

MCNAMARA AS A TRANSFORMATIVE LEADER

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL ANDREW J. LIPPERT
United States Army

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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Lieutenant Colonel Andrew J. Lippert
United States Army

Dr. Richard Sommers
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

ABSTRACT

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Strategic leaders usually encounter friction when attempting to transform institutions and policies. This opposition often comes from subordinate strategic leaders within the institution. Seeing themselves as protectors of proven policies and practices, which have served the nation well, these leaders often defend against change. Transformative Secretaries of War/Defense from John Calhoun and Jefferson Davis through Elihu Root and Donald Rumsfeld have encountered resistance while attempting to transform their departments. This SRP analyzes the reaction of a group of senior Army Officers to Robert S. McNamara as a transformative Secretary of Defense from 1961 to 1968. It explores, in historical context, a recurring phenomenon that will presumably take place again. It seeks to shed light on how environmental scanning, decision making and the human dimension of strategic leadership can impact institutions.

MCNAMARA AS A TRANSFORMATIVE LEADER

Some of our gravest problems in society arise not from over-management but out of under-management¹

—Robert S. McNamara

Much has been written about Robert S. McNamara's term as Secretary of Defense (SECDEF). The majority of these works focus on his leadership related to the Vietnam War. Vietnam was a tragic chapter in the history of both our nation and the military and although his performance was clearly checkered, there were other significant aspects of his tenure. This SRP will evaluate Secretary McNamara's transformation efforts by presenting the perceptions of some senior military officers with whom he worked in light of the concept of environmental scanning and aspects of the civil military relationship.

The Need for Change

Environmental scanning is defined as the process through which organizations read and adapt to their environment. By the early 1960s, senior civilian and military leaders recognized the need to adjust the United States National Security Strategy. With the Korean War (1950-1953) still in recent memory and the Bay of Pigs Invasion (1961), the Berlin Crisis (1961) and the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) having just occurred, the policy of Massive Retaliation did not look tenable as senior leaders considered future potentialities. What resulted was the policy of Flexible Response. A key consideration was implementing the policy in a way that was cost efficient and sustainable.

General Earle Wheeler, Chief of Staff of the Army from October of 1962 through July of 1964, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) for the following six years, articulated this need for cost-effective change in a public speech in March, 1964. He stated that the concept of massive retaliation was untenable in an evolving international community. Instead, he posited that a proper balance in defense spending would protect against both the worst case scenario of nuclear war and the more likely scenario of a limited war featuring an insurgency.² In an effort to avoid, "...pricing ourselves off the battlefield," General Wheeler stated the Army was employing competitive bidding, focusing on multi-purpose weapons and doing everything possible to achieve cost effectiveness.³

Of particular concern was the apparent inefficiency and redundancy within the DOD and its entrenched service parochialism. Upon completing his term, Charles Wilson, SECDEF from January of 1953 through October of 1957, confided to his successor, Neil McElroy, that "...with a few exceptions in the higher ranks it was pretty hard to get those fellows to think about defense programs in terms of the aggregate national problem, as distinct from the interests of their services."⁴ The Rockefeller Panel Report of 1958 also referred to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) as "...a committee of partisan adversaries."⁵ In contrast to the reports of constant infighting during this period, General Barksdale Hamlett, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army from April of 1962 through September of 1964, recalled that the Vice Service Chiefs had an excellent working relationship. He stated that, when he was new to the job, they never tried to "bulldoze" him into a decision and would often advise him when to defer to the Chief of

Staff.⁶ Regardless of whose account was more accurate, there was clearly a perceived problem of animosity among the services.

Considering all these factors, President Kennedy knew that migrating from a strategy of Massive Retaliation to one of Flexible Response would require significant institutional reform within the Department of Defense (DOD). He chose Robert McNamara as Secretary of Defense because Kennedy believed McNamara was capable of driving that change. President Kennedy, accordingly, issued guidance to Secretary McNamara to "...determine what forces were required and to procure and support them as economically as possible."⁷

The Change Methodology

To achieve the transformation he sought, Secretary McNamara redefined the role of the SECDEF, changed the way decisions were made and revamped organizational structure. This process, along with the handling of numerous external events, was heavily influenced by the tenor of civil-military relations. As is often the case, the manner of execution is as important as the methodology it supports.

Redefining the Role of the Secretary of Defense and the OSD Staff. In *Decisions of Robert S. McNamara: A Study of the Role of the Secretary of Defense*, James Roherty, a Professor of Government at William and Mary, described Secretary McNamara's predecessors as either generalists or functionalists. He categorized secretaries James Forrestal, Robert Lovett and Thomas Gates as generalists, who typically focused on objective civilian control through policy, leaving the military to operate with relative autonomy. He described secretaries Charles Wilson and Neil McElroy as functionalists, who were usually corporate managers or former military who focused on organizational efficiency, leaving policy to the purview of the Joint Chiefs of

Staff and the President.⁸ Roherty asserts that Secretary McNamara sought to merge these two roles into one.

General Hamlett mentioned that, under Secretary McNamara, OSD transitioned from a group concerned with policy to one heavily involved in operations and in control of the budget. Yet despite the friction between OSD and the services, General Hamlett credits Secretary McNamara with supporting the airmobile concept.⁹ He also describes the early 1960s as a period in which the Army improved its readiness posture and “...had a better setup insofar as the Secretary of Defense and his department and support of the things that we wanted to do in the Army....”¹⁰

General Wheeler also saw a need for strong and effective civilian control of the military. The need for efficiency as well as economic concerns necessitated a clear chain of command from the president to the forces in the field. Recognizing that the pursuit of efficiency might promote a desire to consolidate functions and merge organizations and that the boundaries of the services might overlap, he cautioned there would still be a need to maintain expertise in the various areas of operation. Whether there were four services or one, there would still be specialization.¹¹

General Frank S. Besson, Jr., Commander of Army Materiel Command from May of 1962 through March of 1969 and Chairman of the Joint Logistics Review Board from March of 1969 through July of 1970, often encountered the differing cultures and sometimes conflicting perspectives regarding the move toward centralization of authority in OSD. Although McNamara had resigned in 1968, his influence could still be seen as late as March of 1969, when his former subordinate, Alain Enthoven, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Systems Analysis, directed General Besson to study

ammunition consumption in Vietnam. Stating that the rates were “very high compared to previous standards,” Enthoven then asked, “Are such rates consistent with the most effective use of our total manpower and other resources, considering the matter in the broadest context?”¹² In response, it appears that either General Besson or a member of his staff underlined the words “ammunition consumption.” Handwritten below the paragraph was the question, “What is the cost of soldier’s life vs. air/artillery support?” As an economist, Mr. Enthoven perhaps saw the increased ammo expenditure as a strategic concern which needed to be justified. As military officers, General Besson and his staff likely viewed investigation into ammo consumption rates as a form of questioning the decision-making ability of tactical commanders engaged in combat. From the perspective of logisticians, their primary concern would have been whether the ammunition supply rate could sustain the expenditure rate, not why the expenditure rate was high.

While these studies directed by OSD were derived from a desire to analyze quantitatively, the analytical process itself sprang from the move toward centralized control. Senior military officers did not question the concept of civilian control. However, what frustrated many of them was an excessive emphasis on centralization and efficiency that seemed to spawn as many problems as it hoped to correct.

An example of a problem which centralization may have created was related to logistics structure and supply discipline. Joseph Zengerle was Director of Materiel Readiness and Support Services in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army from 1962 through 1973. He stated in a 1969 letter to General Besson, who was then serving as Chairman of the Joint Logistics Review Board, that increasing the civilian

workforce in wholesale logistics points in the U.S. during McNamara's tenure had an unintended effect. While it may have enhanced efficiency and continuity stateside, it decreased logistical knowledge among Army Soldiers and contributed to poor command supply discipline at logistics bases in Vietnam. He further stated his belief that the Office of the Secretary of Defense had delved too far into service operations and that this was hindering the Army's ability to support combat missions. As an example, he asserted that the OSD's refusal to allow the Army to operate an Overseas Supply Agency (at a cost of \$5 million) contributed significantly to a far more expensive loss of accountability. Relatedly, Mr. Zengerle recommended educating OSD budget analysts to think beyond the perspective of a specific appropriation and weigh the operational impact of financial decisions. He felt these same analysts also needed to be educated "in the differences in missions, configuration and problems between and among the services."¹³ He then translated this by citing the observation that the Air Force and Navy "man equipment," while the Army and Marines "equip men."

This example illustrates the inherent tension regarding the consolidation of authority in the OSD. Well intentioned military officers frequently argued that differences in branch roles and missions necessitated redundancy and decentralization. Equally well intentioned civilian officials likewise argued that, for the sake of efficiency and cost effectiveness, greater centralization was needed.

Accompanying the consolidation of power at the OSD level was the increased involvement of civilian officials in military operations. This tendency was a consistent sore point among senior military leaders. General Theodore Parker, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations from May of 1962 through June of 1963, stated that some people

may have disagreed with the way Secretary McNamara attempted to improve efficiency within DOD, but General Parker himself did not speak negatively of the SECDEF's efforts in this arena. However, when discussing an operation to support racial integration at the University of Mississippi, he spoke of how difficult it was to work with the Attorney General, Robert Kennedy. Of interest in the University of Mississippi mission was that the Army was not consulted during planning for the operation but was then criticized because of the ensuing confusion during execution. This incident reminded General Parker of General Lemnitzer, CJCS from October of 1960 through September of 1962, who frequently stated "I want to be in on the take-off, not just the crash landing."¹⁴

General Robert Colglazier, Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics (DCSLOG) from July of 1959 through July of 1964, also related examples of civilian leaders becoming involved in operational details. With regard to civil rights issues in Mississippi, he described how civilians at the White House level reviewed and adjusted troop lists. In one case, they sought to delete 100 of 225 Soldiers in a deploying company. General Colglazier and others then tried to explain that companies were functionally designed units that should not be apportioned in a piecemeal fashion. Whole units could be deleted, but sending partial units would create confusion and inefficiencies.¹⁵ While this does not specifically address Secretary McNamara or the OSD Staff, it portrays the widespread push toward the centralization of authority and increased civilian involvement which they shepherded.

Another example of civilian involvement in military operations can be seen in General Colglazier's experience as DCSLOG during the Cuban Missile Crisis. He

stated he had never known a military officer who objected to civilian control of the military. However, he thought that civilian control of operations was an entirely different matter. From his perspective, that is exactly what occurred. He stated, "The President's brother, the Secretary of Defense, all of these people, were in the direct chain of command."¹⁶ This situation reveals a great deal about the civil-military communications and the overall relationship that existed.

This apparent divergence from the official chain of command caused breaks in communication. As an example, General Colglazier first became aware of the military response to the Bay of Pigs Crisis when he received a call from then Chief of Transportation, General Frank Besson. Complaints from the railroads were pouring in because Army movements were blocking nearly every port along the Gulf Coast. After investigating the situation, General Colglazier discovered that direct orders were passing from Robert Kennedy to Secretary McNamara and then to civilians at DCSLOG, completely bypassing the military chain of command.¹⁷ Thus, General Colglazier was unaware of what was going on in his own department.

Decision-Making. A second way Secretary McNamara sought to transform DOD was by implementing changes in the decision-making process. During his tenure, he implemented an operations research and systems analysis (ORSA) approach that was geared toward efficiency and cost effectiveness. Educationally and professionally, Secretary McNamara's experience was grounded in quantitative analysis. He earned a master's degree from the Harvard School of Business and served with the Army Air Force's Office of Statistical Control in the Pacific Theater during World War II.¹⁸ Secretary McNamara's career at Ford similarly reflected analytics-based decision-

making. In those earlier positions, this quantitative approach had served him well, so it is easy to see why he forcefully implemented it while SECDEF.

With regard to the decision-making process, it is hard to think of Secretary McNamara without the term “Whiz Kids” coming to mind. In the oral histories of numerous senior military officers who served under him, the term almost seems to denote a nameless caste. The “Whiz Kids” were a group of talented individuals who, like Secretary McNamara, shared a belief that nearly all decisions could be reduced to metrics and quantitative analysis. Their role was to support Secretary McNamara as he elevated decision-making on significant issues to the DOD level. This, in itself, could have been a source of conflict with the military. However, it appears that civil-military relationships and an inconsistent application of these ORSA concepts were the real issue.

As head of systems analysis in OSD and the senior “Whiz Kid,” Alain Enthoven, was clearly a controversial figure. An economist by trade, he was an ardent advocate of the scientific method for problem solving and decision-making. By his own admission, he believed that military problems were complicated but not necessarily complex.¹⁹ This is significant because, while complicated problems yield themselves to systems analysis, complex problems require a combination of analysis and intuition. With complicated problems, cause and effect may be determined, but with complex problems, only relationships and correlations can be ascertained (both of which can be tenuous based on assumptions made). In a lecture to the Naval War College in 1963, Enthoven opined that direct experience and “reading history books” were not sufficient for contemporary military planning.²⁰ Instead, he felt the rigor of the scientific method

was needed to illuminate the proper course of action. Despite this assertion, General Harold K. Johnson, Army Chief of Staff from July of 1964 through July of 1968, stated that he became disenchanted with OSD's "scientific method" when it appeared to him that studies were generated to support foregone conclusions.²¹ He also mentioned that many of Secretary McNamara's assistants tried to influence members of the Army Staff to provide recommendations that would support OSD positions. This practice would clearly stifle productive debate, and General Johnson believed it was an attempt by civilian leadership to avoid responsibility for decisions.²² Further illustrating a lack of effective collaboration, he described weekly meetings with the SECDEF as a "...mating dance of the turkeys: you went through certain set procedures, but you solved no problems."²³ LTG William Ennis Jr., who served as the Director of the Weapons Systems Evaluation Group at OSD from August of 1960 through September of 1962, derisively related the story of a conversation he had with Alain Enthoven. When asked by Mr. Enthoven what it cost to build a tank, LTG Ennis replied, "About one million bucks." Mr. Enthoven then asked him what a tank cost during World War II. When LTG Ennis replied it had cost about three or four hundred thousand dollars, Mr. Enthoven allegedly replied, "I can build one for five hundred thousand." LTG Ennis then requested that Mr. Enthoven drive the first one into combat, because he would "...get his ass shot off."²⁴ According to LTG Ennis, Mr. Enthoven reported him to Secretary McNamara as being "uncooperative." While an oral history transcript cannot capture the complete context of a conversation or the rapport between individuals, clearly an adversarial relationship like this is detrimental at the strategic level.

LTG Russell Vittrup served as both a legislative liaison and the Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel from April of 1961 through May of 1963. His perception was that Secretary McNamara's influence significantly eroded the credibility of senior military officers as advisors. In his oral history he stated, "...unless a 'Whiz-Kid' with a PhD put his chop on the paper, it was not acceptable to McNamara."²⁵ Although LTG Vittrup described the "Whiz Kids" as very intelligent and conscientious people, "trying to work hard and do all the right things," they were nonetheless militarily inexperienced.²⁶ While not naming the individual in question, LTG Vittrup tells the story of being accompanied by a "Whiz Kid" on a trip to Europe with Stephen Ailes, Under Secretary of the Army from 1961 to 1964 and Secretary of the Army from 1964 to 1965. The purpose of the visit was to determine the appropriate troop strength for Europe. Despite being responsible for completing the study, this particular analyst did not even know what a division was.

General James Woolnough related a similar perspective. Shortly after assuming duties as Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel in August of 1965, he consulted General Harold Johnson about an initiative which, based on experience, General Woolnough believed would not succeed. General Johnson immediately replied, "Learn one thing right now. Your military judgment doesn't count for a thing. You've got to prove it statistically if you are going to sell it to these directors of today."²⁷

General George H. Decker served as Army Chief of Staff from October of 1960 through September of 1962. In discussing the decision-making process, he described Secretary McNamara's focus on cost analysis as "...inherent in his makeup and his way of doing things."²⁸ General Decker stated there were about 200 Army programs which

had to be submitted to the Department of Defense for analysis and approval. A list in General Besson's papers, which was probably not all inclusive, enumerated research conducted by the Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics (DCSLOG), Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (DCSOPS), Army Materiel Command (AMC) and others. Between 1961 and 1968, these offices completed 13 technical memos, 25 staff papers (totaling over 1037 pages) and 23 technical papers (totaling over 1696 pages).²⁹ Despite this deluge of information requests, General Decker believed the Army had the ability to respond and actually had more knowledgeable analysts than the Department of Defense.

General Robert Colglazier held a similar view of the "Whiz Kids" who worked in the Analysis Branch of the Department of Defense. Describing them as extremely intelligent and possessing fine educational backgrounds, he lamented that many of them had little practical knowledge. Also detrimental was their apparent intellectual arrogance. General Colglazier stated, "In many cases, they could start an argument just by looking at you."³⁰

Reorganization and Consolidation. A third way Secretary McNamara sought to transform DOD was through a process of reorganization and consolidation. If quantitative decision-making was a "means" and the "end" was to achieve efficiency and cost effectiveness, reorganization qualified as a "way." Yet despite all the emphasis on studies and quantifiable decision-making, it appears Secretary McNamara was not averse to relying on intuition and directive leadership. One example was the establishment of the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA).

Based on his position, General Colglazier had numerous dealings with Secretary McNamara regarding acquisition, project management, transformation and operations.

Despite participating in numerous organizational studies, General Colglazier believed the creation of DLA was a foregone conclusion. While he thought the change was positive, he was convinced Secretary McNamara had reached his conclusions before appointing the management survey board. He went so far as to say that the Ford Motor Company organization chart could be plainly seen in the recommended framework for Army reorganization found within the Hoelscher Report.³¹ Also known as “Project 80,” it was commissioned by McNamara and intended to give the Army a chance to study its own organization and procedures. Leonard W. Hoelscher was selected to head the project based on the recommendation of General Decker,³²

While General Colglazier believed there was clearly merit to the establishment of the DLA, he felt that similar efficiencies could have been achieved by changing the law.³³ Technical Service Chiefs were nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate for four year assignments.³⁴ This essentially created separate power bases within the Army and a loss of control. General Colglazier felt that if the Technical Service Chiefs were appointed by the Army Chief of Staff, their operations would have been less autonomous and more coordinated by the Army Staff. He believed this “minor surgery” would have achieved the same effect as the restructuring that eventually resulted.³⁵ While this may have been true with regard to the Army, it would not likely have improved logistical efficiency across the entire Department of Defense.

With regard to the abolition of the Technical Services and the consolidation of their function under OSD, General Besson gave the following account of a meeting with Secretary McNamara. He and the other Technical Service Chiefs had been summoned to provide their input before the plan was formally approved. However, to General

Besson, it was readily apparent the meeting was merely a formality. He stated there were questions about the wisdom of transferring control of technical service personnel to an outside agency because, "...we were all pretty proud of the way we had run our personnel programs."³⁶ General Besson questioned the need for a total revamping and stated that he felt all the technical chiefs had ideas on how to improve the current system. Secretary McNamara replied, "Name one." General Besson's response was that decision-making needed to be stratified, so that the higher echelons could focus on the major decisions without becoming immersed in minutiae. However, this idea gained little traction with Secretary McNamara as it was clear he had already made his decision.

In speaking of the Hoelscher Report or "Project 80" study, General Decker presented a more collaborative approach. He described Secretary McNamara as supportive of the report's recommendations. While the study had been directed by McNamara, General Decker stated that the Secretary did not dictate courses of action. Essentially the Army was responsible for re-organizing itself. He credited the results of the "Project 80" study and the Howze Board with establishing an operational need for more air mobility, a concept which Secretary McNamara supported.³⁷ However, with the exception of Army reorganization itself, most other study directives went straight from the Secretary of Defense to the Secretary of the Army, and the Joint Chiefs were not consulted. Overall, General Decker credited President Kennedy and Secretary McNamara with helping the Army achieve greater capability. He stated two critical steps were converting training divisions to tactical divisions and the development of the Special Forces.³⁸

General Colglazier had differences of opinion with Secretary McNamara regarding the method and form of Army reorganization. However, his views were not born of fundamental opposition to Secretary McNamara's analytical approach but were professional differences regarding the application of those management techniques. Like Secretary McNamara, General Colglazier was no stranger to conducting studies or quantitative analysis. This can be seen in his handling of inventory management problems. The scope and volume of inventory management had far exceeded the capability of manual tracking methods, so General Colglazier initiated a study to determine if moving to a computer-based system was feasible. He concluded that computer memory capability at the time was not sufficient to support the undertaking. However, he lobbied Congress to obtain funds for a research and development contract with RCA. The resulting computer system, which was installed in Detroit, was able to handle inventory management for millions of items.³⁹ Soon after, a more advanced system was developed by IBM. Beyond simply tracking inventories, this computer could run calculations that factored in tables of organization and equipment, inventories and industrial production capacity. This system was installed in Virginia and enhanced DCSLOG's ability to conduct logistical estimates in support of strategic plans. These two projects represented the Army's first use of computers for operations and planning.⁴⁰

It was projects like this which highlighted General Colglazier's ability to analyze. This may explain why he was given a task on one occasion that was not only outside of his responsibility but outside the responsibility of anyone in the Department of Defense. During this period, there was concern about gold outflow. With support from the

Department of Commerce, General Colglazier was chosen to lead a study in Europe seeking ways to reduce gold expenditures.⁴¹ He discovered the government was buying large quantities of coal overseas to augment what was being shipped from the United States. After examining the issue, he suggested building briquetting plants in Europe. This significantly reduced transport losses, and the associated cost reduction decreased the outflow of gold use to purchase European coal. The effectiveness of General Colglazier's recommendation earned him additional credibility with Secretary McNamara.⁴²

Despite this apparent credibility, there was still friction with Secretary McNamara, whose constant search for efficiency and cost effectiveness often led to confrontation. General Colglazier believed that the Secretary regarded the military logistics chiefs as obstructionists.⁴³ There were several examples of this. One was related to Secretary McNamara's desire to standardize combat boots across the services. On the surface, this seemed to make sense. However, there were practical reasons the boots could not be standardized. The Marines wanted a boot with clips, so the boots could be removed quickly during an amphibious operation. The Air Force and Army Airborne units wanted laced boots because clips could cause injury or equipment damage during airborne operations. Additionally, General Colglazier stated that standardizing would not have realized savings through economy of scale because the volume of each service's purchases was already so large. Despite these very logical concerns, Secretary McNamara was incredulous. Being a forceful, directive leader, he ignored the logistics chiefs' concerns and told them, "You've got a week." However, in this instance, other

issues arose. The boot standardization issue faded from the spotlight, and the change never happened.⁴⁴

A more complicated example of disagreement between General Colglazier and Secretary McNamara over efficiency and cost effectiveness involved the main battle tank. Secretary McNamara wanted to develop an agreement with the British, Germans and French for a standard tank. However, as military decision makers considered expert advice, there were standardization issues that could not be resolved. For instance, a key vehicle survivability feature is silhouette height. But due to population demographics, a tank that might have been suitable to the average French soldier would have been three to four inches too low for the average American soldier. General Colglazier stated, "There were these fundamentals that the experts knew, but it would be difficult to get McNamara to listen to them." Despite this difficulty, General Colglazier added that Secretary McNamara would listen to advice at times. In the case of the tank, there was a compromise and certain components (like the power train) were standardized.⁴⁵

Impacting the Change Process

As already discussed, the method through which Secretary McNamara drove change included redefining the role of the SECDEF, changing the decision-making approach and restructuring the DOD. However, from the perspective of senior military officers, the overall nature of civil-military relations clearly impacted the process.

In a recent study entitled, "Parameters of Partnership: U.S. Civil-Military Relations in the 21st Century," Sarah Sewall and John White highlighted sixteen aspects which affect interactions between civil and military strategic leaders.⁴⁶ Among other factors, their article stated that effectiveness in any endeavor at the strategic level

depends on clear roles and responsibilities, effective transitions, transparent and consistent decision-making, education and broad advising and relationships. Their findings, however, do not appear to be new. When viewed from the perspective of senior officers who served during Secretary McNamara's tenure, these characteristics form an enduring theme that, while interesting, is not surprising. Beyond illustrating these concepts, the assessment by senior military officers of Secretary McNamara as a transformational leader was both varied and comprehensive.

Transitions. Transitions play a key role in shaping the civil-military relations because they are a time of turmoil superimposed on a complex backdrop of issues. While transitions are inevitable, they can also present a serious challenge and have a negative impact on civil-military relations if poorly executed.⁴⁷

General Decker related that anytime there is a change in leadership, there will be adjustment and turbulence. However, these adjustments do not always correlate to a qualitative change. Sometimes a different way of doing business is neither better nor worse; it is simply different. This in itself is usually not a problem. The danger typically lies in the transition process. General Decker related that, while military leaders were probably more comfortable with President Eisenhower (because of his military background), the Army benefitted more under President Kennedy.⁴⁸ This was particularly true with regard to President Kennedy's support for increasing the size of the Special Forces.⁴⁹

Sarah Sewall and John White further indicated that during transitions, personal interaction, initial orientation and team building efforts are critical to developing productive civil-military relations.⁵⁰ General Lyman Lemnitzer, CJCS from September of

1960 through October of 1962, was a witness to the transition process that can influence civil-military relations. He was present as the Kennedy Administration and Secretary McNamara assumed their offices, and he was also involved in deliberations associated with the Bay of Pigs Invasion, the Berlin Crisis and the Cuban Missile Crisis. General Lemnitzer's comments about the Military Assistance Program illustrated the difficulty associated with transitions. During the Eisenhower Administration, General Lemnitzer was instrumental in renaming the Military Assistance Program as the Mutual Security Program because the former name invited Congressional criticism by representatives who referred to it as the "Giveaway Program." General Lemnitzer stated, "...Jack Irwin...and I urged President Kennedy and his new, young Harvard group to maintain the words Mutual Security Program, and were ignored, just like we were ignored in about every other thing that happened in the first six months of the Kennedy Administration."⁵¹

Education and Broad Advising. Education and a broad advisory role are other facets that influence relations between military officers and policy makers. The complexity of national security issues requires an ongoing, two-way educational process. Civilian leaders must educate military leaders regarding the scope and nature of advice they expect. Correspondingly, military leaders must present their counsel in a "language" that civilian leaders understand. Only through open dialogue, characterized by mutual respect, can the civil-military relationship contribute to effective policy making.⁵²

An example of this education and broad advising process not working well can be seen in General Decker's insights about the Bay of Pigs invasion. Aside from its

impact on U.S. foreign policy and credibility, it was also a seminal event in the development of civil-military relations. While the Joint Chiefs received much criticism for the failed operation, according to General Decker, "...the Joint Chiefs were on the sidelines as advisors," and their expertise was ignored.⁵³ General Hamlett conveyed a similar perspective: "...the thing was handled by the White House and the CIA, and they were running the show."⁵⁴ He also related that part of the calculus for the operation was simply the capability represented in the 3000 Cuban expatriates which would be lost if they were not employed. With regard to the CIA-run operation, he stated, "As the operation unfolded, it was obvious that the points made by the Joint Chiefs of Staff as being essential to the success of the operation had been overlooked or disregarded...."⁵⁵

General Clyde D. Eddleman, Army Vice Chief of Staff from 1960 to 1962, also provided an account which conveys the importance of communication in the education and advising process in the civil-military relationship. Perhaps the critical point during the Bay of Pigs invasion was President Kennedy's decision to call off air strikes supporting the operation. The importance of the airstrikes can be seen in former President Eisenhower's reaction when receiving the Thayer Award at West Point one month after the fiasco. During a break in the ceremony, President Eisenhower pulled General Eddleman aside and asked, "Eddleman, for Christ's sake, what happened at the Bay of Pigs?" When General Eddlemen replied, "Mr. President, they called off the airstrike," President Eisenhower reportedly threw his hands in the air, said, "Oh, my God," and walked off.⁵⁶ General Eddleman believed that, had military advisors properly communicated the importance of the airstrikes to the overall success of the operation,

President Kennedy would have approved them or canceled the entire operation.⁵⁷ From his perspective, military advisors had not displayed enough initiative or persistence in ensuring President Kennedy had the information he needed to make effective decisions.

A bright spot regarding collaborative and educational interaction between civil and military leaders occurred during deliberations associated with the Cuban Missile Crisis. During the negotiations which occurred as the crisis unfolded, Nikita Khrushchev made an offer to remove the missiles from Cuba if the U.S. removed its missiles from Italy and Turkey. Initially, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson was receptive to the offer. However, General Lemnitzer and General Curtis LeMay, Chief of Staff of the Air Force from 1961 through 1965, convinced him that withdrawal of missiles from Turkey and Italy was not a unilateral decision even though they were American missiles. It was essentially a NATO decision, as both countries experienced political difficulty and put their security on the line to house the bases. Therefore, the U.S. could not strike a bilateral agreement with Premier Khrushchev without first consulting with its allies. While LBJ initially considered the offer a reasonable deal, he changed his mind after it was fully explained to him.⁵⁸

A key aspect of providing military advice is that senior officers must often juggle conflicting responsibilities to different members of the government. The Sewall-White study highlighted the importance of honoring the military's multiple advisory roles. In a clear example of this paradox, General Besson related how he was asked to provide Congress with a "personal uncensored view" of the Technical Service reorganization plan. He was in Germany at the time and had to wire his response within 24 hours.

Although he could make little comment because he had not seen the details of the plan, his “uncensored view” had to be processed through the Secretary of Defense.⁵⁹

Personal Relationships. The third factor influencing the civil-military dynamic is personal relations. The Sewall-White study concluded that character and personal relationships were the single-most important criteria in civil-military relations. Not surprisingly, a strong partnership was heavily dependent on civilian leaders’ experience with the military and “...initial orientation and team building efforts.”⁶⁰ Perceptions of senior officers who worked with Secretary McNamara and the OSD staff reflect a wide “shot group” regarding personal relationships.

LTG Ennis clearly had little respect for Secretary McNamara personally. This was perhaps due to LTG Ennis’ interaction with the Secretary regarding the F-111 project. The General stated that Secretary McNamara wanted the plane to serve a fighter/bomber role and be able to operate from land or a carrier. At first glance, this might seem to be a reasonable endeavor. However, the requirements of each service were at odds with each other. The Marines did not like the project because its capability was slanted more toward a fighter versus a bomber. The Navy said the F-111 was too heavy to land on a carrier, and the Air Force argued that a fighter and bomber could not be effectively combined in one aircraft. According to LTG Ennis, Secretary McNamara directed him to conduct additional computer simulations to arrive at data which supported the concept. In LTG Ennis’ words, “It (the computer) came back with the same answer. That’s when I got relieved and retired because I had not done what he told me to do....”⁶¹

Likewise, LTG Russell Vittrup held a low opinion of Secretary McNamara and stated, "...if he wasn't a psychopathic liar, he was a congenital liar."⁶² Yet, despite his vitriolic comments about the SECDEF, his assessment regarding civil-military relations was more balanced. He referred to the military officer's responsibility to provide "fearless counsel." LTG Vittrup described this as "...in a tactful way, you would make the commander or your boss think about some things that possibly he hadn't thought about in connection with whatever the problem or situation was." However, in soldierly fashion, once the decision is made, an officer should carry out the decision or resign.⁶³

With regard to relationships, General Hamlett spoke of the unforeseen personnel changes which resulted in his earlier than expected promotion and move to Vice Chief of Staff. When General Eddleman retired, he told General Hamlett there would be leadership changes that would not affect General Hamlett's current assignment. However, despite more senior officers being interviewed, General Hamlett was chosen as the new Vice Chief. He claimed he never knew for sure what happened, but was later told the decision had been made between Secretary McNamara and President Kennedy. General Hamlett further stated that the non-selection of the more senior officers may have been influenced by poor relations between Mr. Elvis Stahr, Jr., the Secretary of the Army from January of 1961 through June of 1962, and the SECDEF.⁶⁴

From a personal leadership standpoint, General Hamlett's description of Secretary McNamara was very balanced. He clearly analyzed Secretary McNamara's impact on the Army (and DOD as a whole) across several different criteria and described him as a "...dollars and cents man," who wanted a cost accounting for every aspect of operations.⁶⁵ General Hamlett did not disagree with this approach in

aggregate but related that some aspects of military operations, and even equipment procurement, could not be predetermined with a great deal of accuracy. He also stated that he liked Secretary McNamara as a person and was on a first-name basis with him. According to Hamlett, the SECDEF would listen to him. On several issues that were critical to the Army, McNamara changed his mind after he considered the General's counsel. However, one key fault he found with Secretary McNamara was his delving into operating the services versus focusing on policy. General Hamlett described the Secretary of Defense as an extremely hard worker who at times seemed to be moving squads around in Vietnam. However, General Hamlett qualified this statement by attributing some of the blame to the military because of pervasive inter-service rivalry.⁶⁶

General Robert Colglazier's appraisal of Secretary McNamara's personal leadership qualities presents a final and somewhat enigmatic picture. The General rarely dealt with Secretary McNamara by himself, and most of his contact with the SECDEF was in the company of the Secretary of the Army or the Chief of Staff. However, he worked with Secretary McNamara for five years and described him as a "speed reader" who was detail oriented and had an incredible memory. He recounted one instance in which Secretary McNamara recalled a specific number in an extensive report from a year earlier and contrasted it with what was being briefed at the time (He even retrieved the report from the file room adjacent to his office).⁶⁷ General Colglazier had great respect for Secretary McNamara as a person. He believed Secretary McNamara had a prodigious intellect and "In the mechanics of things, he had no superior....I just don't think he knew how to deal with people."⁶⁸ Paralleling this sentiment, General Johnson stated that he did not understand the SECDEF and

described relations with McNamara as “...formal, and regrettably, I suppose, somewhat sterile.”⁶⁹

After the Dust Settled

Robert S. McNamara has been the longest serving Secretary of Defense to date and presided over a significant transformation in DOD during one of the more tumultuous periods in U.S. history. Capitalizing on authority granted by the Defense Reorganization Act of 1958 and a clear mandate from President Kennedy, Secretary McNamara effected broad and sweeping changes.⁷⁰ Largely due to his influence, the U.S. adapted its nuclear policy and national security strategy. Secretary McNamara drove the creation of the DLA and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and perhaps most significantly, he instituted the use of the Program Planning Budgeting System (PPBS). With minor changes, this process is still in use nearly fifty years later as the Program Budgeting Execution System (PBES).⁷¹

It is important to remember that Secretary McNamara's role represents a chapter within a continuing dynamic. In From Root to McNamara: Army Organization and Structure from 1900-1963, official Army historian James Hewes describes a struggle between traditionalists and rationalists. The traditionalist approach intentionally sought fragmentation to offset competing interests. While this might generate diverse input, it was also inefficient and diffused the power base among bureaucrats. Conversely, rationalists sought to control versus provide broad oversight. By applying management techniques borrowed from industry and modern technology, they aimed to implement systems which would integrate departments functionally.⁷²

Like those who went before him and those who would follow, Secretary McNamara implemented changes which reflected his leadership style. As with any

organization as large and diverse as the DOD, these revisions represented a “work in progress” and were subject to considerable criticism. In 1970, a Blue Ribbon Defense Panel headed by Gilbert W. Fitzhugh, President of Metropolitan Life Insurance, cited perennial management problems in the DOD such as shared decision making responsibility, large staffs that were unable to react quickly enough and an inability to raise decisions to the right level.⁷³ An apt definition of the problem may have been offered by David Packard, co-founder of Hewlett-Packard and Deputy Secretary of Defense from 1969 through 1971, when he said, “Every time we want something done in a hurry and want it done right, we have to take the project out of the system. We give a good man direction and authority and let him go - and it works....On the other hand, when we are not in a hurry to get things done right, we over-organize, over-man, over-spend and under-accomplish.”⁷⁴

While a seeming condemnation, Mr. Packard's observation affords a clearer picture of Secretary McNamara's enduring contributions as Secretary of Defense. In effect, Secretary McNamara clarified a better understanding of “half of the equation.” National security is derived from a strategy based on “...detailed force plans, procurement plans, program budgets, and measures of effectiveness.”⁷⁵ Formulating these items and the strategy they support is clearly a complex mixture of art and science. Among many other things, one legacy of Secretary McNamara is a better understanding of the science component of such formulation.

When making decisions or engaging in any attempt to analyze, particularly with regard to human interaction, there is a tendency to discard “outliers” in an effort to form a clearer picture. But as with distillation, what remains may be more homogenous - and

less reflective of the overall context. Reviewing the papers and oral histories of a group of senior officers who worked with Secretary McNamara revealed a great deal about the nature of civil-military relations and Secretary McNamara's impact on the Army as an institution. While perceptions about his personality and even his character varied, nobody questioned his ability or dedication.

Robert McNamara changed the role of the SECDEF, drove a more widespread use of analytical methods in decision-making, and abolished the Technical Services while overseeing the restructuring of the Army. These efforts reflected a desire to consolidate power in the OSD to support transformation and achieve greater efficiency and cost effectiveness. However, they say nothing about leadership style and the civil-military relationship that influenced the change process. These are the product of personalities and circumstances. A recurring theme at the strategic level of leadership is the importance of personal relations. While even detractors must admit that Secretary McNamara did renovate DOD, perhaps a more collaborative leader, pursuing the same goals, would be viewed in a more positive light. Historians still wrestle with Secretary McNamara's impact and probably will continue to do so because his contributions represent a key chapter in an ongoing epic.

Endnotes

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