinger, op. cit., pp. 297-98; Irving L. Janis, Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign Policy Decisions and Fiascos (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), p. 17.

75 Theodore Sorenson, op. cit., p. 372; Arthur Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 297.

> means of discovering whether his instructions were being carried out.[76]

At the same time as Bundy accumulated and enhanced a variety of functions, the State Department and the Secretary of State were increasingly regarded as the 'black sheep' within the administration. The initial intention of having State take charge of the interdepartmental process and to provide leadership in the whole area of foreign affairs was not realized. Kennedy's style and the demands of his collegial system seem to have overtaxed the State Department. One observer noted:

> The President was discouraged with the State Department almost as soon as he took office. He felt that it too often seemed to have a built-in inertia which deadened initiative and that its tendency toward excessive delay obscured determination. It had too many voices and too little vigor. It was never clear to the President [...] who was in charge, who was clearly delegated to do what, and why his own policy line seemed consistently to be altered or evaded.[77]

What was true for State as an institution was also true for its head as a key aide to the President. Thus,

> at times the President wished that his Secretary [...] would assert himself more boldly, recommend solutions more explicitly, and offer imaginative alternative to Pentagon plans more frequently and govern the Department of State [...] more vigorously.[...] Too often, [...] neither the President nor the department knew the Secretary's views, and neither in the public nor in Congressional wars did Rusk share with the President [...] in the criticism for controversial decisions.[78]

The unresponsiveness of the State Department and the weakness of Rusk created a vacuum that Bundy and his staff were eager to fill. Therefore, in addition to the National Security Assistant's

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76 Arthur Schlesinger, op. cit., pp. 422-23.
77 Theodore Sorenson, op. cit., p. 287.
78 Ibid., p. 271; see also Roger Hilsman, op. cit., pp. 34-36.

vital role in the area of information, "interagency coordination, instead of being primarily a State Department responsibility [...], became a mixed enterprise in which the Bundy staff was often a principal element."[79]

Considering these factors, it is not surprising that Bundy also developed a role as an independent adviser to the President and a substantive advocate in the decision-making process. According to Walt Rostow, President Kennedy did not seek to substitute for the department heads, but he wished to hear Bundy's judgement and "solicited" his views in order to obtain an independent statement on options and to prevent his "inprisonment" by parochial recommendations.[80]

However, Bundy's personal strength was not so much that of an architect of coherent foreign policy strategies or a free-standing policymaker, but rather that of a critical challenger of advice given by others and an effective operator of day-to-day initiatives. He also functioned as a frequent 'devil's advocate'. Indeed, his activities as adviser and advocate often left other actors quite confused:

> You don't know what he thinks. I don't know what he thinks. The President doesn't know what he thinks. And I sometimes wonder whether he knows what he thinks.[81]

On the other hand, Bundy was a member of Kennedy's "inner club" for the making of crucial foreign policy and security decisions and as such a substantive contributor to major policy

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79 Richard Moose, op. cit., p. 74.
80 Walt Rostow, op. cit., p. 168.
81 Patrick Anderson, The President' Men: White House Assistants of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisen-hower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson (New York: Doubleday, 1968), p. 270.

initiatives; like the Bay of Pigs invasion, the management of the Cuban Missle Crisis, and the Vietnam involvement.[82]

Bundy also left the anonymity of his predecessors and became active as an occasional senior governmental spokesman on foreign policy issues. Authorized by the President, the National Security Assistant kept close contact with the press, delivered public speeches, and appeared on television programs like 'Issues and America', and 'meet the Press' as a public spokesman and apoligist for current policies.[83]

3.2. Bundy and Rostow under Johnson

3.2.1. Preliminary Role Determinants

Lyndon B. Johnson took the oath of President of the United States two hours after the fatal attack on Kennedy in Dallas, Texas, on 22 November 1963. The new President initially continued the main traits of Kennedy's informal and collegial decision-making mode and retained his key group of senior officials. However, Johnson's unique presidential style soon had its impact on the organizational setting.

Unlike Kennedy, Johnson did not feel intimate with foreign policy issues and lacked self-confidence while dealing with

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82 Roger Hilsman, op. cit., p. 6; Irving Janis, op. cit., pp. 143-44, 281[fn.3], 283[fn. 4]; Graham T. Ellison, Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missle Crisis (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1971), pp. 158 and 196.

83 David Hall, op. cit., p. 109; Joseph G. Bock and Duncan L. Clarke, "The National Security Assistant and the White House Staff: National Security Policy Decisionmaking and Domestic Considerations, 1947-1984," Presidential Studies Quarterly 16 (1986), p. 261.

external affairs. Additionally, he tended to be much more emotional and impulsive when confronted with pressing foreign policy decisions and preferred to be surrounded by a few trusted advisers who shared a basic consensus.[84] Thus, he came to rely heavily on a few men he regarded as the most trustworthy and competent; namely the triumvirate of Rusk, McNamara, and Bundy.

Richard Moose lists six characteristics of the national-security process that basically shaped the conduct of foreign affairs and the role performance of the National Security Assistant under Johnson:

> 1. More than his predecessor President Johnson had facilities readily at hand that enabled him, when he chose to dominate the process--a vast array of information and intelligence, a sophisticated communications system, and an in-house staff which lessened his dependence on the bureaucracy and greatly increased his knowledge of it activities.
> 2. The President frequently choose to participate actively in decisions--big and small--which he believed would significantly affect U.S. interests or his position as political leader [and engaged] in a wide-ranging, informal, and closely held process of consultation.
> 3. Decisions emerging from this process often did not become matters of formal record, nor were their rationales always necessarily explicit; written decisions for policy guidance were the exception rather than the rule.
> 4. A strong desire for 'open options' characterized decision-making, often depriving the departments of preliminary guidance on Presidential thinking, restricting their operational latitude, and complicating the planning process.
> 5. As a corollary to the preceding, individuals--particularly those whom the President had personally 'calibrated'--were more important than institutions.
> 6. Beginning in 1965, Vietnam occupied a major portion of the time and energy of the President and his principal

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84 Walt Rostow, op. cit., pp. 358-62; Richard Johnson, op. cit., pp. 159-99. The most comprehensive and intimate source on Johnson's background, personality, and style is the biography by Doris Kearns, Lyndon Johnson & The American Dream (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

> advisers, [and drew] them together in a tightly restricted inner circle[...].[85]

Although Johnson had sought to diminish Bundy's position during the first weeks of his presidency because he questioned his loyality and was not comfortable with his aristocratic style, the first foreign policy challenge soon proved that the President could not do without him.[86] While the spectrum of Bundy's functions would basically not change, the intensity with which he executed them would.

3.2.2. Roles and Function

Bundy's location at the nerve center of the national security process helped him consolidate his standing among Johnson's key aides. He saw the President more frequently than other senior officials and had the advantage of usually having the first and last shot at keeping him involved in current issues and thus learning his reactions. When the President met with his key advisers, the National Security Assistant was an active participant. In addition, he linked the President with the bureaucracy.

One observer noted--not without some frustration--that "the special assistant's duties do not lend themselves to neat organizational analysis,"[87] but he summarizes his functions as follows:

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85 Richard Moose, op. cit., pp. 82-83.
86 David Halberstein, The Best and the Brightest (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 347.
87 Richard Moose, op. cit., p. 85.

1. The special assistant coordinated and, as appropriate, supplemented the flow of information and intelligence to the President from the departments and agencies, devoting particular attention to items of potential concern to the President, and providing additional depth of coverage on selected items of particular interest, importance, or sensitivity.
2. He ordered and coordinated the flow of decision papers to the President, ensuring that priority items were promptly handled and that the President had available not only all the relevant information and recommendations required to make a decision but also the underlying bureaucratic and political considerations.
3. He followed the daily operations of the government to help ensure that matters touching the President's interests received appropriate attention, that adequate interagency coordination occurred at Cabinet level or below, and that the President's directions were being followed and his options protected.
4. He often communicated Presidential decisions and instructions to the departments and agencies.
5. He provided a point of liaison with Cabinet officers on matters which, although important, did nor require the President's personal or immediate attention.
6. He acted in a close personal sense as adviser to the President and, together with his staff, provided the President with independent substantive analysis as requested or as deemed appropriate.[88]

While formal NSC meeting were rare, Johnson introduced the Tuesday lunch in early 1964. Here, the President and his triumvirate of principal collaborators--Rusk, McNamara, and Bundy (replaced in March 1966 by Walt Rostow)--met on a regular basis and deliberated on predominantly pressing operational decisions and on whatever was on Johnson's mind. Since the National Security Assistant was a member of this intimate decision-making forum, his role as substantive adviser, advocate, and essentialy also decision-maker, was conformed.[89]

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88 Ibid., pp. 85-86; see also Walt Rostow, op. cit., pp. 363-66.
89 Walt Rostow, op. cit., pp. 358-62; Richard Moose, op. cit., pp. 88-90; Irving Janis, op. cit., pp. 97-130.

The issue of NATO's proposed Multilateral Nuclear Force (MLF) illustrates Bundy's influence. While other senior officials and the President tended to endorse this project in 1964, the National Security Assistant doubted its wisdom and feasability. Bundy's persistent opposition to the MLF and the memorandum he prepared to summarize his conclusions and recommendations shifted the mood within the administration and Johnson finally aborted the project.[90]

An area where this modus operandi became even more apparent was the conflict in Vietnam. In this instance, Bundy was basically in accord with the other members of the inner club. He participated in the decision-making for the conduct of the war and became an early advocate for gradual escalation of military pressure against North Vietnam.[91] For example, after returning from a fact-finding mission to Vietnam in February 1965, Bundy recommended "graduated and continuing reprisal" against the North in the report he submitted to the President. Johnson later recalled that he was "impressed by its logic and persuaded strongly by its arguments."[92]

The National Security Assistant also stepped up his activities as a spokesperson for the administration. Especially

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90 John Steinbrunner, The Cybernetic Theory of Decision (Princeton: University Press, 1974), pp. 248-310.

91 Doris Kearns, op. cit., pp. 204, 276, and 294; see also Leslie H. Gelb and Richard K. Betts, The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1979), pp. 108, 116-17, 243-45, and 372-74.

92 Lyndon B. Johnson, The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969 (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971), p. 128. Johnson also reprints parts of Bundy's report.

in the light of the rising public debate over the wisdom of Johnson's Vietnam strategy, Bundy frequently delivered speeches at universities and appeared on major television news shows such as 'Meet the Press', 'Issues and America', and 'Face the Nation' in order to explain and defend the administration's foreign policy.[93]

During March 1966 important change occured within the Johnson Adminstration. Bundy left government--allegedly because he had become increasingly disappointed about the developments in Southeast Asia[94]--and Walt W. Rostow was appointed National Security Assistant in his stead. In addition, Johnson launched an initiative which obviously intended to elevate the State Department's competence in the decision-making process while denigrading the Assistant's role.

With the approval of National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 341, the President assigned to the Secretary of State the "authority and responsibility to the full extent permitted by law for the over-all direction, coordination and supervision of interdepartmental activities of the United States Government overseas."

For this purpose, a permanent interdepartmental committee, the Senior Interdepartmental Group (SIG), was created. Its chair would fall to the under secretary of state. In support of the SIG, a number of Interdepartmental Regional Groups (IRGs) were formed, chaired by assistant secretaries of state. However, the

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93 David Hall, op. cit., p. 110.
94 Doris Kearns, op. cit., p. 335.

attempt to reestablish a State-centered system by Presidential directive did not bear fruit:

> More than a year elapsed before there was any significant progess in making the SIG/IRG system operational. During that period and to the end of the Johnson Administration, the staff remained active, inter alia, in the task of assuring interagency coordination.[95]

Rostow was able to retain most features of the modus operandi Bundy had shaped but, except on Vietnam, he never achieved the degree of Bundy's internal prominence. However, Rostow was an indispensable asset to President Johnson, who referred to him as "my goddamn intellectual."[96] In particular, he became an ally in the conduct of the Vietnam War, which overshadowed the last years of Johnson's tenure and tore his administration apart.[97]

3.3. Scowcroft under Ford

3.3.1. Preliminary Role Determinants

Just as extraordinary circumstances had brought Gerald R. Ford into the presidency in August 1974, so was General Brent Scowcroft's tenure as National Security Assistant between October 1975 and the end of 1976 influenced by unique conditions.[98]

Henry A. Kissinger, wearing the 'two heads' of Secretary of

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95 Richard Moose, op. cit., pp. 93-94; Walt Rostow, op. cit., pp. 362-63.
96 David Halberstein, op. cit., p. 627.
97 Leslie Gelb, op. cit., pp. 205 and 256; Walt Rostow, op. cit., pp. 363-68.
98 The reader is advised to have a look at the final pages of chapter 4.1.2. which discusses the Nixon/Ford transition period and the early Ford Administration.

State and National Security Assistant, had been primus inter pares of foreign and security policymaking during the late period of the Nixon Administration and was inherited as such by the new chief executive. Although Kissinger initially insisted on keeping both positions, he did not object when in the context of the 'big shuffle' in fall 1975, Ford suggested that "Henry ought to concentrate on the Department of State and foreign policy; he should not have to worry about the machanics of the NSC."[99]

Being relieved from his job as National Security Assistant reduced Kissinger's leverage within the NSC system[100] and it certainly meant a loss of protocol, but as Secretary of State he did not have to fear that the new National Security Assistant would do to him what he himself had done to Secretary of State William P. Rogers as Nixon's Assistant. With the appointment of Kissinger's former Deputy National Security Assistant, Brent Scowcroft, to the vacant position, Secretary of State Kissinger regarded the new Assistant as a supernumerary rather than as a potential rival.[101]

Although Ford's NSC system was basically Henry Kissinger-centered--which means State-centered--and Secretary of State Kissinger remained the dominant actor in the Administration, the arrangement gradually developed collegial traits. In contrast to

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99 Gerald R. Ford, A Time To Heal (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 325.

100 He lost, for example, some of his senior interagency group chairs.

101 For the relationship between Kissinger and Scowcroft, see "Up From Anonymity," News Week (17 November 1975), p. 44; see also Kissinger's comments in Years of Upheaval (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1982), p. 437.

Nixon's closed system and exclusive reliance on Kissinger, Ford preferred a more competitive and open decisionmaking process. Thus, while Kissinger remained first-among-equals, other senior officials were able to exert increasing influence.

3.3.2. Roles and Functions

During his almost three years as Kissinger's deputy Scowcroft had developed an understanding of his role within the NSC system which he would largely maintain when he became National Security Assistant. Essentially, Scowcroft was de facto National Security Assistant. It was he who managed the NSC System and the orderly flow of papers. Additionally, he gave President Ford his daily information and news briefing.

Scowcroft explained that when Kissinger became also Secretary of State in late 1973,

> he increasingly spend his time on State Department business and less on National Security Council business and so I tended more and more to do the whole role rather than just that of the deputy.[102]

Scowcroft's workload was remarkable and he quickly gained the reputation of being and 'indefatigable worker' who was laboring 100 hours a week.[103]

When Scowcroft became de jure National Security Assistant, there was no sharp change of the scope of his functions. However, the formal title increased his leverage within the system and gave him some new responsibilities. He would now chair the

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102 Interview with General Brent Scowcroft, 22 February 1988.
103 "Up From Anonymity," ibid.

central Senior Review Group and the 40 Committee, which dealt with covert intelligence matters.[104]

During his testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in 1980, Scowcroft summarized his functions into two major categories:

a. acting as confidential adviser to the President; looking at issues solely from the perspective of the President
b. acting as manager and coordinator of the interagency national security policy process; assuring that all options presented to the President for decision are fully integrated ones and that all pros and cons are set forth; overseeing informally the implementation of Presidential decisions[105]

Scowcroft ran a delicate balancing act in order to avoid a conflict between his roles as 'honest broker' and substantive actor. While he did not seek to substitute for or to exclude any department or agency head, he did function as substantive adviser and advocate. According to Scowcroft, the key to this balancing act was the avoidance of publicity:

> I envisioned the National Security Adviser's role to be off-stage, behind the scenes, in the intimate councils of the President, where I didn't hesitate to give advice whether it was or was not concurrent with the Cabinet heads.[106]

Thus, while Kissinger was the principal 'outside' operator, Scowcroft managed the national security policymaking

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104 Interview with General Scowcroft, 22 February 1988.
105 From Scowcroft's testimony in The National Security Adviser: Role and Accountability, p. 24.
106 Interview with General Scowcroft, 22 February 1988.

process and the NSC. Asked how he himself would rate his policymaking influence, Scowcroft drew--after hesitation--a parallel to Walt Rostow.[107]

Scowcroft's smooth and confidential relationship with Secretary of State Kissinger was based on a largely compatible world view but, more importantly, on his personality. President Ford describes him as

> thin, short and balding. Unfailingly polite, he never raised his voice. If he was really upset about something, he might say, "Gosh," but that was the strongest four-letter word I had ever heard him use. He didn't smoke or drink. Yet his unremarkable appearance and mild manner belied a fine service record and a first-rate intellect.[108]

The available evidence suggests that Scowcroft managed the interdepartmental process effectively and efficiently. Because he abstained from operational roles as well as from publicity, his function as substantive adviser to President Ford and as advocate in the decisionmaking process do not appear to have impaired his managerial responsibilities. Many professional observers hold Scowcroft in high esteem for his style and role performance and present him as the ideal case of a National Security Assistant.[109]

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107 Interview with General Scowcroft, 22 February 1988.

108 Gerald Ford, op. cit., p. 326; and "Up From Anonymity," op. cit.

109 See Henry Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, op. cit., p. 437; Duncan L. Clarke, "Why State Can't Lead," Foreign Policy (Spring 1987), p. 139; I.M. Destler, "A Job That Doesn't Work," Foreign Policy (Spring 1980), p. 85.

3.4. Implications of the National Security Assistant as Equal Actor in the Intermediate National Security System

3.4.1. Role Conception II

Despite the fact that Bundy's and Rostow's role performances under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson fluctuated over time and varied with the issues, the two National Security Assistants followed a common functional pattern that invites the development of a second role conception. Scowcroft fits into that pattern only with qualification. While his role performance had several important parallels to Bundy and Rostow, he operated in a very different organizational setting. Thus, although much of what will be said regarding role conception II applies to Scowcroft, the following analysis is primarily based on the cases Bundy and Rostow.

The above discussion showed that Bundy and Rostow were, respectively, 'one-among-equals' in the group of the President's principal foreign policy and national security officials. In the intermediate system, there is no primus inter pares of national security-making short of the President. The President grants neither the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Defense, nor the National Security Assistant a preeminent standing. Instead, decision-making is the resultant of collegial interaction with influence and authority diffused among the members of the inner club.

The National Security Assistant is active with the collection, aggregation, and facilitation of policy inputs provided by members of the inner club (and other sources).

Because he has an equal standing among this group and is the presonal national security aide to the President, he has far-reaching leverage while managing the national security decision-making process and when approaching others. He is not a policy-neutral actor in the process. Instead, he contributes substantive policy inputs to the decision-making process and gives the President substantive advise. However, his role has to be understood as supplementing, and not supplanting, other senior actors.

Many functions that were listed for role conception I are also performed by the National Security Assistant as equal actor in the intermediate system. However, since the operation of the NSC is more informal and flexible, he focuses more on the spontanious interaction between people and ideas rather than on formal procedures. As the President's personal national security aide, he invests much of his time and energy on the chief executive's special needs and interests. In addition, he performs a number of functions that go clearly beyond that of process management.

In the context of role conception II, the Assistant's mayor functions can be summarized as:

- coordinating the oral and written policy inputs from senior officials, the bureaucracy, and other sources; supplementing information and analysis when requested by the President or when deemed appropriate by the Assistant himself
- injecting the President's interests and perspective into the interdepartmental process and pressing hard for requested information and analysis on the bureaucracy; demanding

open and explicit deliberation on positions taken and recommendations made by senior officials so as to allow the President to become privy of all options discussed and of their inherent contradictions and compromises

- advocating independent substantive policy views in the decision-making process and acting as 'devils advocate'
- communicating Presidential decisions and directives to the senior officials and the national security bureaucracy; double-checking the operations of the departments and agencies and assuring that Presidential decisions were accurately understood and properly executed
- assisting the President in his expanded personal engagement in the national security decision-making process and in his multiple tasks as chief diplomat
- giving the President independent substantive advise on policy issues and developing concepts for the solution of selective policy problems
- undertaking fact-finding missions and diplomatic initiatives on selected issues that are of special interest to the President
- acting as an occasional public spokesperson; explaining and defending current policy initiatives and concepts.

3.4.2. What Factors Determine this Role Conception?

Among the numerous reasons and factors which lead to role conception II, there are four which seem to be particularly important. The first and major determinant is unquestionably the executive style of respective Presidents. Chapters 3.1. and 3.2.

discussed in detail the collegial and informal presidential styles of Kennedy and Johnson which shaped the intermediate national security systems. This influenced the position of the National Security Assistant in two decisive ways:

a) Instead of being at the subordinate echelon of a hierachical organizational arrangement, the Assistant is member of a collegial and informally organized group. As such, he is an equal actor among the senior decision-makers and is assigned far-reaching leverage.

b) Because of the President's enhanced engagement in the details of the national security decision-making process and his personal leadership role in this metier, the chief executive is more dependent on close and intimate staff support. This increases the demands on the National Security Assistant while it also consolidates his standing vis-a-vis other senior actors.

The question whether the national security decision-making process of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations would have looked completely different if Dean Rusk had not been a comparatively weak and passive Secretary of State is a legitimate one. Maybe both Presidents would have followed the traditional Presidential-Secretarial mode in principle--with some minor organizational change--had their common Secretary of State proved to be a more responsive ally. However, it would be a grave exaggeration to blame the change that occured in the foreign policy presidency in the 1960s solely on the personality of the Secretary of State. The problem goes much deeper.

It appears to be obvious that--given the national security

challenges of the 1960s--the State Department and the Secretary of State as its institutional head were no longer able to provide the leadership function they traditionally used to fulfill. While during the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations, State was still able to maintain its preeminent status with the application of grant design conceptionalization and diplomacy, these approaches would quickly prove to be absolutely insufficient under Kennedy's and Johnson's modus operandi and the more complex and complicated international demands they were confronted with.

The State Department kept falling behind the self-dynamics of events--maybe inevitably. I.M. Destler correctly criticized State's

> tendency to smother rather than to take initiative; a predisposition towards seeing one part of the problem, the 'diplomatic' or 'political,' rather than the whole; a reluctance to challenge the expertise of others--the CIA on the Bay of Pigs, the military on Vietnam--though such challenges are indispensable to taking a broader view; an operating *mode* tending to 'exclude' other agencies from issues rather than 'including' them in discussions; a failure to exploit numerous opportunities to 'take charge' in interdepartmental issues[...].[110]

Another problem area was staffing. State Department officials usually tended to be generalists instead of specialists and were by style and education uncomfortable with conceptual approaches. Additionally, many able and talented men were either repelled by the department or chose a career elsewhere on their own. Arthur Schlesinger made the comment, for example, that Rusk's rejection of two competent intellectuals, Rostow and Bundy, as top officials of his department in 1961 was,

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110 I.M. Destler, Presidents, Bureaucrats..., p. 159.

> from the institutional interests of the Department, [...] a grievous error. Kennedy promptly decided to take them into the White House [...]. The result was to give the White House an infusion of energy on foreign affairs with which the State Department would never in the next three years [...]quite catch up.[111]

Thus, although Kennedy had initially sought to follow the Jackson Report recommendation of reducing the role of the White House staff and of leaning strongly on the Secretary of State and his department, the stronger National Security Assistant managed to enter through the back-door that was opened by the pressure of necessity.

3.4.3. What is Wrong With this Role Conception?

Role conception II, as practiced by Bundy and Rostow, has inherent some potential weaknesses that make it vulnerable for criticism.

The national security decision-making arrangement and the focus of the Assistant in it are almost exclusively geared to the idiosyncratic interests of a particular President. Whereas the Truman and Eisenhower systems the President had the support of a solid organizational substructure, the NSC machinery, and had one official with whom he could intimately share the extreme burden and responsibility of his office, the Secretary of State, this organizational arrangement depends almost singularly on the President as an individual and his ability to set priorities and to provide direct leadership. There is no preeminent foreign affairs aide with a broad mandate under the President who can

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111 Arthur Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 150.

share a substantial part of his burden.

Despite the fact that the National Security Assistant is the President's personal aide and performs many functions which are indispensable to the chief executive, he does not fully substitute for the lost leadership role that used to be played by the Secretary of State and his department in the national security decision-making process. Although role conception II differs fundamentally from role conception I, the Assistant is still basically an 'inside' manager, performing 'outside' functions only on selected occasions. Given Bundy's and Rostow's personality and background, they were able to be assertive actors in the group of the Presidents' principal national security officials, but they were not able to substitute for an Acheson or Dulles.

Also, Bundy's and Rostow's activities tended to confuse other senior officials and, even more, the national security bureaucracy. With their speediness and sense of initiative and operation the bureaucracy was often overtaxed and sometimes bypassed. Systematic planning and coordination with a long-range perspective had certainly seen better days in the national security history.

Essentially, role conception II and the organizational setting it is located in are literally of an intermediate character. The National Security Assistant attempts to substitute were the other senior officials and the departments and agencies don't deliver and tries to fill gaps that develop in the day-to-day operation of national security policy, but in the end his role performance is neither one thing nor the other.

3.4.4. What Can be Done About this Role Conception?

The historical evidence suggests that policymakers felt widely uncomfortable with role conception II and increasingly began regarding it as an interim solution. But what could be done about it?

President Johnson tested a 'reactioany' option in 1966 with the creation of the SIG/IRG system and the intended degradation of the National Security Assistant. However, the attempt to re-establish a State-centered national security system was abortive. The SIG/IRG system was not able to substitute for the assertive management of the interdepartmental process that had been provided by the National Security Assistant. It neither became a new locus point for the invention of ideas and initiatives nor did it prove to be of much value for the operational aspect of national security policy. In effect, Henry Kissinger once concluded,

> the State Department is simply not equipped to handle interdepartmental machinery. [...] A Secretary of State seeking to run the interagency process imposes a heavy burden upon himself. For even should he succeed in overcoming the proclivities of his Department [...] he would be in a hopeless position bureaucratically.[112]

If role conception II has proved to be insufficient for the demands of the modern foreign policy presidency and a return to the practices of the late 1940s and 1950s appears no longer as a viable option, what comes into mind as an obvious idea is the further centralization of the national security decisionmaking process in the White House with the further elaboration of the

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112 Henry Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, p. 435.

position of the National Security Assistant. The according prososals that were made in the late 1950s gained new popularity and with Richard Nixon, who had served as Eisenhower's vice-president for eight years, someone who intended to realize them strove for the presidency.

4. The National Security Assistant as Dominant Actor in the White House-centered National Security System

The dominant National Security Assistant is the subject of the third role conception. The Assistant is the President's principal national security subordinate and is the predominant force in the national security decision-making process. Among the foreign policy and national security officials, he has a preeminent status. The President shares the burden and responsibilty of his office with the Assistant and has a special relationship of trust and intimacy with him.

The National Security Assistant dominates the 'inside' as well as the 'outside' aspects of national security-making. In interaction with the President, he initiates and formulates major national security policy. In addition to being preeminent adviser and advocate in the national security decision-making process, he also often acts as the President's principal diplomat, negotiator, and spokesperson. As such he is delegated substantial authority by the chief executive.

The Nixon, Carter, and--with qualification--the Reagan Administrations constitute the subjects of analysis in respect to role conception III.

4.1. Kissinger under Nixon

4.1.1. Preliminary Role Determinants

Although the remarkable role accumulation of National Security Assistant Kissinger was not anticipated at the beginning of the administration, President Nixon had clearly envisioned a

highly structured, formalized, and, most of all, centralized system in which the National Security Assistant had to play an essential role. He notes in his memoirs unambiguously:

> When Eisenhower selected Foster Dulles as his Secretary of State, he wanted him to be his chief foreign policy adviser, a role Dulles was uniquely qualified to fill. From the outset of my administration, however, I planned to direct foreign policy from the White House. Therefore I regarded my choice of a National Security Adviser as crucial.[113]

Richard Nixon had a deep personal interest in foreign affairs and, particularly as Vice-President to Eisenhower, had gained recognized competence in this field. As President-elect he intended to put a substantial amount of time and energy into foreign affairs and he had an explicit set of strategic goals in mind.

During his campaign Nixon had sharply criticized the Kennedy/Johnson NSC's informality as "catch-as-catch-can talkfests between the President, his staff assistants, and various others."[114] When he proposed to restore the NSC to its preeminent role in national security planning he was instead strongly influenced by the organizational arrangement under Eisenhower. However, his objective was "a coherent formal structure without the sterility and bureaucratic treaty-making aspects of the Eisenhower model."[115] Nixon rather sought a unitary/rational

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113 Richard M. Nixon, The Memoirs of Richard M. Nixon (New York: Gosset & Dunlap, 1978), p. 340.

114 From a campaign speech entitled "The Security Gap," in New York Times (25 October 1968).

115 Chester A. Crocker, "The Nixon-Kissinger National Security System, 1969-1972: A Study in Foreign Policy Management," in Appendix O (Volume 6), of the Murphy Commission Report, pp. 79-99.

actor system in which the chief executive would be provided with distinct policy options. He would be neither satisfied with bureaucratic consensus recommendations [like Ike], nor did he like to be exposed face-to-face to political conflict among his advisers [like JFK]. Rather, he preferred to work alone, reflecting over explicit options and consulting with an aid under the intimacy of four eyes.[116]

Thus, when Kissinger received the mandate to reorganize the NSC system he was guided by basic premises: leadership, central control, and presidential activism. The State-chaired network of Senior Interdepartmental Groups/Interdepartmental Regional Groups (SIG/IRG) from the Johnson Administration would be replaced by a new NSC system consisting of six major committees, which would be chaired by the National Security Assistant. In addition to the initially planned Senior Review Group (SRG) Kissinger would later create the Washingtin Special Action Group (WSAG), the Verification Panel (VP), the 40 Committee, the Defense Programs Review Committee (DPRC), and the Vietnam Special Studies Group (VSSG). These senior committees would be supported by a number of lower-level interagency groups (IGs) which were headed by the corresponding assistant secretaries of state.

The central role of the National Security Assistant in this structure is evident. He would control all top-level committees which reached down into the departments and agencies, absorbing their key human resources. Additionally, the assistant

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116 Richard Johnson, op. cit., pp. 210-11.

secretaries of state chairing the lower-level committees would obtain their assignments from the National Security Assistant and would report to the top-level committees, which would be chaired by him.

The newly created sytem would be activated by a series of National Security Study Memoranda (NSSMs) covering current or mid- to long-term national security issues. They would be drafted by the NSC staff and signed by the National Security Assistant on behalf of the President, directing the respective departments and agencies to prepare comprehensive studies on the selected issues.

According to Kissinger, the reorganization was designed to strengthen the intellectual and bureaucratic resources of the White House and to weaken the autonomy and influence of the departments and agencies. Since Nixon considered the State Department untrustworthy and the CIA incompetent, the National Security Assistant "was crucial to him and to his plan to run foreign policy from the White House."[117]

The appointment of Harvard professor of international politics Henry Kissinger to the position of National Security Assistant underlines this desire. This ambitious academic intellectual of German origin not only shared a concurrent world view and set of foreign policy goals with President Nixon, he also preferred a similiar administrative style and the passion for secrecy and manipulation. Highly critical of the sluggish performance and unimaginative output of bureaucratic

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117 Henry Kissinger, White House Years, p. 13.

organizations, he had called for central control and primacy for puposeful action and creative thinking in foreign policy prior to his appointment.[118]

Finally, Kissinger's initial interpretation of his new position was influenced by the experiences of former administrations, particularly by the precedents of the two most recent National Security Assistants Bundy and Rostow.

4.1.2. Roles and Functions

It is not surprising that the Cabinet members of Nixon's Administration had early on voiced strong reservations about the organizational arrangement of the above described White House-centered system and the position it opened to Kissinger. Over the objections of Secretary of State Rogers and Secretary of Defense Laird, President Nixon had given his blessings to the Kissinger proposal and finally signed NSSM 2 one day before Inauguration Day. He was not willing to accept any oppostion in this respect and even offered the option of resignation to anyone who would still resist.

Kissinger's initial role understanding and performance was that of a Machiavellian genies in the focal point of the NSC process. While he acted as the initiator and screener of the interagency policy studies (NSSMs), the interagency groups served as mere think tanks and suppliers with specially assigned tasks. The various groups were instructed to produce high quality

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118 See, for example, Saul Pett, "Henry A. Kissinger: Loyal Retainer or Nixon's Svengali," The Washington Post (23 August 1970).

studies with the focus on sharp analysis. Instead of parochial advocacy or minimal-consensus recommendations, Kissinger expected the NSSMs to provide explicit policy options and to investigate all their the pros and cons, costs and benefits. Using the NSSMs as background material he would then aggregate the obtained expertise in order to provide broad guidance as to long-term national purposes and priorities on the one hand, and rational for short-term operational steps on the other hand. This procedure was thought essential because "putting before the President the fullest range of choices and their likely consequences was indeed the main job of the national security adviser."[119]

The effective and aggressive NSC staff was not only crucial for the White House-centered system per se, it was also indispensable for the centrality and power of Kissinger in that system. Said Chester Crocker:

> The staff would provide the base of support enabling him to seize issues out of the formal channels, to intercept and independently evaluate agency communications to the President (including NSSMs responses), gather bureaucratic intelligence necessary to retain the initiative, and generally to utilise the expertise that would make him the dominant Presidential advisor in foreign affairs.[120]

Therefore, Kissinger himself carefully selected a group of action-oriented intellectuals from inside and outside the government--making professional capabilities, not political suitablilty, the main criteria for his choice. Beside an

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119 Henry Kissinger, White House Years, p. 41.
120 Chester Crocker, op. cit., p. 87.

Operational Staff (organized by regions), a Staff Secretariat (monitoring the formal procedures), and a Planning Staff (for long-term and interregional tasks), there was a Special Staff aiding Kissinger personally in the newly created 'Office of the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs'. The latter staff-within-the-staff is one more expression of the extreme strive for centralization.

During the first year or so of the Nixon administration the system functioned more or less as it had been designed to. A series of 85 comprehensive NSSMs was produced ranging from sensitive topics like Vietnam and arms control to specific issues of weapon's procurement and regional developments. The studies were generally characterized by a long-term and interrelating emphasis. In addition to providing information and guidance to their recipients the NSSMs were clearly also an instrument which enforced government-wide coherence and discipline in the foreign policymaking process.

In the regular NSC meetings (37 in 1969) the NSSMs were discussed at length. The departments and agencies had a chance to bring forward their specific concerns and suggestions and could try to influence the evaluation of options. For Nixon and Kissinger, the well-prepared sessions helped to further gathering relevant information and expertise and to get a feel for the mood among the Cabinet members and within the bureaucracy. The NSC meetings had a substantial advisory function but the actual decisions were made elsewhere.[121]

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121 I.M. Destler, Presidents, Bureaucrats.., pp. 124-26, see also Henry Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 47-48.

Henry Kissinger performed his role as inside manager of the NSC process skillfully and efficiently. David K. Hall concludes that Kissinger

> was ,like Bundy, an extremely active and effective 'second guesser'-pushing the bureaucracy to consider alternatives, clarify assupmtions, spell out consequences. [...] Those attending National Security Council sessions were impressed by his objectivity in delineating the options and leading discussions; at the Senior Review Group, members found him willing to explore options, even when he held a stromg opinion.[122]

However, from the start of the administration it was also clear that Kissinger would open independent channels of information and that he would perform functions as a substantive adviser to the President. As mentioned, this role understanding derived from the precedents of the two former National Security Assistants Bundy and Rostow and, more importantly, from Nixon's style and needs and from the central role Kissinger was given in the formal options system. But the scope of these additional functions was nowhere formally described or suggested: it was up to the performance of the indivudual and institutional players within the system and the foreign demands challenging the administration to determine it.

Indeed, while the NSC system initially worked well within its given framework there was one striking and significant dynamic variable: Henry Kissinger and the rise of his authority, as manifested in his gradual accumulation of roles and functions. Step-by-step, the importance of the NSC system was downgraded and

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122 David Hall, op. cit., p. 113.

Kissinger actively cut down his competitors.[123] Accordingly, the number of NSSMs addressed to the departments and agencies declined from 85 during the first year to 26 in 1970, 30 in 1971, and 23 in 1972. The number of NSC meetings also declined from 37 in 1969 to 21 in 1970, 15 in 1971, and just 5 in 1972-73 together![124]

At the same time there emerged an increasingly closed and independent Nixon/Kissinger duo, with Kissinger beginning to become the dominant innovater/strategist, adviser/advocate, spokesperson, and diplomat/negotiator. I.M. Destler soon came to call him "the functional equivalent of a strong, prominent Secretary of State."[125]

It seems that this remarkable transition from a relatively open formal options system to a closed, implementation-oriented Nixon/Kissinger track was to a large degree predetermined by the factors which were discussed in the preliminary chapter. And once the new system was settled, the strategic goals were made explicit and reflected in long-term planning (NSSMs), and the formal procedures and rules of the new organizational arrangement were accepted and became routine, the honeymoon was over and the focus shifted to policy implementation and outside operation. The Nixon/Kissinger connection soon proved its will to take care of these practical responsibilities.

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123 Seymour M. Hersh, The Price of Power (New York: Summit Books, 1983), pp. 104-5.

124 I.M. Destler, Presidents, Bureaucrats.., pp. 124-27; see also Chester Crocker, op. cit., pp. 90-95.

125 I.M. Destler, Our Own Worst Enemy: The Unmaking of American Foreign Policy (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), p. 209.

The EC-121 crisis in April 1969 was an important ceasura in the transition for two reasons. In response to the shooting down of an unarmed American intelligence plane by North Korean MiG aircraft, the formal options system was set in motion. The individual and institutional players got engaged in the process of decision-making with enthusiasm, but the options and alternatives that were developed expressed the various parochial concerns rather than provide priorities and guidance for action. This 'inconclusive planning exercise' frustrated Nixon and confirmed his low esteem of the bureaucracy. Additionally, the performance of Secretary of State Rogers, Secretary of Defense Laird, and Director of Central Intelligence Helms, who all opposed a 'tough' reaction, had strongly alienated Nixon and he told Kissinger that "he would get rid of Rogers and Laird at the earliest opportunity; he would never consult them again in a crisis."[126] On the other hand, his trust in Kissinger grew and he appreciated the activism and sense of operation of his National Security Assistant. Kissinger soon lifted his self-restraint and established his position as an advocate. On the fourth day of the crisis he urged Nixon in a closed meeting "to take whatever steps necessary to bring the North Koreans to their knees."[127] Finally, Nixon decided to send two aircraft carriers into the Sea of Japan as a show of force. Kissinger's institutional reaction to the crisis was the creation of the WSAG for crisis management. Under his chairmanship "future crises were

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126 Henry Kissinger, White House Years, p. 320.
127 Richard Nixon, op. cit., p. 384.

[to be] handled crisply and with strong central direction."[128]

Kissinger's role as a strong advocate is even more apparent in the case of the Laos operation. Faced with the prospect of a looming massive offensive by the North Vietnamese, the National Security Assistant came to the conclusion by the end of 1970 that the worst could only be averted by a preventive South Vietnamese dry-season offensive into Laos. Of course, this operation would require a substantial U.S. air power and artillery commitment to have any chance of success. He justified his advocacy and activity for this cause as follows:

> I strongly encouraged the concept of a dry-season offensive in 1971, in the face of the essential indifference of the departments, who were battening down against domestic storms. [...] I thought it my duty as security adviser not to await disasters passively or simply to gamble on the most favorable hypothesis.[129]

With Nixon's agreement and approval, Kissinger began to organize the implementation of the project. His deputy Alexander Haig and a team of NSC staff members were sent to Vietnam to explore the situation at the scene of the action and the Pentagon was approached in order to get ready for the implementation. At the same time Nixon began trying to appease the Rogers, Laird, and Helms trio and to seek their support. The operation was executed-but with doubtful success. The North Vietnamese war infrastructure was seriously damaged so that the immediate pressure on the South decreased and the communist offensive got delayed for a year. But this had been achieved at the cost of a psychological

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128 Henry Kissinger, White House Years, p. 321.
129 Ibid., p. 990.

defeat for the South--because its forces had to retreat with heavy casualties at the end--and of a rising disenchantment in America.

Kissinger's role performance as a strong advocate can be observed on many occasions, ranging from such sensitive operations as the early Cambodian bombings in 1970 to the later mining of Haiphong Harbor and the 'Christmas bombings' in 1972 and the action against Allende in 1973 . Later on during his tenure he would hardly have to advocate anymore: as the dominant operator with a semi-autonomous position he would act on his own with the general support of Nixon.[130]

From the beginning, the President had had a clear set of strategic goals he wanted to accomplish during his time in office and the service of Kissinger appeared to be indispensable for this purpose. Accordingly, he restricted the duties of his Secretary of State to the traditional State Department responsibilities; namely to the administration of the regular diplomatic relations. Kissinger, in contrast, was by March 1971 officially assigned to cover "not only foreign policy but [also] national security policy."[131]

Thus, on the issues Nixon regarded most important--U.S.-Soviet relations, rapprochement towards China, the conduct of war and negotiations in Indochina, and, of course, the annoying international crises which frequently occured--Kissinger was the

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130 Kissinger describes most instances of his role as a strong advocate quite openly in his memoirs. Somestimes it is necessary to read between the lines.

131 See Nixon's press conference on 4 May 1971, printed in The New York Times (5 May 1971).

man who counted. He conducted his role as diplomat and negotiator in two dimensions: in Washington, he build up a network of 'back channels' with representatives of selected countries. And overseas, he conducted a spectacular series of secret missions, unofficial state visits, and negotiations.

In respect to the former dimension, it is remarkable how the important back channel between Kissinger and the Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin came about. Nixon had excluded Rogers from the first meeting with the Soviet envoy in early 1969 and told the latter unequivocally under four eyes that Kissinger should be the addressee for the serious business--and not the State Department.[132] Later on the National Security Assistant would not need such drastic help from his boss. The back channel to Pakistan's Ambassador Hilaly--a former student of Kissinger at Harvard--for example, was opened on the Assistant's own initiative in order to prepare the rapprochement to China.

Regarding the overseas activities, the secret talks with Vietnam were set up and conducted to the exclusion of the State and Defense Departments--as were also the SALT negotiations and the opening to China. As a "presidential plenipotentiary, accompanied only by four trusted NSC staff", Kissinger travelled countless miles between continents and capitals and his workload is quite impressive. David Hall registered

> thirteen secret trips to Paris, followed by exhaustive negotiations from October 1972 until January 1973; six trips to China,1971 and 1973; and five trips to Moscow, 1972-1973. Each summit with Brezhnev necessitated

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132 Henry Kissinger, White House Years, p. 141.

> Kissinger's consultation with and debriefing of the European heads of state.[133]

Kissinger proved to be a sharp-witted and able diplomat so that Nixon delegated more and more authority to him for the conduct of foreign policy. Initially, the National Security Assistant had to submit a detailed outline to the President prior to each meeting and negotiation session explaining his steps and tactics--and the latter would usually add marginal notes and comments. Already by the end of 1970 Nixon no longer regarded these formal procedures as necessary. He would discuss the general strategy with Kissinger, if this was still needed, and leave the day-to-day implementation entirely to him. Kissinger comments

> I can recall no occasion after 1971 where he altered the course of a negotiation once it was in train. I knew what Nixon wanted to accomplish. We had jointly devised the strategy. He did not believe that the conductor need be seen to play every instrument in the orchestra.[134]

Being under heavy pressure during the various talks and negotiations Kissinger increasingly tended to take up the role as decisionmaker. Essentially, his action as a rather independent strategist and operator had obviously implied that he would--in general accord with Nixon--determine the formulation and implementation of decisions. He certainly made decisions in collaboration with the President.

But during the Vietnam negotiations in November 1972 this role execution would reach a far more significant stage. After some encouraging progress had been made between Kissinger and the

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133 David Hall, op. cit., p. 114.
134 Henry Kissinger, White House Years, p. 805.

North Vietnamese envoy Le Duc Tho the latter began suddenly to turn back to an uncompromising attitude and harsh propaganda. Thus, Kissinger transmitted two options to the President:

-1 break off the negotiations and resume the bombings,or

-2 continue the negotiations and try to save what was already agreed upon

It should be noted that at this time the relations between Nixon and Kissinger were wary and strained over the famous 'Peace is at Hand' press conference the National Security Assistant had given a month before.

When the disgruntled President dispatched an instruction from Camp David to follow option 1, Kissinger simply ignored it and took "advantage of the specific statement that the message was not a directive and sought to keep the negotiations going."[135] Further instructions followed but they were contradictory in nature, shifting back-and-forth between option 1 and 2. Finally, although the last message clearly suggested a preference of option 1, Kissinger concluded that "the net result of all these instructions was to leave the decision up to me."[136] He decided to continue the negotiations and arranged a private meeting with Le Duc Tho with only one adviser each.

Although the bureaucracy was blatantly circumvented and excluded from all these spectacular ventures, Kissinger did not totally banish it. He needed it to learn the views of the Departments and agencies and he used its expertise and the

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135 Ibid., p. 1420.
136 Ibid., p. 1421.

options it produced as raw material for his own analysis. And by controlling the NSC committees he could squeeze the bureaucracy without the interference from the secretaries and without having to reveal his strategies and secrets.

Regarding Kissinger's power, personality, and performance, it appears inevitable that he also assumed the role of an authoritative spokesperson and public figure. Prior to 1972, Kissinger had been very cautious with public appearances and his exposure to the mass media. Occasionally, and only on Nixon's request, he had given press briefings on a backgroud basis as an unidentified White House or administration spokesman. But the revelations about his secret missions to China in July 1971 and his secret negotiations about Vietnam in June 1972 catapulted him into the public spotlight and aroused widespread curiosity. Incidentally, he was not only an envoy on exciting ventures, he could also deliver authoritative information and elaborate the administration's strategies with brilliance and articulateness. So it was already during the India-Pakistan crisis that the Washington Post had broken the background rules and began to indentify Kissinger by name. Subsequently, most of his press meetings and briefings were on the record.

Then in late 1972 Kissinger reached his first peak of prominence when he appeared on TV, declaring optimistically that 'Peace is at Hand' in Vietnam and when he was about to be named jointly with Nixon 'man of the year' by the Time Magazine. Although Kissinger's function as a background briefer did surely fit into the concept of the public relations conscious Nixon--since it fostered the impression of presidentialism towards the

press--his public prominence had not at all been the President's desire. Indeed, out of concern that Kissinger would steal the President's show, Nixon and his domestic aides John Erlichman and H.R. Haldeman actively sought to restrain him.[137]

However, Kissinger's role as a public advocate and apologist was also clearly exploited by the President. When operations became controversial, such as the tilt towards Pakistan in 1971, or when negotiations stalled, as with the Vietnam talks in 1972, "the political aides directed criticism at Kissinger and the publicly visible National Security Assistant became a lightning rod."[138]

Kissinger himself was aware of the fact that his vital relationship with Nixon was inevitably eroded by his public prominence. Therefore, he "began Nixon's second term firmly determined to resign by the end of 1973."[139] But things turned out differently. Instead of leaving the administration, Kissinger became acting Secretary of State on 22 August 1973 and on Nixon's suggestion he kept his former position, too. Thus, wearing these 'two hats', Kissinger was finally recognized de jure for what he had been de facto for years. The institutional impact of this change was correspondingly marginal.

Being increasingly distracted by the Watergate quagmire, the

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137 John Ehrlichman, Witness to Power: The Nixon Years (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982), pp. 273-75; Henry Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, pp. 414-15. See also Joseph G. Bock, "The National Security Assistant and the White House Staff," in Duncan L. Clarke, ed., United States Defense and Foreign Policy: Policy Coordination and Integration (Greenwich: Jai Press, 1985), pp. 70-74.

138 Joseph Bock, op. cit., p. 73.

139 Henry Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, p. 415.

President could still less do without Kissinger. His initial hope might have been that Kissinger's foreign policy successes would help to uphold the executive's authority and might dissipate some of the domestic pressure. With the whole administration in disarray, Kissinger became the pillar of stability.

But Nixon's decline was inevitable and Kissinger began decisively to shield foreign policy from Watergate. Nixon had to agree to this seperation between his domestic grief and national security, and he granted Kissinger extensive authority while he retreated from foreign affairs. He would sign memoranda or accept recommendations without review or criticism and the oral briefings lost their importance.[140]

During this time Kissinger achieved an undisputed diplomatic success which might be regarded as his most substantial personal achievement. In response to the outbreak of the October War in the Middle East, he started immediately his accustomed pattern of cross-communication with the various back channels, talks at the scene of the action, and the production of comprehensive suggestions (options). Through the famous 'shuttle diplomacy' between Cairo, Jerusalem, Damascus, Amman, various other Arab capitals, and Moscow, he accomplished within the shortest time a cease-fire that would humiliate neither side, established the position of the U.S. as a credible mediator, turned Egypt definitely toward the West, deminished the Soviet influence in the Arab world, and guided a step-by-step process of troop

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140 Ibid., pp. 415-17.

withdrawal agreements which would later pave the way for President Carter's Camp David initiative.

Although Kissinger had principally felt quite comfortable with his independence and authority, even he perceived some unease when on his way to the Kremlin he suddenly learned from his deputy Brent Scowcroft that Nixon was about to send an immediate letter to Brezhnev, informing the Soviet leader that the President of the United States had delegated his National Security Assistant/Secretary of State 'full authority' and that whatever commitments the latter made, he would have the complete support of his superior.

> I was horrified. The letter meant that I would be deprived of any capacity to stall. 'Full authority' made it impossible for me from Moscow to refer any tentative agreement to the Presdent for his approval--- if only to buy some time to consult Israel."[141]

After an abortive attempt to stop the letter Kissinger had a hard time during the talks with the Soviets. Usually he would make the points with a clever network of incentives, pressure, procrastination, and pretended check-backs with his superior. But this time the Soviets would exploit the sovereign position of their counterpart with pleasure.

Facing a personal disaster, Nixon asked his surrogate to carry on their legacy[142] and so, with Nixon's resignation on August 9th 1974, the eminence of Henry Kissinger was carried over to the Ford administration.

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141 Ibid., p. 547.
142 Ibid., pp. 423-24

4.2. Brzezinski under Carter

4.2.1. Preliminary Role Determinants

Governor Jimmy Carter and Columbia professor of political science Zbigniew Brzezinski were well aquainted years before the former won his presidential election campaign in 1976. As director of the newly founded Trilateral Commission, Brzezinski selected Carter in the early 1970s as the 'forward-looking Democratic governor' the commission had been looking for. And later during Carter's presidential election campaign Brzezinski became active as the main conceptualizer, coacher, and adivser for the candidate in the field of foreign policy, striving to foster his trilateral cause of a closer cooperation between the U.S. and its main allies West Europe and Japan.

Although Carter did not have any considerable personal experience or expertise in foreign policy, he was interested in matters of international concern. Based on his deep religious belief he was initially guided by an idealistic and moralistic approach. His association with the Trilateral Commission in the mid 1970s would later influence his presidency in two major ways: First, his general interest in foreign policy experienced an immense intellectual stimulation and he was able to enrich his value system with factual and conceptual knowledge. Secondly, the aquaintances he made at the commission would later serve as a reservoir from which to draw the personnel for his adminstration: Vice President Walter Mondale, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, National Security Assistant Zbigniew Brzezinski, Secretary of

Defense Harold Brown etc.

In respect to the intellectual dimension it was Brzezinski who had a particular influence on Carter. This ambitious and activist academic intellectual of Polish origin was well known and well disputed for his strong views about U.S. foreign policy and international affairs and his forceful public presentation. Starting from a realpolitik and strategic point of view, Brzezinski had fostered a vitalization of the cooperation among the non-communist countries--especially the industrialized ones--and he demanded a more assertive and denying posture toward the Soviet Union and other communist countries. During the years before the presidency and, of course, later as National Security Assistant, Brzezinski was more than just a political partner or adviser, he was a teacher and educator. And Carter was an eager student.[143] In addition, the two got along extremely well and their confidential professional relationship was complimented by a personal friendship.

As President-elect, Carter was anxious to give the impression of change in foreign policy organization; to build up a NSC system that would be in clear contrast to the Nixon/Kissinger precedent. Essentially, Carter took some elements of Nixon's formal options systems, and in order to make it compatible with his own management style, he combined them with some important traits of Kennedy's collegial system. Thus, Carter insisted on a

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143 See Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), pp. 51-53; Peter Eisenmannm, Mit oder ohne Konzept: Bzezinski und die amerikanische Aussen-politik (Krefeld: Sinus Verlag, 1979), pp. 32-33.

formally structured NSC system with a strong NSC staff that would provide comprehensive national security studies (now called Presidential Review Memoranda [PRM]). On the other hand, however, in order to avoid an overcentralized or even closed system, he wanted to be surrounded by a number of officials and advisers receiving multiple advice and stimuli. A strong expression of this desire was the introduction of the Friday breakfast with Vance, Brzezinki, and Mondale and the weekly V-B-B luncheon[144] soon after the inauguration.

Carter did not just want to make the final decisions over a few crystalized options but he wanted to be actively involved in the shaping of these options. He sought to get deep into the details and nuances of issues and wanted to make as many decisions himself as possible. Alexander L. George observes that

> in his somewhat technocratic approach to policymaking, experts and orderly study procedures play an essential role, and so the features of the collegial model that he values had necessarily to be blended somehow with features of a formalistic model.[145]

After his campaign critique of Kissinger as Nixon's and Ford's 'foreign policy president', Carter did not intend to see his National Security Assistant come anywhere near to such a position. Indeed, he had proclaimed repeatedly in public that the Secretary of State would be his principal adviser and spokesperson and that his Assistant would not get a chance to become a 'lone ranger'. On the other hand, the Assistant would be

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144 V-B-B stands for Vance-Brzezinski-Brown; later M-B-B for Muskie-Brzezinski-Brown.
145 Alexander George, op. cit., p. 159.

accorded the same rank as the Cabinet secretaries so that he had a least an equal standing.

All this was reflected in the new NSC system. On Carter's insistence to keep it simple, Brzezinki suggested an organizational arrangement consisting of two Cabinet level committees. The Policy Review Committee (PRC) would deal with regional and topical foreign policy issues; budgetary, strategic, and doctrinal defense policy issues; and international economic issues relating to national security. Depending on the subject of an issue, the chairmanship would be alternately given to the Secretary of State, Defense or Treasury. In practice, the PRC was chaired by anybody else other than the Secretary of State only on very rare occasions. The Special Coordination Committee (SCC), on the other hand, would take up the issues which could not be distributed among departmental line and which required attention from an interdepartmental perspective. such issues would range from sentive intelligence and covert activities to arms control policy (especially SALT) and included, of course, crisis management. On Brzezinski's suggestion, the chairmanship over the SCC was given to the National Security Assistant.[146]

The new system came officially into being with Carter's signature under PD/NSC-1 and PD/NSC-2 on the eve of his inauguration.[147] PD/NSC-2 reveals that

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146 Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle, pp. 57-63.

147 PD/NSC-1 authorized the replacement of the National Security Study Memoranda (NSSMs) and National Security Decision Memoranda (NSDMs) with the Presidential Review Memoranda/ National Security Council (PRMs/NSC) and the Presidential Directives/National Security Council (PDs/NSC); PD/NSC-2 codified the new organizational arrangement of the NSC.

> the reorganization is intended to place more responsibility in the Departments and Agencies while insuring that the NSC, with my Assistant for National Security Affairs, continues to integrate and facilitate foreign and defense policy decisions.

According to this prescription

> the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, at my direction and in consultation with [the other Cabinet members], shall be responsible for determining the agenda and insuring that the necessary insuring that the necessary papers are prepared.

4.2.2. Roles and Functions

When it was noted before that Carter preferred a decision-making mode with collegial traits and that he did not want his National Security Assistant to be a second Kissinger, this neither meant that he would allow a partial diffusion of his presidential authority among the departmental heads nor that he would designate his Assistant to a subordinate position. Quite the contrary, the evidence suggests that he had essentially sought a White House-centered system and active presidentialism from the beginning and that a strong National Security Assistant would be indispensable for him to achieve this dominance.

Carter had been warned of Brzezinski's aggressiveness and ambitions, his inclination to speak out forcefully on controversal issues, and the danger that he would challenge any Secretary of State. But he states frankly in his memoirs that these assessments of his selected Assistant "were in accord with what I wanted: the final decisions on basic foreign policy would be made by me in the Oval Office, and not in the State Department."[148] In effect, Carter not only wanted to sit at the center of the decision-making process and determine the broad outlines as well as the details, he also sought to be the main diplomat, negotiator, and spokesperson himself. In other word, he wanted to be his own Secretary of State. Brzezinski even goes so far to assert that Carter would have really preferred a Nixon/Kissinger-like arrangement but that he did not dare to

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148 Jimmy Carter, op. cit., p. 52.

admit it publicly.[149]

Looking at this consideration, it is not surprising that Brzezinski was more than content when Carter assigned him the position of National Security Assistant. He reveals his calculation openly in his memoirs:

> It was no secret that I wanted to be the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs. I expected Carter to be an activist President, and I felt that being close to him was the best spot for an activist person like myself. The press occasionally speculated that I might be appointed Secretary of State. I felt that this would not be the case. I sensed that Carter wanted to be his own Secretary of State and that he would therefore be in control over foreign policy in the White House. The press speculation, however, was helpful to me because it deflected public attention from what was my goal, namely the White House slot.[150]

Therefore, Brzezinski first of all had to play a crucial role within the NSC system. Although he lacked the definite institutional centrality and dominance, he would, similiar to Kissinger, strive to function as a powerful think tank providing the necessary expertise and conceptual guidance for the presidential activism. According to Brzezinki, "the new system made that eminently feasable."[151] At the same time he would increasingly assert himself in respect to strong advocacy and operational functions.

However, in contrast to Nixon/Kissinger, the Carter/Brzezinski track was not closed. Although it was the most important connection in the administration, the collegial style

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149 Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle, pp. 10-11.
150 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
151 Ibid., p. 63.

of Carter and, thereby, the influence of several players remained a feature of the Carter presidency almost up to the end.[152] Despite the scope of authority, Brzezinski would gain, he was neither able to circumvent the bureaucracy totally nor to exclude other Cabinet members permanently.

Consequently, this organizational constellation was an invitation to struggle. And during the first year or so it seemed as if Vance was quite successful in repelling Brzezinski's advocacy and operational drive. So, when the latter proposed to begin the administration's Soviet policy with a broad dialog on the principles of detente--which would, of course, have required Brzezinski's active engagement--Vance pressed successfully for a 'softer' course of step-by-step negotiations, and unlinked arms control. While Brzezinski took care of the Middle East at first, Vance would emerge as the primary man for this region during and after his summer trip. Concerning China, Vance succesfully slowed down Brzezinski's plan to 'play the card' and to build up a bilateral security relationship. He accomplished this to the extent that his "views on this issue largely prevailed throughout 1977."[153]

Acting as an advocate, Brzezinski perceived himself as the 'strategic conscience' of the administration. He basically shared Carter's desire to re-emphasize human rights and cautious diplomacy after the era of Kissinger's power politics, but he

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152 For example, the Friday breakfasts and the V-B-B (M-B-B) luncheons took place during Carter's whole tenure.

153 Cyrus Vance, Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), p. 78.

deemed it indispensable to persue this approach under consideration of strategic matters. In his memoirs he offers several examples of this role understanding. Discussing 'Human Rights and America's World Role', for example, he would note:

> For strategic reasons, I was also concerned that our assertiveness on human rights would combine with our tough non-proliferation posture to produce a backlash in some Latin American countries, particularly Brasil. [...] Pointing to the globe in his office, I argued that the Carter Administration ought to have at its design the creation of closer relationships with a large number of these emerging regional powers.[154]

Elsewhere he describes his concerns during a debate about South Africa:

> I strongly backed the President's moral concerns, and I supported Cy's and Andy's efforts. My primary focus was on making certain that we did not ignore the Soviet-Cuban military presence in Africa to the point that the conservative whites in South Africa would be fearful of accepting any compromise solution.[155]

Because Vance was too similiar to Carter in respect to moralism and idealism--besides, he was not a conceptual thinker either--it was up to the National Security Assistant to enrich the President's approach with realpolitik.

By the end of 1977 Brzezinski had successfully consolidated his power within the NSC system. Whereas the PRC engaged Carter's main officials in a time-consuming process of discussion and debate about longer-term projects--mostly under the chairmanship of Secretary of State Vance--Brzezinski increasingly used the SCC as the basis from which he would coordinate foreign policy and put it into strategic contexts. Thus, he finally became the

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154 Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 128.
155 Ibid., pp. 139-40.

crucial innovator/strategist for such 'hot issues' as the Persion Gulf, European security, U.S.-Soviet relations (including SALT), U.S.-China relations, and, of course, crisis management.

Brzezinski's power was further strengthened because he was assigned the function of preparing written records of the views expressed and recommendations that emerged from meetings of both the SCC and PRC. In the event that a meeting ended without an agreement, he would summarize the various points of view for the President. If an agreement about recommendations could be reached, Brzezinski would prepare a PD for Carter's signature. It is remarkable that neither the summaries nor the PDs would subsequently be checked by any department or agency representative. Therefore, the National Security Assistant had a chance to filter the SCC/PRC output before submitting it to the President and to advance his own interpretations. Vance had "opposed this arrangement from the beginning"[156], and he notes in his memoirs with regret that he had allowed the President to persuade him of its necessity, arguing the danger of leaks.

In his efforts, Brzezinski was supported by a small but efficient staff. He himself had quickly recruited a group of 30 professionals, consisting of experienced personnel from the bureaucracy, liberal-oriented foreign policy experts from outside the government, and strategic thinkers from academia with similiar views as the Assistant. The selection of distinct 'liberals' and 'conservatives' clearly reflected the ideological contradictions within the Democratic Party in general and the

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156 Cyrus Vance, op. cit., p. 37.

Carter Administration in particular. In contrast to the Kissinger precedent, Brzezinski's staff was largely decentralized and the stern hierachy was replaced by collegiality. It is not surprising that Brzezinski's inner circle would from early on consist mostly of like-minded strategic thinkers. And, in addittion, since he wanted to head a think tank, he preferred 'idea people' over managers.[157]

The roots of Brzezinski's emergence as a forceful spokesperson are certainly to be found in his personality and background. But why could he take up this role despite the fact that there had been an early agreement between Carter and Vance that the latter would only become Secretary of State if the responsibility for defining the administration's foreign policy publicly was restricted to him and the President?[158] Well, after Brzezinski had consolidated his power within the NSC system and became the dominant--yet not exclusive--innovator/strategist for various important issues, it was only natural that he would break his silence in order to transmit his points effectively to the outside world and to confirm his leadership role vis-a-vis his domestic competitors.

The reaction to the Soviet-Cuban inroads in southern Africa and Ethiopia in early 1978 is an important ceasura in this respect. Whereas Vance advocated to continue with detente-as-usual and to keep these Third World problems unlinked from SALT,

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157 Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle, pp. 74-78.
158 Cyrus Vance, op. cit., p. 34; the second condition was that Vance would be able to present his views to the President unfilteredly.

Brzezinski pressed for a strong response; including the sending in of a carrier task force and a slow down in the SALT talks. And he made his views public: on March 1st he declared on Meet the Press that Soviet behavior in Africa was not "compatible with what was once called the code of detente" and he warned that it "could produce consequences which may be inimical to them."[159]

Kevin V. Mulcahy correctly observed that "Brzezinski spoke out as forcefully as he did because the President encouraged his activities."[160] Carter was self-critical enough to realize that he was not a convincing communicator, especially when it came to conceptual and strategic matters. And since his Secretary of State had the same insufficiency and even disliked to be exposed to the 'pushy' press, Carter would turn to his National Security Assistant without hesitation:

> Zbigniew Brzezinski was always ready and willing to explain our position on international matters, analyse a basic strategic interrelationship, or comment on a current event. [...] Because of his attitude and demeanor, Zbig was a natural center of public attention. This circumstance was exacerbated by his willingness to serve as a lightning rod-to take the blame for unpopular decisions made by others.[...] During all the difficult times we faced, I never knew Zbig to try to avoid criticism by shifting blame to his boss.[161]

When an angered Secretary of State Vance complained about the Assistant's publicity the President would impose a temporary restraint on Brzezinski. But in effect, the spokespersonship

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159 As quoted in I.M. Destler, Our Own Worst Enemy, p. 220.
160 Kevin V. Mulcahy, "The Secretary of State and the National Security Assistant: Foreign Policymaking in the Carter and and Reagan Administrations," Presidential Studies Quarterly 16 (1986), p. 284.
161 Jimmy Carter, op. cit., p. 54; see also Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle, pp. 29-30.

remained an important role during Brzezinski's whole tenure.

With the Secretary of State and the National Security Assistant (which literally also meant the State Department and the NSC staff) ideologically divided and a President who could not make up his mind and who vacillated between the two poles, the ongoing diplomatic initiatives were finally split. While Vance was the lead negotiator for the SALT II agreement and the Camp David process, Brzezinski satisfied his operational needs with the rapprochement to China. It should be remembered here, however, that although Brzezinski was not the lead negotiator in many cases, he was mostly a decisive influence because of his control over the NSC system and his special relations to the President.

Anyway, the China initinative, which means the attempt to further normalize the relations with China, had initially been a 'collegial' project, including Vance, Brzezinski, Brown, and others. Yet, like over most other sensitive issues, there emerged an ideological split. Vance advocated persuing the process of normalization with the greatest caution and to always consider Soviet sensitivities and the impact on SALT. Brzezinski, on the other hand, who wanted to use the China card in order to put pressure on the Soviet Union, advocated a substantial Sino-American security cooperation. The Assistant had fostered this strategy with a lot of energy and had actively sought permission to go to China. At the same time, Vance was focusing on 'his' SALT negotiations hoping for an imminent breakthrough. In this confusion, Carter

> was determined that the SALT negotiations not be delayed, so I decided to send Cy to Moscow, and at the same time told him that Brzezinski would go to Peking as soon as the Panama treaties were ratified. Cy did not like the arrangement, but he accepted my decision.[162]

Brzezinski won the race and his trip in May 1978 led to an agreement of fast normalization. Vance's SALT talks stalled--maybe not at least because of the spectecular Brzezinski mission to China and his anti-Soviet rhetoric there.[163]

Preceding and accompanying Brzezinski's overseas negotiations was, of course, his role as a diplomat in Washington. He would hold private meetings with most foreign leaders visiting the U.S. capital, having his reputation as the most influential and decisive architect of U.S. foreign policy. In addition, he would also have his network of back channels--but he had to be cautious in using them.

The crisis in Iran--or I should more correctly say the fateful conclusion of it--was one of the external factors which further strengthend the Carter/Brzezinski connection. Brzezinski regarded Iran as an extemely important regional power in the Soviet arc of expansion and had advocated the strengthening of the Shah's regime, and its military built up, by the U.S. When the situation in Iran got critical in November 1978 he pressed for the full and unqualified support of the Shah. However, as on many other occasions, Vance and other State officials did not share Brzezinski's strategic assessment and call for action. They deemed it immoral to prop up the royal dictator, whose doom they

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162 Jimmy Carter, op. cit., pp. 193-94.
163 Cyrus Vance, op. cit., pp. 114-16.

anticipated anyway.

The National Security Assistant felt obliged to become active. With Vance in the Middle East, he activated his back channel communication with the U.S. Ambassador in Teheran, William Sullivan, and with the Shah's envoy in Washington, Ardeshir Zahedi. But this secret operation was not accepted by the Secretary of State. After a harsh complaint to the President "the back channel communication stopped."[164] Thus, with the two unreconciled views and an undecided President, the situation in Iran was worsening and the Shah finally left his country in Janaury 1979. The religious fanatic Ayatollah Khomeini would take over power soon.

This debacle raised some painful questions in Carter's mind: Had Brzezinski not been right with his call for decisive action and with his aborted initiative? Was it not the inaction and obstructionism of Vance and his State Department that made the fiasco inevitable? Carter answered both questions in the affirmative and his subsequent anger is vividly described by I.M. Destler:

> So, he summoned Iran desk officers and senior sub-Cabinet State Department officials from that department to a White House meeting and declared coldly that their 'leaking' was disloyality. They would have to stop it or leave the govern-ment. Then he 'got up and left the room', giving no one a chance to answere the charges.[165]

The 'loss' of Iran was a serious blow and marks the beginning of Carter's troublesome last year. But while the presidency

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164 Ibid., p. 328.
165 I.M. Destler, Our Own Worst Enemy, p. 222.

itself was in a decline, Brzezinski experienced a remarkable rise. Because of the strained Carter-Vance relationship, the National Security Assistant became most influential during the final SALT negotiations and he used his SCC chairmanship bolder than ever before.

Further external factors, mostly the hostage crises and the Soviet invasion into Afghanistan, again proved the need for realpolitiks and power--things Brzezinski had tried to inject into policymaking from early on. And in the U.S., the climate changed to conservativism, thus favoring Brzezinski's views and assessments.

A short paragraph from Vance's memoirs about the decision for the Iran rescue mission illustrates the power constellation in early 1980 quite impressively:

> On Thursday, April 10, I left with my wife for a long week-end's rest in Florida. On Friday, April 11, in my absense, a meeting of the National Security Council was hastily called to decide whether a rescue operation should be attempted. Warren Christopher attended as acting secretary of state. He was aware of, and shared, my strong views against the use of military force in Iran, but he was not fully briefed on the rescue operation, which had been kept a tightly held secret. Christopher properly declined to take a position on the rescue mission and argued that there still remained important political and diplomatic options to consider before we resorted to military force. But he was isolated. Everyone else at the meeting supported the rescue attempt, and President Carter tentatively decided the mission would be launched on Thursday, April 24.[166]

Vance acknowledged the consequences of Brzezinski's dominance and his exclusion; he resigned. But Carter did not follow the Nixon precedent to give his most important foreign policy

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166 Cyrus Vance, op. cit., p. 409.

subordinate the 'two hats'. Instead, he appointed the widely respected senior Senator Edmund Muskie as Secretary of State. Although Carter had to make some cosmetic changes in order to please Muskie--e.g. Brzezinski temporarily restricted his public appearances and loosened slightly his regime over the NSC--the focal point of decision-making did not return to the State Department.

The U.S. News & World Report poll of 1980 even listed Brzezinski as the 'third-most-influencial' official after the President and the Federal Reserve Chief.[167] Finally, he had gained the position of primus inter pares, but with the decaying Carter Presidency, Brzezinski was at best the dominant care taker.

4.3. What Happened under Reagan?

Reagan's views on U.S. foreign policy and the organization for foreign policymaking were largely based on nostalgia for the 1950s. His cold war internationalist approach was based on the underlying premises that the U.S. was still the unrestricted number one power in the world, leading the non-communist world in its struggle against Soviet expansionism and aggression. In this unchanged bi-polar world system the U.S. had to focus mainly on the Soviet Union. And since the latter sought expansion and military superiority, the U.S. had to be militarily strong in order to contain communism and in order to be able to achieve

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167 Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 524.

roll-backs at the periphery of the Soviet empire--Afghanistan, Angola, Nicaragua.[168]

During the 1960s and 1970s Reagan had been an active advocate for a strong military posture for the U.S. as well as an outspoken critic of the evolving detente with the Soviet Union. During his presidential election campaign he did not hesitate to blame the Soviet adventures in the Third World on a misguided American foreign policy and American weakness. Additionally, he saw the way American foreign policymaking had been organized from Kennedy to Carter as a main reason for the lack of leadership and disorientation.

Said candidate Reagan:

> An early priority will be to make structural changes in the foreign policymaking machinery so that the Secretary of State will be the President's principle spokesman and adviser. The National Security Council will once again be the coordinator of the policy process. Its mission will be to assure that the President receives an orderly, balanced flow of information and analysis. The National Security Adviser will work closely in teamwork with the Secretary of State and the other members of the of the Council.[169]

Reagan's designated Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, was enthused by the idea. Kissinger's former deputy and White House chief of staff under Nixon "was determined to prevent the growth of a competing foreign policy center in the White House such as had bedeviled his predecessors; he wanted a return to the Dulles-Eisenhower model."[170] But, to Haig's surprise, when he

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168 Leslie Gelb, "The Mind of the President," The New York Times Magazine (6 October 1985).
169 Quoted from an October 1980 campaign speech, reprinted in The New York Times (20 October 1980).
170 Kevin V. Mulcahy, op. cit., p. 288.

delivered an organizational memo to the President proposing a clear-cut State-centered system, he received no approval.

Although Reagan liked to look back to the 1950s, he was no Eisenhower. He had no expertise or personal experience in foreign policy whatsoever--but he was a public advocate for strong views. During his whole career as politician and Governor of California, he was well known for his broad visions and firm beliefs, on the one hand, and for his disinterest in the details and profoundness of issues, on the other hand. He insisted on determining the broad direction of his agenda, but for the detailed shaping and implementation of projects he was accustomed to delegating far reaching authority to his subordinates. This executive style required Reagan to be surrounded by a selected group of confidential aides who would not abuse this extreme delegation. And, in contrast to Nixon, Reagan did not insist on private meetings with individual subordinates in order to give them explicit instructions or work out secret strategies; rather, he prefered collegial policymaking sessions hoping that his subordinates would reach a consensus for the issues at hand which he could accept.[171]

Therefore, Haig encountered trouble in his claim to be the 'vicar of foreign policy' in the Reagan administration. First, his proposal for a State-centered system was refused. Reagan's triumvirate of long-time aids, Edwin Meese, James Baker, and Michael Deaver, took care of the question of organization and

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171 See, for example, I.M. Destler, Our Own Worst Enemy, p. 226, and Kevin Mulcahy, op. cit., pp. 286-94.

hammered out a compromise system consisting of three Senior Interdepartmental Groups (SIGs) for foreign policy, defense policy, and intelligence; chaired respectively by the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and the Director of Central Intelligence. The SIGs were to be supported by a number of Assistant Secretary-level Interagency Groups (IGs). Secondly, in order to be dominant in foreign policymaking, Haig depended on a close and confidential relationship with Reagan and on regular access to the Oval Office, but the triumvirate systematically shielded the President from such endeavors. And thirdly, Haig even failed to obtain the say over crisis management when, on Meese's suggestion, the chair of the Special Situation Group (SSG) was given to the vice-president.

Essentially, what we find under Reagan is a decentralized and diffused system; or, if one is very critical, a non-system. In the absense of any focal point for the conduct of foreign policy- in the absense of any coherent guidance or leadership, there was a constant, paralysing fight between the Secretary of State and the White House staff and between the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense. In all this turmoil, the White House staff found itself in a powerful position. The Tower Commission Report concludes that the formal NSC interagency apparatus quickly "fell into disuse."[172]

Was this chaos perhaps intended by the President in order to allow him to impose a White House-centered system with a predominant National Security Assistant? Nothing of the kind. I.M.

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172 The Tower Commission Report (New York: Bantam Books & Time Books, 1987), p. II-5.

Destler concludes that

> no [National Security Assistant] moved to fill the foreign-policy vacuum. Allen remained a second-rank player with weak White House ties. His staff was the weakest the NSC had seen in many, many years. Meese, Baker, and Michael Deaver were very strong, and very close to Reagan, but their priority was the President's economic program. They got into inter-national issues only when the domestic political implications were obvious.[173]

In effect, Reagan's first National Security Assistant, Richard Allen, was eclipsed by the White House staff and Haig. Although the Secreatary of State did not get the official blessing for the formal creation of a State-centered system and was constantly plagued by the White House trio, Haig asserted himself in the conduct of foreign policy. Allen was neither an adviser/advocate nor a process faciliator.

This pattern changed, however, with the replacement of Richard Allen by William Clark. Not that Clark had any more experience in foreign policy matters than Allen--he even admitted publicly that his knowledge in this field was close to zero--but he was a longtime aid and friend of Reagan. With his enhanced standing, Clark set the stage for the operational National Security Assistant and NSC staff in the Reagan administration.

Clark feared that the Reagan agenda was jeopadized by the permanent intra-Cabinet feuding and thus began to take up the initiative from the White House. He introduced many conservative activists into the NSC staff (among them McFarlane and Poindexter) and began to build up a secret institutional system

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173 I.M. Destler, Our Own Worst Enemy, pp. 126-27.

which would serve as the basis for the planed activities. As revealed by the House Iran-Contra Committee on 18 September 1987, Clark enforced, for example, that the Office of Latin American Public Policy within the State Department would be controlled by the NSC staff. Secretary of State George P. Shultz, who had replaced Haig in June 1982, urged the President in May 1983 that he be the 'sole delegate' to carry out the Central America policy, but an unsigned White House memo informed him that in the future, Central America policy would be handled by the NSC because "no single agency can do it alone."[174] Clark was anxious to involve the President deeply in national security matters. Therefore, it can be assumed that if Reagan did not intend himself to move from his original concept of a State-centered system to stricter White House control, he was behind the efforts of his Assistant.[175]

George Shultz was chosen as the new Secretary of State not least because he had the reputation of being a team player and somebody who would not use his position to fight for dominance in the conduct of foreign policy or to exclude others. In effect, Shultz's lack of assertiveness allowed Clark to become Reagan's most influencial foreign policy adviser/advocate and to perform the role of an initiator/strategist for the issues the Assistant deemed central of the Reagan 'philisophy'. While Shultz was increasingly restricted to the 'routine' business of foreign affairs, Clark sought to take charge of the 'hot' issues and the

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174 See Joe Pichirallo ,"NSC Oversaw Office in State Department," The Washington Post (19 September 1987).
175 Phillip Geyelin, The Washington Post (1 July 1982).

projects of special concern: Central America, defense budget, arms control.[176]

When Robert McFarlane replaced Clark in October 1983 he was too familiar with this modus operandi. As Clarks's deputy he had already proved his abilities as a secret operator when in September 1983 he managed to initiate the U.S. air strikes and naval gunfire against targets in Lebanon. One of McFarlane's colleagues from that time noted that "the NSC really began to go operational then, when your peace negotiator became an artillery spotter."[177] McFarlane, and later Poindexter, saw themselves unable to resolve the deep differences between the Cabinet members. Since Reagan refused to settle disputes among his senior officials and failed to enforce decisions once they were made, the two Assistants felt induced to take the most sensitive issues underground. They began to run their selected initiatives, especially those concerning the Iran- and contra projects, under a degree of independence and secrecy which is almost unbelievable; excluding not only most Cabinet members and NSC staffers, but in the end also the President himself. Working through a small group of NSC staffers, which included people like Oliver North, and secretly backed by DCI Casey and White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan, they tried to accomplish covertly what could not be done through regular channels.[178]

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176 Steven Weisman, "The Influence of William Clark: Setting a Hard Line in Foreign Policy," The New York Times Magazine (14 August 1983).

177 Quoted in Charles R. Babcock and John Oberndorfer, "The NSC Cabal: How Arrogance and Secrecy Brought On A Scandal." The Washington Post (21 June 1987), B1.

178 Ibid.

It was sometimes asserted that Kissinger had established a 'mini-State Department' within the White House in order to dominate foreign policy. In the case of McFarlane and Poindexter, they created a 'mini-CIA' within the NSC staff. What is striking here is the fact that McFarlane, Poindexter, and North were all military men and their background certainly influenced their role understanding and performance. But the evidence suggests that this was not a planned pattern. Although the Reagan agenda would certainly require military expertise in the NSC, McFarlane and Poindexter were both named to Assistant after feuding between the Cabinet members had cut down the more prestigious candidates Jeane Kirkpatrick and James Baker.[179]

The secret deals with the Iranians, the secret support of the contras, and the activities of private individuals and groups connected with the 'mini-CIA', reached their peak under John Poindexter, who took over from McFarlane in early 1986. Far less experienced in foreign affairs than McFarlane and averse to consulting with the Cabinet members or anybody else except a small group of active or retired Navy officers, his military drive would draw him into what became the Iran-conta affair.[180]

The Tower Commission Report and the Congressional hearings confirmed the pictures of a President who lost control over his National Security Assistant. Reagan was partially informed over what was going on and he had authorized parts of the activities

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179 Ibid.

180 See Keith Schneider, "Poindexter and the Security Council: A Quick Rise and a Troubled Reign," The New York Times (12 January 1987), A6.

(e.g. the missions and arms sales to Iran) but Poindexter's operations went further:

> The buck stops here with me. I made the decision [to divert profits from the Iran arms sales to aid the contras]. I felt that I had the authority to do it[....] I was convinced the president would in the end think it a good idea. But I did not want him associated with the decision.
> So, although I was convinced that we could properly do it, and that the president would approve, if asked, I made the very deliberate decision not to ask the president so that I could insulate him from the decision and provide some future deniability for the president if it ever leaked out.[181]

The Iran-contra affair led to Poindexter's and North's resignation on November 25 1986 and threw the Reagan Presidency into a crises which is comparable to Nixon's Watergate.

Reagan's new National Scurity Assistant, Frank Carlucci, began immediatly after taking up his duties in January 1987 to change the organization and function, as well as many of the top people, of the NSC staff. The new organization was designed to provide effective institutional management, while it prevents the National Security Assistant and the NSC staff from engaging in outside operations--especially in the field of covert operations.[182]

Carlucci, who was replaced by Lt. Gen. Colin L. Powell (Reagan's sixth Assistant!) in November 1987 , focused on the

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181 From Poindexter's testimony before the Congressional Iran-contra Committee on 15 July 1987, printed in The Washington Post (16 July 1987).

182 See, for examole, Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Carlucci's Men," The Washington Post (19 December 1986); Don Oberndorfer, "Carlucci Changing NSC's Organization," The Washington Post (21 December 1986); no author, "NSC Covert Actions Barred," The Washington Post (17 January 1987).

'inside' management of the national security decision-making process and acted under self-restraint when it came to outside operations. He appears to have set the Assistance's modus operandi for the rest of Reagan's Presidency.

4.4. Implications of the National Security Assistant as Dominant Actor in the White House-centered National Security System

4.4.1. Role Conception III

The role performances of Kissinger, Brzezinski, and in particular of Reagan's Assistants, differ largely in respect to the scope of functions as well as the intensity with which these functions were performed. Whereas the development under Reagan has to be regarded with caution and restraint, the examples of Kissinger and Brzezinski can, however, be used as the basis for the third role conception.

His relative standing is clearly dominant. The Assistant is the principal initiator and formulator of national security policy. As such, he maintains a very close and intimate relationship with the President. Two observers, who ought to know the issue, emphasized the importance of the relationship President-Assistant. Says Kissinger:

> The power of a Presidential Assistant derives from a strong--even ruthless--President. If the President wishes to rely on his assistants he must be able to give them unambiguous and decisive indications of support.[183]

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183 Henry Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, p. 418.

Brzezinski comments with a striking similiarity:

> In the event that foreign policy decision making is deliberately concentrated in the White House, the central role of the Assistant for National Security Affairs should be openly acknoledged and even institutionalized. Conflict is generated when lines of comand or even of influence are not clear. It is minimized when authority is seen as 'legitimate'.[184]

Thus, the President relies heavily, sometimes exclusively, on his Assistant and delegates substantial national security policy-making authority to him. The Assistant constitutes the Presidential instrument for a highly centralized decision-making process that has its locus point at the White House with the chief executive at its center.

Other senior actors, including the Secretary of State, and the bureaucracy play a relative minor role. With the NSC machinery as his instrument, the Assistant coopts other institutional players in order to profit from their expertise or to build up bureaucratic alliances.

In respect to role conception III, the Assistant dominates the initiation and formulation of national security policy and is at the same time the principal negotiator, diplomat, and spokesperson. His role is almost too comprehensive and complex as to allow the creation of a list that neatly summarizes all his functions and especially the way he executes them. Kissinger's and Brzezinski's role performances as innovator/strategist, adviser/advocate, public spokesperson, diplomat/negotiator, and decisionmaker appear to speak for themselves.

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184 Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 536.

4.4.2. What Factors Determine this Role Conception?

There are uncountable reasons and factors which led to role conception III; many of them are of an idiosyncratic nature and reflect the unique circumstances of specific examples. However, there are four determinants that appear to be again the most decisive ones:

The National Security Assistant's dominant modus operandi is first of all determined by the executive style and the personal interests of the President. After World War II Presidents were increasingly anxious to put their personal imprints on U.S. foreign policy and to be personally identified with the conduct of external affairs. This striving for presidentialism led to the incremental centralization of the national security decision-making process in the White House.

Since the gigantic machinery of the permanent government is often perceived as unresponsive or even rebellious by the President, he seeks to accomplish his personal agenda through a 'mini- government' within the White House. The National Security Assistant is a suitable tool for the president because:

a) he is a personal aid to the president,

b) he has no constituency other than the President and is free from parochial pressures, and

c) he is in permanent range of the president--"someone down the hall."[185]

As the examples of Nixon, Carter, and Reagan have demontra-

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185 Henry Kissinger, White House Years, pp. 38-48.

ted, the Assistants became operators because the Presidents wanted them to perform different operational roles or because they were under pressure to handle issues which could not be dealt with effectively otherwise.

It is no accident that--with the exception of Reagan--recent Presidents have recruited their Assistants from a certain species. First Bundy and Rostow, and later Kissinger and Brzezinski were all ambitious and action-oriented academic intellectuals. Their placement into the White House position is a clear signal that Presidents do not want mere 'paper-pushers'. If Nixon and Carter had appointed 'average people' to the position of National Security Assistant, it can be assumed that their role performance would have looked totally different--they would have simply been unable to execute operational functions in that way. On the other hand, once such 'genies' as Kissinger and Brzezinki are put into this potentially powerful position, how can anybody expect them to remain process faciliators? Presidents have developed a need to have an 'intellectual' at their side and, as the example of Brzezinski has shown, people of high caliber actively seek the position knowing of the opportunities it provides.

The performance and responsiveness of the State Department is another decisive factor determining role conception III. During the last decades the traditional policymaking role played by the State Department in foreign affairs has eroded, and in addition, the White House has regarded State's civil servants and diplomats with an increasing distrust and impatience. In the best case, the President perceives the State Department as sluggish, unrespon-

sive, and unimaginative. State neither has the expertise nor the organization to help the president shape his agenda, launch new initiatives, or persue sensitive diplomatic missions. Duncan Clarke has recently pointed out unambiguously 'Why State Can't Lead'.[186] In the worst case, the President regards the State Department as an obstructionist opponent to his aims. For whatever reasons, recent Presidents did not feel inclined to turn to the State Department; rather they more or less openly tended to circumvent and exclude it from important issues and major operations.

Finally, and underlying the three points discussed above, the international demands challenging the U.S. and the nature of decisions has changed dramatically. As Phillip Odeen has pointed out, current national security issues cut across traditional departmental lines and imply complexities and implications which are totally different from problems in the post-war period. Additionally, decisions on foreign policy are no longer a question of classical diplomacy but are strongly interdependent with domestic factors. Thus, numerous decisions of the highest priority and extensive complexity today call for direct Presidential attention.[187] This enhances the President's dependence on his White House aides, especially the National Security Assistant. And once the Assistant has become the crucial adviser/ advocate, initiator/strategist on certain issues--or

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186 Duncan L. Clarke, "Why State Can't Lead," Foreign Policy (Spring 1987), pp. 128-42; see also I.M. Destler, Presidents, Buraucrats.., chapter 6.

187 Phillip A. Odeen, "Organizing for National Security," International Security (Summer 1980), p. 111-12.

principally--to the President, there is an enormous pressure and temptation to accumulate further roles and to become operational.

4.4.3. What is Wrong with this Role Conception?

Since Kissinger's role accumulation and performance of operational roles became evident in the early 1970s there has been a professional debate about the negative impact of this development.

Alexander L. George and his student David K. Hall have called attention to the role conflicts the dominant National Security Assistant faces.[188] Once the Assistant takes up 'additional roles' (adviser/advocate/spokesperson/negotiator etc.) he is no longer able to perform as an effective 'custodial manager' because a) he has lost his reputation as a neutral broker, and b) he is overloaded with his additional assignments. The Odeen Report, which addressed the organizational insufficiencies within the Carter Administration, argued in the same direction.[189] Because Brzezinski put too much emphisis on his advisory role to President Carter, he neglected his institutional role of coordinating and integrating the foreign policymaking process.

I.M. Destler's critique of the 'Rise of the National Security Assistant' refers largely to the competition the operational

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188 Alexander L. George, "Towards a More Soundly Based Foreign Policy: Making Better Use of Information," Appendix D (Volume 2) of the Murphy Commission Report; and Presidential Decisionmaking.., chapters 10 and 11, and David Hall, op. cit.

189 Odeen Report, "National Security Policy Integration," The National Security Advisor:Role and Accountability,pp. 106-28.

Assistant imposes on the Secretary of State.[190] With his role accumulation and execution of operational tasks the National Security Assistant intrudes into the terrain of the Secretary of State and takes away his traditional prerogatives. With the exclusion of the Scretary of State and his bureaucratic base, foreign policy becomes idiosyncratic and discontinuous.

The critique which Senator Edward Zorinsky expressed with his proposal to put the Assistant under the status of Senate confirmation[191] addressed the discrepancy between the Assistant's scope of performance and his non-accountability to the legislative branch. Since the National Security Assistant has de facto become a 'second Secretary of State', so the argument goes, he should not be allowed to act in the shadow but should rather be accountable for his responsibilities de jure.

McFarlane's and Poindexter's role performance, especially in respect to the Iran-contra affair, has again thrown light on the enormous potential for abuse which an operational Assistant implies. The Tower Commission Report and the Congressional hearings have highlighted these concerns. Acting in an ambiguously defined position, backed by an ambiguous scope of presidential authority, free from public accountability, and in the very focal point of power the American political system

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190 See especially I.M. Destler, Our Own Worst Enemy, chapter 4; "The Rise of the National Security Assistant, 1961-1981," in Charles W. Kegley, ed., American Foreign Policy: Pattern and Process (St. Martin Press, 1987), chapter 17; and "National Security Managment: What Presidents Have Wrought," Political Science Quarterly (Winter 1980-1981), pp. 573-88.

191 Senator Zorinsky's proposal is discussed in The National Security Adviser: Role and Accountabilty.

offers, there is a potential danger of the National Security Assistant getting out of control. This leads us to the last question.

4.4.4. What Can be Done about this Role Conception?

Because this has been the crunch question of the foreign policy presidency for a couple of years it is no surprise that there is a multi-colored spectrum of suggestions offered.

At the one end of the rainbow, I.M. Destler calls for the simple elimination of the 'Job That Doesn't Work'.[192] He basically calls for a restoration of the State-centered system of the Truman and Eisenhower models, delegating the leading role for the conduct of foreign policy to the State Department and giving the Secretary of State the role of principal foreign policy adviser and operator. The small and low-profile NSC staff would, of course, again be headed by an executive secretary. Later, Destler moderated his position somewhat and emphasized that the National Security Assistant can be acceptable if he abstains from 'outside leadership functions'.[193]

Quite surprisingly, Henry Kissinger seems to have reconsidered his role performance as Nixon's Assistant. He has become an advocate against role conception III and even recommends, like Destler, a return to State-centered systems.[194] But he still

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192 I.M. Destler, "A Job That Doesn't Work," Foreign Policy, (Spring 1980), pp. 80-88.
193 I.M. Destler, "What Presidents Have Wrought."
194 As expressed during an interview with Garbich Utley, NBC 'Today' Show (29 April 1980).

admits that the temptation is overwhelming "to do it in the White House."

On the other side of the spectrum, there are suggestions to accept the de facto role accumulation of the National Security Assistant and to institutionalize the position. Senator Zorinsky's proposal to establish the Assistant by statute and to put him under the requirement of Senate confirmation and accountability would clearly legitimize the operational mode de jure. Zbigniew Brzezinski is the most outspoken advocate for this idea. He concludes from the four points discussed in chapter 4.4.2. that a dominant National Security Assistant is unavoidable--even indispensable. Thus, he recommends consolidating the 'Presidential mode' in foreign policymaking and upgrading the position of National Security Assistant by statute. Therefore, he calls for the establishment of the Office of the 'Director for National Security Affairs' in the White House.[195]

Between these two extremes there are a number of observers who regard a strong Assistant as indispensable for the coordination and integration of the fragmented executive branch for a coherent and consistent national security policymaking. Although a strong institutional role is recommended, and confidential advice and advocacy is not excluded, these scholars do not deem operational functions as desirable for the Assistant.[196]

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195 Zbigniew Brzezinski, Deciding Who Makes Foreign Policy...

196 Duncan L. Clarke, "Why State Can't Lead"; Robert E. Hunter, Managing National Security (Washington: CSIS, 1984); and Peter Szanton, "Two Jobs, Not One," Foreign Policy (Spring 1980), pp. 89-91.

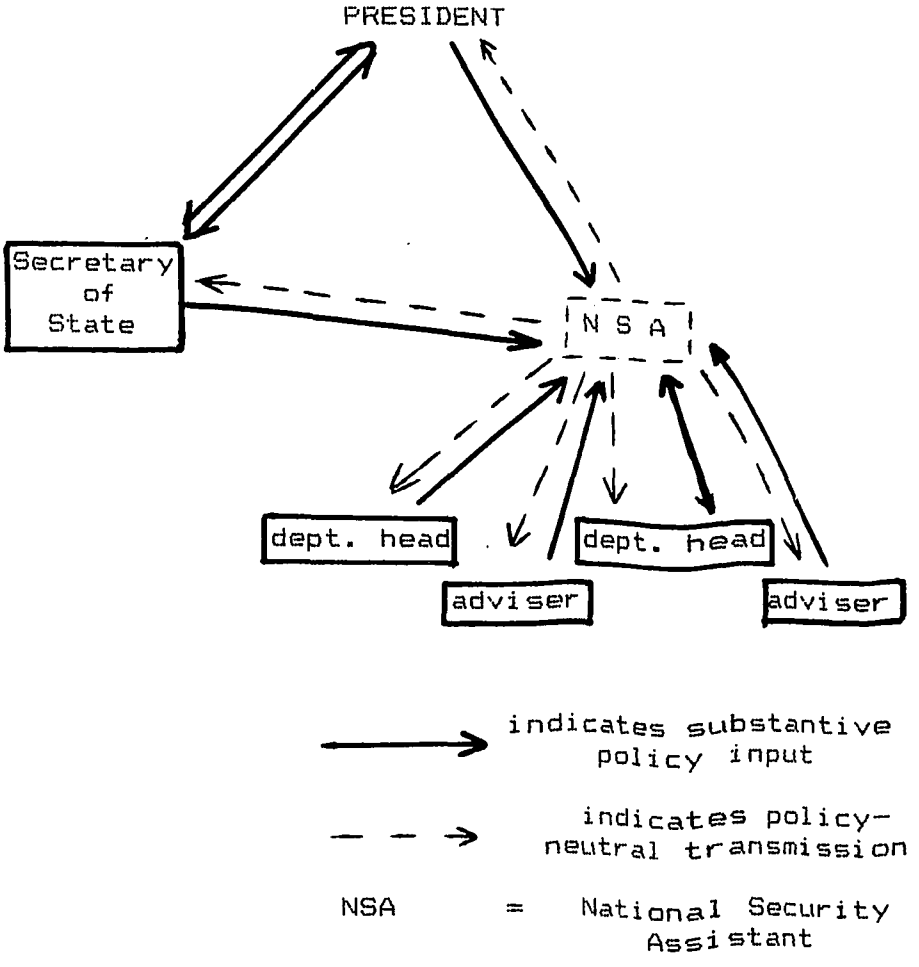
5. Concluding Remarks

The controversy about the proper role conception for the National Security Assistant will linger on for the forseeable future. There are no indications that the question will be closed either by a significant initiative of the President or by a legislative imposition.

It is undisputed that the President needs personal staff support for national security policy as he does for domestic issues. Unlike the parliamentary systems, in which the prime minister or chancellor is usully supported by a stable bureaucratic machinery and by a Cabinet of long-time party friends, the presidential system exposes the chief executive to a diffused and discontinuous environment. The National Security Act of 1947 provided the President with special instruments for bringing to bear a creative and coherent perspective on the various departments and agancies. Depending on the styles and interests of the respective Presidents, the National Security Council, the NSC staff, and the National Security Assistant were used very differently during the past four decades.

This study cristalized and made explicit three basic options for the use of the National Security Assistant in the national security decisionmaking process. In the context of the State-centered, intermediate, or White House-centered systems, the Assistant has, respectively, a subordinate, equal, or dominant standing relative to the other senior officials. Additionally, he has three basic role conceptions with distinct functional assignments.

Figure I: Role Conception I



In role conception I, as illustrated by figure I in simplified form, the Assistant is a policy-neutral process coordinator/facilitator. He collects, aggregates, and facilitates substantive policy input provided by the senior actors and manages the day-to-day operations of the NSC. The Secretary of State is the dominant actor under the President.

Figure II: Role Conception II

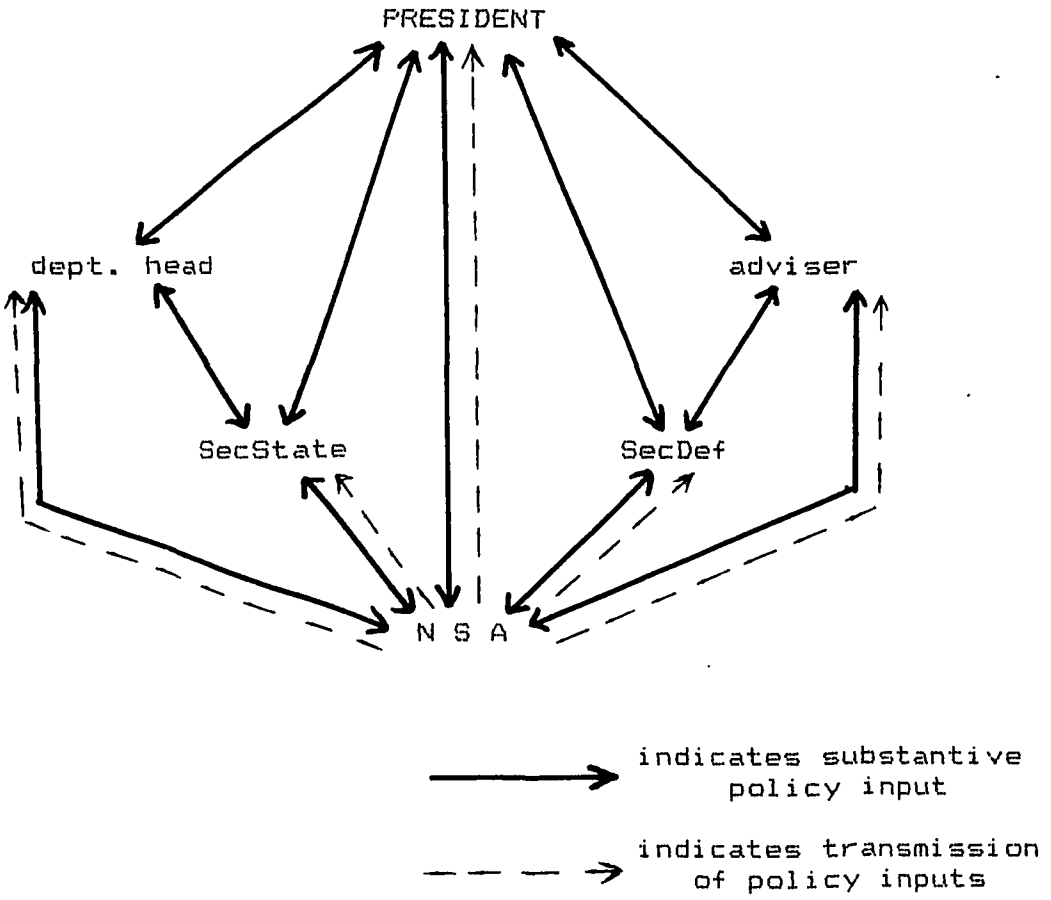


Figure II demonstrates the difference of the Assistant's standing and his role in the intermediate system. He is an equal actor among the senior officials and provides substantive policy input in a collegial decisionmaking environment. The President uses him as a personal aide and seeks policy advice from him. The Assistant also functions as an advocate in his own right and initiates policy on selected issues.

FigureIII: Role Conception III

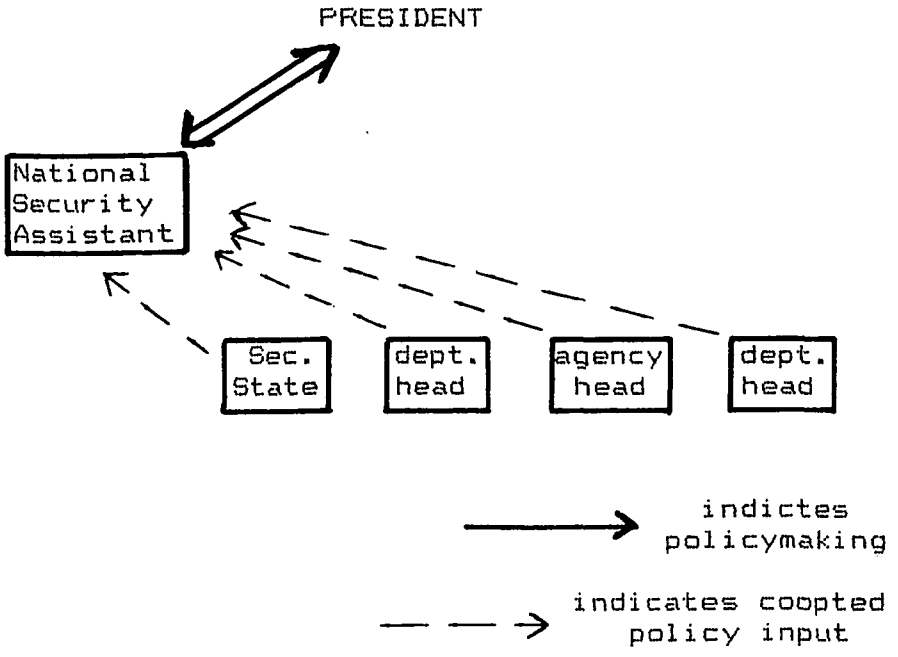


Figure III shows, with the same degree of simplification that accompanied the two former figures, that the relative standing of the National Security Assistant is clearly dominant. National security policymaking is centralized in the White House with the Assistant as the President's principal aide. He initiates and formulates major policy and is an 'outside' operator. As such, he performs roles as diplomat, negotiator, and spokesman. The President delegates substantial policymaking authority to him.

The implications and of these three role conceptions were discussed before. Each of them has its advantages, but also its shortcomings and limitations. Each of them appears to be a viable option which can be taken by an incoming President.

When it comes to the future of the position National Security Assistant, it seems to be undesirable to abolish it altogether or to put it into a narrow statutory corset. It is undisputed that the President needs aides for his highly challenging and demanding office. Prohibiting him from recruiting a National Security Assistant seems to be an illegitimate intrusion into his innermost organization for the conduct of his office. It would also be pointless because he could simply appoint somebody for the same functions under a different title. And the institutionalization of the position by statute would clearly undermine the confidentiality between the President and his personal aide because the latter would be accountable to Congress. Besides, Raymond Celada concludes that the

> statutory creation of the office of the National Security Adviser with senatorial confirmation of appointees in the belief that such action will enhance the power of Congress to require the testimony and production of documents from the officeholder may be illusionary.[197]

As the analysis of the eight postwar administrations has shown, the role of the National Security Assistant was seldom explicitly planned or intended from the beginning. Rather, the role performance grew through an evolutionary process, being shaped by

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197 See Raymond Celada, National Security Adviser: Accountability to Congress CRS, report no. 86-1025 A (3 December 1986), p. 13.

preliminary determinants only to a very limited degree. Therefore, confirmation hearings and statutes would be of a doubtful value.

On the other hand, what would be the advantages of a Director for National Security Affairs? It is doubtful that the creation of such a position per se would make a crucial difference. The formal position mostly determines the actual role performance only to a marginal degree. Furthermore, this proposal--which might be unconstitutional--would undermine the very flexibility of the Assistant's position which has been a major factor for its increasing role in the foreign policy presidency.

In the final analysis, both the restrictive and the expansive role prescrptions seem inadequate because, in Pillip Odeen's words:

> there is neither a magic structure nor an immutable role for the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs and the NSC staff. Rather, these roles depend on the needs of the principals.[198]

Legalistic and formalistic impositions will not force the genie back into the bottle and there are also no indications that Presidents are interested in institutionalizing the National Security Assistant along the line of Brzezinski's proposal. Rather, it is in the President's judgement to choose and monitor his Assistant carefully and to assign him functions which serve his needs without permitting the abuses and excesses of the past. Whatever the scope of the Assistant's role performance may be in

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198 Phillip A. Odeen, "Organizing for National Security," pp. 103-14.

the future, improved communication and trust in the conduct of foreign and security policy within the executive branch and between Congress and the President, supported by a broad and popular consensus on foreign policy, are certainly more helpful than any escape into formalism or legalism.

6. Bibliography

The most valuable sources for this study were the numerous memoirs, published by the former Presidents, National Security Assistants, Secretaries of State, and other senior officials. In addition, the Congressional hearings to the issue of national security decisionmaking that were held in 1960 and in 1980 served as important primary sources. The deficit of primary literature on the Ford Administration was compensated with a personal interview with General Brent Scowcroft.

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