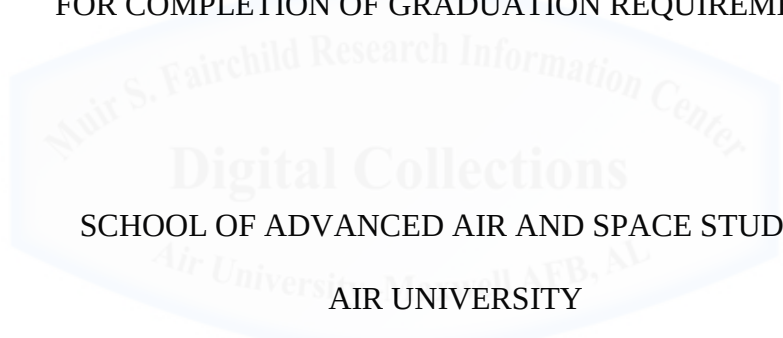


THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL: AN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE
APPROACH

BY
KATHERINE C. MACK

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF
THE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIR AND SPACE STUDIES
FOR COMPLETION OF GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS



SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIR AND SPACE STUDIES
AIR UNIVERSITY

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

JUNE 2018

APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

THOMAS HUGHES (Date)

MELIA PFANNENSTIEL (Date)



DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major Katherine Mack was a 2005 graduate of the United States Air Force Academy, where she majored in History. She earned a Master's degree in International Relations through Troy University in 2010. She has served her 13-year career as a nuclear operator of intercontinental ballistic missiles.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Tom Hughes for his patience, guidance, and support throughout this process.

I would also like to thank the faculty and my classmates, who, through their thoughtful conversations, taught me an incredible amount over the past year.

None of this would have been possible without the love and support of my husband. We embarked on this educational adventure together and he, even when working on his own thesis and coursework, was as supportive and amazing as ever.



ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the United States (US) National Security Council (NSC) through an organizational culture lens. The author examines basic elements of US foreign policy, focusing on roles, structures and processes in the NSC, the development of the special assistant to the president for national security affairs, and the role of presidential 'style.' Together, these elements create a dynamic organizational culture. An organizational approach is applied to three Republican administrations, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and George H. W. Bush, focusing on three areas: how the president embedded culture and how the other elements responded to these mechanisms; how the organization adapted to external challenges; and how well it managed internal conflicts. The organizational culture approach reveals that though an administration might have successful foreign policy outcomes, if the president tends toward an extreme of focusing on either tasks, as did Nixon, or people, as did Reagan, they are less likely to sustain that success over the long term. A balanced, collegial organizational culture like Bush's, while not perfect, is best suited to manage the tensions between tasks and people and to adapt the immense challenge of crafting foreign policy in a variety of international and domestic contexts.



CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
DISCLAIMER	ii
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
INTRODUCTION	1
1 Foreign Policy and the National Security Council	7
2 Organizational Culture and Theory	30
3 Aggressive-Defensive Culture: Nixon.....	42
4 Passive-Defensive Culture: Reagan.....	52
5 Constructive Culture: George H. W. Bush	63
CONCLUSION.....	76
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	81
Illustrations	
Figure 1: Presidential Need for Control and Involvement in the Policy Process	26
Figure 2: Presidential Sensitivity to Context	26

INTRODUCTION

The art of crafting foreign policy is a complicated, iterative, process. It involves a variety of individuals, organizations and systems, and occurs within differing international and domestic contexts. The Constitution grants the President broad executive powers to ensure the nation's security. Over time, organizations such as the Cabinet, the National Security Council (NSC) and the NSC staff were established to help presidents cope with the immense difficulty of developing, coordinating, and executing effective national security policies across the whole of the United States (US) government. Each president uses advisors in different ways, altering the specific structure, roles, and processes to suit his preferences.

The president, his advisors, the NSC, and their representative organizations exist *as a group of people to achieve the purpose* of effective national security policy. The president has the authority to direct the elements as he sees fit, yet the foreign policy process does not always function as the president envisioned or desired. Robert Jervis argues that when elements are interconnected in a system, “changes in some elements or their relationships produce changes in other parts of the system” and that “the entire system exhibits properties and behaviors that are different from those of the parts.”¹ In the foreign policy process each element has different interests, preferences, fears or trusts with respect to other advisors and the president. As this group of people works together to create effective foreign policies, they must also manage their internal relationships.

In a complex system, Jervis also argues systems and their elements do not remain constant: “systems display nonlinear relationships, outcomes cannot be understood by adding together the units or their relations, and many of the results of actions are unintended. Complexities can appear even in what would seem to be simple and deterministic situations.”² In short, elements and actors “never do merely one thing.” Actions and interactions ripple throughout the system, with direct and indirect effects on each element. The president and his cabinet are new elements that are introduced to the

¹ Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1997), 7.

² Jervis, 7.

existing system of the federal government. At the presidential and senior advisor level, the NSC and 'inner circles' in effect become a smaller system embedded within the larger foreign policy system.

Over the course of the NSC's history, much work has been done to analyze the separate and most important elements of the foreign policy process and identify reforms or recommendations to help the president, his advisors, and the nation be more effective. These works provide rich detail in understanding influential roles and key relationships, but do not necessarily create a framework for understanding how separate elements dynamically interact to form the complex system of foreign policy.³ Understanding the overall systemic effects and interactions can provide additional insight into the challenges of crafting foreign policy, especially when indirect or unintended effects might occur. This work argues that these separate elements of the foreign policy process should be understood and grouped within the context of an organizational culture that develops over the course of an administration. This overarching approach can connect disparate elements into a systemic whole. In other words, it is important to see and understand the forest, in addition to the trees.

The NSC, including the president, statutory members, formal and informal advisers, the national security advisor (NSA) and the NSC staff, constitute a unique organization, composed of sub organizations and subcultures. On one hand, each entire NSC organization is a brand-new organization and a blank slate on the first day of any given administration. Each NSC is, in effect, "founded" by the president. On the other hand, Cabinet members represent government bureaucracies that have pre-existing organizational routines and preferences of an administration. Additionally, senior

³ Much of the literature focuses on either presidential leadership or the bureaucratic processes affecting foreign policy. For presidential leadership, see Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan* (New York : Toronto : New York: Free Press ; Collier Macmillan Canada ; Maxwell Macmillan, 1990) and Fred I. Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Barack Obama*, 3rd ed (Princeton, NJ ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009). For presidents and their advisors, see Joseph G. Bock, *The White House Staff and the National Security Assistant: Friendship and Friction at the Water's Edge*, Contributions in Political Science, no. 170 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987) and Paul Kowert, *Groupthink or Deadlock: When Do Leaders Learn from Their Advisors?*, SUNY Series on the Presidency (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002). For bureaucratic processes, see Morton H. Halperin, Priscilla Clapp, and Arnold Kanter, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 2nd ed (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2006) and Sam C. Sarkesian, John Allen Williams, and Stephen J. Cimbala, *US National Security: Policymakers, Processes, and Politics*, 4th ed (Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008).

advisers have often worked together previously or in government agencies and will bring those relationships and experiences to their new positions. Their experiences overlay the existing cultures of the departments of which they are the head. So each NSC is both old and new – as is clear via the memoirs and literature that often characterize the group of senior advisors in the foreign policy process as developing a unique sociology, identity, or culture after taking office.⁴

An orchestra is a useful metaphor to understand the complex structure, roles, and processes that make up US foreign policy and decision making. The orchestra's purpose is to perform music as an ensemble. The conductor selects the score, interprets, and shapes the phrasing of the score, and ensures the musicians perform their parts accordingly, maintaining balance, harmony, and coherence. Depending on the score and the style of music, the instrumental sections of woodwinds, strings, percussion, and brass can be evenly balanced or can emphasize one section over another. The musicians should abide by the conductor's direction, but can bring their own ideas to the conductor and ask for changes (in some instances, they might even disregard the conductor). In this construct, the conductor shapes whether the music ought to be played strictly according to the written music, or if the music should be played like jazz, allowing the musician's flexibility and individual interpretation, so long as it complements the ensemble's overall approach. Individual musicians make choices about how closely they will follow the score and the conductor's direction. The sections make choices about whether they are willing to support other sections or should try to compete in volume and frequency with

⁴ An excellent starting point is David J. Rothkopf, *Running the World: The inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), as it relies extensively on interviews with both principals and their staff members, providing insight into the inner workings of an administration just below the senior advisor level. Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, and Ronald Reagan both wrote individual memoirs, while George H. W. Bush wrote a joint one with his NSA, Brent Scowcroft. See Richard M. Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon, with a New Introduction*, 1st Touchstone ed, The Richard Nixon Library Edition (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990); Henry Kissinger, *White House Years*, First Simon & Schuster trade paperback ed (New York: Simon & Schuster trade paperbacks, 2011); Ronald Reagan, *An American Life*, 1st Threshold Editions trade pbk.ed (New York: Threshold Editions, 2011); George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 1st ed (New York: Knopf ; Distributed by Random House, 1998). Secretaries of State and Defense, like George Shultz, James A. Baker III, and Caspar Weinberger also wrote memoirs on their experiences. See George Pratt Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York; Toronto; New York: Scribner's ; Maxwell Macmillan Canada ; Maxwell Macmillan International, 1993); James Addison Baker and Thomas M. DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War, and Peace, 1989-1992* (New York: Putnam, 1995); Caspar W. Weinberger, *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon* (New York, NY: Warner Books, 1990).

other sections. Conductors make choices about how to respond to musicians and sections that are not performing their parts well or chose not to perform well with the rest of the orchestra. The conductor is in charge, but the musicians and sections have a degree of autonomy to shape the music in accordance with their own views and preferences. Ideally, the ensemble produces music that, no matter the specific sounds or style, is coherent and complementary as a system, rather than fragmented in parts and competitive. The musical performance is a result of the interactions between the entire orchestra: the conductor, his choices about musical style and phrasing, the individual musicians, their sections, and their complex interactions with each other.

In the orchestration of foreign policy, the President is the conductor, his policies and preferences the score, and his senior advisors the chairs of the instrumental sections. The president selects the style of foreign policy structures and roles he expects his advisors to play, if they are expected to execute policy exactly as directed or if they will be allowed to improvise and adapt with the President and other advisors. The president that minimally conducts his orchestra of advisors takes a chance that the music the ensemble, the NSC, performs will be discordant, unorganized, and ineffective in meeting the audience's needs. The unengaged president relies on the individual advisors and their departments to orchestrate themselves, each, perhaps, bringing their own music and hoping to convince other departments and the president to follow along.

This work investigates how organizational cultures develop in an administration, with the president, intentionally or unintentionally, leading the process of culture formation among his senior foreign policy advisers. How do formal and informal NSC groups contribute to or expose elements of organizational culture? What types of relationships develop among the president's senior foreign policy advisers and how do they solve problems of creating and implementing effective foreign policy? How and why might organizational culture change over time during an administration? What is the president's role in orchestrating foreign policy to produce effective music and also balance conflicts among his musicians and their instrumental sections? Can applying an organizational culture lens to an administration expose problems and solutions in the foreign policy process that other approaches cannot systemically analyze?

This work begins by analyzing basic elements of foreign policy: factors inside and outside the president's control, the structure, process, roles, relationships within the NSC, and presidential 'style'. The president chooses the music in that the foreign policy process is foundationally based on the president's vision of foreign policy and preferences for the process. His vision and preferences do not exist in a vacuum, though, and his closest senior advisors can also shape the music by how they play their parts, compete or cooperate with each other or other agencies, and the quality of their relationship with the president. Most often, the Secretary of State and the NSA are the two critical people in that the quality of their relationship with each other, and their interaction can have rippling effects across the entire orchestra. The Secretary of State and NSA are not alone in contributing to the organizational culture of the NSC. The Secretary of Defense, the president's personal aides in the White House, and lower level staffers that support the principals also contribute to the organizational culture that develops in the administration.

Organizational culture is the systemic approach this thesis applies to the foreign policy process in analyzing how even experienced people with well-structured processes can struggle to develop effective foreign policy. Edgar Schein's definition of organizational culture is the organizing framework for chapter two. This section will explain how gaps and inconsistencies between espoused values and observed behaviors expose the basic, often unspoken and unconscious, assumptions about how an organization 'really' works. For Schein, the basic assumptions are the true roots of organizational culture, developed over time in response to shared learning and shared meanings. Leaders in new organizations have an essential role in embedding structures, roles, behaviors and relationships within and among the members. His leadership of these elements helps the organization manage conflict, or internal integration challenges, while working to achieve their purpose in the face of external challenges that require adaptation. Leaders embed and are responsible for their organization's culture, but the members, in their relationships with each other and the president, can interpret and shape the culture in response to presidential action or inaction.⁵

⁵ Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 5th Edition (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 2017).

The last three chapters apply an organizational culture assessment to the three administrations of Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and George H. W. Bush. Each chapter includes a description of the primary and secondary ways the president embedded behaviors, identity, mission, and relationships within their senior foreign policy teams. Each will then focus on how the organization and president managed the challenges of external adaptation, usually due to a significant foreign policy crisis, and internal integration, meaning how well each group dealt with elements of conflict and cooperation, and the resulting impact on relationships in the organization. Lastly, each chapter will focus on how well the president's orchestration of foreign policy resulted in music that balanced and harmonized the many aspects of foreign policy. Along the way, their personal idiosyncrasies and management styles will provide additional insight into the broader organizational culture elements. In the end, each chapter will assess the broader organizational culture of each administration's foreign policy process. The case studies demonstrate that it is difficult to predict behavior or outcomes based on simplistic models of an organization, not only for the US but for other nations as well. Organizational cultures that tend to an extreme can often experience more difficulty over the long term in adapting to external challenges and managing internal conflict. A balanced organizational culture, while not perfect nor a guarantee of success, might be the best approach a president can take in the foreign policy process.

Chapter 1

Foreign Policy and the National Security Council

The NSC is and always has been an imperfect instrument. Positioned as it is midway between a highly routinized bureaucracy and an intensely personal and political White House, the NSC shares the characteristics of both, but is fully integrated into neither. As a result, many presidents seem to have been uncertain about the NSC's proper role.

- Carnes Lord

The foreign policy process in the US is a complex and dynamic system. This chapter breaks the complexity into basic elements and tensions that play important roles in the creation of organizational culture as it relates to the NSC. The foreign policy process does not happen in a vacuum – it occurs in the larger domestic and international context, which can shape and constrain presidential style, actions, and choices. The NSC structure evolves to suit each president's needs, developing formal and informal advisory groups as the group finds ways to manage the pressures and challenges of making effective foreign policy. The NSA, as the president's agent on a day-to-day basis, faces unique challenges in his interactions with the Cabinet members and other senior advisors. The president's 'style' in managing a complicated process among multiple senior advisors, each important in their own right, while often under intense pressure and facing difficult problems, is the foundation from which organizational culture of the foreign policy system springs. While his choices, beliefs, and leadership are extremely important, he also relies on his senior advisors' participation and personal styles to run an effective foreign policy process over the long term. The conductor cannot make his music alone – he must convince the orchestra to follow his direction to create the music he intends.

After WWII, the increasingly complex foreign policy environment drove Congress to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the departments, establish a formal structure to coordinate and integrate US foreign policy, as well as advise the president. The purpose of the NSC has not fundamentally changed since the National Security Act of 1947, though the statutory members have varied slightly over time. Statutory members have always included the president, Secretary of State, and Secretary of

Defense, supported and advised by other departmental secretaries, and an executive secretary. The vice president was added to the council in 1949. The council is advised on military and intelligence matters by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Director of National intelligence.⁶ The special assistant to the president for national security affairs, known as the NSA, leads the NSC staff and has no statutory role but has had an increasingly important role in implementing presidential policies and the relationships within the NSC.⁷

Foreign Policy Factors Inside and Outside Presidential Control

In the seventy years since the National Security Council was established by the National Security Act of 1947, a broad range of structures and processes, roles and relationships, and the influence of varied presidential ‘styles’ have emerged.⁸ David Rothkopf identifies five factors that affect how foreign policy will function within a given administration: the domestic political context; the international context; the personality and sociology/culture of an administration; the ideology and/or governing philosophy; the structure and process.⁹ The domestic and international contexts are not directly within the president’s control but inherently play a significant role in shaping and constraining options and decisions. The domestic political environment includes Congress, the various committees, and their staffers. Not only can Congress enable or hinder presidential behavior and options through Constitutional powers over budgeting and appropriations, Congress can shape the behavior of the departments and agencies. As a result, the loyalty of the bureaucracies under “control” of the executive branch are divided between the president, Congress, and the bureaucracy. Additionally, the domestic environment is further divided by public opinion, media, and private sector organizations. This is not an exhaustive list of the domestic political factors that can

⁶ “National Security Act of July 26, 1947,” Pub. L. No. 80–253 (1947). In 1949, The secretaries of the military services and Chairman of the National Security Resources Board were eliminated in an amendment to the original act. In 2007, the Secretary of Energy was added to the Council.

⁷ Richard Best, Jr., “The National Security Council: An Organizational Assessment” (FAS.org, 2011), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL30840.pdf>, 1, 4, 6; David P. Auerswald, “The Evolution of the NSC Process,” in *The National Security Enterprise: Navigating the Labyrinth*, ed. Roger Z. George, Harvey Rishikof, and Georgetown University (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 32-34.

⁸ John P. Burke, “The Neutral/Honest Broker Role in Foreign-Policy Decision Making: A Reassessment,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (June 2005): 239.

⁹ David J. Rothkopf, *Running the World: The inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), 15-16.

shape and constrain presidential power, even over bureaucracies that are ostensibly under his direct control.¹⁰ This difficulty of executing presidential power over bureaucracies will be addressed in more detail in later sections. Domestic and international crises and long-term policy goals create situations in which the president will have to decide whether or not to take action, how much power and influence to “spend” on an issue, and the potential costs of not acting. William Newmann adds that in the face of external domestic and international contexts, presidents must not only make decisions about what to do, but also evolve the decision making processes to meet the challenges.¹¹ Richard Neustadt argues that the choice of how to respond to both the domestic and international environments is the most critical element that will either enhance or detract from presidential power and influence.¹²

Of the three areas the president has direct control, the culture, philosophy, and structure and process, his ideas about how these will be implemented often predate the administration. During elections, criticizing the current administration’s foreign policy process and leadership is common. John F. Kennedy campaigned on the assertion that Dwight Eisenhower’s NSC was an “ineffective paper mill,” and dismantled the formal structures and staff processes in favor of informal and ad hoc advisory groups.¹³ Jimmy Carter criticized Richard Nixon for allowing Henry Kissinger to be too dominant in diplomacy and foreign policy – and though both he and Zbigniew Brzezinski planned to avoid a dominant NSA, they instead made the NSA a cabinet level position and designated Brzezinski as the chair of key committees.¹⁴ Ronald Reagan criticized Carter for the public divisions between Brzezinski and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, just as he had criticized Nixon and Kissinger during the 1976 election campaign. Reagan argued for a Cabinet-member driven foreign policy process and downgraded the role of the NSA, taking it back to “a staff position,” though it took almost a year for a formal process to be

¹⁰ Carnes Lord, *The Presidency and the Management of National Security* (New York : London: Free Press ; Collier Macmillan, 1988), 16-17.

¹¹ William W. Newmann, *Managing National Security Policy: The President and the Process* (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 34.

¹² Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan* (New York : Toronto : New York: Free Press ; Collier Macmillan Canada ; Maxwell Macmillan, 1990), xi, 48-49.

¹³ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 79, 84-85.

¹⁴ Rothkopf, 165-167.

defined.¹⁵ The process of publicly critiquing the previous administration's perceived problems and ineffectiveness helps to create the context and motivation for specific changes to the national security process.

In addition to the specific context, the president-elect's personal experience and his advisers also shape the details of how the national security process will be structured. This discussion process usually begins in detail during the transition period. Key influencers in the eventual structure are the president-elect's advisers, usually his closest personal aides and the NSA but also often including the secretaries of state and defense. These advisers present proposals to, and have a conversation with, the president about his vision of foreign policy development, coordination, and implementation and how the NSC will function to serve his agenda. In some cases, such as with Nixon and Kissinger, and Carter and Brzezinski, the transition period suggested outsized/increased role and influence of the NSA in comparison to Cabinet secretaries, who may or may not yet be identified.¹⁶ In this, the NSA, since not a statutory cabinet level position, has an advantage over Cabinet secretaries in that as soon as he or she is selected, they can begin building a close personal relationship with the president-elect, whereas the Cabinet secretaries often take more time to occupy their places within an administration. In the case of Kissinger and Brzezinski, this advance access allowed them to execute a "first strike" in cementing the NSA as a very strong or dominant role in the foreign policy process.¹⁷

Additionally, as Rothkopf points out, one of the first ways an administration shapes its identity is by defining the structures and norms for how people and organizations will interact with each other.¹⁸ As the members of the NSC build a mental and physical framework for "identity" and "interactions," they are simultaneously commencing the culture formation process, which will be addressed in a later section. The context and adviser factors, while important in shaping the national security process,

¹⁵ Ivo H Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office: Profiles of the National Security ...* (Simon & Schuster, 2011), 127, 144; Richard Best, Jr., "The National Security Council: An Organizational Assessment" (FAS.org, 2011), 17, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL30840.pdf>.

¹⁶ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 57–58, 60–61, 94–96, 101–3.

¹⁷ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 117.

¹⁸ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 6.

are secondary to the president's personality and sociology of how he will manage (or not manage) his administration and the national security process.

The primary factor in all this is the president's personality and organizational preferences, which drive the sociology and culture of an administration. When the NSC was created, it offered the president a staff organization within the executive branch that would be almost solely responsive to his preferences and governing style.¹⁹ Many former NSAs emphasize the role of presidential "style" in molding the council, its staff and the process, beginning with the first NSA, Robert Cutler.²⁰ Karl Inderfurth and Loch Johnson point out that though the NSC began as an institution of the law, understanding the evolution and transformation of the NSC since 1947 requires tracing the preferences and practices of each president.²¹ Rothkopf similarly argues that the NSC "is all about the influence of one person — in fact, its shape is constantly changing and the result of a series of transactions between the president and its members in which he or she offers or withdraws access, trust, influence and power."²² The series of transactions among the president and his senior adviser are what create the NSC's organizational culture over time. Historical analysis of presidents and their administrations (as opposed to creating theoretical models of presidential leadership or governmental processes) shows that the initial foreign policy processes and structures the president implements early in his administration evolve over time. This evolution is a function of the interpersonal interactions and how effective personnel perceive themselves and the NSC organization - as a whole - during crises and in the day-to-day policy management process.²³ The president's leadership role in creating an organizational culture of the NSC and the traditional models used to explain behavior will be more fully addressed in a later section.

¹⁹ Jon J. Rosenwasser and Michael Warner, "History of the Interagency Process for Foreign Relations in the United States: Murphy's Law?," in *The National Security Enterprise: Navigating the Labyrinth*, ed. Roger Z. George, Harvey Rishikof, and Georgetown University (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 18.

²⁰ Auerswald, "The Evolution of the NSC Process," 35.

²¹ Karl Inderfurth and Loch K. Johnson, eds., *Fateful Decisions: Inside the National Security Council* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), xxvii.

²² Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 6.

²³ Rothkopf, 30, 445.

Presidential beliefs about the external world and his purpose (the president, his administration, and policies) also shape the nature of foreign policy. Presidential ideology and philosophy orient the president, his policies, and even his staffing selections, in a unique and specific manner. Ideology and philosophy goes deeper and wider than political party affiliation, though party affiliation is one way ideology can manifest. For example, Nixon worried about the decline of America as compared to the perceived increase of the Soviet Union's influence in the world. Conversely, Carter came into office with an almost opposite ideology, believing that the Soviet Union was in decline and that America had an opportunity to press for an advantage.²⁴ Similarly, Bill Clinton, in responding to voter's preferences, initially operated under an ideology and philosophy focused on economic and domestic issues, rather than foreign policy focus. This drove him to develop a new organization called the National Economic Council and selected his economic team before selecting his national security team.²⁵ Jimmy Carter's philosophy, especially in the context as a Washington outsider following the corruption of the Nixon administration, focused on restoring values to America and its foreign policy. This sometimes led to ideological differences at lower levels, often characterized in administrations as a "pragmatists versus ideologues" contest.²⁶ Additionally, George W. Bush, since he lacked foreign policy experience and credibility, selected foreign policy 'giants' such as Dick Cheney, Colin Powell, Donald Rumsfeld, and Condoleezza Rice for his national security team. These critical advisers had ideological differences that were difficult for Rice to overcome, however, and Bush's staffing selections created competing ideologies at a lower level that eventually manifested in national security debates and policy choices.²⁷

NSC Structures and Processes

The NSC has two structural elements, the statutory and presidential "formal hardwiring," and the "informal soft-wiring" that develops over time to suit the president's preferences.²⁸ The statutory hardwiring has not fundamentally changed since the

²⁴ Rothkopf, 158.

²⁵ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 205-206.

²⁶ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 164, 208-209, 445-46.

²⁷ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 250-252.

²⁸ The concept of hard and soft wiring is adapted from Dennis Ross who stated, "So much of what we did was outside the wiring that was created. There was hard wiring and there was soft wiring, and we used the

National Security Act of 1947. Presidentially directed hardwiring within the NSC has varied somewhat between administrations, it has generally stabilized since Reagan and George H. W. Bush.²⁹ Presidential hardwiring is usually defined very early in an administration, if not on the first several days. The Presidential hardwiring and structure consists of the various boards, committees, and inter-departmental groups, usually chaired by either the NSA, NSC staff or State department staff.³⁰ These are structured in a variety of ways, functionally, geographically, hierarchical rank, interagency-focused and ad hoc or special interest topics. For example, Eisenhower used two overarching functional boards, the NSC Planning Board and an Operations Coordinating Board, the first for planning and the second for monitoring policy implementation.³¹ Johnson implemented a mixture of both rank and geography when he established a Senior Interagency Group (SIG) that was created to push coordination down one level, from the statutory attendees of Cabinet rank, to the Under Secretaries of State and Defense, the NSC advisers, and the NSA. The SIG was supported by Interdepartmental Regional Groups (IRG) to provide regional expertise from the State Department.³² Nixon and Kissinger created the Washington Special Action Group to address crises and conduct contingency planning.³³ Additionally, most Presidents since Kennedy have established formal structures with some mixture of groups below the statutory NSC principals level. These groups address the need for interdepartmental coordination, gathering the necessary expertise from across the departments and integrating policy options at the undersecretary and lower ranks. More senior ranking policy review groups are also used to focus on (ideally) long term policy goals and strategy. Lastly, presidents, often after their first foreign policy crisis, designate a specific group for day-to-day management of crises or unique, unusual problems that no preexisting committee is suited to manage.

soft wiring to help avoid differences before they started," in an interview with David Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 270.

²⁹ Rosenwasser and Warner, "History of the Interagency Process for Foreign Relations in the United States: Murphy's Law?" 18; Auerswald, "The Evolution of the NSC Process," 45.

³⁰ Newmann, *Managing National Security Policy*, 47–48.

³¹ Stanley T. Falk, "The NSC Under Truman and Eisenhower," in *Fateful Decisions: Inside the National Security Council*, ed. Karl Inderfurth and Loch K. Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 41–42; Inderfurth and Johnson, *Fateful Decisions*, 29–30.

³² Best, Jr., "The National Security Council: An Organizational Assessment," 12; Inderfurth and Johnson, *Fateful Decisions*, 66–67.

³³ Best, Jr., "The National Security Council: An Organizational Assessment," 13."

The primary differences between administrations when these groups were established was the President's vision for the group's purpose, which department (e.g. NSC staff, State Department, Defense Department) would chair it, and how much influence that chairperson will have with the president and over policy. In some ways, during the administrations from Kennedy through Reagan, the formal structure itself was less important than the people who oversaw the structure.³⁴

The Presidential soft-wiring aspects of the NSC, in contrast to the hardwired structures, do not usually exist at the beginning of an administration and can vary widely. These informal adaptations tend to develop over time, as the president identifies weaknesses and frustrations with formal structures and works to adjust the people and organizations to better suit his national security and policy making needs. Indeed, every president since Kennedy has used at least one and often two informal groups during their administration.³⁵ Amy Zegert argues that the role of the formal NSC has declined in favor of informal meetings and the NSC staff. These smaller groups are a flexible “policy channel: the president invited whomever he wished, written records were sparse, leaks were low, and discussions and decisions did not have the stamp of a regular NSC meeting.”³⁶ President Johnson's “Tuesday Lunch” meetings are an infamous example of an informal, ad hoc group that worked around formal structures.³⁷ Informal groups and the development of interpersonal ‘soft-wiring’ is an important indicator of an administration solidifying its organizational culture.

Informal groups can develop for many reasons, though the most common are presidential needs for security and trust with his closest advisors, time constraints in the policy process, and preventing a premature narrowing of options for the president. First, these informal groups tend to be smaller and composed of people with a more intimate and personal relationship to the president — people he trusts and in a forum where he can safely voice concerns or risks that he would not be comfortable sharing with an extended

³⁴ Inderfurth and Johnson, *Fateful Decisions*, 27- 33, 63-79, 97-106; Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 315.

³⁵ Auerswald, “The Evolution of the NSC Process,” Table 2.2.

³⁶ Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed by Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1999), 87.

³⁷ I. M. Destler, “National Security Advice to U.S. Presidents: Some Lessons from Thirty Years,” *World Politics* 29, no. 2 (January 1977), 145.

audience.³⁸ The presidential tendency toward smaller national security decision making groups is consistent with social network theory in that organizations, both public and private, tend to use “small leadership groups” to take action. These smaller groups average six or seven people, while non-action taking groups average 14 people. The implication for NSC structures is that larger, non-decision-making groups are useful for gathering a variety of points of view, but smaller groups are necessary when decisions and action are required.³⁹

Second, as the never-ending demands of the Presidency place constraints on the president’s time, finding shortcuts to discuss options and make policy decisions among a highly trusted and loyal group is an important adaptation for the NSC as an organization.⁴⁰ With few exceptions, first-time presidents have a steep learning curve in the complex and myriad issues that will confront them and it might be the first time he has worked closely with his Cabinet and senior advisers where the stakes were so high. As presidents experience problems or delays with the formal processes or problems with advisers, they learn which channels and people will be most effective in helping them with national security policy.⁴¹

Lastly, the dynamics of large committees and bureaucratic interests can drive the interagency process to narrow options or identify options all might agree to, even if it is not necessarily the best option. Presidents, to avoid a consensus-based policy process, might work with smaller groups to enable diversity of thought in a secure and trusting environment.⁴² All of these factors contribute to presidential preferences to use smaller groups of trusted advisers in ad hoc/informal structures over the formal structures and established national security processes.

The variety of presidentially-chosen formal and informal structures reflect the president’s beliefs about what roles the NSC will perform. The National Security Act of 1947 identified two fundamental roles for the NSC: “to advise the president” and to

³⁸ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 5, 8.

³⁹ Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, 21. printing, Harvard Economic Studies 124 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2003), 53–54.

⁴⁰ Newmann, *Managing National Security Policy*, 9, 39.

⁴¹ Newmann, 41-42.

⁴² Cecil Van Meter Crabb and Kevin V. Mulcahy, *Presidents and Foreign Policy Making: From FDR to Reagan*, Political Traditions in Foreign Policy Series (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 77.

“more effectively” coordinate the “policies and functions of the departments and agencies of the government.” Though these fundamental roles have not changed, *how* they have been implemented has varied. For example, by the late 1970s, I. M. Destler identified three ways the NSC had been used to “advise” the president: as a senior advisory “forum” for face-to-face discussions, as a “formal process” to plan, develop and make decisions on foreign policy, and as the “umbrella” for Presidential staff to meet his foreign policy needs.⁴³ Conversely, Carnes Lord identified six functions that have been used at some point: routine staff support, crisis management, policy development, policy implementation, policy advice, and operations.⁴⁴ The differences between Destler and Lord represent the different ways presidents, cabinet members, NSAs and the NSC staff *interpret* and fulfill the basic “advise” and “coordinate” functions in the original Act of 1947. Some interpretations might include just the formal, statutory members, implying the Cabinet members will have the primary responsibility for providing advice. Other interpretations include the NSC staff and NSA, implying that advice can come from multiple sources in addition to Cabinet members. Depending on how the president, his cabinet members, his aides, and his NSA understand this definition of roles, and how they see themselves performing the various functions, can lead to conflicting interpretations about Presidential direction and who has primary responsibility for various tasks. The potential for conflict among various personnel and its management will be addressed more fully in later sections on organizational culture.

One additional element of the foreign policy process is how the president expects the organizational processes to function and what output it ought to provide to him and the NSC. There are a variety of ways these expectations can manifest. One is whether or not the president wishes to formulate policy directly and have the NSC and Cabinet departments implement it. Alternatively, some Presidents might prefer that the Cabinet members and NSC create the policy, delegating large prerogative to them, while retaining final decision making. Daalder characterizes these ends of the spectrum as “deciders” and “delegators.” For example, Kennedy was the first president to deliberately centralize power and the NSC decision making process in the White House as opposed to the State

⁴³ Destler, “National Security Advice to U.S. Presidents: Some Lessons from Thirty Years” 146-159.

⁴⁴ Lord, *The Presidency and the Management of National Security*, 63-68.

Department. Kennedy's lessons from the Bay of Pigs fiasco showed him that he could not leave the process in the hands of the statutory members of the NSC - he had to take direct control of the information he received in order to make informed decisions, getting information from a wide variety of people and sources.⁴⁵ At the other end of the spectrum, Reagan wanted to delegate the majority of the process to Cabinet members, expecting them to master the details, manage conflict and disagreement on their own, and loyally implement his vision of foreign policy goals.⁴⁶

Presidents have a variety of ways to establish hierarchy and grant power to others in the national security process. There are generally three main approaches, though over the course of an administration or a during crisis, the president can shift from one approach to another. Zbigniew Brzezinski described two opposite approaches, "one the Presidential, the other one the secretarial."⁴⁷ The Presidential system centralizes power in the White House, often using the NSA in more assertive roles on behalf of the president while marginalizing the State Department, as President Carter used Brzezinski. The secretarial system centers power primarily in the State Department and its bureaucracy, though the president retains responsibility, exemplified by Eisenhower, Dulles and his NSA. It is also possible for other advisors, such as the Vice President or the Secretary of Defense, to dominate the policy process, as Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld did for George W. Bush after 9/11.⁴⁸ However, vice presidents have rarely been involved in or empowered to shape foreign policy, Cheney being an "unprecedented" exception.⁴⁹ Brzezinski also described a possible third system, a balanced team approach, that could allow for a strong and secure Secretary of State, NSA and president.⁵⁰ Colin Powell saw this approach as "a combination between the two extremes," in that the NSA serves the process and all NSC members, while still being accountable to and following Presidential direction. To the extent that a successful NSA has the high trust of the president and Cabinet members, the

⁴⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "A Forum on the Role of the National Security Adviser," in *Fateful Decisions: Inside the National Security Council*, ed. Karl Inderfurth and Loch K. Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 143.

⁴⁶ Daalder, 129-131, 149-150.

⁴⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "A Forum on the Role of the National Security Adviser," in *Fateful Decisions: Inside the National Security Council*, ed. Karl Inderfurth and Loch K. Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 143.

⁴⁸ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 391-92, 403-4.

⁴⁹ Auerswald, "The Evolution of the NSC Process," 43-44.

⁵⁰ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 165, 187.

NSA can also “derive authority” from the Cabinet members.⁵¹ This unique combination of power and trust divided among three main agents is unusual compared to the other two systems.

The NSC is a system of systems, an organization composed of other large organizations, all of which have unique missions, interests, and cultural behaviors. These institutional dynamics play out in the context of how the president defines NSC roles and functions, the personalities of Cabinet members on the NSC, and the power and influence of various departments. Government departments are specialized organizations that perform unique missions to achieve objectives or goals. Each department provides its Cabinet member and the president with a range of capabilities, behaviors and procedures that can implement policy, as directed by the president via the NSC and the Cabinet member.⁵² However, presidents can struggle to influence the organizational behavior of their Cabinet secretaries’ and their departments. This is partially due to the oversight and control that Congress can exert over the departments and as a result, the departmental bureaucracies have divided loyalties between their core organizational preferences, Congress, their Cabinet executive and the president.⁵³ Divided loyalties and conflicts over “appropriate” roles and missions can be particularly acute in foreign policy discussions, when stakes and consequences for organizational failure run high.⁵⁴

Clarity and conflict over appropriate roles and missions for the department can manifest in ways that will bleed upward into the processes and effectiveness of the NSC. These bureaucratic tensions, often casually termed “turf battles,” reflect deeper challenges to effective foreign policy making and the NSC than petty squabbles over budgets, organizational size, or tasks. Lord argues “turf battles” such as the ones between the NSC and the State Department during the Carter administration “are at least as much a result of the personal styles and strategies of those advisers and (more importantly) inadequate management by the president as they are a reflection of enduring institutional

⁵¹ Colin L. Powell, “The NSC Advisors: Process Manager and More,” in *Fateful Decisions: Inside the National Security Council*, ed. Karl Inderfurth and Loch K. Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 158–60.

⁵² Graham T. Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed (New York: Longman, 1999), 143–47.

⁵³ Lord, *The Presidency and the Management of National Security*, 15–17.

⁵⁴ Halperin, Clapp, and Kanter, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 40.

tensions.”⁵⁵ Similarly, James Wilson argues that executives, such as Cabinet members, often worry primarily about retaining autonomy over their turf, a monopoly jurisdiction with few or no rivals and minimum constraints.⁵⁶ Thus, turf battles and divisions within an administration are often less about the turf or budget itself than a loss of independence, defense against encroaching bureaucratic rivals, or an attempt to clarify mission, jurisdiction and autonomy of an organization’s perceived mission.⁵⁷

NSA Roles and Relationships

The roles and influence the president assigns to the NSA has important consequences for the foreign policy process. The origins of the NSA begin with the National Security Act of 1947, which established a staff to support the Council and a Presidentially appointed “civilian executive secretary” to head the NSC staff.⁵⁸ President Truman, who wanted to avoid any perceptions that the NSC was a restriction of his executive authority, did not extensively attend NSC meetings or use the NSC. When the NSC was formally placed under the Executive office of the president in 1949, it was clear that the NSC was under Presidential control. At this time, the executive secretary was seen as “an anonymous servant of the Council,” administratively managing proposals within the council and neutrally “carrying recommendations to the president.”⁵⁹ Eisenhower increased the importance and scope of the role of his foreign policy adviser when he assigned Robert Cutler to be the first special assistant to the president for National Security Affairs,” a new position created in addition to the “executive secretary” directed by the 1947 National Security Act.⁶⁰ The creation of this new position was the beginning of a long trend that increased the influence and various roles of the NSA and the NSC staff.⁶¹

In the decades since Robert Cutler first filled the NSA position, the precise role of the NSA has engendered some debate. With the benefit of experience and hindsight, Brent

⁵⁵ Lord, *The Presidency and the Management of National Security*, 87.

⁵⁶ James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*, New ed. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000), 182.

⁵⁷ Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, 182-187; Lord, *The Presidency and the Management of National Security*, 18.

⁵⁸ National Security Act of July 26, 1947.

⁵⁹ Sidney Souers, as quoted in Falk, “The NSC Under Truman and Eisenhower,” 35–36.

⁶⁰ Christopher C. Shoemaker, *The NSC Staff: Counseling the Council* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1991), 11-12.

⁶¹ Bert A. Rockman, “America’s Departments of State: Irregular and Regular Syndromes of Policy Making,” *The American Political Science Review* 75, no. 4 (December 1981): 911.

Scowcroft framed the inherent tensions between two foundational roles for the NSA: policy manager/coordinator/broker for overall administration (e.g. NSC) decisions; and personal senior policy adviser to the president.⁶² The president, in order to protect his power and interests, often relies on the NSA to approach foreign policy making from the president's perspective.⁶³ Conversely, in order for the NSA to work effectively with Cabinet members and other senior advisers in the foreign policy process, the NSA also needs to take other interests into account, creating the tension between loyalty to the president and to the process that every adviser must attempt to balance. How the NSA functions within these two tensions can be thought of on a sliding scale. At one end, the NSA and the NSC staff administer the foreign policy process. At the other end of the spectrum is policy advocacy, controversial since it can impinge on the Secretary of State's role. In between these two poles are policy coordination and integration; policy supervision, policy adjudication, crisis management, and policy formulation.⁶⁴

In addition to NSA roles and functions, how NSA/NSC responsibilities manifest also provides insight to the foreign policy process. In the wake of the Iran-Contra scandal during the Reagan administration, controversy developed over the degree that the NSA and the NSC staff is responsible for implementation. Cecil Crabb and Kevin Mulcahy developed a typology that identifies four basic roles based on the degree to which the NSA is responsible for policy making responsibility and policy implementation. When the NSA has low policy making and low implementation roles, he functions as an administrator of the process and the staff for both the president and the Council, exemplified by Sidney Souers as the first executive secretary to the Council from 1947 to 1950.⁶⁵ When policy making remains low but implementation responsibility is high, the NSA is a coordinator but not an initiator of policy, in the way Robert Cutler was with Eisenhower. When implementation responsibility is low but policy making responsibility is high, the NSA functions as a Counselor primarily to the president, ensuring a wide

⁶² Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 116–17.

⁶³ This addresses the fundamental choices Presidents must make about power, bargaining and influence to retain reputation and prestige in the long term. The President trusts the NSA to represent his interests and protect his power in the same way the President would if he could manage every part of the process. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*, 124-125, 150-151.

⁶⁴ Shoemaker, *The NSC Staff*, 22–23.

⁶⁵ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 4–5.

range of options are evaluated and presented to the president but without pressing his own opinion on the issues, much as McGeorge Bundy did with Kennedy. Lastly, when both policy-making and implementation responsibility are high, the NSA is an agent and dominates the process on behalf of and supported by the president, exemplified by Kissinger under Nixon.⁶⁶

In general, the higher the NSA falls on the policy-maker or implementer spectrum, the more difficult the balancing act between competing roles and tensions. If too visible, popular, or divergent from presidential preferences, the more it appears the NSA is serving his own interests, rather than protecting the president's interests. Similarly, if the Secretary of State perceives his or her role as being the primary policy maker and implementer for the administration, an NSA will likely struggle to build the relationships in order to get the necessary levels of participation, buy-in and response to ensure the president's foreign policy goals are met or that the process runs smoothly.⁶⁷

The relationship between the president and the NSA then, is of primary importance when understanding the relative amount of policy making and implementation responsibility in the NSA. The NSA is wholly dependent on the president for influence and power in the process in a way the rest of the Council members, as heads of large institutions and subject to Congressional approval, are not. The most easily visible artifact of the relationship between the president and the NSA is whether or not he has an office in the White House. While it is now an established custom that the NSA has an office in the West Wing, the NSAs before McGeorge Bundy did not have this level of access. In the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs incident, Kennedy wanted advisors he trusted "close at hand," with increased proximity and easy access to the Oval Office. This close proximity to the president increased the amount of relative influence NSAs have compared to Cabinet secretaries.⁶⁸ Additionally, the NSA must factor in the president's personal aides who also work in the White House. These aides are often focused on domestic agendas and can be gatekeepers that either prevent or assist the NSA in the

⁶⁶ See Figures 16.1 and 16.2 for visual representations of the four roles along each axis of the policy making and implementation spectrum. Cecil V. Crabb and Kevin V. Mulcahy, "The Lessons of the Iran-Contra Affair for National Security Policy Making," in *Fateful Decisions: Inside the National Security Council*, ed. Karl Inderfurth and Loch K. Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 163–66.

⁶⁷ Bock, *The White House Staff and the National Security Assistant*, 172–73.

⁶⁸ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 91.

foreign policy process. In some instances, this can be a source of conflict if the NSA supports an agenda that could have domestic costs to the president's influence and reputation.⁶⁹

NSAs need a variety of skills to be effective. The NSA must be adept at the administrative and managerial side of the process when dealing with the NSC, the NSC staff and the large bureaucracies that will carry out presidential decisions.⁷⁰ In the words of Colin Powell, the NSA must be a "bureaucrat first class." The president needs the NSA to be a skilled bureaucratic player with sufficient stature to maneuver the process and positions of the Council in the way the president desires.⁷¹ The ideal model for an NSA as a first-class bureaucrat is the "honest broker" model. The key to effectiveness in this model is that others must see the NSA as "playing fair with the rest of the government."⁷² The NSA and the NSC staff are a centralized clearinghouse for foreign policy information and are responsible for fairly representing Cabinet member and agency opinions to the president. If the NSA or the NSC staff filter, mislead or expose these personnel and their agencies in an unfair way, the NSA and NSC staff will lose trust and credibility with others, injuring relationships that are needed for an effective process. For example, when Johnson replaced Bundy with Walt Rostow, the other Cabinet members and senior advisors did not trust Rostow to fairly represent their messages to the president, believing he would put his own "spin" on them.⁷³ Brent Scowcroft summed up the nature and the benefits of the honest broker approach:

If you are not an honest broker the system doesn't work well. The first thing you have to do is establish in the minds of all the members of the NSC that their views will be presented honestly and straightforwardly to the president...Once they are comfortable with that, they certainly expect that you will present your own views but that you will do it in a way that doesn't disadvantage theirs.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Bock, *The White House Staff and the National Security Assistant*, 4–5.

⁷⁰ Lord, *The Presidency and the Management of National Security*, 117.

⁷¹ Powell, "The NSC Advisors: Process Manager and More," 158-159.

⁷² Robert Edwards Hunter, *Organizing for National Security*, Significant Issues Series, v. 10, no. 11 (Washington, D.C: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1988), 8–9.

⁷³ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 54.

⁷⁴ John P. Burke, "The National Security Advisor and Staff: Transition Challenges," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (June 2009): 295.

NSAs must earn the trust of the Council and retain that trust while managing the process and ensuring the president's preferences are met. The frequent A-B-C meetings between Madeline Albright as Secretary of State, Sandy Berger as NSA, and Bill Cohen as Secretary of Defense not only solved policy issues in this small, ad hoc group, but also built a solid foundation for their relationships that allowed them to manage problems when policies, roles or presidential direction caused overlap or competition.⁷⁵

While the structure, process and roles are often defined in a presidential memorandum, the type of relationship and the influence Cabinet members, the NSA and other presidential aides hope to have and what the president might grant them are rarely codified. The depth and quality of the relationship between the president and his counselors -- whether statutory members of the NSC or informal counselors -- will shape how much of the day-to-day interactions will play out over time. Presidential and NSA relationships will span a wide spectrum of very close, almost family members, close personal friends with a long history, or political supporters that are rewarded with a key position.

Presidential 'Style'

Presidential 'style' in interpersonal relationships is another inescapable element of the many ways presidential preferences shape the roles, processes and relationships of the NSC and NSA in the foreign policy process. Neustadt argued that for presidents, "effective personal influence [is] a risky thing -- hard to consolidate, easy to dissipate, rarely assured."⁷⁶ Two scholars, Fred Greenstein and Thomas Preston, propose useful frameworks for understanding presidential 'style' that can be combined to help understand the creation of organizational culture. First, in his study of presidential leadership styles, Fred Greenstein identified six qualities that relate to overall presidential performance: proficiency as a public communicator, organizational capacity, political skill, vision of public policy, cognitive style for information processing, and emotional intelligence. Greenstein also argued that the American political system seems designed as a democracy where "the individual on top" matters, and that especially since World

⁷⁵ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 238–40.

⁷⁶ Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*, ix.

War II (WWII) the impact of presidential leadership style has only increased in its effects on policymaking. Thus, the unique personal attributes of each president are essential to understanding the *means* through which his policy goals were sought after or attempted.⁷⁷

Preston's characterization of presidents based on their prior experience, need for power, and cognitive style are also very useful for understanding how presidents interact with their advisors in the NSC and how they make decisions. The need for power manifests as the need for control, dominance and assertiveness in behavior and interactional styles, especially over subordinates. Presidents with high power needs often create and prefer formal and hierarchical structures, centralized decision-making, and tight inner circles with trusted advisors. Conversely, low power needs result in systems where subordinates can play a larger role in decision-making and dissenting views are not seen as a threat.⁷⁸ The difference in either high or low power needs dramatically shape the interactions between presidents and their advisors.

Second, complexity addresses the president's cognitive style and sensitivity to information. Cognitive style, though, is not solely an internal matter in policy-making – it shapes how the president tolerates and accepts information processing within decision groups like the NSC or ad hoc inner circle groups. Presidents with high cognitive complexity tend to tolerate large amounts of incoming information in complex environments better and can tolerate dissent and negative feedback from subordinates and advisors. Information sensitivity manifests as receptivity to external information from advisors, alternative viewpoints and discrepant information. A president with a highly complex cognitive style and high sensitivity to information is more likely to prefer an open advisory system that allows for multiple perspectives, searching out alternative viewpoints and much discussion over the nuances and gray areas of policy making. However, the cognitive style and high sensitivity to information of an open advisory system can make it more difficult to actually commit to a decision, avoiding deadlock and stagnation.

⁷⁷ Fred I. Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Barack Obama*, 3rd ed (Princeton, NJ ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 3-4.

⁷⁸ Preston, 108.

Presidents with less complex cognitive styles and lower sensitivity to outside information rely less on information from advisors, preferring to operate from “previously established and strongly held set of beliefs,” seeming close-minded to alternative views and preferring to exclude discrepant information. The preference for a less complex cognitive style and lower sensitivity to outside information manifests as preference for “black and white” problem sets, often based on stereotypes that will allow the president to reach decisions more quickly but with less deliberation as compared to other styles.⁷⁹

Third, prior policy experience is the foundational background for how presidents expect to be effective and ideas about what will be ineffective. Simply put, presidential leaders with extensive prior experience in a policy area are more likely to rely on their internal information rather than advisors. Presidents often want to be highly involved in areas where they feel they will perform effectively, since they understand what environmental elements and procedures lead to effective decisions. Presidents with high prior experience already understand the nuances and gray area of issues, and while they rely less on advisors for their opinions, they do use advisors to gather detailed information in a deliberative process. A president with low prior experience is more likely to rely on advisors to help scope the problem and provide information about what is important and will most likely lead to an effective decision, though they will also rely on “simplistic stereotypes and analogies” during the process.⁸⁰ See Figures 1 and 2 for representations of Thomas Preston’s characterization of presidential needs and experiences.

⁷⁹ Preston, 109–10.

⁸⁰ Preston, 111.

		Prior Experience	
		High	Low
Need for Power	High	Director	Magistrate
	Low	Administrator	Delegator

Figure 1: Presidential Need for Control and Involvement in the Policy Process

Source: Adapted from Thomas Preston, Table 7.1

		Prior Experience	
		High	Low
Cognitive Style	High	Navigator	Observer
	Low	Sentinel	Maverick

Figure 2: Presidential Sensitivity to Context

Source: Adapted from Thomas Preston, Table 7.2

This is most easily seen in comparing the different ways Presidents tend to have either a foreign policy or a domestic policy orientation. Eisenhower, Kennedy, and George H. W. Bush came to the presidency with foreign policy experience, while Truman, Johnson and Clinton had strong background domestic policy. Based on these prior experiences, preference for power and control and cognitive style, these presidents enacted different advisory system, respond to their advisors and information in different ways and, ultimately, make decisions in different ways.⁸¹ These three dimensions are not immutable. Though a president's preferences about power, control, cognitive style and information sensitivity are unlikely to greatly diverge, there may be occasions, such as a crises, where preferences might be out of the normal range for a short period and then revert once the crisis is over. This is an element of Presidential style that is extremely difficult to predict. Over the course of an administration, though, as the president gains experience in areas where he previously had little, one can expect changes in the ways decision-making occurs.

The president's power, control, cognitive style, information sensitivity, prior experience, beliefs about leadership opportunities, and the established foreign policy structures and process will eventually combine under the president's organizational

⁸¹ Preston, 111, 114–24.

capacity and management style. The dimensions, models, frameworks, and spectrums discussed here are not intended to imply that there is a “silver bullet” to the difficulty of foreign policy process, structure, and presidential leadership qualities. However, the processes, structures and qualities combine over time as the president repeatedly interacts with the NSC and NSA in day-to-day operations and through crisis events. Each interaction is an opportunity for the president and his senior advisors to learn lessons about Presidential preferences, responses, and how to be effective within the structure and roles the president has assigned. The learning process and repeated interactions eventually develop into a unique organizational culture between the president, the Cabinet members, NSA and other senior advisors, which will be addressed in Chapter 2.

Traditional Models of Foreign Policymaking

Beyond these variables affecting foreign policy-making sit two basic models used to analyze the national security process: the governmental process model and the presidential management model. The governmental process model is focused on understanding how large governmental organizations make decisions. These models do not assume that the decision-making process is rational or based on cost benefit analyses. At its core, governmental process model sees political product as a function of compromise and competition among “competing interests of individuals, organizations, and institutions.” Interests can include resources, power, influence, control of policy formation, and execution. For example, conflicts between the Secretary of State and NSA often demonstrate competition between diplomatic and executive offices and/or as a reflection of competition between individuals for power, influence and control. This competition can begin very early in administrations, during the campaign or transition period as described earlier regarding Kissinger and Brzezinski. In these models, the president is just one figure among many who compete for influence, often leading to a chaotic process that results in policy that “was not necessarily the first choice of any players or the best choice available.”⁸²

Presidential management models focus on the president as the crucial driver in the foreign policy process - the “ultimate decider.” These models focus on how presidents use different management methods to control the sprawling institutions and agencies of

⁸² Newmann, *Managing National Security Policy*, 19-21.

the federal government and the national security enterprise. Management styles can vary widely and are also affected by personal leadership style. Richard Johnson identified three common management models: competitive, formalistic, and collegial; all based on the benefits and costs to members and decision makers and the risks of ineffective process.⁸³ Additionally, as discussed in the section on presidential leadership and organizational culture, presidential “idiosyncrasies” and preferences control the way the national security process will be built and used for his ends.⁸⁴ Again, a broad range of variables are suggested as ways to classify the president’s preferences: cognitive style, self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses, orientation to conflict, preferred level of involvement, and personal motivations. Presidential management models fit well with the judgements of the Tower Commission, which described the NSA and NSC as the “president’s creature...molded by the president into the form most useful to him.”⁸⁵

Newmann’s work identifies two key problems with the traditional models: they are competitive rather than complementary, and they do not account for variation over time in a given administration. Artificially isolating and preferencing either presidential leadership or governmental processes bifurcates in theory what is united in reality; while some abstraction and classification is needed to understand detailed elements affecting national security policy, at some point, uniting these two different approaches in a theory may provide additional insight. Furthermore, the models largely rely on detailed analysis of an administration as a “snapshot” in time. While this snapshot is accurate within its time limits, the snapshot may not necessarily be representative of the entire administration unless some comparison between snapshots taken at different times is completed.⁸⁶

Beyond Newmann’s criticisms, the two basic models struggle to account for the diversity in presidential behavior and the unpredictability of the president and his subordinates. The “psychopolitical-psychological” approach toward presidents and foreign policy making adds important human and social elements. Presidents can desire

⁸³ Alexander L. George and Juliette L. George, *Presidential Personality and Performance* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1998), 261–63.

⁸⁴ Newmann, *Managing National Security Policy*, 21-25.

⁸⁵ John Tower, Brent Scowcroft, and Edmund Muskie, “Report of The President’s Special Review Board” (United States, February 26, 1987), I-3.

⁸⁶ Newmann, *Managing National Security Policy*, 28-31.

and use contradictory frameworks and models at the same time – they are not “bound” to any model. Over time, given the way crises and ad hoc arrangements can change the original processes, a rigid approach to models prevents understanding of the organizational dynamics that affect change in Presidential, advisor or bureaucratic behavior.⁸⁷

This work argues that an organizational culture model for the NSC, the national security process and decision making is structured enough to incorporate the governmental process and the presidential management model while remaining flexible enough to account for the dynamic changes that occur within an administration and its national security process over time. While the traditional governmental process model focuses institutions and their organizational culture at large, this work focuses on core NSC principals/senior advisers as a group that develops a unique organizational culture under POTUS leadership. Roger George and Harvey Rishikof point out that while these models help identify ideal approaches to national security decision making, there is a large gap between the models and “how governments actually operate.”⁸⁸ They additionally point out that organizational culture often gets “lip service,” but the culture is what shapes “the process of policy deliberation as well as its execution within the national security enterprise.”⁸⁹ The Tower Commission put it well when it said “At its senior levels, the National Security Council is primarily the interaction of people.” These interactions aggregate in reality and understanding these interactions can provide valuable insights that help us understand the forest as a whole.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Sarkesian, Williams, and Cimbala, *US National Security*, 297–98.

⁸⁸ Roger Z. George, Harvey Rishikof, and Georgetown University, eds., *The National Security Enterprise: Navigating the Labyrinth* (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 2.

⁸⁹ George, Rishikof, and Georgetown University, 2.

⁹⁰ John Tower, Scowcroft, and Muskie, “Report of The President’s Special Review Board.” I-2”

Chapter 2

Organizational Culture and Theory

The NSC System will not work unless the President makes it work. After all, this system was created to serve the President of the United States in ways of his choosing. By his actions, by his leadership, the President therefore determines the quality of its performance.

- The Tower Commission Report

Defining Organizational Culture

Using organizational culture as an analytic lens for understanding the president's role in the foreign policy process within and among the NSC, NSA and other advisors is a holistic approach to understanding how individuals and groups behave over time.

Schein defines organizational culture as:

the **accumulated shared learning** of that group as it solves its problems of **external adaptation and internal integration**; which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, feel and behave in relation to those problems. This accumulated learning is a **pattern or system of beliefs, values, and behavioral norms that come to be taken for granted as basic assumptions** and eventually drop out of awareness.¹ [emphasis added]

This definition provides a way to blend the diverse array of models, frameworks, dimensions that were addressed in the previous chapter. Those layers provide insight to different levels of Presidential preferences and leadership, bureaucratic behaviors, and personal idiosyncrasies, but organizational culture can bring those elements together. As the president, Cabinet, NSA and senior advisors learn how to work together, they learn what is effective or ineffective; they adapt to external challenges in the domestic and international environment; and they (ideally) internally integrate as a group, developing beliefs about roles, policies, and relationships to each other and the president along the way.

¹ Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 5th Edition (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 2017), 6.

Organizational culture is a broad area of study that uses different levels of analysis as the initial assessment framework. Schein argues there are three levels of culture: artifacts, espoused values and basic assumptions. Artifacts are the “visible and feelable phenomena” such as physical environment, language, products, publicly declared mission, vision and core values, rituals and ceremonies. A physical artifact of the NSC and foreign policy process can be seen in the location of the NSA’s office relative to the Oval Office.² Another visible artifact is which members of the NSC advisors have “walk-in” privileges to see the president, and which advisors have to go through the chief of staff or traditional scheduling processes in order to get time with the president. Robert Gates, as the deputy NSA for George H. W. Bush, was permitted to walk directly into the Oval Office and ask President Bush for clarification on a policy issue, which allowed the deputies committee meeting to move forward in the process.³ At the beginning of his administration, Ford used an “open door” policy for senior aides, but this resulted in “endless discussion” so Ford eventually used his Chief of Staff, Donald Rumsfeld, to restrict others’ access.⁴ The levels and types of interagency coordinating committees – and which agency chairs the meeting - (e.g. NSA, NSC staff member, State Department, or Defense Department) are also the visible artifacts that reflect the president’s deeper assumptions and beliefs about what will lead to effective foreign policy options and decision-making.⁵ The memoranda, policy briefs, and internal documents these committees and the overall foreign policy process use to develop and coordinate policy options are also artifacts of organizational culture, though they are not always available for study until decades after the administration has left office.

Espoused values are ideals, goals, values, aspirations, ideologies, rationalizations, and formal philosophies. Presidents communicate their personal and administration’s values before they even take office; first term presidents use the campaign trail to distinguish principles, values and goals from an incumbent and other candidates. These values affect how the president thinks the foreign policy process will work most effectively. Once in

² Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 22–24.

³ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 269.

⁴ Peter W. Rodman, *Presidential Command: Power, Leadership, and the Making of Foreign Policy from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush*, 1st ed (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 85.

⁵ Hunter, *Organizing for National Security*, 18–19.

office, formal strategy and policy documents define the administration's mission and goals and outline broad means of how to pursue their goals. Formal foreign policy memorandums about NSC roles, structure, and processes provide the baseline for how the foreign policy process will function as a group. Even if these are not released publicly, the key advisers and cabinet members will be made aware of the president's values and philosophy, as they are the key to executing it.

The difficulty with goals and values is that they are abstract conceptions and can leave large areas of behavior open to conflicting expectations.⁶ For example, consider the large spectrum of behaviors the NSA has exhibited, as described in the previous chapter. The NSA has been an adviser/counselor, an administrator, a coordinator, a manager, or an agent of the interagency process, depending on different interpretations of the abstract notion of the 'adviser'. *How* the NSA perceived presidential guidance and then chose to act is subject to his interpretation of espoused values and goals. Others in the foreign policy process will also have their own interpretations as to what the president intended. This is seen in the tensions that develop between the NSA and Secretary of State. For example, Lord asserted that conflict between the NSC staff and the State "is a failure to distinguish adequately between the strategic and operational levels of policy. Properly understood, the roles of State and NSC need not conflict, but rather should complement each other."⁷ "Properly understood" roles, then, are related to how well the president communicates how he expects his ideals, goals and values to manifest, which leads to the deepest level of organizational culture.

Below artifacts and espoused values, basic assumptions are the unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs and values and the source of organizational culture. These are the unspoken rules, customs, and norms for getting along with others in the organization.⁸ In an established organizational culture, older members tell new members these are 'the way we do things around here.' In the NSC, this might be the way an NSA, after having a discussion alone with the president, relays the conversation back to the relevant Cabinet members, demonstrating an organizational custom to pass information to each other when

⁶ Schein, 17-21.

⁷ Lord, *The Presidency and the Management of National Security*, 163.

⁸ Bernard M. Bass and Ruth Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, and Managerial Applications*, 4th ed., Free Press hardcover ed (New York: Free Press, 2008), 746-47.

others are not present. Conversely, if NSAs withhold information from other members, this also exposes a cultural norm the president will tolerate from his NSA.

Beliefs about identity, images of self, the organization's purpose, habits of thinking and mental models are all frames that guides individual perceptions and behaviors in the group. In the context of the NSC, consider the different ways Bundy, Kissinger and Brzezinski controlled the information and the relationships their subordinates developed with the president. Bundy pushed NSC experts forward to Kennedy, allowing a direct relationship so long as he was informed after the fact. Kissinger restricted NSC staffer's access to Nixon, acting as the sole conduit of information. Brzezinski allowed NSC staff to develop a relationship with President Carter, but oversaw face to face meetings and ensured written communication from the NSC was signed by Brzezinski, not the actual staff writer.⁹

Lastly, shared meanings are understandings and ideas that develop with repeated group interaction - in a different organization, the words and ideas would have different meanings.¹⁰ For example, H. W. Bush's administration is described as having a collegiality and friendliness between and among the president, the Cabinet and senior advisors. In his memoir, Bush describes how one of the Cabinet members or senior advisors, often Scowcroft, would fall asleep during a meetings and how the sleeper's "recovery factor" grew into an award, *The Scowcroft Award for Somnolent Excellence*, in the first year of the administration. This award was voted on and given out annually to the best "sleep-and-recovery technique" for the rest of the administration.¹¹ Though humorous, consider the shared meanings these specific people developed about the norm of "sleeping and recovering" in front of the president and other Cabinet members. The award created a norm for getting along with the group that allowed them to recognize, respond to, and tolerate what would normally be a serious infraction of hierarchical and social courtesy. It is hard to imagine the shared meaning of this custom being tolerated in a similar way under the organizational culture of Eisenhower, Kennedy, or Nixon. In those organizational cultures, falling asleep during a meeting would be treated within

⁹ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 103.

¹⁰ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 5, 21–23.

¹¹ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 271–72.

very different customs and norms. Customs, norms and rules for getting along as an organization are rarely so explicitly communicated as in the *Somnolent Excellence* award. Most often, the basic assumptions develop when the group reaches an unspoken consensus that implementing a particular belief, custom or norm in a particular manner was “successful.”¹²

Of these three organizational culture levels, only artifacts and espoused values can be directly observed. Basic assumptions are difficult to identify because they are based on perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. Thus, the difficulty in understanding organizational culture is that the shallower levels of culture can be observed, while the true drivers of behavior can only be derived and inferred. In this, organizational culture is like the Titanic’s iceberg: the majority of what really matters is below the waterline, out of sight, and might only be guessed at based on what can be perceived above the waterline or directly below it. Ideally, the beliefs and values that provide meaning to the group are consistent with the beliefs and values about how to achieve effective performance.¹³

In organizational cultures where the three levels of culture are congruent, observers do not discern differences between the desired behaviors in the artifact, espoused values, and basic assumptions levels. In organizations where there are differences between desired and observed behaviors, there will be contradictions between the artifacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions about what core tasks are and how people should work together to have effective performance. Contradictions between espoused values and observed behavior can lead to gaps between the people in the organization and their beliefs about what makes the organization effective: subcultures develop among different functional groups, misunderstandings emerge in what is learned and how much the lesson is shared across the organization. For instance, in the literature on the NSC and policy making, participants frequently state something similar to “that is what was on paper, but that’s not how it worked in reality.” The impact of these contradictions between desired behaviors identified in the artifact and espoused values drawn from observed behaviors will be explored more fully later.¹⁴

¹² Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 22.

¹³ Schein, 25–27.

¹⁴ Schein, 18, 20–21.

The next step in using culture as a lens to see the NSA and NSC is understanding what individuals, groups and the leader have learned over time. Indeed, the shared learning process is what leads to the establishment of basic assumptions and organizational culture. It is important to note that the term “shared meaning” does not indicate that all members reached the same conclusions or lessons from an experience or an event. It means only that an event occurred and some number of members learned something from it, though they are unlikely to ever communicate with each other directly about just what those lessons were. Even if similar lessons were learned, the lessons might not carry the same meanings to another member. When learning is truly shared among the leader and members, it indicates a coherent culture around shared purpose, beliefs, values, and effective behaviors that can lead to success.¹⁵

Organizational culture develops from the inescapable fact that groups come together to perform a task, produce something, or solve a problem, and, perhaps all three. All organizations face two primary problems that create situations in which shared learning will occur for group members: external adaptation and internal integration. The challenge of external adaption is focused on “how to deal with the environments in which they exist.” In NSC terms, these are the international and domestic political factors that constrain presidential influence and action — how he will survive and adapt when faced with external problems. The problems leaders face in adapting to external factors tend to be more task driven: creating a shared understanding and consensus of the mission, tasks, goals, means (including division of labor, organizational structure, reward and authority systems), measurement of success, and how to correct and repair behavior when goals are not met. The president might think these elements are relatively straightforward at first, only to find out that it is more complicated. For example, some presidents like Lyndon Johnson and Bill Clinton wanted to focus on domestic social and economic issues rather than international or national security issues.¹⁶ They structured their mission, goals and means accordingly. Then foreign policy crises of Vietnam and Bosnia appeared and they

¹⁵ Schein, 6–7.

¹⁶ Lord, *The Presidency and the Management of National Security*, 72.

were challenged to adapt and expand their original mission, goals and means to include new and different ideas.¹⁷

The second challenge facing leaders is internal integration, which deals with “how to organize themselves internally to deal with the inevitable human problems that arise in collective life.”¹⁸ Internal integration focuses on building and maintaining a common language and identity, establishing norms on authority, trust, rewards and punishments, and the unexplainable. In some ways, the majority of the previous chapter, the vast scholarly literature on government effectiveness, bureaucratic policy and the myriad recommendations for improving processes and outcomes, are examples of how difficult internal integration is for large and diverse organizations. As discussed in the traditional model of presidential leadership, presidential control over internal integration is the primary driver of long-term effectiveness. Rodman argued that bureaucracies cannot provide the bold, timely, purposeful and consistent policy-making that is necessary in the modern, turbulent world. The president must exercise strong political direction over internal integration processes in order to adapt to external challenges.¹⁹

Culture Formation

Schein argues “leadership is the management of culture.”²⁰ Everyone in the organization learns lessons based on how the leader reacts, adapts, and responds in different situations. Each interaction with the leader, in both day-to-day interactions with other members and in external crisis, provides feedback to the members about how the leader perceives his inputs and contributions. Members will be “hypervigilant” in observing the leaders’ behavior and often adjust based on their interpretation of the leader’s feedback. If the leader sends conflicting signals, most members will find it more difficult to be effective and will be more focused on finding ways to be safe in the group, as they manage the two conflicting social needs.²¹

The process of internal integration begins with the leader. Leaders often have pre-existing ideas about the best processes, structures and people that will lead to effective

¹⁷ Schein, 149-151.

¹⁸ Schein, 149.

¹⁹ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 275.

²⁰ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 125.

²¹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 146; Kadushin, *Understanding Social Networks*, 60-63.

options and decision-making.²² The president communicates these ideas during the campaign, they solidify during the transition period, and they are put into practice on the first day in office. Similarly, key advisors during the campaign, transition period, and those selected to serve in the administration begin the process of group formation early. A common model of group formation is the *forming, storming, norming, and performing*. This model is focused on the social-psychological processes that occur within the structure and processes that a leader establishes. The forming, storming, and norming phases are focused on how the people in the organization, especially the leader, will answer the questions of identity, individual role, authority, influence, and the type of relationship individuals have with each other and the leader.²³

In the storming phase, members will test each other's authority and influence in explicit and implicit ways. For example, Cabinet secretaries can test other Cabinet members and senior foreign policy advisors by derailing or attempting to drive the process, as Donald Rumsfeld did in a variety of ways during the Bush administration. Rumsfeld tested other NSC peers when he brought new papers to meetings, which the other departments had not had a chance to review and insisted on an immediate response or by avoiding meetings on issues that were going in a direction he did not like. Moreover, Rumsfeld did not let his lower level Defense Department representatives make policy compromises during the interagency process. Rumsfeld's approach to testing and confronting other's authority and influence was successful though, outmaneuvering Rice and Powell for control of the process.²⁴ President Bush was not present in these examples, but it brings up the question about the President's role in controlling conflict within his Presidency. Part of the storming phase is how leaders manage, or fail to manage, conflict that goes against the stated values of the national security process and

²² Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 130–31.

²³ Schein's levels of relationships are based on two central issues: relationships between higher and lower status people and the relationship between peers and fellow team members. Ideas about relationships manifest as proper behavior, customs and courtesies, social etiquette, and what is "politically correct" in a given situation. The level of relationship might display in different ways in different situations – especially for lower ranking people in the organization, knowing what behaviors are situationally appropriate matters a great deal for retaining credibility and influence with peers and leaders. For example, an NSA that has a close personal relationship with the president might act with varying degrees of dissent and assertiveness behind closed doors that he might if the entire Cabinet was present. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 100-101.

²⁴ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 273-274.

interagency coordination. If the president is aware of behavior that derails the process he has put in place and does nothing to correct it, a gap in his espoused values and his subordinate's observed behavior develops, creating the potential for long-term problems in the organization and in achieving his policy goals.

The norming phase is an important milestone in that it is when customs and norms related to identity, roles, power, influence and relationships are mutually, and honestly, accepted by the organization. Members are able to balance their needs for safety and effectiveness because the rules and norms for predicting other's behaviors and the leader's responses is generally known. In this phase, members are less worried about losing status and more focused on group goals because other members and the leader have accepted, and have made tangible, the reality that "we can all understand, accept and appreciate each other."²⁵ This does not mean that all conflict ceases, just that the most basic assumptions about group interactions have general acceptance. In a more established organizational culture, if a member leaves or a new member is introduced, some amount of renegotiating over roles, power, influence and relationships will occur, though it is usually less than in the early days of the organization. The phases of group formation overlap and organizations can revert to a previous stage. Some organizations may never reach the performing phase and may instead muddle along in their goals in the storming phase, constantly dealing with issues over power and influence.

The leader is critical in managing the inevitable issues over identity, roles, power, influence and relationships. This relates back to Greenstein's inclusion of emotional intelligence as a critical part of presidential styles, which Preston's approach does not include. Greenstein's definition limits emotional intelligence to "the president's ability to manage his emotions and turn them to constructive purposes, rather than being dominated by them and allowing them to diminish his leadership."²⁶ However, a broader definition is often used in organizational culture, where the president is only one half of the relationship with his Cabinet members and other senior advisors. In addition to knowing and managing one's emotions, emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize emotions

²⁵ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 129–30.

²⁶ Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, 6.

in others and handle relationships.²⁷ This is an especially important skill in the context of the group formation process and the conflicts the president's subordinates will have. If a president is unable to recognize emotions and relationships of his Cabinet and senior advisors, he will struggle to recognize and correct conflict and behaviors that will prevent the group from progressing to the norming and performing stage. That is, presidential ability to manage emotions in himself, recognize emotions in others, and the relationships within the group are critical steps to an effective foreign policy.

Effective leaders manage their organizational culture by: clarifying expectations of subordinates, communicating these expectations, providing feedback on whether individuals and the group are meeting objectives and goals, and allocating rewards based on continuing to meet those objectives.²⁸ Leaders have two mechanisms through which they embed the culture into an organization. The primary mechanisms are "the most powerful daily behavioral things that leaders do" to establish culture.²⁹ These are:

- What leaders pay attention to, measure, and control on a regular basis
- How leaders react to critical incidents and organizational crises
- How leaders allocate resources
- Deliberate role modeling, teaching and coaching
- How leaders allocate rewards and status
- How leaders recruit, select, promote and excommunicate

Secondary mechanisms are less effective over time in shaping the culture than primary mechanisms. Secondary mechanisms are most effective in the early periods of an organization when public statements and espoused values are the clearest communication available about the organization's purpose. These mechanisms can help leaders create and reinforce culture. After the organization has formed and operated for a period of time, secondary mechanisms can still be important, though they are less important than the observable behaviors member see and respond to on a day-to-day basis. The secondary mechanisms are:

- Organizational design and structure

²⁷ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 10th anniversary trade pbk. ed (New York: Bantam Books, 2005), 43.

²⁸ Bass and Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership*, 401.

²⁹ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 183.

- organizational systems and procedures
- rites and rituals of the organization
- design of physical space, facades and buildings
- stories about important events and people
- formal statements of organizational philosophy, creeds and charters

Over time, the day-to-day realities of the organization are stronger mechanisms for reinforcing culture than these secondary mechanisms. If the primary and secondary mechanisms are inconsistent, the members of the organization tend to ignore the secondary mechanisms in favor of the realities or there will be internal group conflict in an attempt to reconcile these discrepancies. This internal conflict “is often the primary source of subcultures that are not aligned with the organizational culture” and create additional challenges in internal integration that leaders must manage.³⁰ In the context of the NSC and foreign policy-making, subcultures are unfortunately a pre-existing cultural challenge for every incoming president and administration. While the president, Cabinet and senior advisors are the members of a new organization, based on the president’s espoused values and preferences, the departments, agencies, and lower levels of the NSC staff are already functionally different from each other. The departments and agencies, as mature organizations, have their own unique culture of behaviors, identity, roles, power, influence, and relationships with each other. Paradoxically, the functional differentiation is necessary to execute the breadth of the government’s tasks.³¹ The president can not manage the entire federal government on his own, and the functional differentiation comes at the cost of the president’s desire and need for a common culture, since subcultures are “built-in” in to every administration before it even takes office. In this way, every president will be challenged to “minimize misalignment” between his espoused values and the values and behaviors of the subcultures and to minimize destructive conflict.

Returning to Schein’s basic ideas, he reminds others that ‘turf battles’ over policy are not simply about control of resources or policy – they are often the symptoms of

³⁰ Schein, 196.

³¹ Schein, 211–14.

underlying mismatches between beliefs about identity, roles and missions.³² Schein argues “subcultures cannot coordinate themselves,” and leadership is a necessary ingredient for well-integrated and functioning culture.³³ The role of subcultures allows organizational theory to encompass the traditional political theory model of bureaucratic politics, but places it into the context of a new administration and allows for the dynamic interaction between the president, his leadership and management of the subculture, and the subculture’s attempts to influence the president and his policies. An organizational culture lens allows that at different points in time, subcultures and presidential leadership might have more influence over the other but, that it is often a much more complex, nuanced, and multilayered interaction than traditional models.

These are seen in various ways and to various extent in each of the case studies that follow. Nixon, Reagan and Bush embedded different cultures during their administrations and their subordinates responded to their leadership in different ways as well. One organizational culture will not necessarily result in better or worse outcomes than another, but each culture will have strengths and weaknesses that affect the organization’s ability to adapt to external challenges and manage internal conflict.

³² Schein, 221, 229.

³³ Schein, 229.

Aggressive-Defensive Culture: Nixon

Richard Nixon achieved several major foreign policy successes during his Presidency. Nixon was highly intelligent and capable, and had clear ideas about his foreign policy goals and the NSC structure needed to achieve those goals. But his ‘style’ and interpersonal skills, or rather, lack thereof, created an unhealthy organizational culture with the rest of his advisors. Nixon’s attempts to embed his ‘style’ into the organizational culture suffered from contradictions and inconsistencies, leading to a lack of internal integration in the NSC and a less effective process. As his advisors and the process became less effective, Nixon became less likely to fix or use the process he had originally intended to embed. Over time, Nixon’s aggressive-defensive approach to his advisors decreased the likelihood that the foreign policy process could provide him a broad range of well-thought out options.

Embedding Mechanisms

With extensive foreign policy experience, Richard Nixon came into office with distinct foreign policy goals and clear plans for the structures, processes and policies to achieve those goals. In Nixon’s discussions with Kissinger during the transition period, Nixon wanted a foreign policy process and structure that would provide him with a broad range of options, not the forced consensus that Nixon perceived from the Johnson administration.¹ Nixon wanted a system that would give him the “best features of the Johnson and Eisenhower NSC systems,” providing detailed justification and rationales that reflected the views of the bureaucracy for Nixon to review and choose from.² Nixon envisioned himself at the center of this process and used Kissinger as his agent to shape the process, and to run interference with the bureaucracy and departments if needed. Nixon did this by ensuring that the NSC chaired the majority of interagency committees, special working groups and other ad hoc meetings – which constituted Nixon and Kissinger’s “first strike” against an agency-driven process.³

¹ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 114.

² John Prados, *Keepers of the Keys: A History of the National Security Council from Truman to Bush*, 1st ed (New York: Morrow, 1991), 263.

³ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 117.

Nixon empowered Kissinger from the very beginning. Within a year, Kissinger had expanded and increased the budget for the size of the NSC staff, since it expressly served Nixon's needs.⁴ Moreover, Kissinger moved from the White House basement up to the main floor, steps away from the Oval Office, in 1970.⁵ Kissinger understood Nixon's desire for a very small inner circle and helped Nixon insulate himself from dealing with too many people. As an example of this, Kissinger removed the NSC staff's privileges at the White House Mess, and even senior NSC staffers were seldom called to meetings.⁶ Kissinger was Nixon's foreign policy conduit to the NSC staff and the rest of the administration. While privileges to the White House Mess seem trivial, it sums up Kissinger's role as gatekeeper for Nixon and the staff's diminished role in supporting the President. Lastly, Nixon selected William Rogers to be the Secretary of State because Rogers was a strong administrator – not because Nixon wanted Rogers to develop foreign policy. Nixon “did not want a secretary of state who actually made foreign policy,” according to one scholar, Rogers was hired to staff the president, not compete with his foreign policy choices.⁷ Whether Nixon communicated his vision to Rogers of the diminished role for the Secretary of State is unclear, though the conflicts that developed between Rogers and Kissinger, and eventually Nixon, indicate there was little shared understanding.

In addition to the secondary embedding mechanisms, the president's observable behavior is the strongest and primary mechanism for creating and managing culture. While the administration was still in transition, Nixon approved Kissinger's plan for the NSC structure and process without talking to his Cabinet members and senior advisors that would be affected by these structures and processes. While the State and Defense Departments objected to the elements that reduced their access to and influence with the president, they were unable to change Kissinger's mind about anything substantive, which laid the groundwork for recurring conflicts over power, authority, and roles.⁸ Nixon chose to use Kissinger - instead of Rogers - as his representative and agent for

⁴ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 282, 313.

⁵ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 49.

⁶ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 277, 283.

⁷ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 59.

⁸ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 265.

back channel diplomacy with Nixon's important initiatives. This happened repeatedly in initial meetings regarding China, Vietnam and the Soviet Union, creating a group behavioral norm based on the president's preference for centralized control of the process and his foreign policy goals.⁹ Often, the State Department did not know the back-channel meetings were planned or had occurred, nor did they receive meeting notes or the results of these meetings. This undermined the State Department's authority on foreign policy matters. Additionally, when Nixon met with foreign leaders, he told them to pass any special messages through Kissinger, again bypassing traditional diplomatic channels.¹⁰

Nixon used a variety of ways to punish those he felt were disloyal or angered him – an important part of shaping future behavior of group members. Nixon was not the first president to struggle with how to manage leaks of sensitive information to the press, and he used both public and covert means to punish and excommunicate members. He and Kissinger were unusual in that their response was to request FBI wiretaps on personnel that were known or suspected to disagree with Nixon's policy decisions.¹¹ Kissinger and Nixon also reduced advisor and staffer access to material, decreased their responsibilities or moved them to low profile projects when they fell from favor.¹² Kissinger also used intimidation to try and muffle dissent by referring to dissenters as a "bleeding hearts club."¹³ This passive-aggressive behavior implicitly communicated that the subordinates were no longer in favor and they could either accept the new, reduced positions or resign. Often, they chose to resign, and the NSC under Nixon and Kissinger had high attrition rates.¹⁴ This resulted in a staff that was superficially more "homogenous," more fearful about expressing dissenting political views, and an organization that valued the correct political views than employing the best people for the job.¹⁵

Shared Learning in External Adaptation and Internal Integration

Leaders address the challenge of external adaptation through a shared understanding about the group's mission, goals, means to attain goals, the criteria used to

⁹ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 132–35.

¹⁰ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 52.

¹¹ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 281–282.

¹² Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 141.

¹³ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 296.

¹⁴ Prados, 283.

¹⁵ Prados, 301.

measure success, and developing the appropriate repair strategies if the leader's goals are not being met.¹⁶ Nixon's espoused values rested on his strong determination to have maximum control over the foreign policy process, while trying to pursue new options with Vietnam, China and the Soviet Union. When Nixon chose to "Vietnamize" the war, he made a quick, basic decision and used the Vietnam Special Studies Group and the NSC memorandum process to explain and codify the process to Cabinet members, who were not entirely involved in the process or in agreement with the president. The process used in Vietnam became the administration's norm for successfully adapting the organization to external challenges: Nixon made "quick decisions, often against the recommendations of his advisers, then had to be exposed to new views or data, and given opportunity to revise his initial choices, all the while scared that leaks would reveal what he was about."¹⁷

In China, Nixon used Kissinger as the secret back channel. Nixon had initially allowed the State Department to begin contact with China through regular diplomatic channels from 1969 to 1970, but the talks bogged down due to "a detailed agenda of technical issues." Nixon feared the State Department would "kill this child before it was born," and decided to utilize the more effective Kissinger back channel beginning in 1971. From this point, Nixon, Kissinger, and White House and NSC staffers had to ensure the State department remained unaware of the secret negotiations.¹⁸ With the breakthroughs in Chinese relations and policy, Nixon viewed his centralized policy process, executed through Kissinger and back channels, as successful, and continued this norm on the negotiations with the Soviet Union for the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT). In addition to continuing to exclude Rogers and the State Department from meetings, Kissinger used the various review and interagency committees he chaired, which allowed him to set the agendas and drive the topics in the direction Nixon wanted and away from favored issues within the departments. The lower-ranking cabinet committees were another way Kissinger avoided conflict with Cabinet members and

¹⁶ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 150.

¹⁷ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 270–72.

¹⁸ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 52-54; Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 321-324.

insulated Nixon from dealing with internal integration problems at the expense of his external goals.¹⁹

Nixon and Kissinger's perception of their effectiveness in achieving foreign policy goals reinforced their beliefs about internal integration challenges. Indeed, their foreign policy success came at the cost of managing internal conflicts and problems. The problems Nixon and Kissinger faced centered on common issues for organizations: unresolved issues over recognized roles, authority and trust. Nixon's fear and hatred of leaks contributed to his belief that centralized policy control and secrecy were necessary for effectiveness. Surprisingly, Nixon did acknowledge that "sometimes they [leaks] were not too harmful" or that "run[ing] too tight of a ship" was undesirable. However, Nixon could not manage the fear of exposure and, to solve the problem of leaks, he denied information to others by clamping down on access or not calling meetings. This response drove others in the organization to seek alternate routes and sources of information.²⁰ For instance, the Department of Defense developed three separate means of "spying" on their commander-in-chief, using the National Security Agency (NSA) to collect communications messages, a Navy member to search Kissinger's belongings to read private messages with Nixon, and placing trusted agents into Kissinger's front office, who then eavesdropped on phone calls and passed other information.²¹

Nixon's view of the bureaucracy was different from the Johnson administration. The bureaucracy struggled to adapt and cope with the new style, already having well established beliefs, customs and norms about the foreign policy process and its role in it. Nixon saw the bureaucracy as an "adversary to be foiled and outplayed, not an ally in the administration of national security." When Nixon embedded his NSC structure, he sought to and did replace the previous agency-centered structure with his White House-centered structure.²² In a similar way, Nixon empowered Kissinger at the expense of his Cabinet members. Though the NSC staff incorporated department positions into the papers provided to Nixon, the Cabinet secretaries were *not allowed* to see what Kissinger wrote on the cover sheet to Nixon, nor were they present when Kissinger provided advice

¹⁹ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 71-72; Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 287-288.

²⁰ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 315.

²¹ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 65-67.

²² Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 266.

to Nixon. As the President's trusted agent in the foreign policy process, the need for frequent, private conversations between the President and the NSA is both necessary and not unusual. However, taken to the extreme, too much compartmentalization decreases the effectiveness of the process to produce quality options and damages relationships with Cabinet members and other senior advisers. Nixon and Kissinger repeatedly excluded others and prevented Cabinet members from knowing what advice Kissinger provided to Nixon, which made them less effective in responding to the President's preferences or providing their own advice to him.²³ Given the divergent beliefs between the bureaucracies and the way Nixon responded to the challenges of internal integration, it was inevitable that there would be internal conflict over the NSA/NSC's appropriate role and structure.

Leadership Impacts

Inconsistencies between espoused values and observed behavior in the administration increased the areas and potential for conflict over identity, roles, power, influence, and relationships. On one hand, Nixon wanted to create the illusion of an interagency process, appearing to keep with Eisenhower's model of a foreign policy process that would create a variety of well developed options on which Nixon could make decisions. Nixon trusted and empowered Kissinger, and only Kissinger, to execute that foreign policy vision.²⁴ However, Nixon always intended on being the dominant force in all aspects, expecting the State Department to fulfill his decisions. Over time, the Cabinet members, departments and NSC staff learned that Nixon did not really want or believe in an interagency approach. While he generally trusted the bureaucracies' expertise in executing his decisions, he did not trust their loyalty in decision-making, so he believed he had to dominate the process. Nixon wanted Kissinger to drive the NSC process so that the departments presented policies in acceptable ways so that Nixon could pick what he wanted.²⁵ Historically, most administrations begin with the intent to use broad and formal structures as the basis for solving the challenge of interagency coordination but evolve into smaller, less formal processes. However, Nixon *began* his

²³ Prados, 266.

²⁴ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 117, 119, 143.

²⁵ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 40–41.

administration with perhaps the smallest inner circle, consisting of himself and Kissinger, seen in the history of the NSC.²⁶ The NSC system that Nixon and Kissinger put into place implicitly told the principles and senior advisors that their policy advice was “incidental only” and would not be a central element in the foreign policy process.²⁷ Nixon’s desire for executive control over the bureaucracy was and is not unusual, but the behaviors he used to centralize his power and control, and how he used secrecy and gatekeeping to exclude Cabinet members, all prevented the development of a shared understanding in his NSC and created conditions of fear, mistrust, conflict and competition within the NSC.

Gaps between values and behaviors often results in or increases divisions between subcultures in an organization. On one hand, Kissinger made an effort to manage the subcultures and bureaucratic resistance to Nixon’s ideas in productive ways. For example, early in Nixon’s first term, Nixon and Kissinger wanted to review strategic policy on nuclear posture and defense issues. The Defense Department was initially resistant to the NSC efforts to discuss these issues, but Kissinger worked closely and diligently with the Defense Department, State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) at a variety of levels to find common ground between the White House, Defense Department, CIA and Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).²⁸ Kissinger continued this approach when preparing the ground for SALT discussions with the Soviet Union.²⁹ Kissinger, as Nixon’s agent, did manage some of the internal integration and subculture conflicts. However, these positive areas were overshadowed by other practices that exacerbated organizational conflict.

From the beginning, Nixon’s approach to the State Department made organizational conflict likely and rendered the interagency process less effective over time. Given Nixon’s view of the State Department as full of “impossible fags,” it is no wonder that Nixon excluded them from his major policy initiatives.³⁰ However, the exclusion came at a cost to the interagency process, making the process less effective.

²⁶ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 118.

²⁷ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 266.

²⁸ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 120–25.

²⁹ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 285–86.

³⁰ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 112.

The State Department issued statements at odds with Kissinger's back-channel efforts, causing confusion in the US foreign policy process and also for foreign governments. After several years in the administration, Rogers realized that the inconsistencies he saw between Nixon's stated beliefs about the process and his actual behavior in foreign policy were intentional and were not going to change.³¹ As the other departments came to similar realizations about their true role in Nixon's process (informational only and always secondary to Kissinger), they learned "they could take hardline positions without bearing responsibility for achieving them in a negotiation with the Soviets – since that was on Kissinger's shoulders." Because Nixon diminished their role and authority in the process, their responsibility to be constructively effective in the foreign policy process was also diminished.³² Nixon's continuing trend to isolate other necessary members of the foreign policy process, no matter how experienced he and Kissinger were, raise the question of whether they would have been able to continue managing external challenges into a second term.

In addition to conflicts across subcultures, the inability of the NSC as an organization to build relationships based on trust and openness greatly decreased the amount of internal integration and prevented the group from progressing through the normal stages of group formation. Nixon was often frustrated with the friction between Kissinger and Rogers, though he liked both of them. To decrease the level of conflict, he wanted to fire both of them at various points, but believed he could not fire Kissinger since Kissinger helped keep Rogers and the State Department in line with Nixon's policies.³³ Either way, Nixon avoided personal and face-to-face confrontations of any sort, and Rogers remained in office for years. Nixon's frustration with the conflicts in his organizations and recurring choices to avoid confrontations also prevented him from resolving or mitigating the effects of these organizational culture problems.

Nixon's inability to trust others, desire for secrecy, difficulty with people and need for domination are well documented.³⁴ He was strongly introverted, an unusual trait

³¹ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 57–58.

³² Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 59; Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 76-79.

³³ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 47–48.

³⁴ Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, 99-100, 108; Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 91-93; Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 138-139; Bock, *The White House Staff and the National Security Assistant*, 83-84.

for a politician, did not like to see a lot of people and was visibly uncomfortable in unpredictable social situations, even with his own NSC staff.³⁵ As a result, Nixon used the NSC to avoid people, confrontations, and objections to either his policies or his way of doing things.³⁶ As components of emotional intelligence and trust, Nixon's defensiveness, sensitivity to embarrassment and self-consciousness combined with his inability to develop close relationships, see others with sympathy, or be open to others ideas was decidedly below the average American and also below the average president.³⁷

However, Nixon also had traits that contributed to high job performance. He was extremely hard working, competitive and had extraordinary abilities to comprehend vast amounts of information. Nixon's advisors and adversaries found his intelligence intimidating and admirable. His creative approach to foreign policy, vision, intelligence, political skill, and tenacity are important factors that enabled him to achieve notable success with China, Vietnam, and the Soviet Union.³⁸ Steven Rubenzer and Thomas Faschingbauer argue that, overall, Nixon's personality traits were a reasonable match with other Presidents, though he suggests the weaknesses of his emotional intelligence, coupled with his high competition for success created a culture among his subordinates where "ethical concerns became a liability" that was different from most other Presidents.³⁹

The extremes of Nixon's traits created an interesting mixture of foreign policy process and management styles. On the overall formal foreign policy process level, Nixon used a formalistic, if somewhat superficial, approach to decision making, relying on a thorough process to emphasize "optimal results."⁴⁰ With his extensive foreign policy experience, high needs for power and control and ability to handle cognitive complexity, Nixon's leadership of foreign policy was to be a director and a navigator.⁴¹ These models help explain foreign policy, but do not explain the organizational conflicts

³⁵ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 112, 118.

³⁶ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 266, 277.

³⁷ Steven J. Rubenzer and Thomas R. Faschingbauer, *Personality, Character, and Leadership in the White House: Psychologists Assess the Presidents*, 1st ed (Washington, D.C: Brassey's, 2004), 108–11.

³⁸ Rubenzer and Faschingbauer, *Personality, Character, and Leadership in the White House*, 108, 113-116; Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, 106-108.

³⁹ Rubenzer and Faschingbauer, *Personality, Character, and Leadership in the White House*, 114.

⁴⁰ George and George, *Presidential Personality and Performance*, 212–14, 262.

⁴¹ Preston, "The President's Inner Circle: Personality and Leadership Style in Foreign Policy Decision-Making," 114–15, 118-119,.

and personnel challenges that Nixon's approach both created and which he avoided. Given his difficulty with personal relationships and lack of emotional intelligence, he used Kissinger and other political aides to be 'palace guards' to insulate him from face-to-face conflicts and ensure the bureaucracy executed his foreign policy decisions as directed.⁴² Nixon's autocratic-authoritarian approach to management is not inherently a negative approach. Autocratic leadership stresses obedience, loyalty, strict adherence to roles so that the leader takes sole responsibility for decisions and control of follower's performance. This approach often drives successful outcomes when a democratic approach would be less successful. However successful this approach might be in the short term, though, autocratic leadership, over the long term, eventually leads to decreased performance by the organization.⁴³

If Nixon's goal was to drive effective foreign policy for the US, he and Kissinger can easily be considered brilliant, but at the cost of creating a dysfunctional and ineffective government and foreign policy process.⁴⁴ Nixon's inability and unwillingness to manage the internal integration problems would likely have continued to degrade the effectiveness of his foreign policy goals if Watergate and his resignation had not cut his second term short. It is worth considering how well the NSC and the members would have performed in the long run if the autocratic style had continued for four more years. As it was, however, the myriad shortfalls in process and procedure within Nixon's administration were somewhat redeemed by his and Kissinger's unique talents regarding world affairs.

⁴² Crabb and Mulcahy, *Presidents and Foreign Policy Making*, 327.

⁴³ Bass and Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership*, 440–41, 445–46, 452–54.

⁴⁴ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 110.

Chapter 4

Passive-Defensive Culture: Reagan

Ronald Reagan's foreign policy process was tumultuous for the first six years of his two terms in office. Except for Bud McFarlane and Colin Powell, Reagan's NSAs rarely served more than a year. The Iran-Contra scandal is often seen as the turning point in Reagan's foreign policy process, when Reagan shifted from a 'hands-off' approach to an assertive role and used Frank Carlucci and Colin Powell as his empowered agents to drive and coordinate the process. For this reason, Reagan's administration and NSC organizational culture bifurcates into the six years before the Iran-Contra scandal and the two years afterward. The Iran-Contra scandal caused a crisis within the administration, driving major personnel and process changes that created a different organizational culture than existed during the first six years. For the sake of scope then, this section will focus on the foreign policy process during Reagan's first term, analyzing the organizational culture that was well embedded before John Poindexter became the NSA and the events that precipitated the Iran-Contra affair occurred.

Embedding Mechanisms

Like other administrations, Reagan entered office with clear ideas about how he would structure and manage the foreign policy process. During the campaign, Reagan criticized Carter's NSC and foreign policy, and Reagan wanted to return to "Cabinet government."¹ The Secretary of State would be the president's "principal spokesman and advisor," while the NSC would "once again be the coordinator of the policy process" working "closely in teamwork with the Secretary of State and the other members of the Council."² To signify the downgrading of the NSA in favor of the Secretary of State, Richard Allen, Reagan's first (of six) NSA, was moved back to the basement of the White House and a key political aide, Ed Meese, given the office.³ During the transition period, Reagan's direction to his Secretary of State-designee, Alexander Haig, about his

¹ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 144.

² Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 127–28.

³ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 145.

responsibilities was, “He would be *the* spokesman,” and that Reagan would “look to you, Al,” on all matters pertaining to foreign affairs.⁴ Once Reagan’s second NSA, William Clark, was in place, Clark was able to establish a codified structure, regaining some of the procedural power that had been lost to Haig and the State department. This helped Reagan and his three key White House advisors that managed much of his agenda regain centralized control over the foreign policy process.⁵ However, unresolved struggles over foreign policy structures, processes, and roles continued until after the Iran-Contra scandal broke. While secondary mechanisms to embed culture are usually less effective than the primary mechanisms in helping the leader embed culture in a young organization, these mechanisms were even less effective under Reagan, resulting in a fragmented foreign policy process through the administration’s first six years.

Reagan’s espoused values about the foreign policy process (the secondary mechanisms) developed inconsistencies and gaps with his day-to-day behavior (the primary mechanism for embedding organizational culture). The contradictions between what Reagan said about how the foreign policy process ought to work and how he behaved as the leader in that process led to increasing dysfunction over time. On inauguration day, Alexander Haig attempted a “Kissinger-like first-strike” to codify Haig’s preference for the national security structure and process. However, he was prevented from executing this first strike because Reagan’s White House advisor, Ed Meese, prevented Haig from reaching the president, and took Haig’s proposal and promptly did nothing with it.⁶ Despite the President’s earlier promise to Haig, Haig’s hierarchical approach was not in keeping with Reagan’s desire for collegiality and openness, nor was it compatible with Reagan’s political aides’ desires for control over the foreign policy process. Haig, for his part, could not adjust to a structure where a White House aide, such as Meese, had so much informal power over a Cabinet member.⁷

The foundational conflicts between Reagan’s White House aides, Cabinet members and NSAs were largely rooted in Reagan’s vision of how he wanted the foreign policy to work. Reagan had a relaxed approach toward governing, and wanted the

⁴ Reagan cited in Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 450.

⁵ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 144.

⁶ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 450–51.

⁷ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 149; Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 135-136.

decision-making process to be collegial, where senior advisors presented different viewpoints to the president but never got “too heated or personal.”⁸ Reagan saw his Cabinet members as friends. He did not want to have to settle their squabbles and come down on one member at the expense of another nor did he want to fire any of them. In this way, Reagan put the burden for conflict management (or at least “minimization”) and resolution on his aides and subordinates.⁹

For Reagan’s administration, three key White House advisors wielded a significant amount of power and influence across foreign and domestic policy making, making the development of a cohesive culture and foreign policy process more difficult. Ed Meese, James Baker III, and Michael Deaver served as Reagan’s buffer between conflicts and demands from the Cabinet and departments. They also had his confidence to protect Reagan’s interest. This “troika,” occasionally called the “three headed monster,” was repeatedly empowered by Reagan to act on his behalf, and the resulting confusion and conflict over who was running foreign policy often made the process slow, indecisive, and at times deadlocked to a degree of ineffectiveness.¹⁰ This was especially true when Haig’s priorities for foreign policy were not in sync with Reagan’s focus on domestic issues.

Similar to Reagan’s unwillingness or inability manage the competition for power between key advisors, the President was unwilling to correct or punish improper behavior, embedding a culture early in the administration that rendered rules and laws mere obstacles to be avoided. First, during the campaign, Richard Allen was forced to resign from the campaign for improper contacts, but was brought back into the administration as the NSA once Reagan was elected.¹¹ Next, Bill Casey was appointed to be the director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), but failed to disclose information about his finances, was improperly registered as an agent of a foreign government, and had been responsible for documents that were “purloined” from Jimmy Carter which later became public. Yet Reagan did not punish or excommunicate Casey, making it clear that Reagan was “unwilling to enforce discipline,” giving “a virtual green

⁸ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 129.

⁹ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 235; Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 154.

¹⁰ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 145; Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 131.

¹¹ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 449.

light for those officials who became the policy entrepreneurs, among them the CIA director.”¹² While Allen was later removed from the administration for inappropriate handling of \$1000 meant for Mrs. Reagan, the removal was primarily a function of the troika maneuvering Reagan to suit their own agenda, rather than Reagan holding Allen accountable.¹³ Reagan’s day-to-day interactions with his senior foreign policy advisors embedded a culture that was consistent with his stated goal of Cabinet governance, but lacked a leader to manage inherent conflict or make decisions. This created or at least contributed to later problems that arose during external adaptation and internal integration.

Shared Learning in External Adaptation and Internal Integration

Reagan clearly articulated his vision for the role of the United States in international politics, but he struggled to manage the people, processes and structures necessary in order to achieve his foreign policy goals. In other words, he could not adapt to the realities of the external world. Reagan had core beliefs about the dichotomy of the Cold War: the “Evil Empire” of the Soviet Union and American exceptionalism, the battle between good and evil of democracy and communism.¹⁴ Reagan’s public communication skills were exceptional and his administration leveraged the clarity of his vision and communication to advance his policies.¹⁵ He expected policy recommendations to reflect these beliefs, but the challenges of domestic and international politics -- and the translation of his vision into executable policy -- was troubled.¹⁶

Beginning during the campaign, Reagan focused on the Soviet Union, arms control, and nuclear weapons as his primary foreign policy interests. Although Reagan’s tough rhetoric about the evils of the Soviet Union eventually led to success with the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty with Mikhail Gorbachev’s USSR.¹⁷ In his first term Reagan struggled to overcome deep divisions between the State Department, Defense Department, the CIA, and the JCS regarding relations with the

¹² Prados, 453-454.

¹³ Crabb and Mulcahy, *Presidents and Foreign Policy Making*, 293; Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 458.

¹⁴ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 129; Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 141.

¹⁵ Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, 155-157; Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 143-144.

¹⁶ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 129.

¹⁷ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 241.

Soviets.¹⁸ For example, Clark and McFarlane coordinated directly with military officers to brief Reagan on the possibility of missile defense, later known as the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), cutting out other key players.¹⁹ In another example, in March 1983 McFarlane wrote critical parts of a speech for Reagan that were major policy shifts for the administration, and he purposefully excluded Shultz, Weinberger, and their departments from any review. They were not informed until just prior to the speech, too late and in the wrong places to speak with Reagan about implementation, risks to allies or secondary effects on other policy initiatives, such as START and the Antiballistic Missile (ABM) treaty negotiations.²⁰ With intense conflict between Shultz and Weinberger over a variety of issues, circumventing the process and secrecy through excluding key advisors became one way Reagan achieved his policy goals. Reagan's high prioritization and direct involvement on the Soviet Union demonstrate that when he engaged, he could accomplish "significant policy initiatives if there is direct presidential leadership," even though his NSA had to circumvent the NSC principals and other senior advisors to do so.²¹

Though the Soviet Union was a clear foreign policy priority for Reagan, the administration's policies on other areas, such as terrorism, drifted. Central America and the Middle East both presented early challenges for Reagan's administration, as crises developed in Honduras, Grenada, and Lebanon. The foreign policy process floundered regarding Nicaragua and Honduras, as ideological divisions between State, Defense, and the CIA officials prevented interagency consensus and as Reagan refused to pick between his advisors and their preferred policy options. In an attempt to break the deadlock, Bill Casey, the CIA director, proposed a covert option to support anti-Sandinista rebels. None of the principals supported this option because they believed it was the best of a wide range of options, reflected a broader approach to the region, or was the product of a sound interagency process. Rather, they accepted the proposal because it would do something while minimizing the various risks to their agencies, a reflection of ongoing

¹⁸ Rothkopf, 234–35.

¹⁹ Rothkopf, 237–38.

²⁰ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 485–486, 488–490.

²¹ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 242.

bureaucratic interests and competition.²² The result, of course, contributed mightily to the Iran-Contra affair.

The Reagan administration's continuing bureaucratic dysfunction in the foreign policy process caused difficulty in developing a coherent policy on terrorism, beginning in 1982 and into 1983, and with Syria, Lebanon, and Israel. The administration struggled to cope or manage with internal division and failed to develop a strategy or policy for the Middle East. As with Central America, the administration was split between the State Department, though Shultz had recently replaced Haig at the helm and Weinberger at the Defense Department. Shultz advocated for a stronger military presence in the Middle East, while Weinberger worried US forces on the ground that could not be defended.²³ Reluctant to choose sides, Reagan appointed McFarlane, as deputy NSA, as a special envoy to the region, in the hope that the White House, via an active and operationalized NSA, could take control over the deadlocked interagency process between State and Defense and negotiate a compromise.²⁴ Unfortunately, Reagan's unwillingness to choose a specific approach that appeared to favor one Cabinet member over the other hampered McFarlane's ability to negotiate anything, since compromises were "so broad as to be meaningless" and he had no clear direction from Reagan.²⁵ In essence, Reagan tried to split the difference between his advisers, leaving US forces "engaged enough to be taking sides and staking its prestige, but not enough to win."²⁶ Sadly, the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut was one result of this hesitant and tentative process.

While Reagan's ability to adapt to external challenges was at least mixed, his ability to manage internal integration and group formation was notably poor. Though he articulated a management approach of "Cabinet government," it is clear that governments, bureaucracies, and organizations cannot prioritize and decide amongst themselves – strong leadership is necessary to make choices, even against one's friends. The interagency and foreign policy process floundered under Reagan and became dysfunctional under "Cabinet government" unless or until Reagan directly involved

²² Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 141–42.

²³ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 229–232.

²⁴ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 471–472.

²⁵ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 152–153.

²⁶ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 171–172.

himself in shaping the policy options and decisions. Under Reagan, bureaucratic politics and competition, especially between the State Department and Defense Department, became the core problem.²⁷ Culturally, this created a situation where, in order to attempt some semblance of effective foreign policy, “key players worked around the system,” processes, and interagency groups.²⁸ To make matters sometimes worse, it was also a system where personnel would not generally be held accountable for stepping outside the boundaries and constraints of their positions.

Fundamental to this culture was Reagan’s inability to make his own choices or empower either the NSA or Secretary of State to do so for him. He repeatedly allowed other White House aides and advisors to diminish the power and authority of these two key positions.²⁹ Additionally, in the delegated structure of Cabinet government and the conflicting messages from Reagan, as a group the NSC never came to a shared understanding of who was directing foreign policy. Groups form to effect some ends, and in the absence of effectiveness in the NSC, individuals attempted to be more effective by working around the system and within their own interpretation of Reagan’s desires.³⁰ The sustained lack of shared understanding and clarity over roles, identity, authority, power, mission, goals and the means to achieve those goals created a culture where personal agendas and bureaucratic entrepreneurs stepped into the foreign policy process gap.

The legendary bureaucratic battles between Shultz and Weinberger and overall foreign policy dysfunction are, at the surface, a reflection of bureaucratic politics but, at the root, more of a symptom of Reagan’s organizational culture for the NSC. The social need for individuals and groups to be effective in their mission is one of the two primary drivers for group behavior. In the absence of effectiveness, individuals take the burden

²⁷ For additional discussions on bureaucratic politics and bureaucratic entrepreneurs, see the following: Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 142-146, 156-158; Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 211-212, 258-259; Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 448, 496-497, 536-537.

²⁸ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 140-41.

²⁹ The first NSA, Allen, participated in the diminishing of the NSA role and was kept there by Haig and the White House troika. It wasn’t until two legs of the troika wanted to eliminate Meese that Clark was put in as the second NSA. While Clark had a close personal relationship with Reagan that regained some of the power and authority needed for the NSA to function in the administration, conflict with Haig and later Shultz over each other’s foreign policy making and advising roles festered. Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 133-134; Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 145-146.

³⁰ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 248.

on themselves to fill the vacuum. Reagan and the White House embedded a culture of using the NSA or NSC staffers in increasingly operational roles at the exclusion of the departments and outside of regular NSC processes.³¹ For example, Clark, in conjunction with expanded roles for the CIA under Bill Casey, operationalized NSC staffers without coordinating with the State Department in Central America and in the Middle East, and directed staffers to bypass the State Department and go directly to Clark when reporting on operations.³² Clark and McFarlane pushed SDI to Reagan and hid it from State and Defense. When McFarlane was NSA, he encouraged Reagan to pursue new initiatives, such as arms sales for hostages with Iran, that Shultz and Weinberger had strongly opposed.³³ The departments also used “end runs” to get their policy proposals to Reagan, hoping to cut through the NSC stalemates. Richard Perle and Weinberger got the Defense Department’s “zero option” proposal approved by avoiding the State Department altogether and getting to Reagan individually.³⁴ Clearly, the NSC and administration culture that led to the Iran-Contra affair had been deeply embedded in the years before the operation began, and before it was made public.³⁵ The Iran Contra scandal, and the years that preceded it, is a reminder that failure to manage internal integration problems over identity, roles, power, and means for accomplishing the mission cannot be solved by analyzing them solely through a bureaucratic politics lens, as this gets to only the surface level conflict and not the roots.

Leadership Impacts

Reagan’s vision of a delegated, Cabinet-led government and foreign policy process was sometimes a successful management approach when he was directly engaged in an issue. Absent that, however, his administration’s foreign policy was often characterized by deadlock and confusion. In a Cabinet-led government, Reagan still needed an agent to advance his policy preferences and protect his interests. Allen, Clark, McFarlane and Poindexter were “too weak to bring order to the process, yet sufficiently unconstrained to perpetuate a landmark abuse of power.”³⁶ Reagan allowed Allen and

³¹ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 538.

³² Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 154–55.

³³ Daalder, 157.

³⁴ Daalder, 140–141.

³⁵ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 513.

³⁶ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 129.

McFarlane to take an increasingly operational role outside of the foreign policy process, but without the strong oversight from the president. As Rothkopf points out, “The NSC job does not exist in a vacuum but is a partnership with the president. The problem in the Reagan era was...the failure of the president to hold up his end of the bargain by properly empowering and guiding his assistant for national security affairs.”³⁷ The inconsistency between Reagan’s Cabinet-led government and the way he repeatedly undercut both Haig and Shultz, giving them mandates but not disciplining other members, constantly hindered the process.³⁸ Additionally, as the policy process limped along in the first term, going through various stages of indecision, deadlock, or compromise, Reagan did not adjust his management style or his empowerment of the NSA or Secretary of State, so swapping out the NSA could not solve the underlying organizational culture problems. Presidential leadership, usually in concert with close aides, is necessary to recognize problems and to correct undesired behavior or processes. Reagan failed to do so until the Iran Contra scandal forced change upon him.

Reagan’s fundamental unwillingness to manage internal conflict and subcultures reflects one of the inherent tensions in cabinet and senior advisors and presidential responsibility for the overall process. A close, personal relationship with the president is an important element of advisors’ ability to move the policy process forward and get feedback from the president, such as Clark and Shultz developed.³⁹ However, Reagan’s friendly relationships with his Cabinet members and dislike of conflict took this to extremes, and he was unwilling to demote, correct or punish those that repeatedly made the process less effective. McFarlane describes Reagan as “always quite upset about the shrillness” between Weinberger and Shultz, yet the President did not address directly this behavior, instead looking to McFarlane to “manage the relationship,” as best he could.”⁴⁰ So Reagan rarely made forthright interpersonal choices, letting compromises and end runs become the norm among his advisors. This meant the winning tactic was to be the last advisor to see Reagan before a decision was announced.⁴¹ Moreover, the unmanaged

³⁷ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 232.

³⁸ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 158–59.

³⁹ Crabb and Mulcahy, *Presidents and Foreign Policy Making*, 295, 301; Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 142-146.

⁴⁰ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 159.

⁴¹ Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 481.

conflict at the most senior levels filtered down to lower levels, with departmental liaisons on the NSC staff deliberately undercutting the NSA and departments' cycle of leaks against other departments.⁴² As George Shultz once commented, "Nothing ever gets settled in this town."⁴³ In an administration where collegiality and team playing were part of Reagan's espoused values, the absence of healthy ways to resolve conflict, was a key factor undermining the administrations ability to conceive and implement effective policy.⁴⁴

The nature and impact of Reagan's personality and intellectual capacity on the administration's effectiveness is a complex problem for assessment, with wide-ranging opinions. Rodman highlights the myriad contradictions in describing Reagan: "bold, stubborn, passive, lazy, incurious, inattentive, detached from the policy-making process, remote, guileless, relentlessly optimistic, innocent."⁴⁵ Rothkopf highlights the impact of those contradictions: "hands-off; didn't want to be bothered with details; focused on a few core concerns; intuitive; saw the world in black and white."⁴⁶ Rothkopf believes, "when it came to the management of the foreign policy apparatus, of the US government, Reagan's record is almost certainly the worst of any president."⁴⁷ Reagan's preferred 'style' is perhaps best described as fluid, or less flattering, unstable and unpredictable, but potentially an accurate description of the first six years of the foreign policy process.

Reagan's personality contradictions make traditional models less useful than in other cases. For instance, using Preston's model of prior foreign policy experience (low), need for power (low) and cognitive complexity (low), Reagan falls into the delegator and maverick typologies.⁴⁸ These seem generally true, but there are important exceptions. While Reagan clearly desired a delegated style of government with his "Cabinet government" approach, he could also strongly engage on issues that were his core priorities, such as winning the Cold War, countering the Soviet Union and communism, and ending the risk of nuclear war. Additionally, Reagan could be seen as a maverick,

⁴² Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 229; Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 482-483.

⁴³ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 146.

⁴⁴ Crabb and Mulcahy, *Presidents and Foreign Policy Making*, 302.

⁴⁵ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 142-143.

⁴⁶ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 211.

⁴⁷ Rothkopf, 211-12.

⁴⁸ Preston, "The President's Inner Circle: Personality and Leadership Style in Foreign Policy Decision-Making," 116, 120, 123.

creative and unusual in his willingness to work closely and directly with Gorbachev, pursue SDI, or transfer arms for hostages. While Reagan's personal style reflects a maverick, when coupled with his delegator approach, he had difficulty turning maverick ideas into executable policy or tangible results. With Reagan, the critical challenge with the delegator and maverick styles is that he remained reliant on advisors in the inner circle and staffers to provide good information and advice, act competently (and legally), and moderate their dissent and control over policy with their peers.⁴⁹ But, when Reagan's aides were "deficient, the results could be disastrous."⁵⁰ The Iran Contra scandal forced Reagan to change his own management approach and empower Carlucci to 'clean' house in order to embed a new organizational culture for foreign policy.⁵¹ It is ironic that a management style of "benign neglect" could evolve into the foreign policy process that "would provide a model for subsequent administrations."⁵²



⁴⁹ Crabb and Mulcahy, *Presidents and Foreign Policy Making*, 328.

⁵⁰ Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, 151, 157.

⁵¹ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 254–55.

⁵² George and George, *Presidential Personality and Performance*, 224–25.

Constructive Culture: George H. W. Bush

When George H. W. Bush entered the White House, his administration took control of a foreign policy process that had been largely rehabilitated by implementing recommendations from the Tower Commission report in the wake of the Iran-Contra scandal. Bush had extensive experience in foreign policy and government. He selected advisors and personalities that he knew could be managed into a “team player” approach, but with clear direction from a coach. In the end, Bush and Scowcroft created what is considered the ‘model’ for a well-functioning NSC and interagency process, managing policy during the significant challenges of the collapse of the Soviet Union and responding to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait.

Embedding Mechanisms

George Bush had extensive experience in foreign policy, in government bureaucracies, and a long history of working with his selected advisors. He used this background to embed structures, processes and behaviors of the NSC. Bush had worked in the Nixon, Ford, and Reagan administrations, where he could observe what made the NSC and foreign policy work and avoid the pitfalls of secrecy, Cabinet member turf battles, operational NSC staff and Presidential disconnectedness.¹ Additionally, Bush selected senior advisors, such as James Baker III, Brent Scowcroft and Dick Cheney, who were similarly experienced in government work and had worked together in different positions.² These previously established relationships and networks helped avoid some of the typical problems groups must confront in the storming phase of group formation. Bush’s key NSC members had experience, expertise, and saw themselves as loyal implementers of the President’s decisions and policies. Bush and his team knew that they needed a collegial process, with Bush at the center, and strong, positive relationships among the advisors, working together in a close network.³

¹ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 261–62, 269.

² Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 175-179; Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 180-189.

³ George and George, *Presidential Personality and Performance*, 237–38.

Bush also embedded his collegial, team-based culture by clearly delineating identity, roles, and influence for his Secretary of State and NSA, the two positions most likely to come into conflict. Baker was Bush's longtime and close personal friend, and the two had an almost familial relationship.⁴ As the Secretary of State, Bush expected Baker to be the "chief action officer and source of foreign policy advice" and the visible spokesperson for Bush's chosen policies.⁵ Baker saw himself as "the president's man" at the State Department and their close relationship empowered Baker to act on Bush's behalf.⁶ Meanwhile, Bush expected Scowcroft to work *with* Baker, as an "honest broker and policy coordinator, not a policymaker."⁷ As Bush publicly stated, Scowcroft "will convey to me exactly the feelings of the Cabinet members. He will bring those together...convey to me, unvarnished, his own view on policy matters of tremendous importance."⁸ In their memoirs, Bush, Scowcroft and Baker all make it clear that they understood the pitfalls of a dysfunctional team, that transparency and trust were critical, and that the president "would tolerate nothing less."⁹ Scowcroft did not try to execute a 'Kissinger-like' first strike to organize formal structures to give himself more power or influence, and in fact asked Baker and Tower (Bush's initial nominee for Secretary of Defense before Cheney) to review a draft of the NSC structure before sending the policy memorandum to President Bush.¹⁰

The Iran Contra scandal during the Reagan administration and the resulting Tower Commission provided Bush, then Vice President, and Scowcroft, a principal member of the investigating board, an opportunity to think critically about optimal ways the President should run the foreign policy process. The Iran-Contra scandal indicated to Bush that a dysfunctional foreign policy process and culture could have an important impact on domestic issues. Reagan's approval ratings had dropped over twenty percent in a single month, multiple investigations put the administration in "disarray," and the

⁴ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 186.

⁵ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 168.

⁶ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 187.

⁷ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 168.

⁸ Daalder, 169.

⁹ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 262-263; George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 1st ed (New York: Knopf; Distributed by Random House, 1998), 30-33.

¹⁰ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 31.

administration spent months recovering.¹¹ The Tower Commission identified the problem of flawed, informal and contradictory foreign policy and decision-making process in which rigorous review, from the President to staff levels, did not occur. Into the resultant vacancy the NSC staff inappropriately and unprofessionally stepped beyond their role to oversee covert operations.¹² The Commission highlighted that ultimate responsibility for foreign policy rests with the President but acknowledged the critical role Cabinet members and the NSA had to ensure appropriate behavior.¹³ The Commission's recommendations section, written by Scowcroft, emphasized the need for Presidential attention and leadership, through clearly communicated guidelines and expectations to the other formal NSC members, the NSA and the NSC staff, creating a process that balances "both the best of the creativity to the President and the learning and expertise of the national security departments and agencies."¹⁴ The Commission recognized "process will not always produce brilliant ideas, but history suggests it can at least help prevent bad ideas from becoming presidential policy."¹⁵

Bush and Scowcroft continued many of the Tower Commission recommendations implemented during the Reagan administration, but added two senior coordinating committees below the full NSC: the Principals Committee (PC) and Deputies Committee (DC). Scowcroft's intent, supported by Bush, Baker and Tower, was to use the PC as "the NSC without the President and Vice President" to "clarify issues and positions among the principals before issues were taken to the President."¹⁶ This would save the President's precious time and be the "forum of last resort for ironing out interagency disagreements or framing those disagreements for presidential decision."¹⁷ The DC, a sub-cabinet committee, was used to resolve interagency and coordination issues that could not be resolved by lower level committees and to narrow down the policy disagreements that the PC would need to address.¹⁸ The DC was the final step of the staffing process to "fully analyze the issues, fairly and adequately set out the facts,

¹¹ Schlesinger in Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 162–63.

¹² John Tower, Scowcroft, and Muskie, "Report of The President's Special Review Board," IV-1-IV-9.

¹³ John Tower, Scowcroft, and Muskie, IV-10-IV-11.

¹⁴ John Tower, Scowcroft, and Muskie, V-1-V-2.

¹⁵ John Tower, Scowcroft, and Muskie, V-2.

¹⁶ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 31.

¹⁷ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 183.

¹⁸ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 266–67.

consider a full range of views and options, and satisfactorily assess the prospects, risks and implications of each,” before presentation to the principals.¹⁹ The DC was also formally designated for crisis response -- an important clarification of roles -- that would pay off later as the administration coped with external challenges. The espoused values, people, relationships, structures, and processes Bush chose for the NSC process created the foundational hardwiring of the foreign policy process, which was consistent with how Bush behaved and how he expected his subordinates to behave.

From the beginning of his administration, Bush’s observed behaviors, the primary organizational culture embedding mechanism, were consistent with his values and expectations for the foreign policy process. First, even though Bush was taking over from a Republican administration, he requested resignations from all of Reagan’s appointees.²⁰ Scowcroft and Baker also emphasized with their staffs that it was “a new administration” and “not a friendly takeover.”²¹ This created a generally ‘clean’ slate for Bush, Scowcroft, and Cheney to embed and grow the collegial and effective foreign policy culture Bush desired.

Second, Bush was keenly aware of the potential for conflict between an NSA and the cabinet members in the formal structure, especially with the Secretary of State. Bush was aware that Baker would worry about being excluded by strong White House advisers and that, conversely, Scowcroft and the NSC staff would worry about “what State might be up to.”²² He used the strength of his personal relationships and informality to increase transparency and trust, while minimizing chances for conflict and misunderstandings. Bush ensured his senior advisors always had direct access to him, and Scowcroft gained other’s trust by supporting their access to the President, rather than trying to cut them out. With the President engaged, end runs, attempts to bypass or exclude others from the President or the process were not tolerated, a striking difference from the Nixon and Reagan administrations.²³ Robert Gates, the Deputy NSA, stated that “*Everybody knew*

¹⁹ George H. W. Bush, “National Security Presidential Directive 1,” January 30, 1989, 3, <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/nsd/nsd1.pdf>.

²⁰ George and George, *Presidential Personality and Performance*, 234; Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 201.

²¹ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 264-265.

²² Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 36.

²³ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 181.

they had free access to the president and if they had a real concern about an issue, not only would no one stand in their way, they were encouraged to bring that difference forward.” [emphasis added]²⁴ The “everybody knew” part of the statement indicates the type of shared, basic assumptions for transparent and collegial behavior expected in Bush’s organizational culture.

The formal elements of the foreign policy process depended on the ‘soft-wiring’ of the transparent and collegial behaviors from senior advisors and lower levels. For instance, at the DC, the members had to be either the number two or three in their organizations, have the authority to speak for their Principal, and be able to gain quick access to the Principal to approve a shift in the department’s position on a policy. The sub-Cabinet levels, empowered by their respective principal, kept the interagency coordination process moving and streamlined the issues down to the limited but difficult issues that had to be solved at the PC level.²⁵ Additionally, Bush, to maintain direct control over the process and in accordance with the Tower Commission recommendation, directed that the PC and DC be chaired by Scowcroft and Gates, which had never been done in previous administrations.²⁶ In other administrations with less team-based organizational cultures, cabinet members might object to this arrangement, fearing diminution of their power and authority relative to the NSA and his deputy. While there were certainly disagreements between the NSA, Cabinet members and other senior advisors, this unusual arrangement did not lead to the paralyzing dysfunction or turf battles seen in other administrations.²⁷ The lack of extended conflict and personal enmity was due to the personnel Bush had selected for his NSC team, the expectations he set for them, and the way Scowcroft continually worked to maintain good relationships.

Scowcroft’s experience with Kissinger and in the Tower Commission prepared him well to take the President’s collegial vision and implement it using specific techniques to manage conflict. From the very beginning of the administration, Scowcroft precoordinated with Baker any high-level meetings with foreign leaders or public

²⁴ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 181-182.

²⁵ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 266–268.

²⁶ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 192.

²⁷ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 263, 271, 282; Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 175, 183-184, 187.

statements. Scowcroft informed Baker of secret meetings with foreign governments and ensured those meetings always included at least one representative from the State Department of Baker's choice. For instance, when the President asked Scowcroft to take a secret trip to China only a few months after the inauguration, Scowcroft ensured a senior State Department member, Baker's deputy Larry Eagleburger, accompanied him.

²⁸ Scowcroft also instituted weekly meetings with Cheney and Baker to increase their awareness of the issues he was working and iron out any differences that were unresolved. Early in the administration, Scowcroft advocated for a smaller "core group" of policy makers composed of Bush, Vice President Dan Quayle, Baker, Cheney, Scowcroft, Eagleburger, Gates and John Sununu, Bush's chief of staff. The core group meetings created a venue where senior advisors could provide their candid opinions and have a "no holds barred" discussion without the risk of leaks, improving Bush's understanding of the issues and ensuring all his senior advisors understood Bush's preferences.²⁹ Scowcroft later remarked:

"My sense is that in order for the system to work, you first have to establish yourself in the confidence of your colleagues to convince them you are not going to pull fast ones on them. That means when you are in there with the president alone, which you are more than anybody else, that you will represent them fairly. And if you begin with that, I don't know that there is much conflict. It seems to me that the first responsibility is to present what you know of the community views."³⁰

Scowcroft believed that if the NSA does not have the confidence of the other NSC members, the NSA fractures the system. His approach to his NSA position highlights why the 'ideal' NSA is defined as the 'Scowcroft model' which was critical to the organizational culture Bush embedded in his foreign policy team.³¹

Shared Learning in External Adaptation and Internal Integration

²⁸ Rothkopf, *Running the World*; Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*.

²⁹ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 41–42.

³⁰ Brent Scowcroft, The National Security Council Project: Oral History Roundtables - The Role of the National Security Advisor, interview by Ivo H Daalder, I. M. Destler, and Center for International and Security Studies At Maryland and The Brookings Institution, October 25, 1999, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/19991025.pdf>, 2.

³¹ David Lauter, "Brent Scowcroft," in *Fateful Decisions: Inside the National Security Council*, ed. Karl Inderfurth and Loch K. Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 203–7.

The Bush administration had to cope with major crises to the international order that had profound implications for foreign policy.³² The pace of change was also remarkable. In the first two years of the Bush's administration, the US invaded Panama, responded to and managed the fall of the Berlin Wall, dealt with the reunification of Germany and the slow dissolution of the Soviet Union, and defended Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion. In each case, Bush's collegial, team-based organizational culture, personal relationships and communication networks of senior advisors pushed into the deputy and lower interagency levels, allowed the administration to respond quickly and efficiently, with a coherent, well analyzed policy.³³

Bush's first external challenge came early in the administration, and taught the members of his administration key lessons they applied to later crises, notably the Gulf War. The Reagan administration bequeathed the foreign policy challenge of Manuel Noriega in Panama, who had been indicted by the US Department of Justice on drug-trafficking and racketeering.³⁴ Even though Bush had campaigned on a policy of removing Noriega, "when coup plotters approached Washington in 1989 for assistance, the administration was unprepared and opted to do nothing."³⁵ The administration quickly learned their crisis decision-making process needed improvement to address the lack of structure in deliberations, the lack of preparation, and the lack of follow-up. As a result, Scowcroft assigned day-to-day management of the crisis process to "summarize information, develop options, and follow up on any decisions that the president had made."³⁶ While painful, Panama taught Bush and his key advisors that they needed improvements to be more effective, and similar lessons were shared by the senior advisors, a key component to adapting organizational culture to external challenges.

The Soviet Union presented a variety of challenges for the Bush administration. Before taking office, Bush and his advisors were cautiously skeptical of Gorbachev and the sincerity of his *glasnost* and *perestroika* initiatives. However, the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in February 1989 and the USSR's reaction to the fall of the Berlin wall

³² Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 190.

³³ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 269.

³⁴ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 175.

³⁵ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 184.

³⁶ Daalder, 184–85.

led Bush and Scowcroft to realize they might have an opportunity to affect change in their favor, though they wanted to prevent a dramatic and risky implosion of the Soviet Union.³⁷ Bush established a small, unofficial interagency group, the “Un-Group,” below the PC and DC levels, staffed by trusted representatives that could work the intricate details needed to address arms control, troop levels, and German reunification. This group focused on problem-solving rather than protecting bureaucratic interests and was an effective organizational adaption for resolving contentious issues.³⁸ Daalder and Destler argue that even at this early stage of the administration, the embedded organizational culture of effective cooperation, rather than confrontation or consensus, made the “Un-Group” an important adaptation for the Bush administration.³⁹ While the “Un-Group” worked to provide resolution on key issues and clear analysis on options, there were still sharp disagreements over policy choices.

Troop levels in Europe and the potential reunification of Germany likewise presented difficult choices for Bush and his advisors. While Scowcroft proposed that the US and Soviet Union make significant force reductions in Europe, using it as a test of Gorbachev’s commitment to change, Cheney was strongly opposed to “such a radical move.”⁴⁰ During several weeks of discussion, Baker, Cheney, Scowcroft, and others were given opportunities to present their case to Bush. Though Bush eventually followed Scowcroft’s proposal, there was little conflict between Cheney and Scowcroft.⁴¹

As the possibility of a unified Germany increased, disagreements over whether it was feasible and how it might be managed divided the advisors. Before the Berlin Wall fell in October 1989, Bush, against Baker and Scowcroft’s advice, publicly announced that he did not have concerns about a reunified Germany. After Bush’s announcement of the US position, Scowcroft and Baker disagreed about how East and West Germany might be united and, importantly, who would participate in the process. Scowcroft wanted to leave it to the Germans themselves, while Baker and experts in the State Department argued “Soviet participation was inevitable and desirable, but only under

³⁷ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 275–81.

³⁸ Rothkopf, 278–280, 284.

³⁹ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 188–190.

⁴⁰ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 184.

⁴¹ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 193–94.

certain conditions.”⁴² Discussions between the State Department and the NSC led to a “two-plus-four” approach, with the issues decided by the two Germanys, as well as the four major powers of the US, Soviet Union, France, and the United Kingdom. Philip Zelikow, working in the NSC at the time, points out that though the process worked, there was hostility and suspicion between Scowcroft and Baker, stating, “there was some real acrimony there, both personal and substantive.”⁴³ However, since the disputes did not leak outside of the administration, hostility eventually diminished, and the interagency process continued to function. Though this was still in the first year of the administration, members of the organization had found ways to manage conflict and suspicion, absorbing tensions and then recovering.⁴⁴ Additionally, even though Baker and Scowcroft disagreed, Scowcroft worked from “the inside” to protect everyone’s equities as Baker was pushing forward with major initiatives in NATO and in Europe.⁴⁵ This cooperative, team-based approach reinforced an organizational culture that was effective in adapting to the external challenge presented by the decline of the Soviet Union.

The cooperative organizational culture embedded early in the administration paid dividends when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in August 1990. The invasion was a large surprise to the administration, which had been focused on diplomatic and economic engagement with Iraq as a counter to Iran. The DC and most of the government was unprepared to develop detailed policy options, provide in-depth analysis, or make policy recommendations to the PC.⁴⁶ As a result, when Bush first spoke to reporters about potential US actions, he recalled “I had no idea what our options were.”⁴⁷ Moreover, the first NSC meeting on the crisis was “meandering, chaotic, and lacking in passion,” and Scowcroft thought the gathering set a dangerous and inappropriate tone resigned to a *fait accompli*, leaving out larger foreign policy issues.⁴⁸ Bush agreed with Scowcroft, so they quickly reconvened a full NSC meeting where Scowcroft stepped out of his broker role to

⁴² Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 281–82.

⁴³ Rothkopf, 282.

⁴⁴ Rothkopf, 282.

⁴⁵ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 194.

⁴⁶ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 293–94.

⁴⁷ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 315.

⁴⁸ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 197; Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 295–296.

“make introductory comments about the significance of what had happened,” and expressed his opinion that “the stakes in this for the US are such that to accommodate Iraq should not be a policy option.”⁴⁹

During the early days of the crisis, Scowcroft took on a policy advocate role that was outside the cultural norms previously established in the administration. This role could have been, and had been in the past, perceived by other senior advisors as an inappropriate role and power grab. But, Daalder argues that since Scowcroft had already gained the others confidence and trust, this risk never materialized, enabling Baker and Cheney to develop critical diplomatic and military elements of the policy while Scowcroft eventually stepped back to “pull these disparate efforts together into a single, successful strategy.”⁵⁰ In the end, Rodman argues, the handling of the Gulf Crisis was “a notable feat of presidential leadership; it was also an exercise in effective bureaucratic management.”⁵¹

This assessment might be correct on the whole, but there are some controversial issues that highlight potential weaknesses in the administration’s organizational culture and internal integration. One example of a controversial issue was the appropriate consideration of options besides use of military force. Bush, Scowcroft, and Cheney had little faith in the chance that Hussein was rational, or that he would bend to a diplomatic solution, and they were equally skeptical that sanctions could be successful.⁵² Some might argue other options were prematurely eliminated or only half-heartedly pursued before being abandoned for a coalition based on military force. The similarity of experience, long standing relationships and expectations of loyalty might have contributed to early consensus and loyalty to Bush’s preference for the military option without true and honest consideration of alternatives. If there is a weakness in the decision making during the Gulf Crisis, it is more likely to reside with Bush deciding on military force very early on, rather than the diversity of opinions within the administration.

⁴⁹ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 296; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 321-323.

⁵⁰ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 196; Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 298.

⁵¹ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 195.

⁵² Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 198-199; Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 298-299.

While the Bush administration managed both an effective process and a consistently collegial team based on an organizational culture for responding to external challenges, Bush did not always manage internal integration challenges. In fact, Bush himself could often be the source of internal integration problems. Bush was a hands on, ‘tactical’ foreign policy president. He repeatedly and often called other foreign leaders on his own, when key stake holders, like State Department personnel, were not in the room.⁵³ Bush also had a tendency to narrow his informal groups to very small inner circles, “compartmentalizing information on sensitive issues and springing surprises on his aides.”⁵⁴ Based on Reagan’s example, an engaged executive is critical to the process, but Bush’s approach sometimes kept information from key advisors and agencies, with the potential to increase fear, uncertainty and a less effective process since they were out of the information loop. Bush’s “mad dialer” habit did not help manage internal integration problems, though Scowcroft and the overall organizational culture seem to have mitigated this weakness.⁵⁵

Similarly, due to his extensive experience with China, Bush often knew the issues better than his advisors or the policy specialists, and took control of any China-related issues. From one perspective, Bush’s hands-on and tactical engagement could be perceived as micromanagement and acting as “the China desk officer” rather than the executive.⁵⁶ Micromanagement can create conflicts over roles and identity, and cause subordinates to fear they are not trusted members of the team. Though there was the potential for an internal integration problem, it appears that Bush’s preference for hands on leadership never reached levels that would cause significant dysfunction in the process and organizational culture.

Leadership Impacts

Overall, Bush’s informal management style and his interpersonal management skills created an organizational culture that aligned espoused values and observable behaviors. His leadership prevented dysfunctional conflict that can fuel subcultures, which tend to interrupt the foreign policy process. Bush selected advisors who were

⁵³ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 181.

⁵⁴ George and George, *Presidential Personality and Performance*, 241.

⁵⁵ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 179–80.

⁵⁶ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 181.

experienced and had worked well together before, which allowed them to go through the phases of group formation quickly and reach a higher level of team performance sooner than other administrations. Bush also tolerated reasonable amounts of conflict and dissent from his advisors, finding value in healthy “give and take” on policy issues. His expectations and role modeling set the standard on how to debate policy issues without letting it spiral out of control. Bush believed it was important to “get good strong experienced people, encourage them to express their views openly, encourage them not to hold back.”⁵⁷ Importantly, disagreements between subordinates never permanently solidified into the hostile camps seen in the Reagan administration. By encouraging dissent, tolerating moderate amounts of conflict and demonstrating continued faith in subordinates after setbacks or ‘losing’ a policy decision, Bush prevented strong subcultures from forming. As seen in the early foreign policy challenges of Panama, the Soviet Union and the Gulf War, alliances among his advisors tended to shift back and forth across the issues, another indicator that effective teamwork was the focus of the organizational culture, rather than competitive subcultures.⁵⁸

Bush’s extensive experience and cognitive style not only made him self-confident but also led him to rely heavily on his own policy judgements and use small inner circles to prevent leaks.⁵⁹ While not as excessive as Nixon, Bush still desired secrecy and compartmentalization to prevent leaks -- which Bush loathed. Like other administrations, Bush narrowed his advisory circles from the formal NSC meetings to the “Big Eight” and often narrowed even further to the “inner inner circle.”⁶⁰ On occasion, he made decisions without consulting Baker, Cheney, or Powell. During the Gulf War, Bush did not consult beforehand with Cheney, Baker, or Powell about the US policy to liberate Kuwait or the decision to double US forces.⁶¹ Bush did not inform Cheney that he had decided to meet with Gorbachev in 1989. His self-confidence in mastery of the policy details may have made him close-minded on some topics.⁶² But, overall, Bush’s collegial and team-based

⁵⁷ George and George, *Presidential Personality and Performance*, 237.

⁵⁸ George and George, 237, 240.

⁵⁹ Preston, “The President’s Inner Circle: Personality and Leadership Style in Foreign Policy Decision-Making,” 114–16.

⁶⁰ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 179.

⁶¹ George and George, *Presidential Personality and Performance*, 239.

⁶² George and George, 239, 241.

organizational culture mitigated the tensions and fears that his desire for secrecy and prevention of leaks might have caused among his advisors, allowing them to manage internal integration, group formation and external adaptation challenges.

Bush's communication and cognitive styles are essentially the opposite from his predecessor. Bush viewed the world through a pragmatic rather than a conceptual lens, and he was a problem-solver rather than a visionary.⁶³ Bush did articulate the vision of "a new world order" but avoided Reagan-esque rhetoric that did not always resonate with the public and appeared reactive, as was the case in the lost opportunity to support the coup against Noriega.⁶⁴ As Scowcroft recalled "we don't want to reinvent the world. This is not an administration hell-bent on change."⁶⁵ While caution was the external presentation of Bush's vision, internally Bush often pushed his aides to "be bolder" about what might be possible as the foundations of the Cold War began to change.⁶⁶ Bush's cognitive abilities and mastery of foreign policy details were frequently demonstrated in transcripts of meetings of briefings or interviews with the press.⁶⁷ His extensive foreign policy experience and high cognitive complexity characterize him as a 'navigator,' which seems an apt description of his foreign policy decisions during a very turbulent time.⁶⁸

⁶³ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 201; George and George, *Presidential Personality and Performance*, 235.

⁶⁴ Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, 169-170; Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 201.

⁶⁵ Daalder, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 173.

⁶⁶ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 185.

⁶⁷ Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, 170.

⁶⁸ Preston, "The President's Inner Circle: Personality and Leadership Style in Foreign Policy Decision-Making," 118-21.

CONCLUSION

Foreign policy creation and management is a collaborative art form – or to use a different metaphor, a team sport. This is a fact that has been lost on many presidents who have viewed their cabinets as a series of individual slots to be filled and then could not understand why coordination became impossible, rivalries emerged and ineffectiveness (and worse) resulted.

- David Rothkopf

The three case studies of this thesis focused on different organizational cultures in foreign policy making. The organizational culture approach focused on systemic effects between basic elements and their reciprocal relationships. Nixon and Reagan created organizational cultures that tended to one extreme, either unduly emphasizing task effectiveness or individual people. Nixon and Kissinger, for instance, aggressively pursued their foreign policy goals, emphasizing task accomplishment at the expense of member's basic social needs for security when working in a group. Nixon was a perfectionist, competitive, oppositional, and power focused, defensive of his policies, expertise, and status. The organizational culture he fostered was aggressive-defensive, and while effective in the short term, it may have been more uneven in his second term, had he not resigned. Members in an aggressive-defensive organization often focus on protecting their status and security, leading to stress, turnover, decisions based on conflict rather than collaboration, and inconsistent performance.¹

On the other end of the spectrum, Reagan was heavily oriented toward people at the cost of the task at hand. His passive approach to conflict and need to be accepted by his friends meant he avoided conflict, which produced a predictable and secure situation at the cost of learning, adaptation, survival, and effectiveness. Reagan, like Nixon, was defensive of his position, but did so through dependency and approval rather than power and competition, as Nixon did. Reagan's passive-defensive style resulted in people that felt secure but, over time, allowed the organization to stagnate, driving members to seek

¹ Robert A. Cooke and Janet L. Szumal, "Measuring Normative Beliefs and Shared Behavioral Expectations in Organizations: The Reliability and Validity of the Organizational Culture Inventory," *Psychological Reports* 72 (June 1, 1993): 1299–1330. Also see Cooke and Lafferty's "Circumplex," descriptions at <https://www.humansynergistics.com/Files/HTML5/Circumplex/index.html#>.

creativity and initiative in unauthorized ways.² It is unlikely Reagan would or could have adapted his style to better manage internal integration challenges if the Iran Contra scandal had not forced his hand. Even then, Reagan did not take an active role in implementation, trusting Frank Carlucci to implement the Tower Commission's recommendations on his behalf.

In contrast, Bush took more of a middle path compared to Nixon and Reagan, using his experience to pursue effective foreign policy and using his emotional intelligence to manage his subordinate's fears and insecurities in the group. Bush's focus on individual *and* group achievement, and his encouragement after setbacks, created an organizational culture where member's needs for security were balanced with the need to create an effective foreign policy process. His constructive approach promoted teamwork at the individual and group levels, leading to organizational adaptability and effectiveness. Bush's healthy balance between people- and task-orientation, as compared to the extremes pursued by Nixon and Reagan, resulted in effective performance, growth, and work quality in his foreign policy.³ While Bush created a collegial and constructive organizational culture, his and his advisor's expertise was based on Cold War contexts. As a result, in the last year of his presidency – and as conflict in the Balkans increased and foreign policy problems appeared in new ways – and the NSC structure and processes he engendered became less effective at coping with external adaptation. Though a counterfactual thought experiment, had Bush had a second term, his constructive organizational culture may have been the most effective at adapting to the changing contexts.

The diversity in these three administrations indicates that neither structure, process, or leadership are the *sole* factor in creating an effective foreign policy process -- though leadership is often dominant in US modern foreign policy. As Jervis argues, the system can operate in different ways than its parts. Even an organizational culture that tend toward an extreme -- with all the resulting dysfunctions and problems, can result in some effective policies. Nixon had success with China and the Soviet Union, and

² Cooke and Szumal; Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*.

³ Cooke and Szumal, "Measuring Normative Beliefs and Shared Behavioral Expectations in Organizations: The Reliability and Validity of the Organizational Culture Inventory."

Reagan's extraordinary vision helped shape the environment for his later arms control successes. The challenge for presidents is understanding their own personality style and preferences, while adapting their focus based on context. Extensive research on leadership demonstrates that necessary or appropriate leadership traits are often contextually dependent. Traits that might be effective in one context are inhibiting in another. Relating back to Jervis, leaders can change their situations, but situations can reciprocally alter leaders – the direct and indirect effects combine into something different than the parts of a system initially suggest.⁴ Consider how effective Nixon's organization culture might be today, in a post-Cold War environment, with different expectations about interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Organizational culture and leadership studies show that constructive styles of organizational culture are, in most situations, more often effective than the aggressive or passive styles.⁵ This does not imply that leaders cannot or should not chose specific instances in which they need to be more task focused or people oriented. It does, however, imply that a leader's overall approach should be balanced, using a specific focus when the context requires it. As in many human endeavors, there are no foolproof structures, processes, or approaches when it comes to adapting to external challenges or managing internal integration in search of effectiveness. For presidents and his senior advisors, then, intentionally creating and maintaining a constructive organizational culture, as Bush did, cannot guarantee a successful foreign policy process, but it might provide the best approach to avoid the pitfalls of other organizational cultures and also increase group effectiveness across the broad range of dynamic foreign policy challenges.

The difficulty in predicting outcomes of our own foreign policy structures and process ought to give advisors and strategists pause in attempting to predict policy decisions in other nations. Simplistic models based on assumptions about perceived rational interests or autocratic leadership are unlikely to provide realistic and useful assessments or predictions. For example, a rational actor approach alone is unlikely to provide the range of potential options and outcomes of another government's policy process. Instead, the different elements and challenges inherent to the US foreign policy

⁴ Bass and Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership*, 716–19.

⁵ Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 287.

process can help us ask a broad range of questions about other democratic governments that use a strong executive to craft policy. Similarly, the potential for errors of analogic reasoning increase the less similar a government is to the US style, but we can expect that some dynamics are similar to organizations everywhere: people in groups will often struggle with roles, identity, power and influence. A longer term organizational assessment might provide more insight into relationships and trends over time, while acknowledging that leaders respond to situations in context, sometimes in surprising ways. If we have difficulty in understanding how our own structures, processes, and leadership function effectively, we should be extremely cautious in accepting estimates and predictions about likely outcomes from other states' structures, processes and leadership.

Lastly, for those below the NSC level, increased understanding about the inherent challenges of effective foreign policy at the most senior levels provides context that those in bureaucratic stovepipes are unaware of or dismiss as "politics." Lower level policy departments and executors can often view the foreign policy process as 'broken' without understanding the extraordinarily complex system that is foreign policy. The president can only influence factors internal to the administration: personality and the sociology/culture of an administration; the ideology and/or governing philosophy; and the structure and process. Even within these, presidential influence and control is circumscribed by bureaucratic preferences and the quality of the relationships among senior advisors. The president is also often constrained by domestic political context and the international context; Nixon's domestic missteps, for instance, diminish his foreign policy successes; Bush's underestimation of the importance of the domestic economy was a major cause in him losing reelection, even though his popularity polls had been extraordinarily high after the Gulf War.

The implication in all of this for personnel below the NSC is that no matter how simple foreign policy options or choices appear from one perspective, options and choices get very complicated when placed in a broader context. Departments that are inflexible on positions and unwilling to work with other departments contribute to stagnating policy, and they can contribute to subculture conflict that so hampered the Reagan administration. Of course, lower levels are often charged with protecting their

department's identity and ideas about effectiveness, manifesting as 'turf battles.' Departments that are more aware about the larger context might come closer to representing a constructive organizational culture, rather than pursuing competition or stagnation, and be more effective over the long term in contributing to effective foreign policy making.

Hovering above all this is the importance of the president. Peter Rodman asserted "For those who care about national security policy, therefore, the key question turns out to be: not what should we look for in a policy-making process, but what should we look for in a president." In recognizing the importance of organizational culture, created through reciprocal effects of leadership style, personalities of key advisors, roles, structure and process, Rodman's statement might be adapted to, "the key question turns out to be not what should we look for in a policy making process, but what kind of organizational culture will a president create in concert with his advisors?"

The complex system of the foreign policy process and the organizational cultures that develop in an administration, then, rely on considering both important elements of the system and their systemic interactions. Detailed analysis of basic elements is important but does not provide insight into how those elements might combine. In an orchestra, understanding the characteristics of one section and their contribution is important but it also matters a great deal how their contribution will balance and harmonize with other sections. Rothkopf argues foreign policy is:

"More like an art form. And if it is like any art form more than another, it is like jazz. The key players work together as a single unit, collaborating closely – the more intuitively the better, responding to new motifs and surprising changes with improvised counterthemes and working and hoping that the elements resolve themselves satisfactorily in the end."⁶

An organizational culture approach provides a framework for better understanding the orchestration of our own foreign policy process and can help educate our assessments about other nations' foreign policy process or at least caution against simplistic models.

⁶ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 277.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allison, Graham T., and Philip Zelikow. *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. 2nd ed. New York: Longman, 1999.
- Auerswald, David P. "The Evolution of the NSC Process." In *The National Security Enterprise: Navigating the Labyrinth*, edited by Roger Z. George, Harvey Rishikof, and Georgetown University. Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2011.
- Baker, James Addison, and Thomas M. DeFrank. *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War, and Peace, 1989-1992*. New York: Putnam, 1995.
- Bass, Bernard M., and Ruth Bass. *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, and Managerial Applications*. 4th ed., Free Press hardcover ed. New York: Free Press, 2008.
- Best, Jr., Richard. "The National Security Council: An Organizational Assessment." FAS.org, 2011. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL30840.pdf>.
- Bock, Joseph G. *The White House Staff and the National Security Assistant: Friendship and Friction at the Water's Edge*. Contributions in Political Science, no. 170. New York: Greenwood Press, 1987.
- Brzezinski, Zbigniew. "A Forum on the Role of the National Security Adviser." In *Fateful Decisions: Inside the National Security Council*, edited by Karl Inderfurth and Loch K. Johnson. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Burke, John P. "The National Security Advisor and Staff: Transition Challenges." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (June 2009).
- Burke, John P. "The Neutral/Honest Broker Role in Foreign-Policy Decision Making: A Reassessment." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (June 2005): 229–58.
- Bush, George H. W. "National Security Presidential Directive 1," January 30, 1989. <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/nsd/nsd1.pdf>.
- Bush, George, and Brent Scowcroft. *A World Transformed*. 1st ed. New York: Knopf; Distributed by Random House, 1998.
- Cooke, Robert A., and Janet L. Szumal. "Measuring Normative Beliefs and Shared Behavioral Expectations in Organizations: The Reliability and Validity of the Organizational Culture Inventory." *Psychological Reports* 72 (June 1, 1993): 1299–1330.
- Crabb, Cecil V., and Kevin V. Mulcahy. "The Lessons of the Iran-Contra Affair for National Security Policy Making." In *Fateful Decisions: Inside the National*

- Security Council*, edited by Karl Inderfurth and Loch K. Johnson. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Crabb, Cecil Van Meter, and Kevin V. Mulcahy. *Presidents and Foreign Policy Making: From FDR to Reagan*. Political Traditions in Foreign Policy Series. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986.
- Daalder, Ivo H. *In the Shadow of the Oval Office: Profiles of the National Security ...* Simon & Schuster, 2011.
- Destler, I. M. "National Security Advice to U.S. Presidents: Some Lessons from Thirty Years." *World Politics* 29, no. 2 (January 1977): 143–76.
- Falk, Stanley T. "The NSC Under Truman and Eisenhower." In *Fateful Decisions: Inside the National Security Council*, edited by Karl Inderfurth and Loch K. Johnson. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- George, Alexander L., and Juliette L. George. *Presidential Personality and Performance*. Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1998.
- George, Roger Z., Harvey Rishikof, and Georgetown University, eds. *The National Security Enterprise: Navigating the Labyrinth*. Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2011.
- Goleman, Daniel. *Emotional Intelligence*. 10th anniversary trade pbk. ed. New York: Bantam Books, 2005.
- Greenstein, Fred I. *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Barack Obama*. 3rd ed. Princeton, NJ ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Halperin, Morton H., Priscilla Clapp, and Arnold Kanter. *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*. 2nd ed. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2006.
- Hunter, Robert Edwards. *Organizing for National Security*. Significant Issues Series, v. 10, no. 11. Washington, D.C: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1988.
- Inderfurth, Karl, and Loch K. Johnson, eds. *Fateful Decisions: Inside the National Security Council*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Jervis, Robert. *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- John Tower, Brent Scowcroft, and Edmund Muskie. "Report of The President's Special Review Board." United States, February 26, 1987.

- Kadushin, Charles. *Understanding Social Networks: Theories, Concepts, and Findings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Kerbel, Matthew Robert. *Beyond Persuasion: Organizational Efficiency and Presidential Power*. SUNY Series on the Presidency. Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1991.
- Kissinger, Henry. *White House Years*. First Simon & Schuster trade paperback ed. New York: Simon & Schuster trade paperbacks, 2011.
- Kowert, Paul. *Groupthink or Deadlock: When Do Leaders Learn from Their Advisors?* SUNY Series on the Presidency. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.
- Lauter, David. "Brent Scowcroft." In *Fateful Decisions: Inside the National Security Council*, edited by Karl Inderfurth and Loch K. Johnson. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Lord, Carnes. *The Presidency and the Management of National Security*. New York : London: Free Press ; Collier Macmillan, 1988.
- National Security Act of July 26, 1947, Pub. L. No. 80–253 (1947).
- Neustadt, Richard E. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*. New York : Toronto : New York: Free Press ; Collier Macmillan Canada ; Maxwell Macmillan, 1990.
- Newmann, William W. *Managing National Security Policy: The President and the Process*. Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003.
- Nixon, Richard M. *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon, with a New Introduction*. 1st Touchstone ed. The Richard Nixon Library Edition. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990.
- Olson, Mancur. *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. 21. printing. Harvard Economic Studies 124. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2003.
- Peterson, Mark A. "Presidential Power and the Potential for Leadership." In *Presidential Power: Forging the Presidency for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Robert Y. Shapiro, Martha Joynt Kumar, and Lawrence R. Jacobs. Power, Conflict, and Democracy. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Powell, Colin L. "The NSC Advisors: Process Manager and More." In *Fateful Decisions: Inside the National Security Council*, edited by Karl Inderfurth and Loch K. Johnson. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

- Prados, John. *Keepers of the Keys: A History of the National Security Council from Truman to Bush*. 1st ed. New York: Morrow, 1991.
- Preston, Thomas. "The President's Inner Circle: Personality and Leadership Style in Foreign Policy Decision-Making." In *Presidential Power: Forging the Presidency for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Robert Y. Shapiro, Martha Joynt Kumar, and Lawrence R. Jacobs. Power, Conflict, and Democracy. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Reagan, Ronald. *An American Life*. 1st Threshold Editions trade pbk.ed. New York: Threshold Editions, 2011.
- Rockman, Bert A. "America's Departments of State: Irregular and Regular Syndromes of Policy Making." *The American Political Science Review* 75, no. 4 (December 1981).
- Rodman, Peter W. *Presidential Command: Power, Leadership, and the Making of Foreign Policy from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush*. 1st ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.
- Rosenwasser, Jon J., and Michael Warner. "History of the Interagency Process for Foreign Relations in the United States: Murphy's Law?" In *The National Security Enterprise: Navigating the Labyrinth*, edited by Roger Z. George, Harvey Rishikof, and Georgetown University. Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2011.
- Rothkopf, David J. *Running the World: The inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power*. New York: Public Affairs, 2006.
- Rubenzler, Steven J., and Thomas R. Faschingbauer. *Personality, Character, and Leadership in the White House: Psychologists Assess the Presidents*. 1st ed. Washington, D.C: Brassey's, 2004.
- Sarkesian, Sam C., John Allen Williams, and Stephen J. Cimbala. *US National Security: Policymakers, Processes, and Politics*. 4th ed. Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008.
- Schein, Edgar H. *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. 5th Edition. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 2017.
- Scowcroft, Brent. The National Security Council Project: Oral History Roundtables - The Role of the National Security Advisor. Interview by Ivo H Daalder, I. M. Destler, and Center for International and Security Studies At Maryland and The Brookings Institution, October 25, 1999. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/19991025.pdf>.

Shapiro, Robert Y., Martha Joynt Kumar, and Lawrence R. Jacobs, eds. *Presidential Power: Forging the Presidency for the Twenty-First Century*. Power, Conflict, and Democracy. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

Shoemaker, Christopher C. *The NSC Staff: Counseling the Council*. Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1991.

Shultz, George Pratt. *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State*. New York; Toronto; New York: Scribner's ; Maxwell Macmillan Canada ; Maxwell Macmillan International, 1993.

Weinberger, Caspar W. *Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon*. New York, NY: Warner Books, 1990.

Wilson, James Q. *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*. New ed. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000.

Zegart, Amy B. *Flawed by Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1999.

