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**National Security Study Memorandum 3
(NSSM-3): A Pivotal Initiative in
U.S. Defense Policy Development**

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PREFACE

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SUMMARY

National Security Study Memorandum 3 (NSSM-3) was signed by Henry Kissinger, the newly appointed Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, the day after President Nixon's inauguration in January 1969. The memorandum required, by 1 July, a review of our military posture and the balance of power as well as the security and foreign policy implications of a wide range of alternative budget levels and strategies for strategic forces (SF) and general purpose forces (GPF). Ultimately, two studies—one on SF and one on GPF—were conducted.

Within days, detailed pilot studies, terms of reference (TOR), study organization, and schedule were distributed. All were modified in the course of the study. For example, within a month the President accelerated the SF study to be done by 1 May. The GPF study proceeded separately and concluded with an NSC meeting on 10 September. Dr. Kissinger presented the matter privately to President Nixon for decision on 2 October. National Security Decision Memorandum 27 (NSDM-27) promulgated the decision, notably the "one major plus one minor" war, or "1½" war strategy.

As the two studies proceeded they spawned other NSSMs. For example, NSSM-24 addressed how the Soviets viewed the strategic balance. NSSM-65 and NSSM-69 addressed nuclear policies in Europe and Asia, respectively. Decisions were made in the course of the basic studies and offshoot studies; in the course of the normal government work going on in parallel with the NSSMs; and, in the case of strategic forces, amidst tumultuous internal and public debate on ABM, MIRV, and SALT. Most decisions had multiple antecedents and might have happened even without NSSM-3.

More important, the NSSM-3 studies were components in a process that was changing the grand strategy of the United States. For example, in the face of American disenchantment with the Vietnam War and a growing Sino-Soviet schism, a less ambitious GPF strategy was contemplated. Dr. Kissinger said the NSDM-27 "1½ war" decision was one of the more important of the Nixon presidency because of the role it played in the opening to China. The import of the SF study was not so clear, however, because it proceeded in a cauldron of argumentation. Nevertheless, it was during the SF study that the subsequently influential four criteria for strategic sufficiency were debated

and codified as part of a process that produced the strategic arms limitation treaties. Overall, these larger processes strongly influenced the direction of DoD programming and budgeting.

The following paragraphs summarize observations on some important process parameters of the NSSM-3 studies. The body of this paper then describes the studies and these process matters in more detail.

Preparation. Extensive preparations of alternative GPF strategies, force levels, and budgets had taken place over nearly a year by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis), OSD (SA), with some participation by other parts of DoD, but no formal vetting. Pilot studies had been completed before the inauguration and were distributed before the end of January. They presented menus of significantly different strategies, forces, and budgets without recommending one or another.

Leadership. The NSC met several times on both the SF and GPF NSSM-3 studies, receiving specific guidance from the President at various points. The President's national security adviser, Dr. Kissinger, was active in the reviews. DEPSECDEF chaired the study steering group, which operated in the interagency arena and included the people who had responsibility and authority to direct analysis work within their agencies. Within DoD both SECDEF and DEPSECDEF supported the study work, but neither was involved day to day. SECDEF was kept informed, and he intervened occasionally. DEPSECDEF was seen as a strong advocate in the interagency arena of the work products of a group chaired by the ASD(SA) or his principal deputy.

Participation and Ownership. The organizations that had an interest in the topics under study were represented. The NSSM-3 Steering Group soon included representatives of Joint Staff (JS), OSD, State, Treasury, DCI, ACDA, BoB, and NSC staff. Later the Director of Emergency Planning and the Council of Economic Advisors were involved too.

The Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) included representatives of the same agencies represented on the steering group, and under it four subgroups were formed:

- Political consequences: State (chair), OSD(ISA) and ACDA
- Probable [Soviet] reactions: CIA (chair), State, ACDA, DoD(ISA, SA, JS)
- Balance of payments: Treasury (chair), BoB, CEA, OSD(SA) & OSD(C)

- Federal budget, GNP & employment: BoB (chair), Treasury, CEA, OSD(SA) and OSD(C)

The NSC staff was in each subgroup. In addition, outside the IAWG structure the White House was to assess domestic political reactions to various strategies, and a working group inside DoD was to examine the forces and defense budgets. The internal DoD group included senior civilians and flag officers from OSD, the Services, and Joint Staff. These participants were responsible for force programming and the staffs that did the day-to-day work, much as they were in the annual PPBS cycles.

Guidance, Feedback and Review. In the 1968–1969 transition period President Nixon and Dr. Kissinger determined that decision making would be an orderly and disciplined affair, centered in the White House. The NSSM-3 studies were an early case to implement this philosophy. Against the background of the detailed pilot studies, the overall TOR, schedule, and organization provided a clear starting point 10 days after NSSM-3 was signed. The TOR, schedule, and organization were reviewed, modified, and reissued in 3 weeks. In the meantime the President had split the SF and GPF studies so they proceeded on different tracks.

Within the organizational structure just described, reviews and guidance were timely. This is not to say the whole process ran smoothly. There were serious substantive disagreements within DoD and among agencies. For example, in the GPF study passionate arguments over GPF numbers routinely spilled out of meeting rooms into the Pentagon halls. Also, in the SF study within DoD, those wanting to accelerate the Safeguard ABM and MIRV missiles, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director of Defense Research and Engineering, prevailed. DoD took this position into the interagency part of the SF study, where State argued vigorously that DoD's ABM/MIRV plan would derail starting arms control negotiations with the Soviets. So many such arguments swirled around the NSSM-3 SF study that it became an almost indistinguishable part of the larger debate.

Links to the PPBS. The Nixon administration standard procedure was to issue a national security decision memorandum (NSDM) after a study was completed. NSDM-27 was issued after the NSSM-3 studies. The NSC staff was then to monitor implementation. The formal linkage to the DoD PPBS was via the *Defense Planning Guidance*, which did not fully reflect NSDM-27 for nearly 2 years.

However, decisions on big programs, such as ABM, were fed directly into programs and budgets. The administration had budget projections before the NSSM-3 study was well underway. The impact of force level and procurement programs on budgets were lively issues throughout the study. While the matter is not clear, it was generally thought at the time of NSDM-27 that the pressure to hold to, or come in under, budget projections was a dominant factor in the decisions, at least in so far as GPF were concerned. The same budget ceilings were also a dominant factor in the GPF decisions that were unfolding in the PPBS during the NSSM-3 studies and afterwards. Thus, budget constraints and piecemeal decisions tended to move force levels and programs in the same ways as would have formal DoD guidance reflecting NSDM-27 immediately and fully.

Some decisions made during the NSSM-3 studies did not relate directly to matters in the PPBS but eventually had an impact. For example, in one review meeting, the President recognized a mismatch between U.S. strategic interests and a U.S. deployment; he directed the beginning of diplomatic actions to work out a change with the ally involved. The PPBS impacts were not seen for years. On the other hand, programmatic decisions derived from the NSSM-3 studies that were not accepted by some players in the DoD PPBS (e.g., BoB, an OSD component, or a Service) often were revisited annually and sometimes were changed a few years later.

Timing. Issuing NSSM-3 was one of the first acts of the Nixon administration, and the studies got off to a fast start. The SF study was completed in about 5 months, the GPF study in about 7½. Both studies took longer than had been scheduled in the first month.

For many reasons it is impossible to demonstrate by the record that NSSM-3 changed the U.S. military in this or that specific way; however, in retrospect it is clear that the NSSM-3 studies were important in a major episode of change in the American military.

NSSM-3 remains the one study that observers generally agree succeeded in dealing, on an interagency basis, with the interconnections between military strategy, foreign policy, and domestic policy objectives.

NSSM-3—A PIVOTAL INITIATIVE IN U.S. DEFENSE POLICY DEVELOPMENT

This report reconstructs a strategic review of U. S. military forces that took place in 1968 and 1969, and presents insights from that process that might help others charged with planning and organizing future reviews. National Security Study Memorandum 3 (NSSM-3) was the operative document and the name of the first broad-ranging examination of U.S. military forces that sought to relate, in a quantitative way, U.S. strategies for using military force and the monetary resources they consumed. There had been earlier strategic reviews for sure, notably NSC 68 in 1950, which articulated the grand strategy of the containment of communism. However, until the late 1960s the knowledge and tools had not been available to link budgets to forces and military employment.

For the most part, this report is a synthesis of various documentary sources, interviews, and personal observations. Given that the studies occurred nearly 30 years ago, there is no assurance that the interviewees, interviewer, and author remembered correctly the events reported, and it is quite possible some events were missed entirely. However, the general flow of events described is clear.

The report first describes the context in which the NSSM-3 studies occurred. Then it presents a chronology of the activities associated with the NSSM-3. Finally it presents some observations on important process parameters of the NSSM-3 studies.

A. NSSM-3 CONTEXT

1. Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System

Under the leadership of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, DoD Comptroller Charles Hitch and Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis) Alain Enthoven set up the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS).¹ The

¹ Deborah Shapley, *Promise and Power: The Life and Times of Robert McNamara* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), p. 99-101.

system established mission categories and used a 5-year programming horizon so that the cost of various collections of ground, sea, and air forces could be calculated. Cost-effectiveness analyses became regular features of debates on programs and budgets, and, as a result, methods of combining judgment and quantitative analysis evolved so that military forces could be sized in light of their intended uses.² It was this foundation that allowed the NSSM-3 pilot studies.

2. Nixon Administration Foreign Policy Apparatus

In November and December 1968, President-elect Nixon and his designee for Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Henry Kissinger, planned to centralize the planning and directing of foreign policy in the White House. The National Security Council staff was to ensure that conflicting opinions came to the White House, shifting power from the State and Defense Departments to the NSC staff, especially the national security adviser. For example, the Senior Interdepartmental Review Group, chaired by an Undersecretary of State, would be replaced with the NSC Review Group, chaired by the national security adviser, to review things to be presented to the NSC. The adviser and his staff also would carry out operations outside the normal government channels.

President Nixon and Dr. Kissinger also planned to institute, under the control of the national security adviser, a system of National Security Study Memoranda (NSSMs) and National Security Decision Memoranda (NSDMs). The NSSMs gave the adviser the power to direct the work of the federal bureaucracy, to force reconsideration of policies, and to receive inputs on topics he was negotiating secretly.³ An OSD(ISA) list dated 22 May 1975 included 223 NSSMs. NSSM-1 was about Vietnam, NSSM-2 was about the Middle East, and many after NSSM-3 pertained, at least in part, to military posture. They included NSSM-6 (Review of NATO Policy Alternatives), NSSM-24 (see section B.3, below), NSSM-50 (Naval Forces), NSSM-65 (Relationship Among Strategic and Theater Forces for NATO), NSSM-69 (U.S. Nuclear Policy in Asia), and NSSM-84 (U.S. Strategy and Forces for NATO).⁴

² Charles J. Hitch, *Decision-Making for Defense* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), pp. 21-58.

³ Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: a Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), pp. 136-155.

⁴ OSD files.

3. Parallel Events as NSSM-3 Studies Proceeded

Three major foreign policy challenges occupied the Nixon administration while the NSSM-3 studies unfolded: the Vietnam War, the strategic arms race with the Soviet Union, and the Sino-Soviet split.⁵ These events overshadowed the NSSM-3 studies and drove their conduct to a large degree.

a. Vietnam War

In April 1965 President Johnson had committed 40,000 U.S. combat troops to Vietnam. By President Nixon's inauguration, 550,000 American troops, more or less, were in Southeast Asia. The war divided the country deeply. After having been elected in 1964 with the largest popular majority in history, President Johnson declined to run for reelection in 1968, primarily because of the level of opposition to the Vietnam War.⁶

Mr. Nixon campaigned against Hubert Humphrey in 1968 believing that U.S. military victory was not possible, but he determined to say otherwise in order to keep bargaining leverage.⁷ While the NSSM-3 studies were directed to the post-Vietnam military, the process of extricating the U.S. from Vietnam influenced the process and results. For example, the Nixon Doctrine resulted from the Vietnam experience. The concept of keeping the U.S. ground forces out of wars in most of the world was not articulated in NSSM-3 itself or in the early study work. It was announced in July 1969, after the DoD GPF strategy-forces-budgets analysis was completed, and was refined in parallel with the completion of the NSSM-3 GPF study.

b. Strategic Arms Negotiations with the Soviets

Throughout the Johnson administration debates had continued non-stop, and discussions had been held with the Soviets, about anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems, multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs), and strategic arms limitations.⁸ Thus, at the beginning of the Nixon administration it was clear that strategic force decisions were related to arms control, but this was not explicit in NSSM-3. Also many in the administration began to argue strongly that MIRV and ABM decisions

⁵ Isaacson, p. 158. Isaacson includes the Mideast in his list; this became a major preoccupation after the NSSM-3 studies.

⁶ Robert A. Cato, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Means of Ascent* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), pp. xxiii-xxvi.

⁷ Isaacson, p. 163.

⁸ Shapley, pp. 389-397.

should be put on hold to facilitate opening arms control negotiations, and this had an effect on the NSSM-3 studies. The debate also raged outside the administration—in Congress and among intellectuals. The President made major decisions on both ABM and MIRV deployments as the SF study under NSSM-3 was underway.⁹

Furthermore, strategic arms control and the Vietnam War became linked by a decision of the President and his national security adviser. At the first NSC meeting of the new administration, held on Inauguration Day, Dr. Kissinger spelled out the concept of “linkage,” using trade and arms control talks as bait to get the Soviets to help with the North Vietnamese.¹⁰ Throughout the course of NSSM-3 studies, Dr. Kissinger sought secretly and unsuccessfully to use arms control as a lever to get Soviet help in ending the Vietnam War. Although the secret peace negotiations do not seem to have influenced the strategic weapons and arms control assessments in the NSSM-3 SF study, certainly the assessors were operating with materially incomplete knowledge.

c. The Sino-Soviet Split

The McNamara direction for planning GPF invoked the assumption that the U.S. would have to fight simultaneously the Warsaw Pact in Europe and the communist Chinese in Asia. The Sino-Soviet split had been evident since the beginning of the 1960s, with periodic confrontations interspersed among relatively quiet times. In 1968 and early 1969, confrontation resumed: the Soviets sought to eject the Chinese party from the international communist movement, and there were border clashes between the two nations. President Nixon and Dr. Kissinger saw the opportunity to establish relations with China for the first time since the communist takeover and, thus, to produce a triangular relationship, with the USSR as a third party, that could help U.S. interests. Clearly, the need to prepare to fight the USSR and China simultaneously would be alleviated. The NSSM-3 GPF study produced such a shift in U.S. military strategy. Conversely, when the 1½ war strategy was announced, it was a signal to China that the U.S. was open to a new relationship, an important signal among many along the way toward the Nixon opening to China in 1971.

⁹ Henry A. Kissinger, *The White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), pp. 195–212.

¹⁰ Issacson, p. 166.

4. The Players

Richard Nixon was inaugurated on 20 January 1969. Henry Kissinger became the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, usually called the national security adviser.

Melvin Laird replaced Clark Clifford as Secretary of Defense (SECDEF). David Packard became Deputy Secretary of Defense (DEPSECDEF) after a fair amount of pain in Congress over his holdings in Hewlett Packard and otherwise. John Foster continued as Director, Defense Research and Engineering (DDR&E), and Gardiner Tucker came in as his Principal Deputy. Robert Moot was the comptroller, ASD(C). G. Warren Nutter was Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, ASD(ISA). Robert Seamans was Secretary of the Air Force, John Chafee was Secretary of the Navy, and Stanley Resor was Secretary of the Army. Alain Enthoven had left around December 1968; Ivan Selin was acting ASD(SA), and Charles Rossotti was Principal Deputy ASD(SA). William Rogers became Secretary of State. Robert Mayo became Director of the Bureau of the Budget (BoB). Richard Helms was Director of Central Intelligence (DCI).

B. NSSM-3 CHRONOLOGY

1. Preparations for NSSM-3

In February 1968, almost a year before Inauguration Day, the senior staff of OSD(SA) concluded that the picture for strategic forces (SF) was reasonably complete, while the picture for general purpose forces (GPF) was not. Accordingly, this senior staff—which included Ivan Selin, Charles Rossotti, and Laurence Lynn, among others—began to assemble the pieces that it had produced over the preceding several years in an effort to produce a comprehensive picture for GPF and to polish the SF picture. The project was not directed by SECDEF Clifford or ASD(SA) Enthoven. Other OSD colleagues, notably some in OSD(ISA) and Robert Pursley, Military Assistant to SECDEF, were informed of the work. Pursley followed the pilot study and critiqued the working papers thoroughly. Much of the material had been reviewed piecemeal over the years by the Services, the Joint Staff (JS), and other OSD offices. In addition, parts of it were reviewed by analysis counterparts outside OSD in 1968. The services and JS analytic shops were shown and asked to comment on the pilot study working papers. They showed little interest and little persuasion was attempted. The study as a whole was

not circulated when completed. During the November 1968–January 1969 transition, the now completed OSD(SA) pilot studies came to the attention of Dr. Kissinger. On his new NSC staff were Dr. Lynn from OSD(SA) and Morton Halperin from OSD(ISA).¹¹

2. The NSSM-3 Studies Begin

On 21 January 1969, the day after President Nixon was inaugurated, Dr. Kissinger signed NSSM-3, which said:¹²

The President has directed the preparation of a study reviewing our military posture and the balance of power. The study should consider in detail the security and foreign policy implications of a wide range of alternative budget levels and strategies for strategic and general purpose forces.

To perform this study the President has directed the creation of a steering group to be chaired by the Deputy Secretary of Defense and to include representatives of the Secretary of State, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of Central Intelligence, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. Staff support for this study will be arranged in consultation between the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the undersigned. Upon request, agencies shall make available personnel to provide staff support. Agencies shall also perform such studies in support of the overall study as may be requested by the Chairman of the Group.

The report of the group shall be forwarded to the NSC Review Group by July 1, 1969.

The OSD and NSC staffs had prepared for study organization and procedures before the inauguration.¹³ Therefore things moved quickly. On 24 January 1969, DEPSECDEF distributed *Pilot Studies of Alternative Military Strategies and Budgets* in DoD for review. On 31 January 1969 DEPSECDEF signed memoranda (Subj: NSSM-3) to CJCS; the Secretary of Treasury and Director BoB; and the Secretary of State, the DCI, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.¹⁴ The memorandum to Treasury and BoB added their representatives to the steering group. Each memorandum forwarded terms of reference (TOR), with a schedule, and the pilot studies. It also called for a Steering Group meeting on 7 February 1969 to approve the

¹¹ Interviews with Ivan Selin, 22 January and 4 March 1998.

¹² NAII Declassified copies of documents designated "NAII" are on file in the National Archives II in Silver Spring, Maryland.

¹³ Selin

¹⁴ NAII

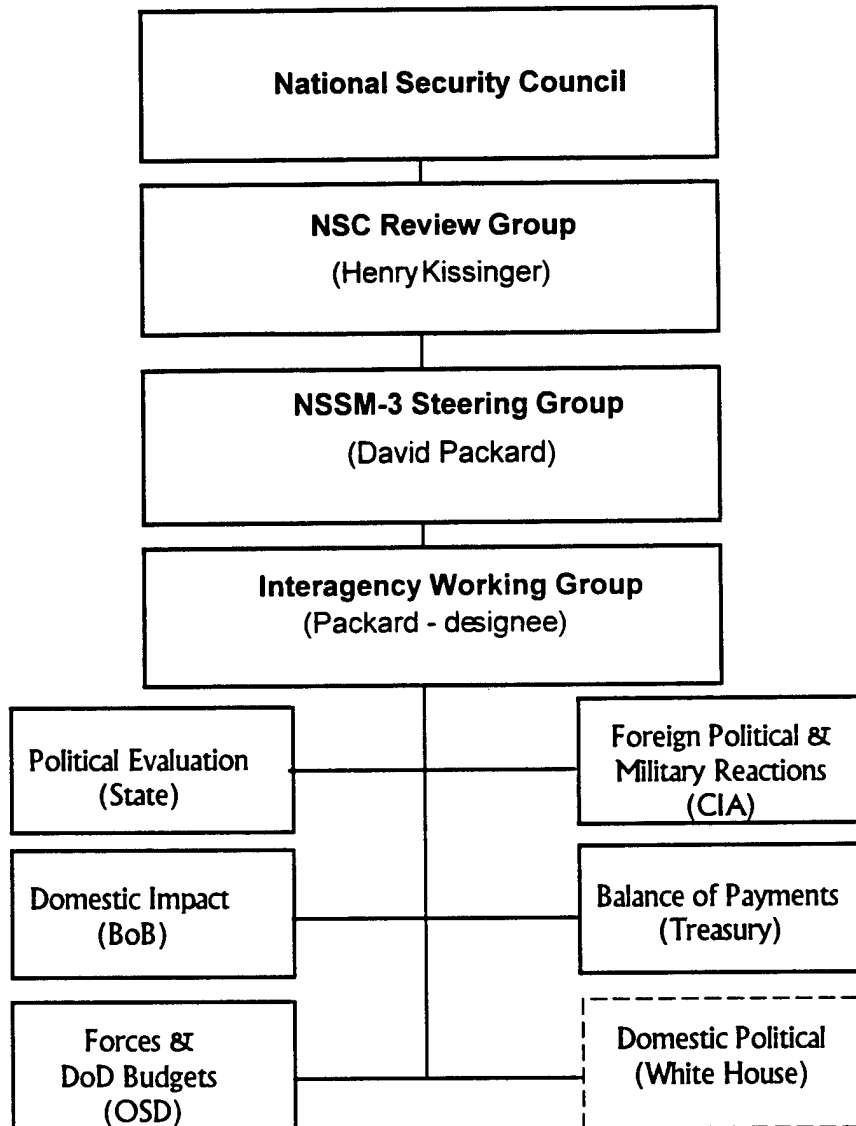
TOR and schedule and to "consider the set of military strategies discussed in the pilot studies as well as any others you might suggest."

The TOR said alternative strategies and associated force structures and budgets were being laid out as the first step. Each alternative was to be evaluated for military risk, foreign political and military reactions (including probable changes in allied and communist forces), impact on overall national interests abroad, and domestic political impact and economic impact (including effects on the non-Defense budget and the balance of payments).

Among the ground rules stated in the TOR were the following:

- Force structures would be described only to the level of detail necessary for costing and evaluation of political and economic implications.
- Major differences in views would be clearly stated.
- No particular strategy or force structure would be recommended.

A schedule was laid out that called for completing the DoD work and then forming an interagency working group (IAWG) to bring together the non-DoD evaluations, each of which was assigned to an agency, State, CIA, Treasury, and BoB. By 12 February the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) and the Council of Economic Advisors (CEA) were also added, the schedule was modified, and evaluation responsibilities were assigned to interagency subgroups. Thus the NSSM-3 organization and approach detailed in Figure 1 and Table 1, respectively, were completed within 3 weeks of the signing of NSSM-3.



The lower left hand box, Forces and DoD Budgets, was not formally a part of the NSSM-3 studies structure, but it was in fact active with Ivan Selin and/or Charles Rossotti chairing its meetings. The lower right hand box, Domestic Political, was listed in the TOR with a question mark and most likely never formally constituted.

Figure 1. NSSM-3 Organization

Table 1. Initial Schedule for the NSSM-3 Study

Dates (1969)	Action
1/24-2/21	Develop alternative strategies. Pilot studies had been sent to JS & Services and were being sent to others. The 2/7 meeting also would consider other strategies suggested by participants.
1/24-3/15	OSD, OJCS & Services work on force structures & budgets.
3/15-4/15	DoD Working Group (JS, Services & OSD) prepare revised strategies, forces and budgets analysis, resolving or summarizing differences, and forward to other agencies.
4/15-5/15	The IAWG to be formed and to direct four interagency subgroups to address separate areas, each chaired by the agency with primary responsibility. The NSC staff to be included in all subgroups.
4/14-5/15	Subgroup with State (Chair), DoD (ISA) and ACDA evaluate political consequences of strategies and force structures as they relate to U.S. national interest and basic security objectives.
2/17-5/15	Subgroup with CIA (chair), State, ACDA, DoD (ISA/SA/JCS) estimate foreign political and military reactions to alternatives.
4/15-5/15	Subgroup with BoB (chair), Treasury, DoD (SA/C) and CEA look at impacts of different force structures and budgets on nondefense budget, GNP, and employment.
4/15-5/15	Subgroup with Treasury (chair), BoB, DoD (SA/C) and CEA look at balance of payments
	"An estimate of the probable domestic political reaction to the various strategies - White House (?)" (sic—and with no dates)
5/15-6/15	IAWG, with representatives of all these agencies, produce an integrated report with differences in views clearly stated.
6/15-7/1	Steering Group receive report, modified and forwarded it to NSC

A 22 February 1969 SECDEF memorandum¹⁵ forwarded to Dr. Kissinger the 12 February revision of the TOR and schedule, listing the Interagency Steering Group as follows:

David Packard, Chair, Deputy Secretary of Defense

Ivan Selin Acting ASD(SA)

Leslie Gelb, Acting DASD(ISA) Policy Planning and Arms Control

U Alexis Johnson, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

Charls Walker, Under Secretary of the Treasury

Laurence Lynn, NSC staff

RADM FW Vannoy, J5, Joint Staff,

James Schlesinger, Assistant Director, BoB

The Director of Strategic Research, Central Intelligence Agency

¹⁵ NAI

Later, DEPSECDEF invited Gerard Smith, Director of ACDA, to join the Steering Group. Presumably a CEA representative was added as well, and the Director of Emergency Preparedness became involved in at least the SF study, whether or not formally represented on the Steering Group.

The IAWG was made up of these people or their assistants. Each subgroup chairman was typically the IAWG member for the agency designated to chair it. For example, in a 4 March 1969 memorandum to David Packard, Alexis Johnson designated Philip Farley, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Politico-Military Affairs, as the State Department representative on the IAWG and chairman of the Political subgroup.¹⁶ The subgroup members were not necessarily IAWG members. For example, the DoD working group was chaired by Dr. Selin or Mr. Rossotti and consisted of flag officers or senior civilians from the Services, JS, and OSD.¹⁷

3. The Strategic and General Purpose Forces Studies Move to Separate Tracks

The NSSM-3 study plan hardly was set when it was changed. In a 14 February NSC meeting the President called for:¹⁸

- An analysis of how the Soviets view the strategic balance. Specifically, based on Soviet estimates of U.S. strategic plans and programs, how might the Soviets react?
- A full reappraisal of our tactical nuclear and conventional strategies, especially with regard to U.S.-Europe strategy.
- Completion of the strategic portion of NSSM-3 by 1 May 1969.
- An NSC meeting on the FY70 Budget for the Sentinel Program on 4 March.
- Completion of the U.S. position on Strategic Arms Limitations Talks within 3 months. During the 3 months there were to be no public or private indications of a U.S. commitment to having the talks, and efforts were to be made to explore taking the initiative in solving other international political problems.

This NSC meeting set the SF study on a different track from the GPF study, and they proceeded separately thereafter. The decision apparently resulted in part from arguments, led by State in early February 1969, that waiting to open arms control

¹⁶ NAI

¹⁷ Selin

¹⁸ State Department memorandum from Richard F. Pederson for Philip J. Farley, dated 17 February 1969 (NAI).

negotiations with the Soviets until the NSSM-3 study was completed on Packard's schedule, would jeopardize the negotiations. For example, on 8 February Richard Pederson of State sent a point paper to Dr. Halperin on the NSC staff proposing, among other things, accelerating the SF study.¹⁹ On 20 February 1969 NSSM-24 was issued, calling for an analysis of how the Soviets view the strategic balance for inclusion as an appendix to the NSSM-3 SF study.²⁰

SECDEF Laird's 22 February memorandum to Dr. Kissinger did not reflect the separation of the SF and GPF studies implied by the 14 February NSC meeting. It may be that the blizzard of NSSMs simply saturated the management systems. Twenty-four NSSMs had been issued in less than 20 working days. However, by 1 March, when the Political Evaluation Subgroup schedule was drafted, adjustments were being made to reflect that the SF and GPF studies would proceed on separate tracks (Table 2).

Table 2. Political Evaluation Subgroup Schedule

Dates (1969)	Action
3/7	Subgroup meeting
3/10-21	State Political Military Affairs office draft a SF/GPF options paper
3/24-28	Coordinate papers on SF/GPF options in State State Political Military Affairs draft a SF options paper
3/31-4/18	Coordinate SF draft in State
4/18-25	Interagency working group prepare SF options report
4/25	Memorandum to Secretary of State Rogers
4/25-5/1	Steering Group review SF report
5/1	Steering Group SF report to NSC

Along the way the IAWG and its subgroups were formed and organized to support the Steering Group. Case in point: On 3 March 1969, Mr. Farley had sent a memorandum to the Steering Group members of the agencies designated to participate in

¹⁹ NAI

²⁰ The 4 June 1969 DoD report gives this date. The 12 May 1969 DoD report cover memorandum lists the answer to NSSM-24 as being at Tab E.

the Political Evaluation Subgroup (and to the JS and CIA) announcing a subgroup meeting on 7 March to consider a proposed approach and a schedule.²¹

The framework proposed by State on 3 March called for describing the world of the 1970s in the following terms:

- Security situations and threats in various regions
- U.S. objectives and interests, including the role of various military means and what would be expected of allies in the context of several U.S. strategies
- SF and GPF combinations to assess the capabilities, limits, and risks of the U.S. strategies
- Suggestions for improvements in each case

The intent was to be explicit about uncertainties and divergent views. The strategies laid out by State for consideration by the Political Evaluation Subgroup were not the same as, and did not track with, those that were being used in DoD.

The State Department schedule illustrates the adaptation of the working groups to the President's direction that split NSSM-3 into two studies, with immediate emphasis on the SF study.

a. The Strategic Forces Study

Apparently the Treasury-led subgroup, treating balance of payments issues, was not active in the SF study; there was no balance of payments issue there. Balance of payments were addressed in the GPF study. Similarly, the BoB-led subgroup did not participate in the SF study. From BoB's perspective the strategic force issues were in a narrow band and the differences did not involve big budget changes. The big potential changes were in the GPF study, in which the BoB participated extensively.²² The three subgroups involved seemed to have worked in accordance with the vetting procedures to which the chairing agency was accustomed. For example, the State Department used the approach described above. Within DoD, procedures much like those used for program reviews in the PPBS were employed under the working group. Each working group member headed staffs that had been through very similar studies in the recent past and

²¹ NAI

²² Interviews with Richard A. Stubbing, 5 February and 9 March 1998. Dr. Stubbing was a Bureau of the Budget representative on the Budget Subgroup.

taken similar approaches. This does not mean that everything went smoothly. Contentious issues sometimes generated procedural disputes.

On 18 April 1969 Mr. Farley submitted the report of the Political Evaluation Subgroup on Strategic Force Postures to the NSSM-3 Working Group.²³ On that same date, the CIA's Director of Research submitted the report of the NSSM-3 Study Group on Foreign Political and Military Reactions (Strategic Forces) to David Packard as Chairman of the NSSM-3 Steering Group.²⁴ On 17 May 1969 DEPSECDEF Packard forwarded to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs the NSSM-3 (Strategic Part) report.²⁵ It included a response to NSSM-24 as an enclosure. The NSC Review Group discussed the paper on 29 May.

A 5 June 1969 National Security Council Secretariat memorandum for the Office of the Secretary of State, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and Office of the Director of Emergency Preparedness—with copies to the Under Secretary of State; Chairman, JCS; Director of Central Intelligence; Director ACDA (Mr. Gerard Smith); and the Attorney General—forwarded a revised paper on U.S. Strategic Posture that reflected the discussion at the 29 May Review Group meeting. The memo expressed the expectation that the paper would be considered at an early NSC meeting—possibly as early as the week of 9 June.²⁶ The 17-page attachment presented alternative views, reflecting disagreements in the Steering Group, without identifying which views belonged to whom, except in the one case noted below. It recapitulated the approach that had been taken in the SF study:

The DoD examined four nuclear strategies which varied widely in the military objectives they were designed to achieve. These strategies differed in the emphasis they placed on the following factors: our confidence in our ability to deter nuclear attacks in a variety of circumstances, the extent to which we can limit damage to the U.S. in a nuclear war, and the relative advantage the U.S. could achieve in a nuclear war with the Soviet Union. The strategies ranged from those which were designed to achieve "dominance" or "superiority" over the Soviet Union—mainly by seeking extremely effective damage limiting capability—to those which were designed primarily to deter an all-out Soviet attack on

23 NAI

24 NAI

25 OSD files

26 NAI

the U.S. and include additional forces to limit damage only from small attacks. The strategies do not take into account possible alternative civil defense postures, which will be the subject of NSSM-57.

Eighteen representative U.S. strategic force structures were developed and grouped into five (sic) categories which correspond roughly to the four strategies. At the same time, a Working Group on Foreign Political and Military Reactions, chaired by the CIA, estimated possible Soviet military responses to each of these strategies and force categories. Using a range of representative Soviet threats, including the postulated Soviet responses to each strategy, the U.S. forces were reevaluated to see how well they could meet the military objectives for which they were designed. The analysis was broken off at this point without considering further responses and reevaluations ... Another Working Group, chaired by the Department of State, evaluated the broad foreign policy implications of each strategy and force category ...

Based on the results of the analysis, the paper identified two major issues for Presidential consideration. The first was the principles that should guide the design of strategic forces. With respect to this, it asked first, "Against what threat to design?" and discussed three options: threats much greater than intelligence projections, high intelligence projections, and most likely projections with more emphasis on R&D. The second question was, "How much redundancy?" and again three options were discussed: (1) having each triad component—ICBM, SLBM and aircraft—be independently capable, (2) keeping the triad but not necessarily keeping each component independently capable, and (3) reducing from the triad. Pros and cons were given for each of the six options discussed.

The second major issue for Presidential consideration was described under the heading, "U.S. Alternatives in Light of the Present U.S.-Soviet Strategic Relationship." Here the paper presented three options: (1) emphasize improving the U.S. SF position vs. the Soviet's, (2) proceed with current programs—including MIRVs and ABM—while emphasizing sufficiency as the goal, and (3) restrain MIRVs and ABM as a means to promote strategic arms limitations. Again, pros and cons were given for each option.

Finally the paper identified issues for further analysis: U.S. capability for selective use of SF in a slowly escalating war of attrition, when to use SF to respond to conventional or nuclear attack on allies, steps to reassure countries that feel threatened by China's nuclear weapons, and last, the role of SF in supporting theater nuclear forces and GPF and deterring conventional war.

Among the Steering Group conclusions were four criteria for "...strategic sufficiency as far as nuclear attacks on the United States are concerned..." endorsed by the Steering Group and a note that the JCS wanted a fifth. The four criteria were:

- Maintain high confidence that our second strike capability is sufficient to deter an all-out Soviet surprise attack on our strategic forces.
- Maintain forces to ensure that the Soviet Union would have no incentive to strike the United States first in a crisis.
- Maintain the capability to deny to the Soviet Union the ability to cause significantly more deaths and industrial damage in the United States than they themselves would suffer.
- Deploy defenses which limit damage from small attacks or accidental launches to a low level.

These criteria were intended to replace the "assured destruction" doctrine that had been articulated in the previous administration.²⁷ Variants of them remained the framework for talking about strategic forces in force planning, modernization, and strategic arms negotiations until the Soviet Union's last years.

At the same time, major strategic force decisions had already been made within the administration. For example, on 14 March 1969 President Nixon announced that the Safeguard ABM system would go forward, but funds for it were authorized by the Senate by only one vote on 6 August after vigorous debate in Congress, in the press, and among national security experts.²⁸ Similarly, MIRV testing proceeded while the 5 June NSC memorandum was being drafted in a political atmosphere of great controversy.²⁹

Finally, at the same time President Nixon and Dr. Kissinger were trying to get Soviet cooperation in ending the Vietnam War, holding out strategic arms limitation talks (SALT) as an inducement.³⁰ Their attempt to link SALT and Vietnam did not work,³¹ and after NSSM-3, SALT began while the Vietnam War continued.

²⁷ Kissinger, pp. 215-218.

²⁸ Kissinger, p. 209.

²⁹ Kissinger, pp. 210-212.

³⁰ Kissinger, pp. 132-133.

³¹ Issacson, pp. 166-168.

With all this interplay going on it is clear that the SF study was not what one would have expected from reading NSSM-3. Rather, it was part of an intellectual and political maelstrom of sorts, in which its progress was subject to many outside influences that changed unpredictably. Still, it was a venue in which some important executive branch players with responsibilities in this area were helped to understand what was unfolding. On balance, then, it is fair to say the SF study was an important piece in the evolution of U.S. strategic thinking.

b. The General Purpose Forces Study

The GPF pilot study distributed in January 1969 contained 330 pages, many of them foldout pages covered with tiny print that made up detailed tables.³² It described two to four (usually three) alternatives for each of several regions (central and southern Europe, the Middle East, Korea, and Southeast Asia). For each regional strategy, the study estimated U.S. forces, including logistics, aid to allies, shipping, and antisubmarine warfare (ASW). It then combined each of these estimates with a strategic reserve to hedge against uncertainty and add-ons to account for training pipeline and other support. These were then evaluated to get to nine alternative worldwide GPF strategies.

The worldwide strategies ranged from complete withdrawal to the Western Hemisphere (Strategy 0) to conventional defense against aggression anywhere in the World (Strategy 4). The "in-between" strategies represented judgments on the priority of U.S. interests, the intentions of the communists, and the risks and costs of relying on nuclear weapons or giving up allied territory.³³ The GPF pilot study was highly varied in its treatment of different regions and alternatives. For example, there was a lot of detail on Greek and Turk ammunition and POL needs on the NATO southern flank. In some other areas, the treatment was much more broad-brush.

The DoD working group, chaired by Acting ASD(SA) Dr. Selin and his principal deputy, Mr. Rossotti, worked from the basis of the pilot study using essentially the same procedures the Pentagon had evolved for dealing with PPBS matters. On the issues of force levels and costs, the normal Pentagon situation emerged: "OSD" views were contrasted with "JCS" views, with the former calling for fewer forces and lower budgets

³² OSD files.

³³ NAIH

than the latter. A revised study document was ready on 23 April, one week behind the schedule promulgated in late January.

On 23 April 1969 DEPSECDEF sent to the CJCS and Service Secretaries the draft *DoD Report on General Purpose Forces for NSSM-3*.³⁴ The transmittal memorandum said the draft reflected the recipients' comments on the Pilot Study and the discussions of the DoD working groups. It also requested comments by 30 April. In the memorandum used to send the draft package to DEPSECDEF, Mr. Rossotti, who was acting as ASD(SA) at that time, said that the purpose of the draft was to get final comments within DoD and that informal copies would be given to other agencies in the meantime.

The draft addressed the relationship between GPF and SF in qualitative terms, covering essentially the same nine strategies covered in the GPF pilot study. For each strategy, the report included OSD force levels and budgets and JCS force levels and budgets. The level of detail for forces was, for example, Army active, hybrid, and reserve divisions; Marine active and reserve expeditionary forces; total active and reserve tactical air wings; and Navy attack carriers, ASW carriers, escort ships, patrol aircraft squadrons, and attack submarines. Costs were given as FY71-75 total cost and annual level-off costs thereafter. The differences between the OSD and JCS numbers were very large for costs and most force level measures, and the draft discussed the major reasons for these differences. Also included in this draft were GPF overseas deployment estimates, again broken out for OSD and the JCS, for balance of payments analysis.

On 4 June 1969, a draft entitled *DoD Report on Analysis of Alternative General Purpose Force Strategies and Force Posture for NSSM-3* was circulated.³⁵ At about 110 pages with 15 to 20 pages of attachments, this document was much smaller than the January GPF pilot study. A lot of detail had been eliminated, but this was partially offset by the addition of the dual OSD and JCS estimates in April. The transmittal document accompanying the draft said that the purpose of the NSSM-3 study was to develop a wide range of alternative military strategies, force structures, and budgets for SF and GPF to attain basic U.S. national security objectives. In addition, the document stated that the first portion of the study (SF) had been completed and that the second portion (GPF) was to be concluded by 1 July, the completion date originally assigned by NSSM-3.

³⁴ OSD files

³⁵ OSD files

The 4 June draft addressed the same strategies addressed in the earlier drafts. Big differences remained between the OSD and JCS force estimates, although some of the gaps had narrowed in the intervening month as the OSD numbers edged higher. Since April the JCS budget numbers had changed only a little, while the OSD budget for each strategy was now expressed as a range, the lower bound of which was close to the OSD April number. For example, since late April the OSD number for one category had gone from zero to a range of 1 to 3 for most strategies, while the JCS number remained at 6 for the less demanding strategies and 10 for the more demanding ones.

Before the report was disseminated, however, DEPSECDEF decided to use the high end of the OSD range as the defense budget number to be used in further NSSM-3 analyses. Apparently, he had no hope of resolving the remaining differences after OSD had moved toward the JCS positions and so "split the difference" to give a single number for each strategy to the non-DoD working groups.³⁶ Included as attachments to the report were a JCS evaluation of the risks associated with SECDEF GPF budget levels and an Air Force statement on the threat.

On 25 July 1969 President Nixon was on Guam en route around the world. In an off-the-record talk with the accompanying press corps, he spoke about what might happen to Asian allies other than South Vietnam. He said the U.S. would expect problems of internal security and external attacks to be increasingly handled by the Asians themselves and that only an attack by the Soviets or Chinese would justify U.S. direct involvement. The Nixon Doctrine, thus enunciated without formal preparation, was refined as the NSSM-3 GPF study was completed and thereafter. It eventually was stated formally in a presidential speech on 3 November 1969:³⁷

- The United States will keep all its treaty commitments.
- We [the U.S.] will provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us, or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security and the security of the region as a whole.
- In cases involving other types of aggression we [the U.S.] shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested and as appropriate. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.

³⁶ Stubbing

³⁷ Kissinger pp. 223-224.

On 28 August 1969 DEPSECDEF forwarded to Dr. Kissinger a working draft of the *NSSM-3 Summary Report*, which was 55 pages.³⁸ The Summary Report observed that GPF accounted for over 60% of the projected DoD budget, while SF accounted for less than 25%. It then discussed U.S. interests, commitments, and threats in Europe and Asia and described the following regional and worldwide strategies:

- Regional GPF strategies
 - NATO GPF strategies
 - Token presence
 - Initial defense
 - Sustained defense
 - Total conventional defense
 - Asian GPF strategies
 - Assistance to allies – Rescue forces
 - Full joint defense (Korea or Southeast Asia (SEA))
 - Full joint defense (Korea and SEA)
- Worldwide GPF strategies
 1. NATO initial defense and Asia rescue force
 2. NATO initial defense or full joint defense in Asia (Korea or SEA)
 3. NATO initial defense and full joint defense in Asia (Korea or SEA)
 4. Sustained NATO defense and holding action in Asia, or Initial defense of NATO and full joint defense of Asia (Korea and SEA)
 5. Total NATO defense and full joint defense in Asia

For each worldwide strategy, the report summarized the associated costs, force levels, and deployments. One of the summaries was entitled “Secretary of Defense and JCS Defense Budgets.” Another was a table of the force structures, actual structures for 1965 and 1969, and projected structures for each NSSM-3 GPF strategy; in the NSSM-3 structures were compromise numbers rather than separate OSD and JCS numbers. The report concluded its military presentation with a two-page discussion of theater and strategic nuclear capabilities and GPF, noting that NSSM-65 and NSSM-69 would discuss nuclear policy in Europe and Asia. This presentation occupied 38 pages.

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The Summary Report then turned to the impact of various strategies on non-defense programs and budgets. The BoB-led Domestic Impact subgroup had done this assessment using the following analytic approach:³⁹

1. Estimated available resources—basically tax receipts—into the out-years.
2. Estimated uncontrollable spending such as social security and interest on the debt.
3. Held other domestic programs to 1970 levels except for pay, price, and some minimal workload increases.
4. Assumed that remaining resources were available for defense, controllable non-defense programs, and if necessary, a surplus to hold down inflation.
5. Constructed four broad priority tiers of non-defense spending packages, recognizing that one could well argue about the assignment of a specific non-defense program to one or another tier.
 - *First Tier.* Domestic programs to which the administration was already committed, including Head Start, expanded aid to elementary and secondary education, crime control and highway safety, water and air pollution, and the President's welfare reform, for a total of \$5 billion in FY71 rising to \$20 billion in FY75.
 - *Second Tier.* FAA modernization, expanded aid to higher education, multilateral banks, AID, etc., for a total of \$2 billion in FY71 rising to \$8 billion in FY75.
 - *Third Tier.* Major aid to urban areas, expanded model cities program, medicare for the disabled, an environmental observation and prediction system, etc., for a total of \$2 billion in FY71 rising to \$11 billion in FY75.
 - *Fourth Tier.* Accelerated manned space program, expanded food stamp program, prototype SST development, merchant marine modernization, etc., for a total of \$5 billion in FY71 rising to \$20 billion in FY75.
6. Explored which domestic tiers could fit with each GPF strategy, taking as given strategic forces programs and some DoD overhead costs. Not surprisingly, fewer domestic tiers fit with the more demanding military strategies within a balanced budget. Most significant for domestic policy, strategies 4 and 5 (and the First Tier of new domestic programs) would require income tax surcharges to maintain a balanced budget.

The NSSM-3 GPF report discussed military and economic assistance in general terms, suggesting that the impact of such assistance on allied capabilities was not well understood. The analysis of aid to allies had not been included in the TOR tasking in

³⁹ Stubbing

January or the DoD analyses before July. The subject was added, apparently as a result of the announcement of the Nixon Doctrine a month earlier, but the Steering Group was not able to comment definitively. At the same time the report noted that there was little difference among the strategies in terms of their impact on the balance of payments. This assertion was based on the fact that DoD did not plan significant changes in the deployment of U.S. forces overseas from one strategy to another. The report did not address how the balance of payments was affected by changes in military and economic assistance to allies. After these discussions, the report turned to issues for decision. In discussing these issues, the report noted a JCS dissent in three places.

On 5 September 1969 DEPSECDEF Packard distributed the final report of the NSSM-3 Interagency Steering Group on U.S. Military Posture and the Balance of Power accompanied by a memorandum addressed to members of the National Security Council, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Science Advisor to the President, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.⁴⁰ He said, "Since there would be no NSC Review Group meeting before the 10 September meeting of the NSC, I hope you will have an opportunity to study the report thoroughly before the 10 September meeting."

For the President's use in the 10 September 1969 NSC meeting, the NSC staff prepared talking points that included the following:⁴¹

1. Dick Helms (DCI) would first brief on the WP threat to NATO and the Chinese threat.
2. Dave Packard would then brief on the results of "his study."
3. Dr. Kissinger would summarize issues to be decided (see below).
4. The main objective of the discussion would be a clear understanding of the threat each posture was designed to meet and the diplomatic implications and military risks of each.
5. The President would not make any decisions at the meeting. The meeting would serve as basic education in preparation for a decision. The President would need time to think about what he had learned.

⁴⁰ OSD files

⁴¹ NAI

6. The President would, however, specify that once he decided on strategy & budget guidelines, he would want a 5-year force plan consistent with them.
7. The President would not want major strategy, force, and budget issues decided annually in bilateral negotiations between BoB and DoD.

The NSC staff also prepared talking points for Dr. Kissinger.⁴² One of his main points would be that the difference in strategies turned on the following judgments:

- Likelihood of a Chinese attack in Northeast Asia or Southeast Asia and whether to maintain forces to meet such an attack. Strategy 1 did not call for such forces. All others did.
- Likelihood of simultaneous WP and PRC attacks. Strategy 2 did not include forces for this. Strategies 3-5 did.
- Whether to prepare for a sustained conventional defense in Europe. Strategies 4 and 5 provided for this capability.
- Whether to prepare to meet a surprise attack in Europe following a concealed mobilization. Only Strategy 5 provided for this.
- The pros and cons of each strategy were described as follows:

Strategy 1. The JCS believed Strategy 1 would risk allied realignments in Asia. State believed that if the U.S. unilaterally transitioned over 2 to 3 years from the 1969 force of $23\frac{2}{3}$ divisions to the $13\frac{1}{3}$ divisions of Strategy 1, Asian allies might loosen their ties with the U.S., creating a more favorable atmosphere for Chinese aggression even though U.S. overseas deployments would be about what they were before the Vietnam war.

Strategy 2. One view of simultaneous WP and Chinese attacks held that they were unlikely because of Sino-Soviet differences and the fact that the non-involved communist power would see the U.S. nuclear threshold as lower. Another view was that the non-involved power would perceive lower risks from aggression when the U.S. was involved elsewhere. State believed a 2- to 3-year unilateral transition to the $14\frac{1}{2}$ divisions of Strategy 2 would have impacts like Strategy 1.

⁴² NAII

Strategy 3. This strategy was seen to approximate the then-current strategy, with the major issue being whether the additional capability was worth an additional \$9 billion per year over Strategy 1 or \$5 billion per year over Strategy 2.

Strategy 4. The Steering Group—except for the JCS—believed the NATO allies would oppose Strategy 4. For these allies, a strategy involving a sustained conventional defense would erode the credibility of U.S. intentions to use its nuclear forces to defend Europe. Moreover, it would require a 4% to 6% surtax if already approved non-defense programs were to be funded.

Strategy 5. The problems seen in Strategy 4 were seen as amplified here. The surtax would be 9–14%.

On 17 September 1969 DEPSECDEF Packard sent a memorandum to NSSM-3 Steering and Interagency Working Groups saying, “The NSSM-3 report is excellent. The President and NSC are pleased with the progress it represents in defining major GPF issues and developing alternative strategies for consideration and decision. Each of you has made significant contributions to this effort, and Mr. Laird and I extend our compliments and appreciation for your excellent work.”⁴³

After the NSC meeting more work went on in the NSC staff. As Dr. Kissinger described it, “An Interdepartmental Group responded with five options, which my staff and I boiled down to three:”⁴⁴

- Strategy 1 would maintain conventional forces for an initial (90-day) defense of Western Europe against a major Soviet attack, and for simultaneous assistance (by logistical support and limited U.S. combat forces) to an Asian ally against threats short of a full-scale Chinese invasion.
- Strategy 2 would maintain forces capable of either a NATO initial defense or a defense against a full-scale Chinese attack in Korea or Southeast Asia.
- Strategy 3 (essentially our strategy before the Vietnam War) would maintain forces for a NATO initial defense and a defense of Korea or Southeast Asia against a full-scale Chinese attack.

⁴³ NAI

⁴⁴ Kissinger, pp. 220–221.

In short Dr. Kissinger and his staff eliminated strategies 4 and 5, the two that would require income tax surcharges, from final consideration. Dr. Kissinger went on to write:

On October 2, 1969, I wrote to the President summing up the options and their military and budgetary implications. The agencies had varying views, which I reported fairly, but in case of a split view the President as always wanted my recommendation. I urged that he approve Strategy 2: 'I believe that a simultaneous Warsaw Pact attack in Europe and a Chinese conventional attack in Asia is unlikely. In any event, I do not believe such a simultaneous attack could or should be met with ground forces.'... Nixon accepted my recommendation. It was one of the more important decisions of his Presidency. First of all, it harmonized doctrine and capability...There was no realistic prospect that the Chinese and the Soviets would move against us at the same time. But if there *were* a joint assault ... to pretend ... we would confine our response to a conventional war in two widely separated areas would multiply our dangers...The political implications were even more decisive. We had to give up the obsession with a Communist monolith ... The reorientation of our strategy signaled to ... China that we saw its purposes as separable from the Soviet Union's, that our military policy did not see China as a principal threat. Although our change of doctrine was never acknowledged by Peking, it is inconceivable that it was ignored... Not only did we begin to reflect the new strategic design in our military planning ... to leave no doubt about our intentions, we took the extraordinary step of spelling out our rationale in the President's first Foreign Policy Report to the Congress on February 18, 1970...

A few weeks after Dr. Kissinger's 2 October 1969 memorandum, National Security Study Memorandum 27 (NSDM-27) was issued stating the decision based on the NSSM-3 study, described above.

4. After NSDM-27

The first broadly distributed public statement of NSDM-27 appeared in the December 1969 *Fortune* column entitled "Letter from Washington."⁴⁵ It reported:

A new strategy, hammered out over 9 months by the administration and now approved by the President, aims for a sharply reduced defense budget by the mid-1970s. The top secret policy, known as National Security Decision Memorandum 27, calls for defense spending to be reduced, starting next year, to the low \$70 billion range by 1972, the next presidential election year. The Decision Memorandum, which resulted from a National Security Council Study Group led by Deputy Secretary of

⁴⁵ Juan Cameron, "Letter from Washington," *Fortune*, December 1969, 80:43.

Defense David Packard, determined that strategic nuclear forces will be maintained at current levels. But conventional forces will be sharply reduced....

The option that the administration finally chose was announced in an almost off-hand way. Walking unannounced into the Pentagon pressroom, Laird watched a televised ball game for a while. Then almost casually he said that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were being told to plan next year's budget on a one-plus contingency capability—the capability, that is, to sustain at the same time one major and one minor war. The Secretary explained, 'We're probably in a position today where we can handle a major impact of war in Europe and give substantial support [to a conflict] in Southeast Asia and Korea ... I don't think that ... before, we were in a position to handle with general-purpose forces—this is not including the Vietnam situation—two major ground wars.' By thus intimating that the new policy was merely abandoning a concept that had no reality because it was not funded adequately, Laird obscured the breakthrough in strategic decisions that had taken place.

As already noted in this chronology, NSSM-3 developments were also announced in the President's Foreign Policy Report, the SECDEF Posture Statement, and various other statements by administration officials to Congress, the press, and open meetings. The process of implementing the decisions in terms of defense PPBS is discussed below.

C. SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE CONDUCT OF THE NSSM-3 STUDIES

1. Preparation

The OSD(SA) staff updated the SF decision memoranda that had been used in the PPBS and over a period of almost a year prepared a new GPF pilot study. These pilot studies analyzed dramatically different strategies, forces, and budgets in an effort to identify a framework of solid alternatives for broader investigation. The studies made no recommendations for adopting any one strategy over another.

While the pilot studies had not been fully vetted with the Services and JS, analysts in those entities were shown drafts of the evolving studies. Furthermore, the presentations and most of the arguments were familiar after years of cost-effectiveness studies and Draft Presidential Memoranda (DPM). From a DoD perspective it might be tempting to say that the pilot studies laid out the answers and that all the rest was political negotiation leading to marginal changes in each strategy. Political negotiations surely took place since all government decisions are intrinsically political. However, the pilot studies set parameters for informed political

discussion. Also, although new analyses within DoD were relatively few during NSSM-3 itself, the non-DoD subgroups were starting new and potentially important analyses.

Apparently there had been no deliberate prior preparations for addressing the issues with which the non-DOD NSSM-3 subgroups were to deal. For example, one subgroup's charter was to look at impacts of different force structures and budgets on non-defense budget, GNP, and employment. The subgroup did work through the relation between military strategies, forces and budgets, on the one hand, and domestic programs and taxes, on the other, in the course of the NSSM-3 GPF study. Though not explicitly stated, a balanced budget mindset guided this subgroup. In that framework, the GNP and employment differences between a dollar spent by DOD or by a domestic program were too small to be seen. The idea of an income tax surcharge was regarded as politically infeasible; therefore, in such cases no further analysis of GNP and employment impacts seemed worth doing.⁴⁶

The Balance of Payments subgroup was set up because the answer was not intuitively obvious. During the NSSM-3 GPF study the subgroup traced through a lot of complexity to reach the conclusion that the strategies under consideration were essentially the same from a balance of payments perspective, within the precision of the analytic tools available.

These and the results of the Political subgroup's work in the chronology show that substantial analysis was performed during NSSM-3 studies. The role of the pilot studies was to provide a set of solid alternatives (although other military specialists argued they were very wrong with respect to forces and budgets) adequate to give a framework for broader investigations.

2. Leadership

The NSC met several times on both the SF and GPF NSSM-3 studies, receiving specific guidance from the President at various points. The Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Henry Kissinger, was active in the reviews.

⁴⁶ Stubbing

DEPSECDEF chaired the study steering group, which operated in the interagency arena and included the people who had responsibility and authority to direct analytic work within their agencies.

Within DoD both SECDEF and DEPSECDEF supported the study work, but neither was involved day to day. SECDEF knew and understood the implications of what was going on, but he usually was "hands off." Specifically, Robert Pursley, his military assistant, followed the GPF study closely, regularly attending working meetings. Pursley kept the SECDEF informed and on occasion suggested that SECDEF nudge on some matter, which he did. DEPSECDEF was seen as a strong advocate of the group chaired by the ASD(SA) or his principal deputy. He was new to DoD. Sometimes he did not grasp the issues initially, but he was willing and able to learn. When he took a concept on board, he was "immovable."⁴⁷

3. Participation and Ownership

The organizations that had an interest in the topics under study were represented. The NSSM-3 Steering Group soon included representatives of the JS, OSD, State, Treasury, DCI, ACDA, BoB, and NSC staff. The Director of Emergency Planning and the Council of Economic Advisors also were involved. For example, in an 18 April 1969 memorandum, David Packard formally invited Gerard Smith, Director of ACDA and an opponent of the DoD program for MIRV and ABM, to join the NSSM-3 Steering Group.⁴⁸ Over time, the distribution lists in various documents changed to include different interested parties.

The IAWG included representatives of the same agencies represented on the Steering Group, and its four subgroups were chaired by the agencies that would normally claim primacy in the activities of the subgroups. A BoB participant recalled that in the NSSM-3 GPF study his agency had a fair opportunity to be heard.⁴⁹

The internal DoD group included senior civilians from OSD and flag officers from the Services and JS. These participants were responsible for force programming and the staffs that did the day to day work, much as they were in the annual PPBS cycles.

⁴⁷ Selin

⁴⁸ OSD files

⁴⁹ Stubbing

It appears that the DEPSECDEF and his staff made significant compromises to accommodate the views of the military and to include their remaining concerns in the report. For example, the 4 June 1969 *DoD Report on Analysis of Alternative General Purpose Force Strategies and Force Posture for NSSM-3* indicated that since late April the OSD force estimates had edged higher to narrow the gap with the JCS estimates. The JCS budget numbers had changed only a little. The OSD budget for each strategy had been expressed as a range, but before the report was disseminated, DEPSECDEF decided to use the high end of the OSD range (closer to the JCS budgets) as the defense budget number to be used in further NSSM-3 analyses. DoD also attached to the report a JCS evaluation of the risks associated with SECDEF GPF budget levels and an Air Force statement on the threat.

As another example, in the 22 August report, *Secretary of Defense and JCS Defense Budgets* were displayed and the two points of view were described succinctly and objectively to the recipients of the draft, most of whom were outside DoD. The report's force structure projections for each NSSM-3 GPF strategy were compromise numbers rather than separate OSD and JCS numbers.

A memorandum issued by DEPSECDEF in late January invited suggestions for military strategies. Otherwise, suggestions for new strategies were not solicited and none were received. Still, everyone had been given the chance to provide input. Of course, the GPF strategies evolved over the summer of 1969, but the original menu was rich enough that the final strategies were close to and between the original ones.

These actions were taken in the midst of debates that were heated and even passionate. For example, within DoD the Navy was passive during the evolution of the 4 June 1969 *DoD Report on Analysis of Alternative General Purpose Force Strategies and Force Posture for NSSM-3*. However, the other Services and the JS were very much involved. Arguments over particular numbers in the GPF drafts sometimes spilled out of meeting rooms into Pentagon halls. When the Navy later became engaged, it was even more emotional. For example, the Chief of Naval Operations was enraged to discover that aircraft carrier numbers as small as those being addressed were even being discussed.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Selin

4. Guidance, Feedback, and Review

As noted earlier, President Nixon and Dr. Kissinger decided that decision making would be centered in the White House, fed by a disciplined process to lay out views from across the government. The NSSM-3 studies were an early case to implement this philosophy. Against the background of the detailed pilot studies, the overall terms of reference (TOR), schedule, and organization provided a clear starting point 10 days after NSSM-3 was signed. The TOR, schedule, and organization were reviewed, modified, and reissued in 3 weeks. In the meantime the President had split the SF and GPF studies, which then proceeded on different tracks.

Within the organizational structure described above, reviews and guidance were usually timely, but not always. For example, the concept of keeping the U.S. out of ground wars in most of the world—the crux of the Nixon Doctrine—was not articulated in NSSM-3 itself or in the early study work. It was announced in July 1969 after the DoD GPF strategy-forces-budgets analysis had been completed.

That reviews were reasonably frequent and feedback and guidance were usually timely does not mean the whole process ran smoothly. As noted earlier, there were serious substantive disagreements within DoD. They also occurred among agencies. The SF study had more of the latter disagreements than the GPF study. For example, in the SF study within DoD, those wanting to proceed with the Safeguard ABM and MIRV missiles, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director of Defense Research and Engineering, prevailed. DoD took this position in the interagency part of the SF study. There, State argued that DoD's ABM/MIRV plan would derail starting arms control negotiations with the Soviets.

Moreover, the deliberative structure was often violated in the SF study. For example, there were numerous communications outside the established interagency structure in which proponents of one viewpoint or another sought to win adherents in higher echelons of the national security apparatus. To put this in context, however, the study was occurring in the midst of intensive lobbying by Congress and people outside government on the matters of ABM, MIRV, and strategic arms limitation talks. The interconnected issues were being decided piecemeal, causing proponents to mount urgent campaigns to prevent their favored options from being foreclosed. To a significant degree the NSSM-3 SF study became integral to the larger debate.

Finally, the NSC staff participated in each subgroup, maintaining White House involvement in the studies at several levels. There was often tension between the NSC and DoD staffs as the former sought to control the study processes and findings in ways the latter thought inappropriate since DEPSECDEF chaired the steering group. Again, this happened more frequently in the SF study than in the GPF study.

As the two studies proceeded they spawned other NSSMs. For example, DEPSECDEF's TOR provided for evaluating foreign reactions to U.S. programs. However, the President asked for the same analysis in an NSC meeting, and Dr. Kissinger issued NSSM-24 shortly thereafter to address how the Soviets viewed the strategic balance, with a report to be incorporated in the NSSM-3 SF report. For a more challenging example, the connections among SF, theater nuclear forces (TNF), and GPF never were resolved in the NSSM-3 studies. A 4 June NSC staff memorandum on SF said the matter would be addressed in the GPF study. The 5 September report of the GPF study gave only passing attention to the matter. In the meantime, NSSM-65 and NSSM-69 had been issued to address nuclear policies in Europe and Asia, respectively. Apparent, difficult questions that were peripheral to the focus of the studies were generally handled in this way. What constituted proper relationships between SF, TNF, and GPF was never worked out in the Nixon and Ford administrations.⁵¹

5. Links to the PPBS

The Nixon administration standard procedure was to issue a national security decision memorandum (NSDM) after a study was completed. It issued NSDM-27 after the NSSM-3 studies. The NSC staff was then to monitor implementation. The formal linkage to the DoD PPBS was via the *Defense Planning Guidance* (DPG), which did not fully reflect the work of NSSM-3 for nearly 2 years.

First, the linkage was not made during the studies because the men who led the NSSM-3 GPF work in DoD had not sought to connect the study with the PPBS. They judged it better not to connect the study to the PPBS in order to minimize opposition to it.⁵² The reason why the NSSM-3 work continued to be omitted even after NSDM-27 was issued is not so clear.

⁵¹ Kissinger, pp. 217-220.

⁵² Selin

In the normal course of events OSD(SA) would have picked up the decision and incorporated it in a draft DPG, which would have been forwarded to OSD(ISA) for refinement and presentation to SECDEF. Why this did not happen is not clear. One hypothesis is that the informal chain that had produced previous DPGs had broken down. In December 1969 after repeated political attacks against "whiz kids" that made it clear Ivan Selin could not win Senate confirmation as ASD(SA), Selin, Rossotti, and several other key senior staff members departed DoD en masse. It may well be that the replacements in critical places in OSD(SA) were unaware of their responsibility to draft the DPG. At the same time, OSD(ISA) might have failed to notice a lapse because it was overwhelmed during 1970 by matters relating to the Vietnam War and plans to open SALT with the Soviets. At any rate, in early 1971 OSD(SA) took on the task of incorporating the NSDM-27, Nixon Doctrine, and other recent policy into a new DPG that was issued by SECDEF Laird later that year.

The formal connections of NSSM-3 to the PPBS—or lack thereof—do not warrant a lot of attention, however, for a number of reasons. First, decisions on big programs, such as ABM, were fed directly into the programming and budget processes. For example, President Nixon decided to proceed with the MIRV program in May 1969 before the NSSM-3 SF study was presented.⁵³

Second, the administration had budget projections before the NSSM-3 study was well underway. The impact of DoD budgets on non-defense budgets and taxes was a lively issue in the GPF study. While the matter is not clear, it was generally thought at the time of NSDM-27 that the pressure to hold to, or come in under, budget projections was a dominant factor in the decisions, at least insofar as GPF were concerned. The same budget ceilings were also a dominant factor in the GPF decisions that were unfolding in the PPBS during the NSSM-3 studies and afterwards. For both reasons, force levels and programs tended to move as they would have moved had the DPG formally and fully reflected NSDM-27 immediately.

Third, the Vietnam War dragged on longer than anticipated in the NSSM-3 GPF study, putting additional pressure on budgets—downward on the rest of the DoD budget and upward on the overall federal budget. Then compromises were worked out in negotiations between BoB and DoD.

⁵³ Issacson, p. 318

Fourth, some decisions made during the NSSM-3 studies did not relate directly to matters in the PPBS but eventually had an impact. For example, in one review meeting, the President recognized a mismatch between U.S. strategic interests and a U.S. deployment. He directed the beginning of diplomatic actions to work out a change with the ally involved.⁵⁴ The PPBS impacts were not seen for years. On the other hand, many programmatic decisions derived, in part at least, from the NSSM-3 studies that were not accepted by some players in the DoD PPBS (e.g., BoB, an OSD component, or a Service) often were revisited annually and, in some cases, changed within a few years.

6. Timing

Issuing NSSM-3 was one of the first acts of the Nixon administration, and the studies got off to a fast start. However, both studies took significantly longer than had been scheduled initially. The SF study was completed in about 5 months, a month longer than the President had directed at the 14 February NSC meeting. The GPF study took 7½ months, 2½ months longer than the 5 months directed in NSSM-3, although as late as 4 June DoD was projecting it would be done by 1 July, the completion date originally assigned.

The 14 February NSC meeting set the SF study on a different track than the GPF study; the studies proceeded separately thereafter. The decision apparently resulted from the urgency that the broader political debate was giving to the SF study. This change undoubtedly contributed to the delay of the GPF study.

D. CONCLUSION

NSSM-3 spawned numerous NSSMs, and decisions were made not only in the course of the basic NMMS-3 studies but also in the course of the offshoot studies and normal government work conducted in parallel with the NSSMs. Moreover, most decisions had multiple antecedents and might have happened even without NSSM-3. Therefore, it is impossible to demonstrate by the record that NSSM-3 changed the U.S. military in this or that specific way. Nevertheless, it is clear that the NSSM-3 studies were pivotal in a major episode of change in the American military.

More important, the NSSM-3 studies were components in a process that was changing the grand strategy of the United States. For example, a less ambitious GPF

⁵⁴ Selin

strategy was contemplated in the face of American disenchantment with the Vietnam War and the growing Sino-Soviet schism. Henry Kissinger wrote of the NSDM-27 "1½ war" decision as one of the more important of the Nixon presidency, in his view, because of the role it played in the opening to China. The impact of the SF study was not so clear, however, because it proceeded in a cauldron of argumentation. Even so, it was during the SF study that the subsequently influential four criteria for strategic sufficiency were debated and codified, a key step in the process that produced the strategic arms limitation treaties. Overall, these larger processes strongly influenced the direction of DoD programming and budgeting.

NSSM-3 remains the one attempt, imperfect as it was, that observers generally agree dealt successfully, on an interagency basis, with the interconnections between military strategy and broad national issues such as the reactions of allies and opponents, balance of payments, and domestic spending and income taxes.

Appendix A

GLOSSARY

ABM	Anti-ballistic Missile
ACDA	Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
AID	Agency for International Development
ASD(C)	Assistant Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)
ASD(ISA)	Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs)
ASD(SA)	Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis)
BoB	Bureau of the Budget
CEA	Council of Economic Advisors
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DCI	Director of Central Intelligence
DDR&E	Director, Defense Research and Engineering
DEPSECDEF	Deputy Secretary of Defense
DoD	Department of Defense
DPM	Draft Presidential Memoranda
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
GNP	Gross National Product
GPF	General Purpose Forces
IAWG	Inter-agency Working Group
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JS	Joint Staff
MIRV	Multiple Independently Targeted Reentry Vehicles
NAII	National Archives II
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSC	National Security Council
NSDM	National Security Decision Memorandum
NSSM	National Security Study Memorandum
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
OSD(C)	Office of the Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)

OSD(ISA)	Office of the Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs)
OSD(SA)	Office of the Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis)
PPBS	Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System
PRC	Peoples Republic of China
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitations Talks
SEA	Southeast Asia
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
SF	Strategic Forces
SLBM	Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile
SST	Supersonic Transport
TNF	Theater Nuclear Forces
TOR	Terms of Reference
WP	Warsaw Pact

Appendix B

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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) The offices of OSD(A&T) and OSD(PA&E) commissioned an independent review of the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) process to identify lessons for the next review. To provide a reference point different than recent studies with which interviewees were familiar, such as the Bottom-Up Review (BUR) and the Congressional Commission on the Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces of the United States (CORM), a defense review conducted nearly thirty years earlier was selected. The review was conducted in 1968 and 1969 and is generally known as "NSSM-3," after the abbreviation of the document that formalized the review, National Security Study Memorandum 3, signed by President Nixon's Assistant for National Security Affairs, Dr. Henry Kissinger, on 21 January 1969. Through analysis of archival documents and interviews with participants, the NSSM-3 process was examined in the same framework as that used to examine the QDR process. Findings with respect to the NSSM-3 process were included in deriving lessons for DoD consideration.				
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