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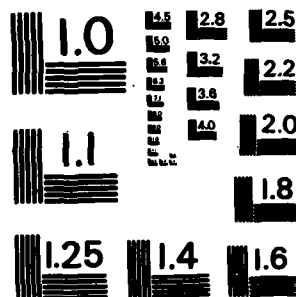
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REFORMING THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

Henry Oliver Johnson IV
Charlottesville, Virginia

B.S., United States Air Force Academy, 1979

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate
Faculty of the University of Virginia
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Woodrow Wilson Department of Government
and Foreign Affairs

University of Virginia

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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

I. Introduction

The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) is one of the least understood institutions in America's national security policymaking process. Most of the studies and essays critical of the JCS lack an understanding of the historical evolution of the institution.¹ Without the benefit of a historical analysis, there is a tendency by critics of the JCS to ignore its original purpose and limitations. One author attributes this lack of understanding about the JCS to two factors. First, the JCS organization is a relatively new institution, dating from the mid-1940s. Second, scholars have not spent a great deal of time studying the JCS.² Who are the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and what are their responsibilities?

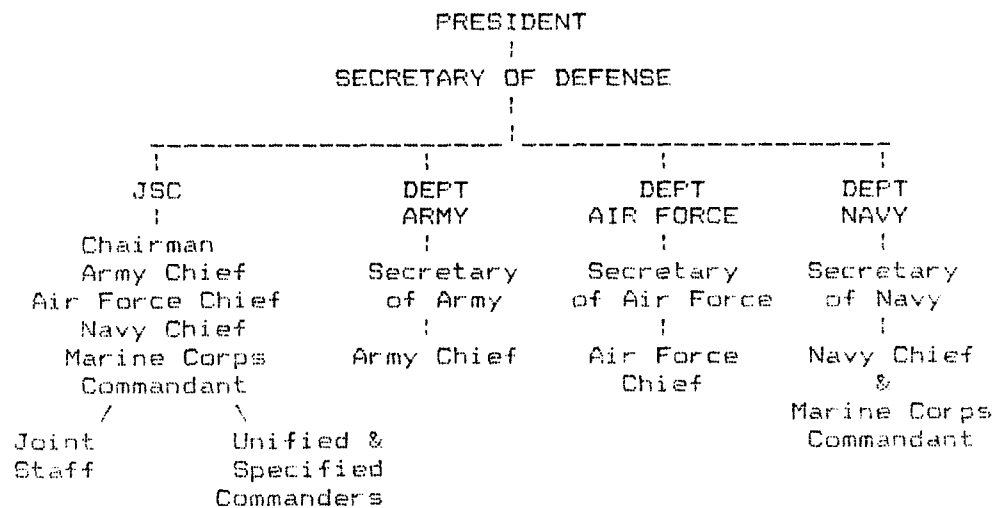
The Joint Chiefs of Staff is the body of principal military advisors to the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the National Security Council. The JCS consists of a five-member committee composed of a chairman and the head of each of the four services--the Chiefs of Staff of the Army and Air Force, the Chief of Naval Operations, and the Marine Corps Commandant. The JCS members are appointed to office by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate. The legal status of the JCS is derived from the National Security Act of 1947 and its subsequent amendments.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff can come from any of the services. He has no service responsibilities and is tasked with setting the agenda for JCS meetings, managing the Joint Staff which supports the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and representing JCS positions at National Security Council meetings. Although the chairman is the highest ranking active duty officer, he commands no operational forces. The chain of command runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense and through the Joint Chiefs of Staff collectively to the field commanders or CINCs. The CINCs are this nation's combat commanders and head unified or specified commands.

The individual Service Chiefs have dual responsibilities. In addition to providing military direction to their service, they are also members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. As JCS members they are responsible for providing guidance on joint affairs and formulating strategic military policy. As Service Chiefs, they report to the respective civilian head of their service. In their JCS role, the Service Chiefs report to the President through the Secretary of Defense.

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The functions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff can be grouped into three overlapping categories: advice, planning and staff work, and transmission of executive orders.⁴ By law, the members of the JCS are the principal military advisors to the President and the Secretary of Defense. However, both of these individuals can choose to either accept or ignore JCS advice. The relationship of the JCS to the President and the Secretary of Defense can be influenced by the personalities involved.

In recent years, members of Congress have increasingly utilized the JCS to obtain advice on the military budget and military strategic policy. The Joint Chiefs of Staff make numerous appearances each year before congressional committees to provide testimony on our national defense policies. One could argue that the JCS is becoming a political football and is getting kicked around by the

Congress and President as they battle each other over national security issues.

The second major category of JCS functions is planning and staff work. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are directly involved in strategic planning. They deal with such questions as -- What forces and weapon systems will our nation need in the future? The JCS play an important role in developing contingency plans in case of war. To help the JCS members with developing such plans is the Joint Staff. This staff is composed of officers from all the services. The Joint Staff develops and coordinates with the Service Staffs the decision papers discussed by the members of the JCS at their weekly meetings in the Pentagon. The current layered-staffing process encourages the JCS members to arrive at a consensus position on military issues. Very few split opinions are forwarded by the JCS to the Secretary of Defense.

Finally, the JCS acts as an intermediary between the National Command Authorities -- the President and the Secretary of Defense -- and the CINCs or combat commanders. The JCS has no executive authority to issue orders, it is only a staff organization. In a command and control function, the JCS acts as an agent to transmit the President's or Secretary of Defense's orders to the combat commanders. This arrangement is confusing in peacetime and potentially unworkable during war.

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This paper will review the role of the JCS in the national security policymaking process by analyzing the three functional categories noted above. Several aspects of the JCS are examined in detail: ~~first~~, a brief historical look at how the JCS has evolved since its inception; ~~second~~, a review of the criticisms of the organization; ~~third~~, an analysis of current proposals for JCS reform; and finally, some comments on the prospects for change. Several questions need to be addressed in this inquiry. How was the JCS originally established? Has the institution evolved as designed? Have these changes improved or hindered the JCS functions? What reforms, if any, are necessary for the JCS to maintain an active role in formulating national security policy?

↑

II. Evolution of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

The Joint Chiefs of Staff evolved from our military experiences of World War II. At the Arcadia Conference of December 1941 - January 1942, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill agreed to create a Combined Chiefs of Staff. This organization would provide strategic direction for American and British forces during the war effort. President Roosevelt created the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the American counterpart to the British Chiefs of Staff Committee. Under the authority and guidance of President Roosevelt as Commander-in-Chief, the Joint Chiefs of Staff undertook the coordination and strategic direction of both the Army and Navy war efforts.¹

The original members of President Roosevelt's Joint Chiefs of Staff were: General George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff; General Henry A. Arnold, Commanding General of the Army Air Forces; and Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander in Chief of the U.S. Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations. Soon after the Joint Chiefs were formed, Admiral William D. Leahy was brought in and made Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief. He functioned as the liaison between the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Throughout World War II, the Joint Chiefs of Staff operated at the direction of the President without any formal charter. The Joint Chiefs of Staff bypassed the

Secretaries of the Army and Navy in carrying out their responsibilities. In doing so, "they combined command and planning within themselves and maintained direct access to and the confidence of the President." ² Many have attributed our victory in World War II to the planning done by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

However, the wartime success of the JCS can be described as "more apparent than real." According to scholars who have studied the wartime decision-making process, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had difficulties in reaching agreement on many issues. Often agreements were reached only "by numerous compromises and after long delays." Throughout the war the Joint Chiefs of Staff failed to coordinate effectively logistical support matters. As a body for strategic planning, the Joint Chiefs of Staff only functioned effectively "in the European theater from mid-1943 until May 1944." The Joint Chiefs of Staff was all but locked out of the war in the Pacific. The Navy ³ directed the war campaigns in this theater.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff without any formal charter continued to operate after the war. All the postwar armed forces unification plans included the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Nobody seriously took issue with the Joint Chiefs of Staff arrangement. Paul Hammond, in Organizing for

Defense, noted:

During World War II the Joint Chiefs of Staff worked effectively in handling the larger problems of strategy and operations which were its primary raison d'être only briefly and with respect to a limited range of issues . . . Its limited success, diminished by the costs which success incurred, does not justify the conclusion that World War II was a test of the JCS which established its value beyond substantial doubt.⁴

However, the congressional debates surrounding the passage of the National Security Act of 1947 assumed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff would be an inherent part of any national military establishment.

Since the end of World War I, the subject of unification of the armed forces had been hotly contested between the Services and Congress. The Army and Navy both had agreed in principle to the need for a "single unifying organization," but had different ideas on the structure of such an organization. Both services differed in their interpretation of the role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the new military establishment. The Army wanted to give the individual members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff "a statutory right to present their military programs to the President." The Navy favored "program formulation and direction . . . by an organization without a unified command structure at the center."⁵ The Navy envisioned the proposed National Security Council handling this function. In the end, the National Security Act of 1947 adopted neither approach.

7

The National Security Act of 1947 was signed into law by President Truman on September 17, 1947. The Act created

a:

National Military Establishment headed by a Secretary of Defense; gave the Joint Chiefs of Staff legal status as the principal military advisors to the President and Secretary of Defense, but with no provision for a budgetary function; authorized a Joint Staff of not more than 100 officers headed by a director appointed by the Chiefs; established the Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force as executive, cabinet level departments of the government; and created the National Security Council and the Central Intelligence Agency.⁶

The 1947 Act was a compromise between diverse interests, including those who supported and those who opposed a genuine unification of the armed forces. The Army, Navy, and Air Force each retained certain functions and responsibilities, but limited coordinative authority was given to the Secretary of Defense. His coordinating function was weakened by the fact that

All powers not specifically delegated to him remained with the service departments. He was given only general authority and control over the three services, authorized no more than three special assistants, and provided with no military staff.⁷

In the 1947 Act, the Joint Chiefs of Staff was made a legal part of the National Military Establishment. The JCS was to consist of the Chief of Staff, United States Army; the Chief of Naval Operations; and the Chief of Staff, United States Air Force. No provision was made for a single military commander of all the armed forces. This

idea had been suggested by the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee established by the JCS in 1944 "to study and recommend the best and most efficient form of peace-and-wartime military organization." ⁸ Congress rejected this advice and chose to make the Joint Chiefs of Staff a balanced, coequal body drawn from all the services. This reflected the strong sentiment in Congress against militarism. Members of Congress were deeply concerned about the concentration of power and authority in the hands of a single military commander who would lead a well-organized, disciplined body of men. Many feared such an arrangement would threaten our democratic heritage of civilian control over the military. They did not want a military organization modeled after the German General Staff. For these reasons the members of the JCS were to act as the principal advisors to the President and the Secretary of Defense. Under the authority and direction of the President and the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were directed by law to:

- (1) to prepare strategic plans and to provide for the strategic direction of the military forces;
- (2) to prepare joint logistic plans and to assign to the military services logistic responsibilities in accordance with such plans;
- (3) to establish unified commands in strategic areas when such unified commands are in the interest of national security;
- (4) to formulate policies for joint training of the military forces;

(5) to formulate policies for coordinating the education of members of the military forces;

(6) to review major material and personnel requirements of the military forces in accordance with strategic and logistic plans;

(7) and to provide United States representation on the Military Staff Committee of the United Nations in accordance with the provisions of the charter of the United Nations.⁹

To aid the Joint Chiefs of Staff in carrying out the above mentioned tasks, provisions in the 1947 Act created a Joint Staff. Specifically, the law stated:

There shall be, under the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a Joint Staff to consist of not to exceed one hundred officers and to be composed of approximately equal numbers of officers from each of the three armed services. The Joint Staff, operating under a Director thereof appointed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, shall perform such duties as may be directed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Director shall be an officer junior in grade to all members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.¹⁰

Some members of Congress had opposed the creation of a Joint Staff; they believed it would too closely parallel the feared German General Staff. They warned that:

Congress should consider well the inherent dangers of the section of the bill pertaining to the Joint Staff before giving it the effect of law. If the section as written is passed it will mark the victory of General Staff influences over Congress, which for 44 years has fought to restrain such influences within our government.¹¹

These fears probably prevented the creation of a single military commander and lead to the establishment of the JCS as an advisory committee.

How effective was the new Joint Chiefs of Staff organization? It soon became evident that interservice rivalry was preventing coordination of military policies at the JCS level. As early as 1948, James Forrestal, the first Secretary of Defense, recommended strengthening the office of the Secretary of Defense and creating a JCS Chairman. The National Security Act of 1947 was designed so that policy guidance was to flow from the National Security Council to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. However, President Truman refused to accept "the NSC as a corporate policy-making body, nor any 'right' of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to be heard by him." The President "was free to seek or disregard these or any other channels of advice."¹² Since the National Security Council was essentially ignored by Truman, the Joint Chiefs of Staff lacked guidance on developing strategic planning. As a result, the JCS became preoccupied with looking at defense policy from a business management perspective.

During Forrestal's tenure as Secretary of Defense, battles were fought over the defense budget. In the budget battles of fiscal years 1949 and 1950, Forrestal found the JCS to be more a "trading post" than a planner of integrated strategy. Louis Johnson replaced Forrestal as Secretary of Defense in the Spring of 1949. At the time, Congress was holding hearings on the National Security Act Amendments of 1949. Budget pressures on defense spending

...ing from the White House and Congress helped "to force
the pace of integration in the military establishment."

The National Security Act Amendments of 1949 strengthened the position of the Secretary of Defense. The National Military Establishment was renamed the Department of Defense (DoD). The Departments of the Army, Navy and Air Force lost their status as executive, cabinet level departments of the government. They became military departments under the direction of the Secretary of Defense. The 1949 amendments created a non-voting Chairman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. His position was to formulate agendas and preside over JCS meetings. The Chairman of the JCS was not given any command authority. The Joint Staff was expanded from 100 to 210 officers.

Even with the 1949 amendments, the Joint Chiefs of Staff still "needed to have political guidelines set for them on the basis of which they could make their own strategic plans and derive the military requirements from which military budgets could be made." The National Security Council did not provide the Joint Chiefs of Staff such guidelines nor did the Secretary of Defense on his own or from the White House. Johnson's tenure as Secretary of Defense has been characterized as a "preoccupation with managerial problems to the exclusion of substantive issues." Consequently, the Joint Chiefs of Staff "were left to make their own assumptions about national

objectives and policies which were supposed to be, but were not, determined by the NSC."¹⁵

Johnson managed to open up the JCS by splitting it. The Secretary of Defense forced the JCS to vote on the continued construction of a super, flush-deck carrier for the Navy. All the Joint Chiefs except Admiral Louis A. Denfeld favored cancelling the project. Denfeld's outspoken opposition to the cancelling of the project during congressional hearings resulted in his dismissal. Admiral Denfeld had found it impossible to play the dual role of chief spokesman for the Navy and joint planner for the JCS. Secretary of Defense Johnson soon realized "he was dealing with an institution which would break down before it could be opened up to operate beyond the bounds of interest representative negotiations."¹⁶

During the Korean War, the Joint Chiefs of Staff became preoccupied with running the war. In consultation with the State Department the Joint Chiefs of Staff

prepared the directives to the Commander in Chief, Far East and cleared them with the Secretary of Defense. He sent them to the President, usually by the hand of General Bradley, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, who met with President Truman every morning at 10 o'clock. Before approval or disapproval by the President, some directives were forwarded to the National Security Council for study and discussion by the senior staff there.¹⁷

The Korean War did not prove to be a test of the Joint Chiefs of Staff military strategic ability. The war caused

no major disputes among the Chiefs over strategy, roles or missions. Korea was viewed as a policing action with the real threat still residing in Europe. The Joint Chiefs of Staff was strategically concerned with "long-term expansion of the American armed services, and the acceleration of the¹⁸ rearmament of our allies."

After the Korean War, there were several proposals for changing the defense establishment. Vannevar Bush, President of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, criticized the current defense structure. Secretary of Defense Robert A. Lovett wrote President Truman suggesting needed changes. Bush and Lovett would eventually be appointed to the Rockefeller Committee, which was asked by the incoming Eisenhower Administration to study the defense organization. General Bradley, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, entered the debate by publishing his own set of reform proposals.

Bush was concerned with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and their role in developing new weapon systems as it pertained to the strategic planning process. He proposed that

the Joint Chiefs should be relieved of operating responsibilities within their departments so that they would cease to be representatives of interests and planners with command responsibilities as well.¹⁹

Bush opposed the dual-hatting role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Lovett proposed that the Secretary of Defense be recognized as "the Deputy Commander in Chief" and placed in the chain of command between the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Lovett favored creating a military staff under the Secretary of Defense to aid him in "resolving conflicts between Services" and managing the budget process.²⁰ It was hoped that these changes would free the Joint Chiefs to concentrate on strategic planning.

General Bradley advocated the establishment of a National Military Council comprised of retired military statesman. They would have the "authority to review the decisions of the Joint Chiefs on strategic matters, and to decide on a course of action when the Chiefs could not agree."²¹ General Bradley envisioned them presenting "the unified view of all the services to Congress," thus "eliminating the old battles on Capitol Hill in which each service fought separately for its own views."²² The Joint Chiefs of Staff would be retained as a body and this created serious problems with General Bradley's proposal. How were the JCS and National Military Council responsibilities to be defined?

Bush, Lovett, and Bradley all focused on the JCS role in strategic planning. They criticized the JCS both for "being expected to do too much and for accomplishing too little."²³ Each reformer stressed that the emphasis of JCS activity should be on the planning not operational aspects.

Although they differed on solutions to the problem, each implied the same two major weaknesses in the JCS:

its tendency, first, to provide compromises rather than integrated policies, and, second, to get drawn into the short-run and the superficial at the expense of the long-range and the fundamental.²⁴

By the end of the Truman Administration serious thought had gone into a reorganization of the military establishment. The primary thrust of the proposals were to strengthen the JCS role in strategic policymaking.

During the 1952 Presidential campaign, Dwight Eisenhower had been critical of the Department of Defense operations. Soon after winning the presidential election, Eisenhower formed a committee to investigate DoD reorganization. The committee was chaired by Nelson A. Rockefeller. In its report the committee recommended changes to improve the corporate character of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and strengthening the office of Secretary of Defense. President Eisenhower incorporated the Rockefeller Committee's work into Reorganization Plan No. 6 and transmitted it to Congress on June 30, 1953. The role of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was strengthened by making him responsible for appointing and managing the members of the Joint Staff. The chain of command was redirected from the President to the Secretary of Defense through the appropriate Service Secretary on to the unified or specified commanders. Previously, the Joint

Chiefs had been in the chain of command. The Secretary of Defense's staff was boosted with the addition of six²⁵ assistant secretaries and a general counsel.

The Reorganization Plan of 1953 reflected Eisenhower's philosophy on how the military should be structured. The emphasis was on unified civilian-military thinking. The Rockefeller Committee report urged the Secretary of Defense to actively participate in the meetings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Chiefs were encouraged to "avail themselves of the most competent and considered thinking that can be obtained representing every pertinent point of view, including military, scientific, industrial and economic" when discharging their statutory responsibilities. This was a switch in philosophy from the Truman Administration where the Joint Chiefs had argued purely "from the military²⁶ viewpoint." The Eisenhower Administration gave high priority to a balanced budget, this meant cooperation from the JCS in defense budget matters. The qualifications for a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the Eisenhower Administration differed from the Truman Administration. It has been generalized that:

The Truman Administration needed military leaders with the political prestige to carry the Administration's policies. The Eisenhower Administration wanted agreement not advocacy from its military Chiefs.²⁷

Eisenhower wanted team players on the Joint Chiefs of Staff not advocates for individual service interests.

The 1953 reorganization of the military by Eisenhower failed to alter the character of the JCS. The Rockefeller Committee had emphasized increasing the status of the Office of the Secretary of Defense by taking away the JCS command line and stressing the Chiefs' staff functions. It was hoped that the JCS would be made a more effective planning body and provide the President and Secretary of Defense with "full, frank, and prompt advice."²⁸ However, the Joint Chiefs of Staff failed to provide the strategic planning hoped for by President Eisenhower and the Rockefeller Committee.

In 1958, President Eisenhower submitted to Congress another Department of Defense reorganization plan. The plan was approved by Congress on August 6, 1958. It provided for sweeping changes in the chain of command line.

The military departments were removed from the chain of command so that it ran from the President to the Secretary of Defense and through the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the unified and specified commands. The service secretaries lost their role as executive agents for these commands, but retained responsibility for recruiting, training, logistic support, and administration within their services, and for preparation of service budget requests. The authority of the Secretary of Defense over the defense budget was enhanced, and his right to transfer, abolish, or consolidate functions was confirmed.²⁹

The JCS was brought back into the line of command. The position of the JCS Chairman was enhanced by giving him a vote on all JCS issues and the power to appoint the

Director of the Joint Staff. To improve the administrative operation of the JCS, the Joint Staff was increased to 400 officers, but their tenure of duty was limited to three years. The Joint Staff was forbidden to be organized "as an overall Armed Forces General Staff."³⁰ However, it could be organized and operate along conventional staff lines to support the JCS.

The changes in 1958 were needed because the 1953 reorganization plan failed to clarify the JCS role in strategic planning and the command arrangement was confusing. The attempted distinctions between JCS "staff" and Service Secretaries "command" status broke down between 1953 and 1958. The Joint Chiefs remained as spokesmen for their separate services. The Secretary of Defense was unable to provide strategic guidance to the JCS because of inadequate staff support. The National Security Council did not fill the gap in strategic thought either.

Under the 1958 reorganization plan, the principal functions of the JCS may be summarized as

preparing strategic plans and arrangements for strategic direction of the armed forces; recommending establishment and force levels of the unified and specified commands and reviewing their plans and programs; performing logistic and mobilization planning; providing the Secretary of Defense military requirements and strategic guidance for developing the defense budget; and establishing joint doctrine for the unified and specified commands.³¹

The emphasis was on staff planning and advising. Command responsibilities were limited to translating directions from the President and Secretary of Defense into tasking orders and transmitting them to the unified and specified commanders out in the field. The reorganization centralized civilian authority in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Since the 1958 reorganization, the functions and responsibilities of the JCS have remained virtually constant. In 1967, the tenure of the Service Chiefs was increased from two to four years. Internal changes were made in the Joint Staff organization in 1976. In 1978, the Commandant of the Marine Corps was added to the JCS as a full voting, regular member. Previously, from 1952 to 1976 the commandant had had status only when a matter under consideration involved the Marine Corps.

Several changes in the structure and functions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have occurred since passage of the National Security Act of 1947. Most changes were as a result of legislation passed in 1949, 1953, 1958, 1967 and 1978. Some changes were accomplished administratively within the JCS. Changes to the JCS organization can be grouped in response to three problem areas:

First, their own service duties have prevented the chiefs from giving proper time and thought to JCS functions. Second, in the joint arena, the Chiefs have been influenced too much by service particularism or aggrandizement. Third, the chiefs have been

politicized by the party in power and thus became partisan rather than military spokesmen.³²

In response to the first problem area, reforms were directed at diluting the Joint Chiefs' service and operational responsibilities. The 1953 and 1958 reorganization efforts emphasized a shift in operational control of the armed forces to the unified and specified commanders. The Joint Chiefs were directed to concentrate on joint matters and delegate the day-to-day operations of running the services to their Vice-Chiefs.

The second problem involved the lack of JCS strategic planning. Several changes were made to improve the capabilities of the JCS in this area. In the 1949 amendments, the position of a JCS Chairman was created. The Chairman's role was strengthened in 1958 when he was given the right to vote on JCS issues and appoint the Director of the Joint Staff. To help in the joint planning process, the Joint Staff was increased from 100 to 400 officers.

Finally, problems arose in the political arena for the Joint Chiefs. Several changes were made to protect the JCS from political pressures. In 1949, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were allowed to state their views independently before Congress on DoD matters, regardless of what the administration position was. To prevent undue presidential pressure on the JCS, the term of the Service Chiefs was

lengthened from two to four years in 1967. Once appointed to the JCS, a member was in a better position to speak his own mind on defense policies.

The guidelines for JCS members to express themselves have changed over the years. The Truman Administration demanded full support of the JCS in its effort to demobilize after World War II. With the outbreak of the Korean War, Truman reversed gears and initiated a rearmament program. All the JCS members followed suit. General Bradley, the JCS Chairman, became an outspoken advocate of Truman's military policies. General Bradley made fifty-seven appearances before Congress, civilian groups and over radio and television in support of administration policy.³³ Those officials that did not support Truman's defense policies were ousted. Recall, Admiral Denfeld, the Chief of Naval Operations, was fired over the "carrier" issue.

The eight years of the Eisenhower Administration produced no change in the expectations of JCS advice. Eisenhower insisted that the Joint Chiefs of Staff support his military policies. Disloyalty was not tolerated. Eisenhower went as far as publicly accusing JCS members General Matthew Ridgeway and Admiral Arleigh Burke of "legalized insubordination" because they did not strongly support his policies. Eisenhower "forced some of his recalcitrant chiefs into early retirement; the others he

simply ignored."

JCS advice during the Kennedy-Johnson years was filtered through the Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. He served for an extended period of time, 1961 - 1968. McNamara dominated the office and intimidated the members of the JCS. He replaced every member of the JCS within the first two years of holding office. It has been said that:

For the greater part of the Kennedy-Johnson years, McNamara's methods plus his strong support within the White House so overwhelmed the JCS that they gave their endorsement to such critical policies as the Test Ban Treaty with the Soviet Union, the strategy of gradualism in Southeast Asia, and the intervention into the Dominican Republic. This approval was given in spite of the fact that the chiefs played no meaningful role in the formulation of these policies and that the chiefs disagreed with these decisions.³⁵

The Joint Chiefs of Staff was held in check by the White House until the late 1960s. Then, several factors were to cause a fundamental shift in the JCS-White House relationship. In 1967, Congress passed legislation lengthening the tenure of the Service Chiefs from two to four years. This tended to decrease the possibility that a President would fire a Joint Chief before his full term expired. At the same time Congress was taking a keen interest in foreign affairs and our military policies. It soon became "doubtful that a president would risk the political reaction of discharging a service chief for expressing his personal or professional views to Congress at Congress's request."³⁶

In 1972, the Nixon Administration was forced to bargain with the JCS for support of the SALT I agreement. JCS support of SALT I was conditioned on Nixon's promise to build the Trident, Minuteman III, and B-1. No longer was the President able to keep the JCS rigidly in line with his own military policies. During the 1970s the Secretary of Defense achieved some degree of independence too. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird openly criticized many of President Nixon's military policies in Southeast Asia. When President Ford fired Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger for his hawkish views on detente, Schlesinger was hailed as a hero and a martyr and Ford judged incompetent for not tolerating dissent.³⁷ Perhaps JCS members sensed a changed relationship with the Executive. Admiral Elmo Zumwalt and General George Brown were very outspoken in criticizing White House military policies.

The relationship between the Secretary of Defense and the JCS has produced mixed results over the years. Often the relationship depended on whether the Secretary was seeking a reduction in defense expenditures or if he wanted a program of rearmament. The Secretary of Defense did not start to meet regularly with the Joint Chiefs until the late 1950s. Thomas Gates was the first Secretary of Defense to meet each week in the "Tank" with the JCS members. This practice has been continued on and off until the present day. During the 1960s, Secretary of Defense

McNamara relied on his "whiz kids" for military advice. He built up a civilian staff to supply alternatives to JCS recommendations. In contrast, Secretary of Defense Brown in the late 1970s "tried to encourage greater participation by the JCS in policy making."³⁸ Brown tended to downplay the advice of his civilian staff and rely on the Joint Chiefs for military advice.

The National Security Council was created by the same legislation formally establishing the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The National Security Council integrates all aspects of national policy relating to security affairs. The NSC works for the President and serves as a crisis decision-making forum. How does the JCS interact with this organization?

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is an advisor to the National Security Council. Ideally, the NSC provides the JCS with overall national security policy guidance. In turn the Joint Chiefs of Staff funnel back to the National Security Council specific recommendations pertaining to military policies. However, in reality the system is not that precise. As a coordinator of national security policies the NSC throughout the years has responded to the "personal style and wishes" of the incumbent president.³⁹ Consequently, the influence of the National Security Council on JCS decision-making has varied. During the Vietnam War, the NSC was not used to

make foreign policy decisions. In recent years, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs has become the real power broker in national security policymaking. This individual can develop a close working relationship with the President and diminish the influence of JCS advice.

Overall, the National Security Council has failed to provide the JCS with clear guidance for long-range strategic planning. The trend in recent years has been for the President to confide in his National Security Affairs advisor. As a result, the NSC and JCS have been shortchanged in the process.

What kind of relationship with Congress has the JCS experienced? Normally, "the attitude of Congress toward the JCS has been essentially opportunistic." When members of Congress disagree with an administration's military policies, attempts are usually made to "play off the chiefs against their civilian superiors." ⁴⁰ These attempts by Congress are mostly unsuccessful. Among the Joint Chiefs are varying viewpoints on the rules of engagement with congressional members.

How far can JCS members go in expressing personal views in testimony before congressional committees? Two former members of the JCS who served together had sharp disagreements on this question. Admiral Thomas Moorer, as

JCS Chairman, argued

that though it was necessary to give our military views with absolute frankness to the Secretary of Defense and the President, it was risky to be that frank with the Congress.⁴¹

Admiral Moorer believed Congress would use the individual views of JCS members to embarrass the Administration. The net result would be that "frank pessimistic evaluations rather than encouraging Congress to do more, would lead it to feel 'what's the use' and do less."⁴² Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, the Chief of Naval Operations at the time, disagreed. He believed

that Congress would react responsibly, over time, if it had the facts and that it couldn't possibly act responsibly without the facts.⁴³

Where should the line be drawn between Congress's need to know and the JCS's responsibility to accept Administration decisions?

Perhaps the best advice on handling this situation has been given by General Maxwell Taylor, a former JCS Chairman, who commented on the subject. He believed that after making every effort to guide the Secretary of Defense and the President toward a correct decision, once the final decision has been made, JCS members are expected to support the decision. The JCS should not make public statements contrary to the Administration's final decision. The only alternative was resignation. General Taylor recognized that JCS testimony before congressional committees was a

unique situation. He stressed:

I have found no way of coping with the situation other than by replying frankly to questions and letting the chips fall where they may.⁴⁴

However, JCS members should at the same time provide the rationale for the Administration's decision. A congressional forum was recognized by General Taylor as a special case where Congress's need to know outweighed the JCS duty to their civilian chain of command.

It has been argued that the Joint Chiefs have seldom abused these informal ground rules before Congress. On the contrary, the problem seems to be that the President goes too far in involving JCS members in the political process. Recall, President Truman used General Bradley to win public support for his containment and rearmament policies. More recently, President Carter selected Air Force General David C. Jones as JCS Chairman in 1978 over an Army counterpart because Jones was more willing to "change his mind⁴⁵ publicly" on such issues as the B-1 bomber. We must be careful in drawing the JCS institution into political battles that are best fought between Congress and the President. Since the Civil War, the American military profession has been taught to be apolitical.

III. Criticisms

Criticisms of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as an institution is nothing new. Complaints about the JCS have been heard since the day they were legally established in 1947. Basically, there are two categories of objections to the JCS system:

- (1) the quality of the work product, and
- (2) the institutional behavior of the members themselves.¹

The quality of the work product reflects the advice given by the JCS as a body and the efforts of the Joint Staff. The institutional behavior of the members is a result of internal and external influences. The Joint Chiefs have a divided loyalty -- to their respective services and to the joint arena. External influences on the Joint Chiefs of Staff include their relationships with the President, the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Council, and the Congress.

The most frequent criticism against the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the poor quality of their military advice. Former Secretaries of State have complained about the poor advice received from the JCS. Dean Acheson, for example argued that

Since it is a committee and its views are the result of votes on formal papers prepared for it, it quite literally is like my favorite old lady who could not say what she thought until she heard what she said.²

More recently, Henry Kissinger's analysis of the JCS in the budget process revealed:

The "agreed" Joint Chiefs of Staff submissions were usually nonaggression treaties among the various services unrelated to coherent strategy.³

However, it should be noted that some who find fault with the JCS may simply not like the positions the Chiefs have taken on certain issues. The President, the Secretary of Defense, the Congress, and the American public are not always going to be satisfied by what they hear from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The debate over the Panama Canal treaties provides a good example of this phenomena. The JCS supported ratification of the treaties. Those who opposed this action labeled the JCS advice as "bad."

During the first quarter century of existence, the Joint Chiefs of Staff was dominated by the White House. It was apparent that if the President or Secretary of Defense did not like any particular military advice from the JCS, it was simply ignored. Unfortunately, this type of attitude led to a prolonged conflict in Southeast Asia. This is evidenced by the following example:

On 1 November 1964, the Viet Cong staged a mortar strike on the important air base at Bien Hoa, about twenty miles northeast of Saigon. This attack killed five Americans, wounded seventy-six, and destroyed five B-57 aircraft while damaging eight others. Our stated policy at the time was to retaliate against North Vietnam for any such incident in South Vietnam, but the White House, ostensibly concerned about further escalation and uncertain as to how the

Communist Chinese would respond, made a critical -- and portentous -- decision to make no retaliatory move.⁴

The President's decision on the eve of the 1964 election was made against the advice of the JCS. With hindsight it can be said

At this critical juncture, some eleven years before its end, we might have prevented the costly and drawn-out war that followed.⁵

Many people fail to realize that the JCS is only an advisory body, without any command authority. The Vietnam War was run from the White House, not from the JCS meeting room, "the Tank" in the Pentagon. Once it became clear to everyone that the United States was going to be heavily committed in South Vietnam, the JCS wanted to take full military action to resolve the conflict as quickly as possible. For over eight years the members of the JCS were all on record recommending continuous bombing of North Vietnam and mining of its harbors. President Nixon did not authorize these actions until 1972.⁶ Why was it not done earlier? The point to be made is that "good" quality advice can just as easily be rejected as "bad" advice or simply ignored.

Criticism against the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the poor quality of their advice cannot be substantiated in the Carter-Reagan era. JCS influence has increased for a couple of reasons. First, Congress has become very interested in national security affairs. The JCS have been

actively sought by congressional members for advice and opinions. The Chiefs frequently appear before congressional hearings. Members of Congress want professional military opinions from the JCS and they do not want to always hear the White House line. For example:

In 1977, Congress used inputs from some members of the military to delay the B-1 decision for eight months and then only failed by three votes of overturning it. The following year, Congress, at the urging of Navy officials, transferred funds from the Carter administration's NATO programs to the Navy for construction of a large nuclear-powered aircraft carrier (CVN) in Fiscal Year 1979. The legislature did this in spite of the fact that the president wanted a medium-size conventional carrier (CVV) built in Fiscal Year 1980.⁷

The second reason that JCS advice has become more influential has to do with changing technology. With the Reagan Administration coming to power in 1982, the nation has embarked on a massive rearmament program. Today's technology and modern warfare have enhanced the status of the JCS in their advisory role. Military strategy in a complex, sophisticated combat environment is too risky to be left solely to civilian advisors. President Reagan has accepted many recommendations from the JCS on the development and deployment of future combat weapon systems.

Another major criticism of the JCS is that their staff work is of poor quality. The Joint Staff consisting of four hundred officers from all the services was created to help the Chiefs in their advisory roles. Many feel that

the Joint Staff does not provide the Joint Chiefs with impartial information:

Once delegated to work for the Joint Chiefs, officers from the services theoretically subordinate their loyalty to their own service in favor of loyalty to the entire defense establishment. It is a nice theory. It does not always work. Too many of the officers assigned to the organization of the Joint Chiefs use their positions to act as advocates of their service's viewpoint.⁸

In addition, each service maintains a large staff of officers in its headquarters to work on joint matters. Each service staff has an opportunity to comment and object to any portion of the Joint Staff paper product. Often times this is a time-consuming process and Joint Staff officers are reduced to playing the role of arbitrators between the services.

Many people do not understand the "flimsy-buff-green" process of the Joint Staff.⁹ The papers and studies produced by the Joint Staff are highly stylized, color coded for coordination processing, and cite references within the text. This rigid format has tended to turnoff civilians in the federal bureaucracy who read these outputs. Defending the paper product of the Joint Staff, Admiral James L. Holloway III, a former JCS member, wrote:

JCS staff papers cannot be personalized. They must be written so that the most arcane professional concepts can be understood by all officers, regardless of their backgrounds.¹⁰

In doing so, JCS papers often become redundant and tiring

to read.

Some people have suggested that the best officers from the different services are not assigned to the Joint Staff. A quality Joint Staff would be the first step in ensuring a quality paper output. The Air Force and Army have pointed to recent below-the-zone promotion boards for Lieutenant Colonels (O-5s) and Colonels (O-6s) to show that a good percentage of these officers selected for promotion came from the Joint Staff. The Navy's record in this area is the worst of all the services. The Navy brass believes their top-quality personnel should be out in the field gaining command experience not sitting behind some desk pushing a pencil. For those naval officers selected for staff duty, the best go to the Chief of Naval Operation's service staff or to the Secretary of Defense's personal military staff, but not to the Joint Staff. Admiral Harry D. Train, former Joint Staff Director, has testified, "as long as there is the danger that service on the Joint Staff will be a black mark on a man's career, as some believe it is in the Navy, then we will never get the high quality officers to serve on the Joint Staff." ¹¹ Navy officers perceive a tour of duty on the Joint Staff as the "kiss of death" for promotion opportunities.

Another factor in the Joint Staff equation is the high rate of staff turnover. Because of congressional concern about the development of a general staff, by law no tenure

of duty may be more than three years and officers may not be reassigned to the Joint Staff until they serve¹² somewhere else for at least another three years.

Although there are some exceptions to this law, the thrust of the legislation was originally intended to avoid a "Prussian General Staff" system. In reality, it prevents officers from developing expertise in the joint arena. In reference to the statutory three year limitation on duty, a former Joint Director stated:

I don't believe it serves any useful function and it inhibits the assignment practice, that is, the practice of assigning officers to the Joint Staff who turn out to be of great utility to the staff and might eventually find their careers are better served on the Joint Staff than going back to their parent service. This could become a specialty in and of itself, which would not be bad.¹³

Would this lead to a general staff?

The fear of a general staff modeled after the "Prussian" model has haunted Congress since the unification debates of the mid-1940s. Some feared that a general staff would ignore civilian direction and constantly be planning for and promoting war. Congress went as far as legislating that the "Joint Staff shall not operate or be organized as¹⁴ an overall Armed Forces General Staff." These fears are unfounded because Germany never had a single general staff as many have alleged. Hitler used his army staff to run the war and vested it with executive authority. In the United States, civilian control of the armed forces is

beyond question by the military professional. The charge that a general staff could usurp the power from the executive is unfounded. John G. Kester, a former DoD official, believes it is time to replace the Joint Staff with a new Defense General Staff. According to Kester:

What is called for is movement toward a general staff mechanism, primarily through career incentives and training designed to upgrade the quality of the Joint Staff (or a new Defense General Staff) and, relatedly, through loosening the staff officers from the fetters of their respective services.¹⁵

Unfortunately for Mr. Kester, there is not much support for this idea in Congress. The roots of opposition to this scheme go back to the original opponents of armed forces unification.

The second broad criticism deals with the institutional behavior of the JCS members. A common complaint about the Joint Chiefs is that their preoccupation with parochial service interests prevents them from rendering any unbiased advice in the joint arena. The problem of dual-hatting, being the military head of the service and a member of the JCS, cannot easily be dismissed. As a Service Chief, the JCS member is responsible for the training and equipping of his forces. The members of the individual services turn to the Service Chief for leadership and expect him to advocate their service unique programs, roles, and missions. Because of the dual roles, the workload of our Joint Chiefs is tremendous. Supposedly, much of the day-to-day

operation of running the individual services can be delegated to the Vice-Chiefs of each service. One can only wonder if this is done more in theory than in actual reality.

If the primary task of the JCS is advising and planning future strategy, how can the built-in conflict of interest be eliminated? Some say it can only be done through radical surgery of the JCS organization. One proposal would be to remove Service Chiefs from all joint planning activities and let them run their services. The Joint Chiefs of Staff would be replaced by a body of National Military Advisors who would be independent of the services. This group would concentrate on strategic planning and coordinate the activities of the joint arena¹⁶. Can the current JCS member be an effective administrator, leader, and national strategist simultaneously?

Some former members of the JCS believe that the two jobs cannot be separated. According to Admiral Holloway:

The service chief manages, trains, and equips his forces. No one is better qualified than he to understand their tactical capabilities and limitations, and thus advise on their operational employment. As long as full responsibility and authority can be reasonably be vested in a single individual -- and experience has demonstrated that a service chief is physically capable of also serving effectively as a member of the JCS -- that is the way it should be. To separate the two jobs would dilute the quality of expert military advice available to the National Command Authority and would, in my view, create new and worrisome problems of accountability at the highest level.¹⁷

Admiral Holloway's position on the quality of recent JCS advice has been disputed.

A Chief's responsibility to manage and lead his Service conflicts directly with his agreement in the joint forum to recommendations which are inconsistent with programs desired by his own Service.¹⁸

The JCS as organized cannot by the nature of the system effectively address the issue of resource allocation. In recent years the trend has been toward "unanimous" JCS papers which water-down issues to the lowest common-denominator among the services. In a 1978 study, JCS decision-making was found to have

a tendency to be reactive, rather than innovative or participative. There has been a trend in recent years toward fewer "split" JCS papers being forwarded to the Secretary for decision. Pressures have thus built toward developing positions on which all Services can agree, and "coordination" among the staffs is often interpreted as a requirement for concurrence. Since the number of people who must agree on the details of a paper is large, the process tends to inhibit initiative.¹⁹

Was this tendency toward fewer "split" JCS decision papers more a reflection of external influences on institutional behavior?

External influences on the JCS include their relationships with the White House, the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Council, and Congress. The members of the JCS rarely see the President as a group. Usually their recommendations are forwarded to the

President through the Secretary of Defense. As discussed previously, there is no guarantee that the President will follow JCS advice. Sometimes the JCS is totally excluded from the military policy-making process. During the Vietnam War, most key decisions made by President Johnson concerning the war were discussed at the White House Tuesday lunch sessions. It has been reported that

Johnson invited McNamara and Secretary of State Dean Rusk to those sessions. Richard Helms, the CIA director attended, and so did Walt W. Rostow, the President's national security affairs adviser. Bill D. Moyers, and later, George Christian, the White House press secretaries, attended. They were civilians all. There was not a military man among them as they pored over maps and reports, making decisions down to such minute detail as the type of bombs that would be used in attacks on particular targets and the flight plans the aircraft would fly.²⁰

Notably absent from these decision-making meetings on the war was General Earle G. Wheeler who was the JCS Chairman.

At other times, members of the JCS are asked to comment on details of a particular plan, but not on the overall issue. During the Carter Administration:

On the question of the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Korea, for example, the Joint Chiefs were not asked if the United States should withdraw, but only about the best and speediest way to implement a decision already made. The President then used withdrawal plans of the JCS as prima facie evidence of their support for his withdrawal decision.²¹

In this instance, the President backed the JCS into a corner.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff as an institution has been criticized on two basic levels. The first category involves the quality of their advice and staff work. The second deals with their individual behavior and loyalties. Many feel that the JCS committee system is ineffective. In striving to obtain consensus among divergent opinions, the JCS produces poor quality advice. The big question that has always haunted the JCS is: should the Joint Chiefs strive to make unanimous decisions or would the system be more effective with split decisions? In trying to answer this question one must consider the role of the Joint Staff and the dual role the Chiefs play. Members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff have two conflicting responsibilities -- planning in the joint arena and heading their respective services. Only the JCS Chairman is freed from this dilemma.

IV. Current Proposals For JCS Reform

Numerous studies have been conducted in the past on the Joint Chiefs of Staff organization. Why should any recent criticisms necessitate reform? Recent proposals calling for JCS reorganization are unique because they were initiated by sitting members. In March 1982, General David C. Jones, JCS Chairman, proposed changes to the JCS organization in three specific areas:

- (1) Strengthen the role of the Chairman;
- (2) Limit service staff involvement in the joint process;
- (3) Broaden the training, experience, and rewards for joint duty.¹

Several months later, General Edward C. Meyer, Army Chief of Staff and JCS member, added his recommendations for an overhaul of the JCS institution. General Meyer proposed an end to dual-hatting by the Joint Chiefs through the creation of a National Military Advisory Council. The new body would consist of "distinguished four-star rank officers, not charged with any service responsibilities, who would never return to the respective services.² This group of senior officers would work closely with the Secretary of Defense to formulate national strategic policy and would handle planning in the joint arena. The Service Chiefs would be freed from their responsibilities of joint planning and analysis, and thus would have more time to devote to the day-to-day running of their services.

My analysis will compare the reform proposals of General Jones and General Meyer. What are the advantages and disadvantages? How do these proposals compare to the status quo and what are the possible effects of altered relationships between the JCS and:

- (1) the President;
- (2) the Secretary of Defense;
- (3) the National Security Council; and
- (4) the Congress.

General Jones was completing his fourth year as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff when he went public with his call for reform. Previously, General Jones had served four years on the JCS as the Air Force Chief of Staff. During these nearly eight years of service on the JCS, General Jones felt a great deal of frustration with the systems. He wrote:

We need to spend more time on our war fighting capabilities and less on an intramural scramble for resources.³

General Jones identified the deficiencies of the JCS as an institution in two categories: personnel and organization.

He summarized the personnel problems in the following way:

There is inadequate cross-Service and joint experience in our military, from the top down. The incentives and rewards for seeking such experience are virtually nonexistent. And the problem is compounded by the high degree of turbulence in key positions.⁴

Officers lack the necessary training and proper preparation for joint-service assignments. Many come to the Joint Staff without having inter-Service experience. The

statutory three year limit on a tour of duty with the Joint Staff further hinders development of good quality officers. Duty on the Joint Staff is controlled by the officer's parent service, which controls subsequent assignments and promotions. Where is the incentive for the Joint Staff officer to differ with his service's position in joint deliberations?

Organizationally, General Jones finds fault with the JCS as a committee. The JCS members have a difficult time deliberating on resource allocation issues. The Service Chief is in a dilemma. How can he effectively be a spokesman for his service, but at the same time put aside these loyalties on joint issues?

General Jones believes that it is an impossible job for the Service Chiefs. He offers several changes to enhance the JCS system. First, General Jones proposes strengthening the role of the JCS Chairman. A committee system is ineffective when four of its members have "institutional stakes in the issues and the pressure is on⁵ to achieve unanimity in order to act." These matters should be removed from their agenda. Instead, the Chairman of the JCS in consultation with the unified and specified commanders, should address the resource distribution issues. After all, the combat commanders in the field are responsible for conducting the joint operations. They should know what is needed. To aid the JCS Chairman in

taking more of the responsibility in joint affairs, a deputy should be authorized. The Chairman is one of the only senior military officers without a deputy.

Second, General Jones favors limiting the Service staff involvement in the joint process. Currently, the Service staff coordinates on all joint issues. The Joint Staff action officer faces the almost impossible task of accommodating each services' viewpoint. General Jones stated that

we should abolish the current system in which each Service has almost de facto veto on every issue at every stage of the routine staffing process.⁶

It is no wonder that critics of the Joint Staff process find its product of poor quality. Contributing to the problem of Service staff involvement in joint matters are the Joint Chiefs themselves. They rely almost exclusively on their Service staffs for preparation on joint issues.

Finally, General Jones would like to see the training, experience, and rewards for joint duty broadened. The services should seek more joint assignments for their officers, especially in the junior ranks. The education system for joint-service officers needs improving. Many of the graduates from the Armed Forces Staff College and the National War College are not utilized for joint assignments, yet that is their purpose. The services have to recognize and promote those officers who excel in joint assignments. Joint duty should not be perceived as "the

kiss of death."

General Meyer proposed an alternative to General Jones JCS reorganization plan during the 1982 House hearings on JCS reform. General Meyer believes that more change is necessary than just creating a stronger Chairman and Joint Staff. He identified three major problem areas with the current JCS system:

First, is the divided loyalty we currently demand of the Service Chiefs . . .

Second, while the Chairman's proposal clearly promises to improve the Joint Staff's performance in peacetime, there may be a better way to provide a structure which can transition rapidly to war . . .

Third, we need to increase the role of the CINCs even more than General Jones has proposed in order to involve them more fully in the defense decision-making process.⁷

General Meyer wants to end dual-hatting, set up a structure that can easily cope with a future war, and increase the involvement of the unified and specified commanders in the resource allocation or budget process.

In 1982, General Meyer testified before Congress on JCS reform. At the time, he proposed abolishing the existing JCS organization. He favored creation of a new Senior Military Advisory Council. The Council would assume the current responsibilities of the Service Chiefs on joint affairs. In effect, dual-hatting would be eliminated. The Chairman of the JCS would assume the new role of Chairman of the National Military Advisory Council. His role would be greatly enhanced. The present Joint Staff would work

directly for him.

What are the advantages and disadvantages to the two proposals? General Jones' changes would strengthen the role of the Chairman in developing long-range strategic planning and improve the timeliness and quality of advice rendered to the President and the Secretary of Defense. The creation of a Deputy Chairman would provide continuity in JCS deliberations and National Security Council meetings when the Chairman is absent. Limiting Service staff involvement in the joint process would free the Joint Staff from relying on consensus to push a paper or recommendation through the military bureaucracy. Recommendations could be made on resource allocation issues without undue service bias. Finally, enhancing joint duty assignments with increased education and promotion opportunities will provide long-term benefits in planning and budgeting for our future war fighting capabilities.

The primary disadvantage of enhancing the power of the JCS Chairman is that the advice of the four Service Chiefs might be denied to the Secretary of Defense and the President. Presently, the Chairman can provide his personal views on an issue to the Secretary of Defense and the President, but he must label it as such and he has the duty to give the collective JCS view and any dissenting views.

What are the advantages to creating a National Military

Advisory Council? The primary benefit is an end to dual-hatting by the Service Chiefs. Better formulation of long-range military strategy could result because the Chairman and the National Military Advisory Council would work more closely with the unified and specified commanders in developing joint plans and dividing the necessary resources to insure a responsive war fighting capability. General Meyer has argued:

Removal of direct Service involvement in the relationship of the Chairman and the Council to the CINCs would free the latter to become more visible participants in the development of defense policy and joint programs.⁸

The major disadvantage to the creation of a National Military Advisory Council is the perception that those who would serve on such a body might not rise above their former service interests. It has been suggested that "an attitude of service advocacy would be bound to develop."⁹ In addition, the Service Chief who manages, trains, and equips his forces should be the individual qualified to give advice on their needs and operational capabilities.

What are the possible effects of reform on the relationships between the JCS and the President; the Secretary of Defense; the National Security Council; and the Congress. Under the current system, the President can meet individually with the JCS Chairman or collectively with them as a group. Usually, the President relies on the Secretary of Defense for transmission of the JCS viewpoint

on military issues. General Jones' proposal would make the Chairman the principal military advisor to the National Command Authorities. He would be freed from the responsibility of reporting the "consensus" position of the JCS and be relied on more for his personal assessments. Whether the enhanced Chairman's views would carry more weight than the collective JCS opinion of today's system would probably depend more on the personalities involved than on any legislated changes to the institution.

Under General Meyer's proposal, the President would have the opportunity to receive advice from a separate body or council divorced from the day-to-day burdens of running the services. In the past, the Service Chiefs have been criticized for not being able to put aside their service interests when discussing joint issues. It is unlikely that members chosen to serve on a National Military Advisory Council would behave any differently. After all, the generals and admirals selected to serve on this independent council are still products of the same military system that produces our Service Chiefs. The military expertise of the members of a National Military Advisory Council will in all likelihood be service unique. The President would probably not receive any better advice under this proposed system. The character of the individuals serving as presidential advisors on military affairs is more important than the forum used to convey

that advice.

In today's system, the Secretary of Defense receives advice on military issues from many sources. He can rely on personal staff, the JCS, or the Service Secretaries for information and advice. General Jones' proposal would shift policy formulation to the strengthened Chairman and Joint Staff. General Meyer's reforms would attempt to insure uninhibited cross-service advice to the Secretary of Defense.

The two proposals would have minimal effect on the current JCS relationship with the National Security Council. Currently, the NSC supposedly provides the JCS with overall direction, but that is more theory than fact. Under General Jones' and General Meyer's proposals the Chairman would have more influence at NSC meetings. It is difficult to tell if that increased influence would translate into different NSC options being recommended to the President.

How would the two proposals effect Congress? Under the status quo, Congress turns to the individual Service Chiefs for answers during the budget process. General Jones' proposal would probably increase the Chairman's prestige on Capitol Hill. The JCS Chairman would be in a better position than the Service Chiefs to reflect on the overall needs of the military. The Jones proposal places the Joint Staff under the direct control of the JCS

Chairman and minimizes the Service Staff involvement in joint issues. Members of Congress would expect the JCS Chairman to look beyond the individual service interests when advising on the merits of specific military programs. The Service Chiefs would continue to advocate the programs beneficial to their respective services. The proposed National Military Advisory Council would have limited utility to members of Congress, unless the legislators could direct the Council to study specific issues.

Both proposals would greatly enhance the roles played by the unified and specified commanders. Under General Jones' plan the CINCs would have a stronger say in matching resources to operational plans. Currently, this is primarily a function of the individual Services. General Meyer's believes the CINCs need to engage in direct dialogue with the National Military Advisory Council for direction on current programs and funding levels.

For the most part, the reactions to the proposals have supported JCS reorganization. The House Armed Services Committee's Subcommittee on Investigations began hearings on the subject of JCS reorganization in April 1982. After almost five months, the Subcommittee had heard testimony from more than forty witnesses: including the Chairman and all current members of the JCS, former Chairmen and members of the JCS, former Directors of the Joint Staff, former Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries of Defense,

Commanders of Unified and Specified Commands, as well as other distinguished civilian and military witnesses. The Subcommittee "found near unanimous agreement that organizational problems hamper the performance of the present organization."¹⁰ Recommendations ranged from maintaining the status quo to strengthening the Chairman and creating a National Military Advisory Council.

The congressional hearings focused on the proposals presented by General Jones and General Meyer. At the start of the hearing, the current members of the JCS were split on the merits of JCS reorganization. General Jones wanted to strengthen the Chairman and reform the Joint Staff. General Meyer favored these changes, but wanted to go one step further and create a National Military Advisory Council. General Allen, the Air Force Chief of Staff, favored the Jones proposal. He believed that there was a need "to improve in the JCS, the focus on national military strategy."¹¹ General Allen favored a strengthening of the Chairman's position by making him the principal military advisor to the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the National Security Council. He supported legislation which would allow the chain of command to run through the Chairman instead of the JCS as a committee. However, General Allen did not favor restricting Service staff interaction in the joint staffing process. The two other members of the JCS, Admiral Thomas B. Hayward, Chief of

Naval Operations, and Marine Corps Commandant General Robert H. Barrow opposed all calls for reform.

Admiral Hayward did not agree with any of the proposals for reform. He told the subcommittee:

I am deeply offended by the slanderous criticisms which one frequently and commonly hears about the Joint Chiefs of Staff being an ineffective group of parochial service chiefs who spend most of their time bickering among themselves, or trading to preserve turf and what is best for their service.¹²

Admiral Hayward admitted being a naval officer first, but asserted that this did not compromise his ability to carry out the responsibilities of a JCS member in joint affairs. General Barrow lined up with the Navy in opposing any changes in the JCS organization. General Barrow testified:

My considered military advice to this committee is to reject the Jones or any other proposal to reorganize or change the current Joint Chiefs of Staff system.¹³

He believed that the JCS organization was personality sensitive. Members change over time and so does the quality of advice. General Barrow pointed out that

we have had 20 studies over the years of this institution's existence, and no changes have been made of any substantive nature, speaks well of its durability and the fact that it must be working pretty well.¹⁴

Perhaps it only shows a reluctance to change. In any event the battle lines were drawn early in the hearings. The Army and Air Force generals supported reform, while most of the Naval and Marine officers were opposed to any changes.

The former Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries of Defense who testified were in full support for JCS reorganization. Most believed that the JCS system was weak in providing "definitive long-range strategic planning." 15

The former DoD civilian leaders had high praise for the quality of individual advice given directly by each JCS member during discussions, but criticized the paper products of the Joint Staff.

From the record of testimony available from the Investigations Subcommittee, one thing is clear -- the Navy and Marine Corps opposed reform. Why are these two services firmly against any JCS changes? Retired General Andrew J. Goodpaster suggested that the Navy has its own way of doing things and is therefore reluctant to see any strengthening of the joint structure. With the help of the Marines, the Navy is a "self-sufficient unified command." 16

The Navy usually operates without any support from the Army or Air Force. They have no incentive to improve the joint structure. It would only diminish some of the Navy's roles and missions.

Support for enhancing the JCS Chairman was particularly strong during the hearings. Witnesses cited the advantages of effective command and control of operations, a more reliable voice for the combat commanders in the resource allocation and strategy processes, and a more responsive system for providing advice to the National Command

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Authorities. Bolstering General Jones' proposal was the testimony of the Special Study Group. This body of distinguished retired military officers was formed by General Jones to examine the effectiveness of the JCS organization and its procedures. The Special Study Group found several major deficiencies with the JCS organization. They made the following recommendations:

- (1) Establish the position of Vice Chairman.
- (2) Refine the process for focusing the attention of the JCS in issues of major national significance (e.g. arms limitations) and strengthen the Chairman's authority to resolve other issues.
- (3) Require the Joint Staff to brief, interact with, and prepare the Service Chiefs for JCS meetings, and to support the Chiefs generally in the resolution of the Joint issues they address.
- (4) Change the practices and policies that now result in overemphasis on the consensus-seeking "committee" approach to the development and approval of Joint papers.
- (5) Improve the preparation and experience levels of Service officers assigned to the Joint Staff and other Joint activities such as the Unified Command Headquarters.
- (6) Involve the CINCs and their staffs in Joint Staff activities.
- (7) Strengthen the Joint Staff through an organizational realignment.¹⁸

General Jones relied heavily on the recommendations from the Special Study Group in drawing up his JCS reorganization proposal.

The proposal for a National Military Advisory Council was supported by several witnesses. General Curtis E. LeMay, former Air Force Chief of Staff, supported the need for separating the dual-hat functions of the Service

Chiefs. Service management and advising on joint affairs were two different jobs. Robert A. Komer, former DoD official, favored a "decoupled JCS" and an increased "purple suit" character of the Joint Staff.¹⁹ Elliot L. Richardson, former Defense Secretary, applauded General Jones' initiative, but believed that "the prescription he offers is insufficient to cure the ills he has identified."²⁰ For this reason, Richardson favored General Meyer's proposal. Finally, Richard C. Steadman, author of a study on the National Command Structure, showed some support for the National Military Advisory Council.

In 1978, Steadman studied our national military structure at the request of President Carter. Included in this work was an examination of the JCS organization. The final report recommended strengthening the position of the JCS Chairman and changing joint staff procedures. However, the report went on to conclude that if as a result of these changes much of the dissatisfaction with the JCS process does not disappear, then

solutions of a more fundamental nature directed at resolving the inherent tensions in the current organization, such as separating the joint advice and command functions from those of Service administration, would become necessary.²¹

One such solution suggested was the creation of a National Military Advisory Council. The Steadman report did suggest²² that this would be "a drastic and controversial change."

After hearing the testimony of some forty witnesses, the subcommittee drafted legislation on JCS reorganization. The bill (H.R. 6954) provided several changes in the organization and functioning of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The legislation increased the responsibilities of the JCS Chairman. Specifically, it would authorize him to provide his personal views to the President, Secretary of Defense, and National Security Council on military matters. He would be required to inform these authorities on all matters where the JCS had agreed or disagreed. Before, the Chairman was only obligated to report on those issues on which the Joint Chiefs had "split" votes.

Another key provision of the legislation would establish a Deputy Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who would act in the Chairman's absence. The bill would also allow the Chairman of the JCS to select officers for the Joint Staff from lists of the best officers provided by the services. H.R. 6954 removed the three year limitation on service with the Joint Staff. The proposed legislation would allow the Chairman of the JCS more latitude in managing the Joint Staff.

Finally, the legislation would establish a Senior Strategy Advisory Board consisting of ten retired four-star rank officers. This body of advisors would serve the President and Secretary of Defense in formulating military strategy. Members of this body would serve on staggered

five year terms.

H.R. 6954 was approved and sent to the full committee on August 5, 1982. The Committee on Armed Services on August 11, 1982, without objection agreed to report the bill to the House floor.²³ On August 16, 1982 the House passed H.R. 6954. The bill combined elements of General Jones' and General Meyer's specific proposals.

V. Prospects For Change

In 1982, the House passed legislation (H.R. 6954) that would have strengthened the role of the JCS Chairman and created a Senior Strategy Advisory Board. The Senate Armed Services Committee did not start to hold hearings on this issue until mid-December, consequently there was not enough time for the Senate to consider or approve any JCS reform legislation. What are the prospects for change in 1983?

Several factors have to be considered before any prediction can be made on the likelihood of JCS reform occurring this year. First, what is the effect of having five new members appointed to the JCS since last July? Does General John W. Vessey, the new JCS chairman believe that changes are needed? What about the views of the other four new JCS members? Second, what is the Reagan Administration's position on JCS reform? Last year, the Administration failed to share with Congress its position on H.R. 6954. Finally, is there support in Congress for JCS reform? If so, how sweeping?

Last July, General Vessey appeared before the House subcommittee that was holding hearings on JCS reorganization. At the time, General Vessey had only been JCS Chairman less than two months. He agreed to study the

proposals of Generals Jones and Meyer against the following criteria:

- (1) Would the Nation be better able to fight a war than it is under the present system?
- (2) Would the proposed changes provide better military advice to the President and Secretary of Defense than the present system does now and would the advice be timely?
- (3) Would the commanders of the unified and specified commands be better supported than they are under the present system because ... those combatant commands will fight our wars for us.
- (4) Would the proposed changes give the President and Secretary of Defense better advice on how to construct the defense budget and programs than does the present system?
- (5) Would the suggested change be consistent with civilian control of the military forces of our country?1

General Vessey told the subcommittee that he had received instructions from Secretary of Defense, Casper Weinberger to review the reform proposals against the above criteria.

Secretary Weinberger wanted the new JCS members' views on the proposed changes by October 1st. It was reported that the Secretary of Defense was under pressure from the White House to take a position on JCS reorganization. Unofficially, it seemed that President Reagan favored a "revamping" of the JCS, but wanted to hear first from his new appointees to the JCS.² The October 1st deadline for the new JCS members' position seemed to be an attempt by Secretary Weinberger to diffuse the JCS reform issue. Not surprisingly, this deadline slipped by without a report by the new JCS members.

The JCS report was finally forwarded to the Secretary of Defense sometime in mid-November. However, Secretary Weinberger would not take an official DoD position on the issue of JCS reform. The JCS report was not made public for a few months. In the mean time, the Senate Armed Services Committee began hearings on the subject of JCS reorganization. Four witnesses appeared before the Senate Committee. They included: General Jones, and General Taylor, both former JCS chairmen; Admiral Holloway, a former JCS member; and Representative White (D.TX), author of the House-passed JCS reform legislation. As predicted, Admiral Holloway was opposed to any reform and the other three gentlemen supported some sort of change.³

In an attempt to head off possible legislation effecting the Joint Staff, General Vessey announced to reporters in December that the JCS had agreed to review the quality of officers assigned to the Joint Staff and to initiate a better training program to prepare them for such an assignment. He said:

We have set in motion a program to police up a training program to help those officers do their jobs better and make them more useful to the (JCS) staff if they come back in later years or go on and serve on a unified or specified command. All the chiefs agreed to take a harder look at the talent and capabilities of people who are assigned to the staff.⁴

Apparently, General Vessey and the other JCS members believed the time was ripe for such changes. These

administrative changes were internal to the JCS organization and did not require legislation for approval.

When the 98th Congress convened in January 1983, much of the talk about JCS reform had subsided. However, some members of Congress were still interested in the subject. In April, Representative Ike Skelton (D.MO) introduced a bill that would abolish the JCS and replace it with a new military command structure.⁵ Perhaps in partial response to Representative Skelton's drastic proposal, the Secretary of Defense released a Department of Defense JCS reform proposal which was based on the recommendations of the new JCS members. The DoD bill would make modest changes to the current JCS structure. The role of the Chairman was to be clarified as the direct link between the Secretary of Defense and the combat commanders in the field. The proposal would also allow Joint Staff officers to serve an extra year for a maximum of four years with a reassignment opportunity to the Joint Staff after two years. The statutory limit of 400 officers who can serve on the Joint Staff⁶ would be repealed.

The proposals received a mixed reaction from members of Congress. Representative Bill Nichols (D. Ala.) described the DoD proposal to reorganize the JCS as "much more timid than our 97th Congress bill."⁷ Representative Skelton lashed out at the DoD proposal. He said:

It represents the compromise system of doing things. This approach is cosmetic at best. It doesn't attack the main issue. It is the result of obvious compromise with the joint organization.⁸

Representative Skelton argued that his bill was much better than the DoD proposal. He would abolish the JCS and make a single officer the principal military advisor to the President and Secretary of Defense. The existing Joint Staff would work for this person. Representative Skelton's proposal had twenty-five co-sponsors.

In mid-June, all the members of the JCS appeared before the House Armed Services Investigation Subcommittee for a rerun of last year's legislative process. However, this time the lineup had changed. Joining the new JCS Chairman General Vessey was a new Air Force Chief of Staff, General Charles A. Gabriel and a new Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral James D. Watkins. General Vessey in speaking for all the Chiefs testified that "our recommendations concurred in unanimously by all the Chiefs, have been submitted to Congress through the Secretary of Defense, and we recommend their approval."⁹ In short, the JCS had formulated and concurred unanimously on the modest DoD proposal.

Many people were surprised by the statement of unanimity because General Meyer was still a member of the JCS. Only a year before, General Meyer had testified for the establishment of a National Military Advisory Council.

General Meyer told the subcommittee that he was now taking a more practical approach to the problem of JCS reform. He stressed that providing better military advice to the President and Secretary of Defense should be the goal of any JCS reform. He testified that

if this group of chiefs was willing to agree on a way to come up with a solution . . . to provide better military advice, then I was willing to join with them in a common approach toward the solution.¹⁰

General Meyer's flipflop disappointed those Congressmen who favored major JCS reforms.

At the mid-June hearings, General Barrow, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, emphasized that the JCS organization was very sensitive to changes in personnel. General Barrow had given similar testimony during the 1982 subcommittee hearings on JCS reform. Legislative reforms were not needed to improve the JCS, only a change in its cast of characters.¹¹

General Barrow had nothing but praise for JCS Chairman General Vessey. The Marine Corps Commandant attributed better relationships among the Joint Chiefs to General Vessey's leadership abilities. These improved relationships fostered an eagerness by the JCS to engage in more effective joint planning.

General Vessey is primarily responsible for changing the attitudes of the JCS members. In order to improve the image of the JCS, he has relied "more on persuasion than on

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formal organization." Since General Vessey's appointment as JCS chairman last year, each Service Chief has finished his four year tenure as a JCS member and retired. The Reagan Administration has appointed all the current members of the JCS. The current lineup in addition to Chairman Vessey includes: General Charles A. Gabriel, Air Force Chief of Staff (appointed 1 July 1982); Admiral James D. Watkins, Chief of Naval Operations (appointed 1 July 1982); General John A. Wickham, Army Chief of Staff (appointed 1 July 1983); and General P.X. Kelly, Commandant of the Marine Corps (appointed 1 July 1983).

General Vessey has stressed that the key to the success of the JCS is the cultivation of three essential relationships: with the President and Secretary of Defense, among the Chiefs themselves, and with the service field commanders.
13

What has been done to improve these relationships? General Vessey has encouraged frequent meetings between the President, Secretary of Defense and JCS. Already President Reagan has probably met with the JCS as a body more often than any previous president. At these meetings General Vessey said, "We let him know who we are and where we're coming from in the general philosophy of how to defend the nation."
14
With the Secretary of Defense, General Vessey has attempted to develop a "good, free, easy relationship."
15
As a body, the chiefs meet with the

Secretary of Defense once a week. General Vessey personally meets with Secretary Weinberger daily.

To improve the relationship among the Chiefs themselves, General Vessey has made several changes. He had asked each Chief "to serve as acting chairman for a quarter of the year, standing in for him at the National Security Council or with Mr. Weinberger when the chairman is out of town." ¹⁶ Evidently, all the Service Chiefs enjoy this new responsibility. Obviously, the intent of this change in routine is to make the Chiefs more attentive to joint affairs. Previously, only the ranking Service Chief substituted for the Chairman in his absence.

Finally, General Vessey has strengthened the JCS relationship with the unified and specified commanders. The field commanders have been asked to come to the Pentagon and brief the JCS on their resource needs and contingency plans. Hopefully, this improved dialogue will lead to a better quality of JCS advice on weapon systems acquisition and setting of budget priorities.

General Vessey has attempted to restructure the JCS organization to function as originally designed. He has relied on his leadership abilities and the mutual cooperation of the Service Chiefs in an effort to improve the quality of military advice provided to the President and Secretary of Defense. All this had been accomplished without the benefit of any JCS reform legislation.

VI. Conclusion

Recent criticisms of the Joint Chiefs of Staff can best be understood by examining the historical evolution of the JCS as an institution. By using this approach one discovers that the current calls for JCS reform have been echoed with varying frequency since the JCS was formally established in 1947. Most everyone agrees on what two of the primary functions of the JCS should be: military advice and strategic planning. A third function relating to command authority is a subject over which there is much disagreement. Some want the JCS to function only as a staff organization, while others want the JCS to be a formal part of the operational chain of command. Critics differ in their interpretation of the effectiveness of the Joint Chiefs of Staff organization in carrying out the above functions.

Two schools of thought have emerged in the debate over the role of the JCS in the national security policymaking process. One group of commentators is in general agreement that the functions of the JCS are primarily determined by the distinctive personalities of the President and the Secretary of Defense. A second body of consensus attributes the JCS role in national security affairs to be a function of institutional factors.

It is difficult to argue with the first assumption that

personalities affect the functioning of institutions. This factor is always present in the study of organizations. In the case of the JCS, it is most revealing. President Roosevelt established the JCS during World War II to function as his body of close military advisors. Without the benefit of a formal charter, the Joint Chiefs depended on Roosevelt for guidance and authority. After the war, the debates over unification of the armed services took place. The Army generals wanted a single military commander for all of the armed services, while the Navy admirals advocated a decentralized military command structure.

The National Security Act of 1947 was a compromise between diverse interests, including those who supported and those who opposed a genuine unification of the armed forces. Elements of the 1947 Act included, among other things, the formalization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the creation of a National Security Council; and the establishment of the Office Secretary of Defense. The Air Force became an independent service and with the Army and Navy was brought under the control of the Secretary of Defense.

Fundamental to the creation of the new national military structure was the concept of civilian control over the military. Many members of Congress were concerned that a movement toward unification of all the

armed forces would result in a single military commander and the establishment of a general staff. Some legislators feared that the concentration of power in the hands of a single military commander threaten democracy in the United States.

The structure of the JCS reflects a legislated compromise by members of Congress concerned with the above unification issues. The JCS was made a committee with all members possessing coequal status. The JCS was not to perform a command function, but to operate as an advisory body for the President and Secretary of Defense.

The President can choose to utilize the JCS for military advice and long-range strategic planning or he can simply ignore this body of advisors. The relationship between the President and the JCS has varied over the years. Truman and Eisenhower demanded loyalty from the Joint Chiefs; the penalty for distrust was dismissal. Presidents Kennedy and Johnson tended not to rely on the JCS for military advice. Nixon bargained with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and traded promises of future military weapon programs for a JCS agreement to support SALT I. President Ford allowed the members of the JCS to be very outspoken. Carter held frequent meetings with the JCS, but usually ignored their recommendations. President Reagan has established a good rapport with the Joint Chiefs. The point to be made is that the personalities of

the various Presidents has had a direct effect on the JCS role in national security affairs.

The Secretary of Defense's relationship with the members of the JCS has also been heavily influenced by different personalities. Robert McNamara and Harold Brown provide a good contrast in showing how differences in personalities can influence the role of the JCS with the office of the Secretary of Defense. McNamara relied on his personal staff for decision-making, while Brown met frequently with the JCS and had a great deal of respect for the quality of their advice.

The case can always be made that personalities are important. But, it would be an exaggeration to say that institutional factors are not relevant to the study of the JCS role in national security affairs. A thorough explanation would take into account institutional factors. The formal and informal rules of the JCS organization influence the behavior of its members.

One school of thought does make the argument that the JCS role in national security policymaking is a function of institutional factors. These factors are variable, but can be grouped into several overlapping categories, to include:

- (1) representational composition;
- (2) position in line of command;
- (3) staff support;
- (4) tenure of office; and
- (5) recruitment system.

The performance of the JCS has been influenced by the above

variables. By understanding the institutional factors, we can see why past attempts at reform have failed. Ultimately, the focus on institutional factors leads us to consider a different approach to improving the performance of the JCS.

The JCS is a committee whose membership includes the four military Service Chiefs and a Chairman that can come from any one of the services. Each Service Chief is responsible for the management and leadership of his individual service. He must organize, train, and equip the forces of his service. At the same time, the Service Chief is expected to participate in joint actions. There is a built-in conflict of interest in this system. The JCS committee structure is ineffective as a decision-making structure for national military policy. Service interests will always come first; the Service Chief has no alternative if he expects to retain the support of his service following.

The position of the JCS in the line of command has varied from one reorganization plan to another. The JCS was designed as an advisory staff divorced from operational command responsibilities. The deep rooted fear by some members of Congress of the potential creation of a general staff and the firm belief in the need for strong civilian control over the military will prevent the JCS from evolving into anything more than an advisory body.

The Navy is completely satisfied with the JCS as an advisory board. Since the unification debates, the Navy has feared circumvention of its roles and missions by the Army and Air Force. The Navy is convinced that it has nothing to gain from cooperation with the other services in the joint arena. The Navy is a self-supporting service and through joint cooperation with the Army and Air Force would risk losing mission responsibilities.

Much criticism of the JCS has been directed at the staffing process. The Service Chiefs have two staffs supporting them--the Joint Staff and the Service Staff. The Joint Staff consists of officers who spend a limited tour of duty working on joint issues. They come from a single service and return to the particular service after Joint Staff duty. The Joint Staff officer depends on his parent service for promotion and reassignment opportunities. There is no incentive in the joint staffing process for the Joint Staff officer to take the initiative and rise above service self-interests.

The Service Staff officer has all the incentive in the world to insure that joint staff papers reflect favorably on his service. The Service Chief uses his Service Staff to develop positions on joint issues. The competing staff structures would break down under any rules other than those based on the principle of compromise.

The JCS has a difficult time recruiting top quality officers for service on the Joint Staff. Service Chiefs want the best officers to serve on their Service Staffs. Another problem is that most officers assigned to the Joint Staff lack the proper training or prior experience to do a completely successful job.

Recent proposals calling for JCS reform attempt to remedy some of the institutional factors effecting JCS performance. However, legislating JCS reforms is not going to solve the problem. JCS reorganization has been tried several different times in the past and each attempt had met with only limited success. There is nothing unique about General Jones' proposal of a strengthened JCS Chairman or of General Meyer's suggestion that we establish a National Military Advisory Council. These proposals and most others like them fail to address the real problem with the JCS system.

Past attempts at JCS reform have focused on changing institutional structures. The real problem is in the character of the JCS members. A Service Chief advocates his service position because he has not acquired any other expertise. From his service academy days and continuing up until he takes the position as a JCS member, the Service Chief has been indoctrinated into thinking only in a particular military perspective. The same holds true for officers who serve on the Joint Staff. They have spent

most, if not all of their careers exposed to a unique set of experiences be it on land, in the air, or at sea.

If we want to make the JCS a more effective body of advisors and improve the joint staffing process, then it is important to consider the professional education of our officer corps. The following recommendations are in order:

- (1) substantially increase the number of cadets and midshipmen involved in service academy exchange programs;
- (2) increase the number of joint-service assignments; and,
- (3) revise the curriculum at the Armed Forces Staff College and National War College to reflect an emphasis on joint issues.

The above recommendations would not require any congressional legislation for approval. The changes could be adopted by all the military services. Of course, there is no guarantee that all the services would agree to support the recommendations. However, it is becoming quite clear that the quality of military advice and the amount of joint strategic planning will not appreciably improve by simply making periodic legislative changes to the JCS.

Endnotes

I. Introduction

1

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A Unified Command is a command composed of significant forces from two or more Services, e.g., the Pacific Command or the The European Command. A Specified Command is one which has a broad continuing functional mission and is normally composed of forces from one Service, e.g., The Strategic Air Command or the Military Airlift Command.

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