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CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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SUMMARY

Our founding fathers foresaw no Department of Defense nor did they visualize a Secretary of Defense. Accordingly, the powers of both man and office have evolved over the years to the point where the Secretary is in a position of power and prestige perhaps only second to the President himself. Concomitantly, the complexities of the office have developed to the size where only the most unusual and talented individual can manage this fantastic operation. The effects of his decisions are felt almost everywhere in the United States and almost as often make similar impacts on the international scene.

The responsibility for choosing his Secretary of Defense falls on the President. It must be assumed that the President knows what kind of talent he is seeking. But in light of the foregoing he must be exceedingly perspicacious when he evaluates the qualifications of likely candidates. In fairness to the Secretaryship and to the nation the candidate must have a background that qualifies him to hold this office, a desire that motivates him to serve until he is a master of the problems, a will to work under comparative personal financial hardships which will reduce his standard of living, and a philosophy that will permit him to fade into obscurity when the job is done.

American experience in having a Secretary of Defense dates only since 1947. In these few years the Secretaries have been subject to increasing scrutiny and abuse. All eight Secretaries have found themselves in a show window where each and every decision could be observed and then debated by the domestic and international press. This adds still another criterion to the list of potentially desirable attributes the candidate should possess. But where should the President look for such a unique individual? What does the President expect of him? What can he offer him as to reward or fate?

This research effort examines certain criteria for the selection of the Secretary of Defense. It analyzes these criteria to the extent that conclusions can be drawn which will be of value in deciding how long the Secretary should serve, what conflict-of-interest problems lie ahead, what leadership philosophies he should have, and the professional background from which he should be selected. In the last analysis, it is recognized that the President will make his choice based on esoteric reasons rather than on scientific criteria. But if the proposed criteria are utilized, the choice should be easier and the Secretaryship enhanced.

To govern is to choose.

(John F. Kennedy
Press Conference
December 1962)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1958, the Congress of the United States, revising the provisions of the National Security Act of 1947 for the third time, drew the command line of authority from the President to the specified and unified commands passing initially through the Secretary of Defense and subsequently through the joint Chiefs of Staff. By this Act, Congress recognized the elite position of the Secretary as a national security policymaker second only to the President himself. He became, in effect, the Deputy Commander in Chief and a rival of the Secretary of State in the prestige of his new powers.

Because of his increasing powers, the Secretary is closely scrutinized by a worldwide audience. A recent news magazine, tracing the Secretary's soaring authority, concluded:

> In many ways, he has more influence on foreign policy than Dean Rusk, as much ability to affect fiscal policy as Henry Fowler, more direct impact on wages, prices and consumer goods than the Secretaries of Labor and Commerce--and, more than any officer of the government excepting only the President, a direct and literal responsibility for the life of the nation itself.[1]

Until the arrival of Secretary McNamara the average tenure for a Secretary of Defense was less than two years. As will be shown, the Jackson Subcommittee, a committee of the U.S. Senate

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[1]"The Power in the Pentagon," Newsweek, 6 Dec. 1965, p. 30.

convened to investigate National Security Policy, was appalled by this and gathered voluminous testimony to the effect that a Secretary is still learning the job during his first 24 months in office. Hence, the short time in office spent by most of our Secretaries to date must be considered on the minus side, but a powerful plus is the fact that none of these individuals has used his high office as a stepping stone to a higher political calling. For our first seven Secretaries the Office of the Secretary of Defense has been the last step in each of their careers as public servants.

What type of individual would be willing to tackle the job on the terms that he serve sufficiently long to justify his training and then revert to obscurity? Professor Samuel Huntington warns that he must be a truly outstanding individual of statesmanlike character:

> . . . the Secretary should be a man of respect, commanding the admiration of informed public opinion. He must be publicly recognized as a man of stature, integrity, responsibility, and respectability. His ability and honesty must inspire confidence and not consensus. He must, in short, have some makings of a statesman. This is essential for the public image of the office. The American people will permit many individuals to be Attorney General or Postmaster General whom they would never permit to be Secretary of State. We demand statesmen in the latter case; we accept, if we do not prefer, machine politicians, special-interest representatives, or personal cronies in the other. The public image of the Secretary of Defense should be similar to that of the Secretary of State.[2]

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[2]Samuel Huntington, The Soldier and the State, p. 454.

The public image of the office, therefore, is becoming increasingly important both at home and abroad. Domestically the Secretaries of today are expected to take firm control of the Department, establish the highest degree of continuity, and defend their actions over the years in which their administration is in power. In spite of the top secret nature of much of the Pentagon's work, a distinct "show window" operation has developed over the years. John Ries, writing of this unavoidable situation, reminds every potential Secretary of the wealth of detail that simply must be mastered:

> The Secretary of Defense, and possibly even his assistants, may realize their isolation, their vulnerability, and their tenuous control. However, the forces operating on them must surely buttress their desire to "run" the entire organization. Congress, the public, the press, and possibly even the President, expect the Secretary to take personal responsibility for everything that happens within the defense establishment, especially when things go wrong. They make it clear that the Secretary must know everything about his department. In light of this pressure, what Secretary could be so courageous (or foolhardy) as to refuse accountability on this basis?[3]

The responsibility for selecting his Secretary is that of the President, and his alone. When a choice of candidates is made, the selection should be the very best man from a group of truly outstanding candidates. In this connection, the past performance of each individual Secretary might well be weighed against the demands of present and future national security goals. But a Secretary's

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[3]John Ries, The Management of Defense, p. 363.

activities in national security alone is only a starting point, for the impact he will have on the economy of the nation must also be taken into consideration. This impact has become particularly evident lately because of the role being played by the Department of Defense in the Executive's efforts to discourage inflation.

In such a vast arena of domestic and international affairs the need for competence becomes self-evident. This is no task for a crony, a politician who seeks this office for personal advancement or profit, an unqualified manager, or an executive who avoids making weighty decisions. It is certainly not meant to be a short layover for a rising politician who desires the Secretaryship to be on his record solely for his own political advancement. Such an individual, unwilling or unable to master the work of the Pentagon and all it entails, would not only fail to last long enough to justify his appointment, but might also render the nation a disservice in the process.

The Secretary, moving through an ocean of details and controversy, is a major newsmaker in his own right. The President, with the security of the nation and the reputation of his administration at stake, can only hope that controversial publicity be reduced to a minimum. There is no way of assuring such a thing in the show-window-world comprising Capitol Hill, the White House, and the Pentagon. He must surely hope that, beyond professional competence, his Secretary not fall victim to an unfortunate scandal such as the Jenkins Case or the John Profumo Exposure.

With all of these pitfalls in mind, what type of individual should the President choose? Where will he find him? What should his background be? How long should he serve as a minimum? These are the questions which this study addresses.

Let the War Office be held by the tallest and strongest man living, and he would stagger or be crushed under the weight. This lack of unity, this pulling and hauling at cross purposes, cannot justly be laid at the door of the bureau chiefs, each of whom in his own way, according to his own lights, is continuously striving to work out the destiny of his speciality.

(Brigadier General Theodore Schwan
1900)

CHAPTER 2

PRESSURES ON THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Both from within the Department of Defense, the Department, which he must administer, and from without, from others whom he must convince, come a variety of pressures which act on the prospective Secretary. Seldom is any pressure routine in nature. Each must be dealt with on its own merits. In any event, there are usually two or more facets to each controversy, and the Secretary's position is often debated in such an open manner that all the world may witness and discuss the good and the bad points of each decision. As he gropes with each crisis, the Secretary must tread a careful path indeed, especially if sensitive security aspects are involved.

It is, perhaps, the very magnitude of power vested in this one individual that triggers the temper of his various critics in friendly nations abroad. The Jackson Subcommittee identified 42 nations with which we have bilateral military arrangements, four regional alliances which we dominate, and still another regional alliance in which we participate.[1] Although we reckon each nation in these agreements as a friend, it is obvious that their individual national interests are bound to clash. A "foreign devil,"

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[1]US Congress, Senate Subcommittee on National Security and International Operations, Committee on Government Operations, Conduct of National Security Policy, 1965, p. 13.

personified by the American Secretary of Defense, is a readily available scapegoat. Even if he could please all the diverse elements within these United States, it is doubtful that he could also satisfy the conflicting national goals of half a hundred foreign states.

GENERAL PROBLEM

Adolf Hitler, Chief of State and Chief of Goverment of Nazi Germany, added another title to his list when he appointed himself Minister of War (Kriegsminister). This arrangement obviated a number of disadvantages at the time, and it could be argued that it worked to Hitler's advantage in the earlier years of Nazi power. Hitler's actions as Minister of War could not be criticized by the German Press, his force levels could not be disapproved by the Bundestag, his military budget requests could not but receive instant approval, and his solutions to inter-service rivalries, if any existed, dared not be questioned or discussed. Only foreigners could complain of his policies in these respects, but not even all of them had the courage to do so. The position of the American Secretary of Defense is almost the complete opposite. The pressures on him are many and unrelenting. It could almost be said that our Secretary of Defense must be able to thrive on controversy, for, as John Ries reminds us, only when the Secretary's decisions are

supported by the press, the joint Chiefs of Staff, Congress, and the White House is the authority of the Secretary clear and complete.[2]

DOMESTIC PRESSURES BEYOND THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Domestically, his problems with organizations not in his department are principally those in relation to the President and to Congress. As a cabinet member, he has but one loyalty upward; the loyalty is to his Chief, the President. He must concurrently enjoy a reasonable degree of harmony with Congress as has been shown. His portion of the budget is submitted to the Bureau of the Budget, approved by Congress, and monitored by the General Accounting Office with increasing intensity. In Congress alone more than 500 individuals are afforded the opportunity to scrutinize his programs carefully. In the past five fiscal years, for example, the Defense Department has averaged an annual appropriation of $50 billion; this can also be expressed as 50% of our total federal expenditures or 9.3% of our GNP. The Hoover Commission estimated that the Defense Department spends $30 million each year simply to draw up its proposed budget.[3] There is little doubt that such huge sums of money invite careful checks and analyses.

Congress has every right to maintain detailed supervision over the moneys received by the Defense Department. The increasing

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[2]John Ries, The Management of Defense, p. 390.

[3]Neil MacNeil and Harold Metz, The Hoover Report: 1953-1955, p. 51.

Congressional vigilance appears to be keeping pace in direct proportion to the dollar amounts appropriated for individual weapon systems. The Tactical Fighter Experimental (TFX) Hearings offer a cogent case in point and are certainly illustrative of the American system of checks and balances. The loss of the Secretary's time in justifying the selection of contractors and soothing the nation's lawmakers is unavoidable.

Alternatively, a Secretary endears himself to Congress when he proposes the establishment of a new Defense facility. But on the other hand, he is accused of bad judgment when he closes an establishment. Even if this installation is as useless as a cavalry outpost in the nation's West, the Congressional elements involved will do their utmost to change the decision even if the closing is in the overall interest of the taxpayers. This is a bitter fact of life which the new Secretary must know before his confirmation or learn by bitter experience during his service.[4]

DOMESTIC PRESSURES WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Within the Department of Defense can be found the other domestic source of problems, the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Although the missions of this military group are to carry out the orders of the President and his Secretary of Defense and to render military advice to both,

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[4]"Defense Cutbacks-How They'll Work," United States News and World Report, Vol. 55, 23 Dec. 1963, p. 6.

the JCS frequently find themselves in a gray area of politico-military matters where their advice has led to difficulties.[5]

The furnishing of advice has frequently led the Joint Chiefs into honest and exaggerated splits of opinion. General Maxwell Taylor reminds us that these splits are an exception, but are both unavoidable and controversial.[6] The five distinguished officers comprising the JCS represent a total of at least 150 years of military experience, but each member is the product of a different military system which recognizes military power in distinct forms. Each member, therefore, bases decisions on his personal experiences gleaned over a lifetime career in his parent Service. Although this problem is being somewhat alleviated by assigning officers to joint and combined staffs and to other federal departments, these assignments usually occur after termination of some 15 years' service. When one adds to this the four years on officer spends as a cadet or midshipman during which time he is encouraged to best the other Services in all endeavors, the inevitable result is a half grown tree whose development has been influenced by competitive pressures since the time the twig was first bent.

Obviously dissensions also occur within other federal executive departments, the legislature, and the judiciary. But the Joint Chiefs, holding sway over the largest empire, seem to be an inviting

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[5]Paul Y. Hammond, Organizing for Defense, p. 379.
[6]Maxwell D. Taylor, The Uncertain Trumpet, pp. 225-227.

target for the press. When a Secretary attempts any remedial action he cannot help but be swept into the very controversy which he is trying to pacify. Admiral Orem was able to retain his sense of humor when he wrote: "How curious it is that the Congress debates, the Supreme Court deliberates, but for some reason or other the Joint Chiefs just bicker /Italics in the original/!"[7]

This alleged bickering inevitably reflects on the Secretary. But, if the history of splits and inter-Service rivalry has produced difficulties in the past, the Secretaries of the future can be assured of even greater problems still to come. The late General Thomas White, a former member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, warned that conflicts involving the giving of advice are still unresolved:

> By law the Joint Chiefs of Staff are the principal military advisers to the President, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense. Yet the JCS are subject to the orders of the Secretary of Defense. Do the JCS advise the President according to their own judgments or adhere to the views of the Secretary of Defense?[8]

At this writing this dilemma would appear to be solved by sheer will of keenly attuned personalities between Secretary McNamara and his Joint Chiefs of Staff. But here we have the ingredients for a controversy of major proportions awaiting a Secretary of the future.

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[7]H. E. Orem, "Shall We Junk the Joint Chiefs of Staff?", United States Naval Institute Proceedings, Feb. 1958, p. 57.

[8]Thomas D. White, "A JCS Questionnaire," Newsweek, 15 Feb. 1965, p. 22.

IMPACT OF PRESSURES

And these are not the only sources of difficulties the Secretary of Defense will encounter. All of them, taken together, would be well nigh insuperable to the "tallest and strongest man living." It is beyond the scope of this modest research effort to study the number of Americans who aspire to the position, but it might be fair to assume there are not too many. We must, however, have a Secretary of Defense. It is a problem for the nation in general and the President in particular. But no institution offers a course or program for training and developing leaders to take over this type of responsibility. As will be shown, we train people formally in a wide variety of disciplines, but rely on an undefined set of criteria to select a Secretary, uproot him from his career, and thrust him unprepared into our nation's biggest business.

Fortunately, we enjoy a large reservoir of talent in our impressive number of Assistant Secretaries of Defense, the Service Secretaries, and their staffs. This, however, is on-the-job experience which is neither formal training nor training programmed specifically to culminate in an individual's proficiency to the extent that he can be judged prepared to take over the biggest defense job of all. Chapter 3 will examine this in greater detail.

PROPOSED CRITERIA

It must be assumed that each President has had a general concept of what specific talents his Secretary should bring to the Office. Yet research in the area of former selection criteria might tend to convince most students of the Office of the Secretary of Defense that there have been none other than those of a broad and general nature. If there are specific criteria, they probably address themselves to prominent living Americans and are, accordingly, most sensitive. There are, however, patterns that emerge from a study of the Office and its eight occupants which may aid in the process of synthesizing the required criteria. After a glimpse into individual backgrounds it will be possible to discuss these criteria from four points of view: (1) Experience for the Position, (2) Length of Time in Office, (3) Financial Criteria, and (4) Leadership Capabilities.

Could I--or for that matter could anyone--truly manage the Department of Defense?

I expressed my doubts to the President and seriously questioned whether he would be wise in making the appointment.

The President said he was not aware of any school for cabinet officers.

ROBERT S. McNAMARA
(April 1964)

CHAPTER 3

EXPERIENCE FOR THE POSITION

Eight men have held the post of Secretary since 1947. A brief review of career patterns is considered necessary. From a study of eight careers, the first criterion, experience for the position, should manifest itself.

THE SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE

James V. Forrestal. Secretary of Defense Forrestal began his career as a pilot in the Navy during the First World War when naval aviation was still in its infancy. Between wars he pursued a career in investment banking. The Second World War brought him back to public life as Undersecretary and later Secretary of the Navy. Here a pattern of investment banking and public service in the overall area of defense emerges. His service as an officer has an importance that will be discussed later.

Louis Johnson. Secretary Johnson, an accomplished politician from West Virginia, was trained as a lawyer. He also had prior federal defense experience as Assistant Secretary of War from 1937-1940. Here there are three general areas of experience: legal training, politics, and federal service in the defense establishment.

George Catlett Marshall. Secretary Marshall's career breaks the pattern set by his two predecessors. He spent the bulk of his career as an officer in the United States Army where he held every

commissioned rank. In 1946 President Truman appointed him Envoy to China with the rank of Ambassador; this was followed by short service as Secretary of State prior to a brief tour as President of the National Red Cross. Much military service plus some federal civilian service are the two outstanding points that can be drawn from a brief look at his successful career.

Robert A. Lovett. Secretary Lovett was brought to the Pentagon from his duties in the State Department by Secretary Marshall to serve as his Deputy. He had no military service, but did have an extensive career as an investment banker. From 1941 to 1945 he served as Assistant Secretary of War for Air. Of interest here are: (1) the absence of military service, (2) the now familiar experience of investment banking, and (3) the federal service in both the State and War Departments. His experience as Deputy Secretary of Defense undoubtedly was ideal preparation for the job left vacant by Secretary Marshall.

Charles E. Wilson. Secretary Wilson's appointment by President Eisenhower broke the tradition of attracting leading figures with federal service in their backgrounds. Prior to his nomination he served as Chairman of the Board of the General Motors Corporation. Before this he had risen from apprentice to the position of president of the same corporation. Wilson was the first of three industrialists. He had little else in his career which might otherwise be used for comparison with the others.

Neil H. McElroy. President Eisehnower's pattern of appointing industrialists was confirmed when Secretary McElroy entered the Pentagon. His career in civil life is similar to that of Secretary Wilson's. A detailed study would indicate a lifetime of service with one large corporation--Proctor and Gamble.

Thomas S. Gates, Jr. With the appointment of Secretary Gates, the Eisenhower industrialist pattern was broken sharply. An investment banker with the Morgan Guarantee Trust, Secretary Gates had federal service experience as Undersecretary of the Navy and later Secretary of the Navy. Together with his tenure of Deputy Secretary of Defense under McElroy, he brought six years of defense experience into the job with him. His background is somewhat similar to that of Secretary Lovett, but a study of Secretary Gates and his career will furnish no new background criteria.

Robert Strange McNamara. Lastly, Secretary McNamara has a pattern of experience which includes many similarities to Secretaries of the past. His initial training at Harvard was in the field of law. Until the start of the Second World War he taught business administration as an assistant professor. His wartime military service brought him the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Army Air Force. The Ford Motor Company became his employer in 1945, and he eventually rose to the presidency of this large corporation. His experience for the job, therefore, contains but one new element, that of teaching at the university level.

BIG BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT BANKING

There is much to be said for the obvious trends toward industrialists or investment bankers. Both professions accustom executives to do or die in the biggest of commercial businesses. Since 1952, the annual expenditures of the Department of Defense have exceeded $44 billion and threaten to reach new highs. There are extremely few people in the world who have had practical experience in dealing with sums of money expressed in eleven digit figures. American Telephone and Telegraph, perhaps the largest corporation, has an annual operating expenditure of about $9 billion.[1] Large investment banks deal in smaller, but nevertheless, substantial sums. Even other federal departments fail to approach defense expenditure magnitudes. It becomes obvious that a most powerful factor in establishing the first criterion should be the business background of the individual under consideration. Only from within the largest of corporations will a man be found who has dealt with huge sums of money which belong to someone else.

PRIOR GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE

Prior experience on a high level within a federal department forms the second portion of the first criterion. The Department of Defense, unique by any measure of size, complexity, and scope of operations, continues to operate worldwide 24 hours each day. The

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[1] Standard and Poor's Corporation Records, Vol. 25, p. 3022.

choice of a man who has served as Secretary of one of the Services, or at the Assistant or Deputy Secretary of Defense level, would ease him into a position of greater responsibility with a concomitant lessening of impact on overall operations. Unfortunately, such an argument might well be lost on an incoming administration because of the politics involved. Yet, in the appointment of Robert McNamara, the candidate's political affiliations did not become an issue. Neither Republicans nor Democrats have a monopoly on talent or experience. Top executive talent is rare, but an adequate amount of future expertise is constantly being developed in the nation's capital.

PRIOR MILITARY EXPERIENCE

Prior military experience is not to be neglected for the needs of the various Services clamor for the Secretary's attention. Some have had prior service, but the majority has not; yet it is difficult to ascertain the true value of such experience in relation to the demands of the job.

On the other hand, a good case can be made for insistence that prior military experience might have compartmentalized the candidate's thinking along lines of the Service in which he held a commission. An investigation of the records of Forrestal, Marshall, and McNamara, three of the Secretaries, with prior service in the Navy, Army and Air Force respectively, does not support any such accusation. If anything, each of these individuals went out of his way to avoid Service favoritism.

A scholar, addressing himself to the significant lack of military experience on the part of Eisenhower's three Secretaries, could make an excellent case for concluding that the General saw in himself sufficient military competence within his Cabinet and consequently felt that management rather than command of the Defense Department to be the proper chain of command. Indeed, the Eisenhower experience at the highest military levels of staff and command would appear to suffice in his overall role as Commander in Chief.

But in the last analysis, there is no substitute for military experience when dealing with military personnel on a person-to-person basis.

PRIOR POLITICAL EXPERIENCE

Still within the broad criterion of background careers is the consideration of politics. President Johnson is a master of the art of utilizing his excellent knowledge of and experience in politics to the advantage of his high office. An equally experienced Secretary of Defense might find this to be a great advantage.

The appointment of a politician to the position of Secretary of Defense or of a Service Secretary has not always had a happy ending. The tenure of Louis Johnson as Secretary offers an historic glimpse into the problems faced by a politician who attempts to satisfy too many groups. His decision to cancel a super-carrier in favor of the B-36 bombers was not irresponsible,

illegal, or immoral--accusations of the times notwithstanding. Johnson's decision was supported in spite of the famous controversy which it triggered.[2] But with the outbreak of war in Korea, the Johnson approach to defense policy was found wanting.

History proves that politicians in similar appointments did not always produce in the interests of the United States. Abraham Lincoln, speaking of his first Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, said of this Pennsylvania politician: "Cameron is utterly ignorant and regardless of the course of things, and the probable result . . . obnoxious to the country. He is incapable of organizing details or conceiving and executing general plans."[3] But this politician was an extreme case, even if measured by the criteria of a century ago.

THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

With the exception of McNamara who enjoyed brief employment as an assistant professor, the academic community has been totally ignored by Presidents seeking a competent Secretary of Defense. There appears to be no reason for this. In fact, a learned academician might yet prove to be an excellent choice for the appointment. Marion Folsom, Director of Management for the Eastman Kodak Company and former Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, testified that educators should be seriously considered for this and for other

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[2]US Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, The National Defense Program--Unification and Strategy, pp. 359-360; 529-530.

[3]Carl Sandburg, Abraham Lincoln: The War Years, Vol. 1, p. 424.

high positions in the government.[4] He concluded that educators in administrative positions in their respective institutions would make a creditable and meaningful contribution based on their broad experience.[5]

CONCLUSIONS ON EXPERIENCE

In the last analysis, however, the Department of Defense is tending to grow more centralized in administration. As a direct consequence, the Office of the Secretary has taken on many aspects of business administration operations.[6] The first criterion, therefore, would be the selection of an individual with a broad background in business at the highest corporate level. Experience in government, also important, should rank a close second. Military experience, helpful in dealing with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, should be considered at about the same value level as experience in politics. Academic experience, this writer suggests, should be a good substitute for a military or political background.

Time does not permit a detailed discussion of other professions which might produce an outstanding Secretary. Perhaps these new professions will appear in later years, but with only two decades of Defense Department history and experience available, we simply lack the data on which to base an educated guess.

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[4]US Congress, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, Organizing for National Security, Vol. 1, p. 480.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Paul Y. Hammond, Organizing for Defense, p. 313.

Admittedly, using experience as a cirterion by itself would not guarantee the selection of the best possible man for the position. It would, however, based on prior performances of past Secretaries, provide a leading figure. This initial impression is most important when one considers the prestige of the nation that will ultimately be involved.

Resolved: That it is the consensus of the Senate that nominees appearing before its committees shall indicate a willingness to serve as long as the President desires.

(Senate Resolution 338, 86th Congress, 2d Session 2 July 1960)

CHAPTER 4

LENGTH OF TIME IN OFFICE

Our founding fathers were aware of the need of stability in high federal offices such as that of the Presidency, the Senate, and the Supreme Court, but at the time of drafting our constitution, they did not foresee a Department of Defense of such vast power or complexity at all. Indeed, the fact that the Secretary of Defense is also a Cabinet member argues for the need not to spell out a precise length of time he should serve. Nevertheless, the problems of first attracting and then retaining competent civilians are thorny and unresolved dilemmas of our times.

ATTRACTING AND TRAINING

The Jackson Subcommittee devoted considerable time and effort to produce a solution for the problems of attraction and retention. It failed, however, in being precise as to what was wanted. The overall problem was exceedingly well summarized by former Secretary Lovett:

> Everyone is aware of this much discussed problem of Government. In the Department of Defense it has a special importance largely because continuity of planning and operations is of vital concern. It takes a long time for an able man, without previous experience in Government, to catch up with his job in this increasingly complex department. At a guess I would say he could pay good dividends to the Government in about two years. Meanwhile, of course,

> he is becoming a more valuable asset each day. To lose him before, or just as he becomes productive is manifestly a serious waste of the effort that went into his training.[1]

Senator Jackson had similarly strong views on this facet of the problem and addressed himself to the prospects of a short tour in the Pentagon by unmotivated personnel:

> I think too often they come down--and I emphasize again under both political parties--with the idea that, 'Well, I am going to get a job in Washington --it will be nice for a couple of years--it is very intriguing,' and then they leave.[2]

Mr. John Broeschenstein, President of Owens-Corning Fiberglass Corporation, put his finger on the most vital reason why these appointees sometimes leave as soon as possible:

> Another deterrent for many men who might otherwise serve their Government is the prospect of unwarranted abuse. The abuse I speak of may come in the form of extravagant assertions by selfish pressure groups. Also, I might add, unwarranted criticism which comes from the press.[3]

This further complicates the problem. A sensitive individual would certainly find his life in the Pentagon to be miserable and terminate his tenure with all due speed. In view of the criticism he knows he can expect, no sensitive person need apply for the job.

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[1]Robert Lovett, "Testimony," US Congress, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, Organizing for National Security, Vol. 1, p. 480, (referred to hereafter as "Congress, National Security").

[2]Henry Jackson, Congress, National Security, p. 432.

[3]John Broeschenstein, Congress, National Security, p. 416.

HOW LONG A TOUR?

It certainly must appear to a distinguished professor, industralist, lawyer, or even an experienced politician that he has little to gain and much to lose by accepting an appointment for which no length of time is either prescribed or implied.

Senator Jackson has felt quite strongly about going to extremes in fixing a definite tenure:

> That is the last thing we want to do, is to make rigid standards, but to give some expression of concern about the turnover. /Italics not in the original/. Frankly, I think it is better not to appoint people to serve 18 months, 24 months. The turnover in the Pentagon has been enormous, as you know. They are still briefing them when they leave.[4]

The exact length of time a Secretary of Defense should serve, Senator Jackson was implying, simply cannot be fixed. The opposite danger, legistlation requiring he service three or four years, might result in the retention of an individual of the type personified by a Simon Cameron.

A prescribed tenure is neither wise nor warranted. It should, however, spring from a spirit within the conscience of the individual selected. Secretary McNamara was deeply aware of this problem as he testified before the Senate Committee on Armed Services prior to his confirmation. He voluntarily announced his intention to serve up to

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[4]Henry Jackson, Congress, National Security, p. 431.

four or even eight years if the President so desired.[5] The Committee was obviously impressed by this testimony. Concerning this motivation, Senator Cannon had this to say:

> Mr. McNamara, I was also happy to see that you are willing to serve, as you stated, I believe for 1 month or 4 years at the will of the President, and I think that is something that has long been needed in government /italics not in the original/. I am very happy to hear that you are not limiting it to only 4 years if the President desires that you serve for a longer period of time.[6]

CONCLUSIONS ON LENGTH OF SERVICE

The President must reserve the right to terminate the services of the Secretary for some reason not readily apparent at the time of appointment. This would be unfortunate, but should not prevent the President from relieving an individual if ill health or other cogent factors were involved. The minimum goal, if it is fair to establish such a thing, should match the length in office of the President himself and coincide with this tenure whenever feasible. Anything less constitutes inefficiency in a department which is least capable of absorbing rapid turnovers in top executive talent. The second criterion, simply stated, is the selection of a man who is motivated and prepared to serve at least four years. Only this will insure the progressive and continued development of the incumbent to a peak of productive proficiency.

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[5]Robert McNamara, "Testimony," US Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Nomination of Robert S. McNamara, p. 31 (referred to hereafter as "Congress, Nomination of McNamara").

[6]Howard Cannon, Congress, Nomination of McNamara, Ibid.

And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, but rather what you can do for your country.

(John F. Kennedy,
Inaugaration Address,
January 1960)

CHAPTER 5

FINANCIAL CRITERIUM

The problem of making a high government office financially attractive is not limited to the Department of Defense nor to modern times. Elihu Root, for example, was asked by his President to leave a job paying $100,000 annually and to accept a Secretaryship at the niggardly salary of $8,000.[1] Federal pay scales today are similarly out of balance with comparable remuneration in industry. In Root's case, however, the difference was staggering when one recalls that in those days a federal income tax was unknown. But well known throughout our history have been public officials who have used their influential appointments to make their office financially attractive by the use of graft and corruption. The American tradition of fostering an austere way of life on its high officials has changed little if at all. No Secretary can expect to become wealthy while in office--nor should he.

CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST

In 1953 the Republican Party founded a tradition which remains with us today when they demanded that prospective holders of high offices reveal their financial status publicly. Secretary Wilson, the first Secretary to be so affected, was forced to divest himself

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[1]Richard Leopold, Elihu Root and the Conservative Tradition, p. 47.

of $2.5 million worth of stocks and options in the General Motors Corporation. The plan behind these directed actions was designed to eliminate in advance any stigma of conflict-of-interest on the part of key officials which might diminish the prestige of the new administration.[2]

The Secretary's salary is absurdly low in comparison to the remuneration usually associated with industralists and investment bankers. No useful purpose would be served by a detailed analysis of the handsome stipends once paid Secretaries Wilson, McElroy, and McNamara, but suffice it to say that at least these three Americans gave up high posts in business to serve for some five percent of their former annual salary.

Roger Jones, the then Chairman of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, summed up the problem in one sentence:

> In the 9 years in which it was my privilege and honor to serve as Assistant Director for Legislative Reference in the Bureau of the Budget, I felt that the present conflict-of-interest statute made it quite impossible for me to own a single share of common stock.[3]

Hence we are asking these highly paid men to divest themselves of their investment portfolios and to get along on a small fraction of the salaries to which they have become accustomed. As a final blow,

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[2]Editorial, "Do Business Ties Bar U.S. Job?", The U.S. News and World Report, XXXIV, 30 Jan. 1963, pp. 36-38.

[3]Roger Jones, "Testimony," US Congress, Senate, Committee on Government Operations, Organizing for National Security, Vol. 2, p. 443 (referred to hereafter as "Congress, National Security").

we literally require them to keep themselves as poor as possible during the period in which they hold office.

But what alternatives are open to the Government? In this connection, Professor Bayless Manning, an expert on conflict-of-interest laws, testified before the Jackson Subcommittee that this approach was poor at best but, alternatively:

> There are some conflict-of-interest situations that I just do not think we can tolerate. Because it is now a past issue, and I hope one that has no political overtones, I think the example of Mr. Wilson can be used as an instance. I do not think we would have thought it appealing if we were looking at this problem outside the United States and saw the head of the Krupp Works going in as the German Secretary of Defense. That parallel is not exact, but it is close enough to make the point that the general flavor and aura of the relationship involved was simply unacceptable from a political--all that means to me--is good commonsense--standpoint. Whether or not Mr. Wilson would, under any conceivable circumstances, in fact favor his company is just irrelevant to that proposition.[4]

The point being made by Professor Manning was that there is no middle ground in conflict-of-interest. The position of the Secretary is simply too sensitive to this sort of criticism.

This is the dilemma. We must seek to attract and to keep the best possible man, but we can offer him no more than an insecure financial position during the years in which he must tackle the problems of the Department of Defense. We cannot tell the candidates where to invest, because of the changing rules from year to year. Mr. Broeschenstein felt rather strongly about this:

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[4]Bayless Manning, Congress, National Security, p. 473.

> Probably the most serious obstacle to bringing people from business and the professions into top level posts in the Federal Government arises out of the vagueness of the laws and regulations dealing with conflict-of-interests. As a consequence, in various cases there have been different interpretations over a period of time by Congress and the Department of Justice as to application. This has given fear of legal reprisal for alleged or real conflict-of-interest, and the gravity of personal sacrifices that are called for in order to remove any basis for allegation of the existence of a conflict-of-interest.[5]

This worsens the dilemma. We cannot specifically define the conflict-of-interest laws which prevail or explain to a candidate which rules, if any, will be changed during his tenure in office.

There are few greater blows to the prestige of the nation in general and the administration in particular than the involvement of high officials in shady practices. Even the suggestion of fraud or kickbacks receives major journalistic attention. From Teapot Dome to the Bobby Baker proceedings, the eyes of the world have been focused on graft and corruption in American politics. Secretary McNamara was acutely aware of this problem and made his intentions abundantly clear when he testified before Congress:

> I am quite willing to go so far as to furnish to the press or the Committee copies of my income tax returns. I want absolutely no questions raised about my financial position or the effect on it of my actions in the Defense Department.[6]

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[5]John Broeschenstein, Congress, National Security, p. 415.

[6]Robert McNamara, "Testimony," US Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Nomination of Robert S. McNamara, p. 25, (referred to hereafter as "Congress, Nomination of McNamara").

CONCLUSIONS ON CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST

It may well be that the prospective Secretary might hesitate before giving up a lucrative career to accept a government job at perhaps one-twentieth of his former salary. Should he hesitate or show signs of manipulation, the President could conclude that the candidate is not motivated to the calling and would do well to look elsewhere for his Secretary. But this, as a criterion, does not solve the overall problem, nor will any palliative suffice until the complex conflict-of-interest laws are rewritten and the Secretary's salary is raised.

The springs of policy bubble up;
they do not trickle down.

(Dean Acheson, 11 October 1959)

CHAPTER 6

LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES

As the administrator of the largest department, the prospective Secretary will have to bring his powers of leadership to bear. The sheer magnitude of the leadership requirements has been discussed by Secretary McNamara.[1]

> We have some 3,700,000 people in the Department of Defense--2,700,000 in uniform and 1,000,000 civilian employees--located all over the world. The Department spends over $50 billion a year--over half of the Federal Government budget. Its inventory of real property and equipment is worth over $150 billion. Its major installations--some 600 of them in the United States alone--are in reality municipalities with all of the housing, the utilities systems, maintenance and transportation requirements, policing needs, and schools and hospitals typical of our smaller cities. The Department operates, for support of its forces, airlines, shipping lines, a communication system, supply distribution systems, and maintenance establishments, each of which represents a major management task in its own right. It procures annually over four million different items of equipment and supplies.

The need to lead is acute. Leadership, however, means a variety of things to different individuals, but in connection with the last criterion it is meant to be firm policies of command, control, and arbitration. On the last policy, Mr. John Ries makes the excellent point that leadership at this level is actually the skill of negotiation.[2] The requirement exists for a Secretary to enter his

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[1]Robert McNamara, "Managing the Department of Defense," Civil Service Journal, Vol. 4, Apr.-Jun. 1964, p. 5.

[2]John Ries, The Management of Defense, pp. 280-285.

office and influence a great number of people, both civilian and military, to perform an equally great number of tasks.

LEADERSHIP AMONG CIVILIANS

Speaking of leadership in his Department in general and among his civilian Secretaries in particular, Secretary McNamara saw himself in the following position shortly after his nomination:

> I see my position here as being that of a leader, not a judge. I'm here to originate and stimulate new ideas and programs, not just to referee arguments and harmonize interests. Using deliberate analysis to force alternative programs to the surface, and then making explicit choices among them is fundamental.[3]

The act of making the choices is the key to leadership. Of the choices made at the level of the Secretary of Defense, none can be assumed to be an easy choice. Just as in the alternatives offered to the President, no easy option normally exists--the non-controversial choices are resolved at a lower level. This, then, becomes a matter of negotiation at the highest defense level. The Secretary may have to trade programs and wish to pacify the losing Services. Some individuals excel at this--some do not.

The civilian Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries within the Department of Defense have traditionally created relatively fewer problems of leadership or negotiation than have the military. This may be due, in part, to the fact that the Secretary is instrumental

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[3]Robert McNamara, US Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Hearings on Military Posture, p. 373.

in making the very recommendations which lead to his civilian staff appointments. Nor are his civilian staff members as conservative or as service-oriented in their individual views.

One seldom hears of a disciplinary problem created by an over-zealous civilian within the Department. Yet, for the past forty years, each decade has seemed to produce a General Billy Mitchell, a Captain Crommelin, or a Colonel Nickerson who felt the publicity accorded his breach of discipline might solve an inter-Service dispute in his own Service's favor. Lindsay Rodgers, writing of this interesting situation, summarizes:

> At the request of a Minister, the civil servant prepares schemes in which he does not fully believe, and after the schemes are accepted, without loss of intellectual integrity, share in carrying them out. The soldier and the sailor cannot be so cynical or so servile. The labors will test their own expertness, while the civil servant is rarely faced by that grim touchstone.[4]

LEADERSHIP AMONG THE MILITARY

The Joint Chiefs of Staff are almost part of another world, and there is no sure way of concealing the honest splits of opinion which emerge from this distinguished military staff. These splits will undoubtedly reflect on the Secretary and on the administration. There is no panacea for avoiding such potential controversies.

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[4]Lindsay Rodgers, "Civilian Control of Military Policy," Foreign Affairs, Jan. 1940, p. 283.

Secretary Gates was aware of this problem before he took office, and made great strides in assuring more harmonious relationships within the JCS by means of intruding on their meetings.[5] But time will often not permit this approach even though the Secretary has the intention and the right to do so.

If one excludes the Treasury Department which controls the Coast Guard in time of peace, only the Department of Defense has the complex problem of both civilian and military authority. Although the American tradition of civilian control of the military is well established, there are still the gray areas in which the military sees itself as the one body truly qualified to make authoritative judgments. The selection of certain tools of war is but one example of how military judgment can clash with civilian judgment and authority. Frequently only the Secretary can resolve such matters. Secretary McNamara recognized this problem shortly after his confirmation and took great pains to explain how he intended to deal with inter-Service controversy:

> On many major issues, backgrounds of varied experience lead to different judgments and conclusions as to the best course of action. I am gratified that this is the case. Too often has honest difference been resolved by compromise in the interest of unanimity with the result that the strongest elements favoring each position are lost in the process. The accumulation of individual and collective judgments, however, cannot be substituted for decision. It can only facilitate it, if the policy of active management is to be followed. In some cases service interests are involved inevitably. The judgments brought to

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[5]Paul Hammond, Organizing for Defense, p. 339.

> bear reflect experiences characteristic of the historic viewpoints of particular services. These cases are rare, fortunately, but when they occur they are fraught with controversy. In such circumstances the decision must be mine. Obviously, a decision made in these circumstances cannot satisfy every differing viewpoint--it cannot please every protagonist--but it must be made. I am charged by law with decisionmaking responsibility--and I have no hesitancy in making the required decisions, always, of course, subject to the approval of the President.[6]

Although the selection of a strong and firm leader as the criterion may be desirable, no man is perfect in such a role. The records of possible candidates are, however, always available to the President. His choice of the best candidate, with respect to making difficult decisions in his chosen profession, would be to the President's advantage.

There is also much to be said for the policy of publicizing the aims and goals of the President in relationship to the Department of Defense. This was done by President Kennedy in his initial guidance to Secretary McNamara, but it did not completely eliminate controversy.[7]

Conflicting opinions, aired by the press, could sway the Secretary's decisions toward courses of action not necessarily the best for national security policy. Public opinion appears to be growing more voiceful and, if always heeded, begins to work against him on a variety of different issues. No more striking

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[6]Robert McNamara, op. cit., p. 9.
[7]William Kaufmann, The McNamara Strategy, p. 48.

warning of what might lie in store for the indecisive Secretary can be found than this piece of sound advice: "The popular mind wants quick results; it will sacrifice tomorrow's real benefit for today's apparent advantage."[8]

CONCLUSIONS ON LEADERSHIP

But even the truism above reduces itself to the question: "How do we predict these leadership abilities prior to a candidate's nomination?" The answer is simple. We do not. In the last analysis a President is motivated by the degrees of success each candidate has achieved in his respective profession. And it matters little if that profession has been industry, banking, academics, or politics. To select on a basis other than success--to take a chance on an unknown quantity--is gambling with the nation's security. No President would be so inclined. The criterion is, and remains, responsible leadership; but the leadership in question must be equated with success in the candidate's professional pursuits.

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[8]Hans Morganthau, Politics Among Nations, p. 146.

Again, your country has a right to your services in sustaining the glories of her position. These are a common source of pride to you all, and you cannot decline the burdens of empire and still expect to share its honors.

(Pericles of Athens
460 B.C.)

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this paper has been to set forth a list of broad criteria for use in the selection of a Secretary of Defense. If a choice of two or more candidates exists, these criteria may serve a useful purpose in aiding the decisionmaking process. Anyone engaged in this process of selection would probably assign weights or values to each criterion as a matter of personal choice, and it is doubtful that two selectors would assign equal weights. In any event, the four stated criteria all represent guidelines that could be used, and all are worthy of further exploration.

The list has certainly not been all inclusive. Conscientiousness might well be an implicit criterion. Certainly we expect such a trait in every high government official, but there is a limit to this attribute as evidenced by the untimely death of the first Secretary of Defense. Moreover, extreme conscientiousness might be exceedingly damaging to the morale of both his civilian and military staff members. Anyone who has served in any defense capacity can remember an otherwise talented superior who drove his staff relentlessly and worried his subordinates to the point of absolute frustration. Suffice it to say that the unwritten criteria, such as judgment, enthusiasm, and loyalty are self-evident. Furthermore, to make a listing of desirable attributes similar to those possessed by a boy scout would not only be fallacious, but would eliminate a

goodly number of candidates who possess specific alternative talents.

Specific detailed requirements, for example, would have eliminated Elihu Root whom President McKinley selected to run the War Office based solely on Root's "dispassionate objectivity" and his knowing "nothing about war."[1] But of greater significance was the overriding consideration to appoint a Secretary who could serve in the capacity of military governor for the territories newly won from Spain.[2] Another overriding requirement was also instrumental in bringing to office a man who might have failed to pass the test of possessing detailed attributes--Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War during the First World War. Baker, although eminently qualified in some respects, was an avowed Pacifist at the time of his nomination and an active member of three Pacifist societies.[3] Times have changed, however, and it is doubtful that the Senate would overlook such tendencies today.

The necessity to search for alternative criteria in a potential candidate has been instrumental in the appointment of at least two Secretaries since 1947. General Marshall was appointed during the Korean crisis because the Defense Department required the firm hand of a man already proven in his abilities to manage a war effort.[4]

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[1]Otto Nelson, National Security and the General Staff, p. 39.
[2]Richard Leopold, Elihu Root and the Conservative Tradition, p. 5.
[3]Frederick Palmer, Newton D. Baker - America at War, pp. 196-197.
[4]Samuel Huntington, The Soldier and the State, p. 450.

Robert McNamara was selected by President Kennedy based on various criteria not necessarily apparent at the time of McNamara's confirmation. Among the things sought by the late President Kennedy in his Secretary of Defense were: excellence in the application of modern management techniques, proven ability to initiate policies rather than arbitrate them, vision in establishing options from which the President could choose, and skill in the building of a military budget which would prevent the traditional battle amongst the Services.[5] The exclusion of a candidate must not occur if that particular individual has the solution to the problems of the hour.

Alternatively, the President may wish to appoint a man who is an extension of the President's own personality. Such an alternative may initially appear to be most attractive for a variety of reasons. But the existence of "yes men" or cronies in high posts of government have placed administrations in a bad light. The next logical step of such a self-centered philosophy would be for a President to take over the duties of Secretary himself. Some heads of state have done just that. In this connection, the case of Adolf Hitler has already been mentioned, but the ultimate disastrous consequences of this decision need not be related here.

The President, noting the historical controversy which has engulfed the Office of the Secretary of Defense, may wish to seek an individual who can minimize the great debates of military policy. Should he search for such a personality, his quest is foredoomed to

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[5]William Kaufmann, The McNamara Strategy, pp. 31-40.

failure. He may, however, be fortunate enough to select that rare type of man who has the talent for keeping from public view those issues which National Security Policies dictate as unwise for public discussion. Such a selection must be considered to be a bonus.

Indeed, with the wide variety of alternatives at hand, the four basic criteria are no more than a beginning. But basic as they may be, their application may do more than just provide one gifted Secretary every decade or two. Of even greater importance, they should assure that the office is constantly filled with the nation's very best executive talent.

The reputation of the Secretary of State was not built on the selection of a single Secretary. Professor Samuel Huntington reminds us that this particular reputation evolved over the long term based on outstanding performances of Jefferson, Madison, John Quincy Adams, Clay, Webster, Calhoun, Seward, Hay, Root, Hughes, Stimson, and Hull.[6]

Although the Office of the Secretary of Defense dates only from the year 1947, the Secretaryship similarly deserves the finest talent that American can produce. Matching the illustrious names and performances of former Secretaries of State with equally outstanding Secretaries of Defense should constitute a great challenge for any President and should be accorded priority attention at the

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[6]Samuel Huntington, op. cit., p. 453.

time of the President's election. The criteria advanced in this paper will not guarantee the selection of a Secretary of Defense comparable in stature to Thomas Jefferson, but their use may preclude the appointment of a Secretary of Defense similar to Simon Cameron. In short, without guiding criteria, the President must grope for a name. With these criteria, a list of potential candidates can be reduced to the point where the final selection will cast great credit on the administration and insure that the reputation of the Secretaryship progressively increases in future decades.

The Secretary's performance, whether good or bad, will follow him and the administration he represents forever. A good image set by the Secretary cannot fail to create immense prestige. A bad image, caused by a bad performance, will certainly damage any prestige. The selection of the best possible man for the job implies expectations of the best possible performance. The President can do little more than assure a proper performance by making the best selection based on the needs of the nation.

But whether the President chooses a tycoon, banker, soldier, or politician, we are all vulnerable to criticism, error, and even failure. We cannot be sure that the Secretary's life will remain open and above board. Nor can we legislate against incompetency, indifference, or poor judgment. The science of selecting the right man for the right job has not proceeded to the point where absolute accuracy is certain.

In the last analysis, a President may elect to make his choice for esoteric reasons rather than basing the decision on scientific criteria. This would be most unfortunate. For, if "to govern is to choose," then to govern wisely is to choose wisely. We can only hope that a President will be sufficiently motivated to devote sincere thought to both the men he has in mind and the job for which he must nominate one of them. If his choice results in a Root, Stimson, or Baker the nation and the administration are both winners. The choice and the challenge are the President's, but the office, the administration, and the nation certainly demand the best.

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