Restructuring the National Security State: President Richard M. Nixon, the War in Vietnam, and Executive Reorganization

By

Ashley Lorraine Neale
DPhil, University of Kansas, 2020
M.A., Trent University, 2015
B.eD, Queens University, 2013
B.A., Honours, Trent University, 2012

Submitted to the graduate degree program in History and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Chair: David Farber

Sheyda Jahanbani

Beth Bailey

Erik Scott

Jay Childers

Date Defended: 27 April 2020

The dissertation committee for Ashley Lorraine Neale certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Restructuring the National Security State: President Richard M. Nixon, the War in Vietnam, and Executive Reorganization

Chair: David Farber

Date Approved: 27 April 2020

Abstract

My dissertation explains how and why President Richard M. Nixon directed a fundamental rebuilding of the National Security State. I argue that Nixon worked hard to sideline major executive departments, as well as Congress, and elevated the role the National Security Council played in the forging of US foreign policy. President Nixon worked deliberately to build a presidential-driven foreign policy apparatus because he believed that without major restructuring of the executive branch, America's role as a stabilizing global force was in danger. He believed that rival power centers within the United States government, including Congress but also the State Department, had weakened America's global reach and endangered America's international interests. He refashioned the national security policymaking architecture to reduce the power of those rivals and to increase his own autonomous capacity to reshape the world. He believed that only with strong presidential leadership, supported by a tightly controlled intelligence and policy "shop," could the United States take on the powerful threats that were confronting the American nation. I illustrate how Nixon irrevocably changed the architecture of the national security state and the power of the modern presidency.

Acknowledgements

My immense thanks to my advisor, David Farber. While he threw me a curveball in the move to Kansas, he has forever changed my life for the better. His support, guidance, and tutelage have helped me become a better scholar and writer. I could not have accomplished my doctorate without him and my dissertation would be nowhere near as good.

Thank you to Sheyda Jahanbani. Her kind guidance, willingness to talk, and supportive nature were invaluable. She helped shape my ideas and teach me how to ask stronger, more historical questions. Thank you to Beth Bailey, who helped me become a better writer and historian. As well, her support has been invaluable this last year as I went on the job market and pondered my career options. My thanks also go to Adrian Lewis, Erik Scott, and Jay Childers, who all helped shape my dissertation and enrich my time at the University of Kansas.

Grad school can be a lonely experience—thank you to all my friends and colleagues at KU who made sure that was not the case for me. Thank you to Michael Hill, Ariel LaGue, Brian Trump, Steve Davis, and Jen Warburton, who read multiple drafts of my dissertation in our writing group. They challenged my ideas, counseled me, and made my dissertation better. Thank you as well to my girls' night group—our conversations and laughs were some of my best nights in graduate school.

One of the best things about completing my doctorate has been the chance to travel to different archives throughout the United States. I got the opportunity to go to the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library and Museum, the LBJ Library, the Gerald R Ford Presidential Library and Museum, the Rockefeller Archive Center, the US National Archives and the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum. My immense thanks to the all of the archivists who patiently listened to my research ideas and helped me locate sources and documents I would not have

found otherwise. My dissertation was supported by the 2019-2020 Richard Nixon Foundation Dissertation Fellowship. I also received research funding from the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation, as well as a Moody Research Grant from the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Foundation. Those grants are extraordinary appreciated and enabled me to do archival work at each presidential library. My thanks also go to the KU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Hall Center for Humanities, which provided valuable financial support in the completion of my dissertation.

Finally, my immense and immeasurable thanks and appreciation to my family who made this dissertation possible. My parents, Brian and Judy Neale, forever supported my endeavors, encouraged me, and helped make my doctorate possible. Without their support I would not have completed this project and I cannot thank them enough. My brother and sister-in-law, Kent and Kate Neale, are also deserving of thanks for their support and reassurance. Thank you as well to my nieces and nephew, Lily, Nora, and Daniel, who brought smiles and laughs to my life, and helped draw me out of the academic bubble. My immense thanks also to go my grandmother, Muriel Kent, who continuously encouraged me and helped keep up to date on the family news in our weekly chats. Without the contributions of these people completing this project would not have been possible. My dissertation is dedicated to my parents; thank you both!

Table of Contents

Introduction

1

When Richard M. Nixon was inaugurated as thirty-seventh president of the United States on 20 January 1969 he faced profound questions about the United States' role in the world, particularly in regards to the ongoing, bloody conflict in Vietnam. Nixon felt ready to take on those questions and to rethink America's policy in Vietnam. He had been working on American foreign policy for decades and had been involved in US decisions about the fate of Vietnam since the early 1950s. He had been a US congressman from 1946 to 1950; a senator from 1950 to 1953 and had been Dwight Eisenhower's vice president. These experiences, Nixon believed, had him well prepared for the challenges of his presidency, including a particularly daunting task: restructuring the national security policymaking apparatus of the modern American State.

Upon his election, Nixon intended to refashion the American State to maximize the president's power—his power—to make and manage national security and foreign policy. He believed that without restructuring the executive branch, America's role as a stabilizing global force was in danger and that a successful policy shift in Vietnam would be impossible. For Nixon, rival power centers within the United States government, including Congress and the State Department, had weakened the United States' global reach and endangered American international interests. Only with strong presidential leadership, supported by a tightly controlled intelligence and policy "shop," could the United States take on the powerful threats that were confronting America.

Principally, Nixon believed that he had to restructure the National Security State to resolve the unfolding disaster in Vietnam. The policies that he inherited were, he believed,

destroying the United States' international credibility and prestige. To change disastrous policy, he believed, he had to change the atomized, chaotic, and overly bureaucratized way in which national security policy was made and implemented. Nixon's reform efforts, which began almost immediately after he was inaugurated, centered on reshaping the National Security Council (NSC).

During the sixty-three months of his presidency, Nixon successfully refashioned the national security policymaking architecture of the American State to reduce the power of his rivals and to increase his own autonomous capacity to reshape the world.[1] However, despite his critical restructuring of the government, he was unable to fulfill his major policy goal: quickly resolving the war in Vietnam. Still, Nixon's efforts to rethink how national security policy was made in the executive branch had fundamental impacts not only on his own national security policies but on the evolving structure and power of the modern presidency.

Nixon effectively reinvented the presidency. Key executive branch agencies that were expected to help the president, such as the National Security Council, were relatively new, poorly developed and built on vague and malleable statutes. Nixon revamped the executive branch administrative and policymaking apparatus to protect his decision-making autonomy. He

---

[1]An presidential administration's national security policymaking structures or architecture shapes foreign policy and government decisions. National security architecture is principally how the president organizes the executive office and directs the key foreign policy departments and agencies. Architecture also encompasses the flow of information and decisions, including how intelligence is processed. Architecture also involves who is included or excluded from policy formation. The architecture helps form the president's mindset, dictating who and what he is exposed to and with whom he engages.

See also: Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration and the Cold War,* (Stanford University Press, 1992); Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* (Cambridge University Press, 1998); David J. Rothkopf, *Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power* (PublicAffairs, 2005); I.M. Destler, "National Security Management: What Presidents have Wrought," *Political Science Quarterly* 95:4 (Winter, 1980-1981): 573-588; Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan* (Collier MacMillan Canada, 1990).

created a system that avoided dependence on executive departments, most especially State, and provided him with the policy options and intelligence he believed he needed to operate as he saw fit.

At President Nixon's direction, Henry A. Kissinger, as National Security Advisor, took on unprecedented powers in the coordination and management of foreign policy. Nixon's policymaking apparatus made Kissinger not just a manager of information and foreign policy—as others within his position had been—but also a critical advisor to the president and a powerful controller of the bureaucracy. National Security Advisor Kissinger became *the* critical conduit to Nixon and used his privileged position within the NSC to influence Nixon. But Kissinger's unprecedented access and influence was contested by the power of Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird. Nixon's presidential restructuring, it turned out, could not control the entrenched strength of the US Defense Department, in particular the Defense Department's ability to shape America's war fighting options. As a result, Nixon's reorganization revealed the enormous, semi-autonomous power of the US Defense Department.

A series of questions guide this examination of Nixon's executive reorganization and national security decision-making process. First, how did Richard Nixon perceive the problems of prior presidential administrations' national security policymaking processes—especially in regard to the National Security Council—and what did he learn from those problems? In response, and secondly, how exactly did Nixon once he became president restructure the architecture of the presidency? Third, how did the circumstances of Nixon's presidency and the political climate surrounding policy in Vietnam influence how he restructured his national security apparatus? Fourth, how did Nixon's new architecture work in shaping policy for the

war in Vietnam and how did the president manage his new structure? And finally, how effective was the Nixon administration in developing a presidential-driven architecture?

In historical accounts of Nixon's presidency, Nixon's transformation of administrative processes within the White House in service to concentrated presidential power has too often been overshadowed by Nixon's personal political travails and the Watergate crisis. Scholars' focus on Nixon's character weaknesses and self-imposed political catastrophes has resulted in a major misreading of the work Nixon accomplished in reorganizing the executive branch to concentrate national security policymaking in the president's hands. President Nixon successfully made the National Security Council—a non-elected, non-Congressionally confirmed policy creation body, which operated outside traditional models of the US government—into a powerful tool of the presidency. The NSC became Nixon's means of operating outside the rival power centers, including Congress and the State Department, which had long limited presidential power. Nixon's belief that the kind of statecraft and diplomacy demanded by the nuclear age required secrecy and opacity, and extraordinary presidential prerogatives should be treated as more than just a personality quirk; it was a philosophy of modern government that has outlasted the rise and fall of the Nixon's presidency.

Nixon's national security architecture was an outgrowth of the Cold War presidency that he inherited. In particular, Nixon's efforts to reorganize the president's national security powers stemmed from the opportunities created by the National Security Act of 1947. This landmark legislation fundamentally changed the structure of the presidency and the relationship between the president and congress. While historians have explored the origins and immediate impact of the Act, few have written about how the statutes often vague language and implicit powers played out over time. Simply put, Nixon understood that the 1947 National Security Act gave

him the opportunity to revamp presidential power in the national security realm. Nixon took full advantage of that opportunity and, as a result, fundamentally changed the presidency.

President Nixon used his new national security architecture to strengthen his ability to make policy outside of the purview of the public and without congressional control or interference. Nixon successfully built a new presidential driven administrative state but at the cost of both democratic oversight and Constitutional constraints. Nixon cut congress—and the American people—out of the policymaking loop.

Nixon was not driven to make these reforms by irrational personality quirks, as some have suggested. Too long have Nixon's concerns about an obdurate and oppositional government bureaucracy been waved off as indicators of his supposed paranoia. Nixon, actually, was right: problems with the bureaucracy were real and significant impediments to the making and implementation of Nixon's foreign policy. Nixon rightfully feared that government officials, especially in the State Department, wanted to control and shape his policy options. He had observed how other presidents had faced this same resistance. Nixon's reforms were not driven by his personality, per se, but by his long and thoughtful analyses of the Cold War presidency.

2

My analysis of President Richard M. Nixon's reconstruction of national security policymaking makes a number of significant historiographical departures. While many have written compelling histories of the Cold War and how that conflict reshaped US ideology and the America's international role, far fewer scholars have examined how and why the presidency itself changed during and because of the Cold War. In general, historians have not reckoned with

how the pervading, bi-partisan Cold War consensus profoundly reshaped the architecture of the US executive branch.

To the degree that scholars have examined the Cold War presidency as an institution, they have primarily focused their attention on the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. Little has been written about what subsequent presidents did with the statutory power and immense challenges the Cold War had created for America's eighteenth century, congressionally driven, governmental structure. My dissertation seeks to explore how Richard Nixon, perhaps the greatest presidential student of executive branch power, remade the Cold War presidency to meet the challenge of his times and by so doing, changed the trajectory of presidential power thereafter.[2]

A few key works do set the historiographical scene for this analysis. One of the only historical works that connects our understanding of the National Security State to the architecture

---

[2] A key example of this focus is *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War,* by historian Melvyn Leffler. Though it is important to note that Leffler focuses more on the changes to the US's role abroad, than internal structures. Leffler contends that postwar Washington sought preponderant global power in the aftermath of the Second World War, with the belief that a combination of military strength and economic power would give the United States strength over its rivals. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration and the Cold War,* (Stanford University Press, 1992).
Another central work on the national security state is *A Cross of Iron,* by Michael J. Hogan, who similarly focuses on the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. Hogan illustrates how the Cold War and questions about American identity changed the structure of the US government. Hogan concludes that the national security ideology took over the discourse and that "the Cold War did enlarge the role of the military in American life and alter the relationship between military leaders and civilian authorities." Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* (Cambridge University Press, 1998). See also: Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall, *America's Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009); M. Kent Bolton, *The rise of the American Security State: The National Security Act of 1947 and the Militarization of US Foreign Policy* (Praeger, 2018); Louis Galambos, ed. *The New American State: Bureaucracies and Policies since World War II* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); Mary Ann Heiss and Michael J. Hogan, eds., *Origins of the National Security State and the legacy of Harry S. Truman* (Truman State University Press, 2015); William I. Hitchcock, *The Age of Eisenhower: America and the World in the 1950s* (Simon & Schuster, 2018); Anna Kasten Nelson, "President Truman and the Evolution of the National Security Council," *The Journal of American History* 72:2 (Sept., 1985): 360-378; William E. Pemberton, *Bureaucratic Politics: Executive Reorganization during the Truman Administration* (University of Missouri Press, 1979); James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (Oxford University Press, 2013); Brian Waddell, *Toward the National Security State: Civil-Military Relations during World War II* (Praeger Security International, 2008); Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State* (Houghton Mifflin, 1977);

of the US government is Andrew Preston's *The War Council.* Preston argues that the National Security Council and National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy emerged as significant, if not critical players, in the Kennedy administration and, in the first years of the Johnson presidency, changed how both presidents operated internationally. While Preston is correct that the NSC changed the architecture of Kennedy's foreign policy apparatus and altered the scope of Johnson's policy decisions, I argue that the National Security Council becomes far more important to presidential control over the executive branch, under Nixon, not Johnson.[3] It is not until the Nixon administration that the NSC becomes not just a component aspect of policy formulation and implementation but central to it.[4]

My dissertation also rethinks the Nixon presidency and its impact on the balance of power in the US government. Nixon's presidency is generally viewed as a peak of gross presidential power brought down by the Watergate debacle and congress's subsequent reassertion of its power. I argue, instead, that the Nixon administration permanently reinvented the presidency by increasing the power and importance of the National Security Council. Nixon's changes would outlast Watergate and the War Powers Act of 1973.[5]

---

[3] Andrew Preston, *The War Council: McGeorge Bundy, the NSC, and Vietnam* (Harvard University Press, 2010).
[4] While the concept of the National Security State has been well-studied, the focus has been on the formation of those ideas and mechanisms during the early Cold War period. For instance, in *Creating the National Security State: A History of the Law that Transformed America,* Douglas T. Stuart meticulously examines the political struggles and different reports that informed the National Security Act of 1947. Stuart does not think about how those struggles actually carried forward or how the implementation of the act worked in practice. Douglas T. Stuart, *Creating the National Security State: A History of the Law that Transformed America* (Princeton University Press, 2008). Stuart is not alone in failing to extend analysis of the National Security Act and corresponding structures to the latter years of the Cold War. Similarly, political scientist Amy Zegart, in *Flawed by Design: The Revolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC,* focuses on the initial statutes and legislative debates. Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed by Design: The Revolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC* (Stanford University Press, 1999. See also: John P. Burke, "The National Security Advisor and Staff: Transition Challenges," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 39:2 (June 2009); Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (Oxford University Press, 1998); Roger Z. George and Harvey Rishikof, eds., *The National Security Enterprise: navigating the Labyrinth* (Georgetown University Press, 2010);
[5] In this argument, I build on Sarah Burns, *The Politics of War Powers.* Burns argues Congress actually accepted their impotence with the War Powers Resolution. She contends that the resolution was actually an acknowledgment

In arguing that Nixon cemented presidential power, I engage with Arthur Schlesinger's seminal work on presidential power, *The Imperial Presidency*. While Schlesinger initially argued that Congress, at least temporarily, reasserted itself during and after the Nixon administration, he later acknowledged that his obituary was premature and that the imperial presidency, post-Nixon remained alive. I build on Schlesinger's argument by detailing how Nixon reconstructed the executive branch. I also illustrate how Nixon created a lasting and potent national security architecture. I also counter the work of Andrew Rudalevige. He argues that congress, at least temporarily, reasserted itself during the Nixon administration.[6] But, while congress was certainly a factor in Nixon's decision-making, his reconfigured national security architecture was largely able to subordinate Congress. In particular, in *The New Imperial Presidency: Renewing Presidential Power after Watergate,* Andrew Rudalevige argues Congress did reassert power but did not "make the resurgence stick."[7] While Rudalevige raises some important points about the expansion of presidential power, the Congressional resurgence that he and other historians discuss never took place; rather, intended reforms, such as the War Powers Resolution failed to reign in the presidentially-driven National Security State.[8]

---

the president could go to war without prior approval. Sarah Burns, *The Politics of War Powers: The Theory and History of Presidential Unilateralism* (University Press of Kansas, 2019).

[6] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. *The Imperial Presidency* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004).

[7] Andrew Rudalevige, *The New Imperial Presidency: Renewing Presidential Power after Watergate* (The University of Michigan Press, 205), x.

Rudalevige is inspired in his analysis by the work of James L. Sundquist, *The Decline and Resurgence of Congress.* Sundquist argues that in the wake of Watergate, Congress reasserted its power in foreign policy creation, and that significant movements were made to retake power that had been ceded to the executive branch. Sundquist is overly idealistic about the post-Watergate period.

[8] See also, Louis Fisher, *Congressional Abdication on War and Spending* (Texas A&M University Press, 2000); Edward A. Kolodzieg, *The Uncommon Defense and Congress, 1945-1963* (Ohio State University Press, 1996); W. Taylor Reveley III., *War Powers of the President and Congress: Who Holds the Arrows and Olive Branch?* (University Press of Virginia, 1981); Charles A. Stevenson, *Congress at War: The Politics of Conflict Since 1789* (National Defense University Press, 2007); See also relevant work on the arc of the modern presidency since World War II: Dillon Anderson. "The President and National Security." *The Atlantic* CXCVII (January 1956): 42-46; Larry Blomstedt, *Truman, Congress, and Korea: The Politics of America's First Undeclared War* (University Press of Kentucky, 2016); Carl Boggs, *Origins of the warfare state: World War II and the transformation of American*

For Nixon the Vietnam War was a critical impetus for his transformation of the presidency and national security architecture. But as historian Jeffrey P. Kimball points out, "the most misunderstood major event of the Vietnam War is the Nixon phase—specifically, the widespread misunderstanding of his policy and strategy during his presidency."[9] Historians of Nixon's Vietnam War policy have largely focused on the expansion of the war into Cambodia and the efforts that led to the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973. In general, scholars have focused their energies on criticizing the Nixon administration's conduct of the war.[10] I lend greater understanding to the Nixon phase of the Vietnam War by focusing on the war from a structural perspective. Instead of focusing on the content of Nixon's decisions or policy, I focus on the architecture behind his policies and how he made decisions.

Finally, too often scholars of the Nixon presidency have allowed the Watergate debacle and a general contempt and disgust with Nixon's Vietnam policy to color their analyses of him

---

Politics (Praeger, 2018); Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (Oxford University Press 1995); Matthew J. Dickinson, *Bitter Harvest: FDR, Presidential Power and the Growth of the Presidential Branch* (Cambridge University Press, 1996); Louis Fisher, *Presidential War Power, Third Edition, Revised* (University Press of Kansas, 2013); Michael J. Glennon, *National Security and Double Government* (Oxford University Press, 2016); David J. Rothkopf, *Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power* (PublicAffairs, 2005); Jeremi Suri, *The Impossible Presidency: The Rise and Fall of America's Highest Office* (Basic Books, 2017); John Yoo, *Crisis and Command: The History of Executive Power from George Washington to George W. Bush* (New York: Kaplan Publishing, 2009); I.M. Destler, "National Security Management: What Presidents have Wrought," *Political Science Quarterly* 95:4 (Winter, 1980-1981): 573-588; Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan* (Collier MacMillan Canada, 1990); Karen M. Hult and Charles E. Walcott, *Empowering the White House: Governance Under Nixon, Ford and Carter* (University Press of Kansas, 2004)

[9] Jeffrey P. Kimball, "H-Diplo Roundtable Review," Review of Edwin E. Moise, *The Myths of Tet: The Most Misunderstood Event of the Vietnam War,* Volume XIX, No. 44 (16 July 2018), 8.

[10] See: Stephen G. Rabe, "Cold War Presidents," in *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations since 1951, 2nd Edition,* eds. Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); David F. Schmitz, *Richard Nixon and the Vietnam War: The End of the American Century* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014); William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia* (Simon and Schuster, 1979); Jeffrey Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War* (University Press of Kansas, 1998); Kenton J. Clymer, *United States and Cambodia, 1969-2000: A Troubled Relationship* (Routledge, 2004); David F. Schmitz, *Richard Nixon and the Vietnam War: The End of the American Century* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2014); Jeffrey Kimball, *The Vietnam War Files: Uncovering the Secret History of Nixon-Era Strategy* (University Press of Kansas, 2004); Philip E. Catton, "Refighting Vietnam in the History Books: The Historiography of War," *OAH Magazine of History* 18:5 (Oct., 2004): 7-11;

and his administration. The first interpretations of the Nixon's administration were the most egregious in this regard, indulging in armchair psychoanalysis and psychobiography. Kissinger's self-serving memoirs added ammunition to this portrait of a deranged president.[11] In his memoirs, Kissinger describes Nixon as an unstable man whose dangerous impulses were only contained by Kissinger and Nixon's Chief of Staff, H.R. Haldeman. These self-serving or biased analyses of Nixon ignore his critical role in reshaping the presidency and national security architecture. They also ignore the institutional power of both congress and the federal bureaucracy and the real challenges and enemies that Nixon faced.

3

[11] Fawn Brodie, *Richard Nixon: The Shaping of his Character* (W.W. Norton and Company, 1981); Bruce Mazlish, *In Search of Nixon: A Pscyho-historical Inquiry* (Routledge, 1972); Joel D. Aberbach and Bert A. Rockhman, "Clashing Beliefs within the Executive Branch: The Nixon Administration Bureaucracy," *The American Political Science Review* 70:2 (Jun., 1976): 456-468; William Bundy, *A Tangled Web: The Making of Foreign Policy in the Nixon Presidency* (Hill and Wang, 1998); Robet D. Schulzinger, "Richard Nixon, Congress, and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1974," in *Vietnam and the American Political Tradition: The Politics of Dissent,* ed. Randall Bennett Woods (Cambridge University Pres, 2003); Michael A. Genovese, *The Nixon Presidency: Power and Politics in Turbulent Times* (Greenwood Press, 1990); Earl Mazo, *Richard Nixon; A Political and Personal Portrait* (Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1959); Earl Mazo and Stephen Hess, *Nixon: A Political Portrait* (Harper & Row Publishers, 1968); Bruce Mazlish, "Toward Psychohistorical Inquiry: The 'Real' Richard Nixon," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 1:1 (Autumn 1970): 49-105; David Abrahamsen, *Nixon vs. Nixon: An Emotional Tragedy* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1997); Raymond Price, *With Nixon* (Viking Press, 1977); Joan Hoff, "Researchers' Nightmare: Studying the Nixon Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26:1 (Winter 1996): 259-275; Herbert S. Parmet, *Richard Nixon and his America* (Little, Brown and Company, 1990); Anthony Summers, *The Arrogance of Power: The Secret World of Richard Nixon* (Viking Penguin, 2000); Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nixon: The Education of a Politician* (Simon and Schuster, 1987); Stanley I. Kutler, *The Wars of Watergate: The Last Crisis of Richard Nixon* (Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1990); Bruce P. Montgomery, "Nixon's Legal Legacy: White House Papers and the Constitution," *The American Archivist* 56:4 (Fall, 1993): 586-613; Ruth P. Morgan, "Nixon, Watergate, and the Study of the Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26:1 (Winter 1996): 217-238; Barry Schwartz and Lori Holyfield, "Nixon Postmortem," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 560 (Nov., 1998): 96-110; Jonathan Aitken, "The Nixon Character," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26:1 (Winter 1996): 239-247; Robert Dallek, *Partners in Power: Nixon and Kissinger* (HarperCollins Publishers, 2007); Conrad Black, *The Invincible Quest: The Life of Richard Milhous Nixon* (McClelland & Stewart, 2007); Anthony Summers, *The Arrogance of Power: The Secret World of Richard Nixon* (Penguin Books, 2001); John A. Farrell, *Richard Nixon: The Life* (Doubleday, 2017).

Rather than putting Nixon on the psychoanalytic couch, I trace Nixon's long and sustained interest in reforming the office of the presidency and the executive branch. Beginning with his days as Eisenhower's vice president. Nixon worked deliberately and successfully to build a presidential-driven foreign policy apparatus. To explain Richard Nixon's role as an architect of the modern American state, I first historicize the development of the modern presidency, especially in regard to foreign policy making. I then briefly examine the emergence of the National Security State in the 1940s and how a new set of elite state managers competed—sometimes with and sometimes without the direct authority of the president—to advance the burgeoning role of the United States in the world. After exploring this "pre-history" of the Nixon administration, I turn to President Nixon's direct efforts to restructure the national security state.

The first chapter explores the development of the federal government and the presidency. I argue that the structures of the federal government and the presidency, integral to foreign policy creation and national security oversight, changed fundamentally but unevenly during the twentieth century. From there, the second chapter analyzes Nixon's time as vice-president in the Eisenhower administration. I argue that Nixon learned about the administrative problems of both the presidency and the newly created national security structure. He witnessed, first-hand, the problematic working relationship between the presidency and congress, as well as the barriers the executive branch and bureaucracy placed before presidential policymaking.

The third chapter explores the development of Nixon's ideas and beliefs about presidential power during his time as a private citizen and then presidential candidate, from January 1962 to November 1968. I argue that although Nixon was out of office, he re-energized his efforts to think through the office of the presidency and sought to maximize his personal connections. In the fourth chapter, I focus on Nixon's reconstruction of the architecture for

national security policy creation. Nixon's national security architecture was a product of his long-standing experience in and knowledge of the American government. Nixon's system was more than a product of his personality quirks and suspicions; it was a carefully considered product of the Cold War environment and his government experience.

From there, the fifth chapter explores how Nixon's reconfigured architecture created policy for the war in Vietnam. Nixon trusted the National Security Council for research and analysis, and his reconfigured architecture played a major role in shaping his first major initiatives in the bombing of Cambodia, backchannel diplomacy and Vietnamization. I also explore how the NSC-centered policy process began to break down, unable to completely wall off congress or constrain the power of the Defense Department. The sixth chapter continues to explore Nixon's policymaking architecture and the war in Vietnam. I argue that Nixon's policymaking architecture began to break down and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird effectively went around Nixon's carefully constructed policymaking apparatus. Finally, in the conclusion, I explore how Nixon's reconstructed decision-making structure remained a potent and critical force in the Nixon administration. While Nixon was unable to quickly resolve the war in Vietnam, his efforts to rethink national security architecture cemented the importance of the National Security Council.

Chapter I: Before Nixon: The Formation of the National Security State

President Richard M. Nixon entered the Oval Office with the fervent belief that he alone could resolve the war in Vietnam. The new president was determined to preserve the Republic of South Vietnam while simultaneously maintaining American honor and credibility. For Nixon, the presidency and the chance to conclude the Vietnam War 'his way' were the culmination of decades of work and political experience. For Nixon, the work to reshape the presidency began immediately. As president-elect, Nixon began to lay the groundwork to reshape the architecture of the United States government. He intended to restructure the mechanisms for foreign policy creation, including the executive office structure and the role of the National Security Council (NSC). Nixon believed these reforms would be critical to resolving the war in Vietnam, and ultimately to ensuring presidential control of both the US government and foreign policy creation. The incoming president saw a new executive structure as the only way to resolve the Vietnam War, and move forward with his larger foreign policy goals including normalizing relations with the China and the Soviet Union. He believed Vietnam was to be "the first test of the new NSC structure," as he noted to his National Security Advisor Henry A. Kissinger in an interregnum briefing memorandum.[12] Nixon was convinced that the National Security Council held the key to reorganizing the presidency. In an initial briefing memorandum to Kissinger, the president-elect noted, that "the NSC task will be to make a rational whole of all our programs, and to end the tendency to make policy by answering cables from Saigon and Paris."[13]

---

[12] "Cabinet Briefing, December 12, 1968, Henry A. Kissinger," Briefings, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 1, RNPLM.
[13] "Cabinet Briefing, December 12, 1968, Henry A. Kissinger," Briefings, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 1, RNPLM.

In order to understand Nixon's determined focus on restructuring the National Security Council and the broader national security policymaking apparatus, it is vital to understand the presidency Nixon was inheriting and why, therefore, he believed change in executive branch organization was imperative. Nixon was, in fact, in a long line of presidents who felt that the executive branch, especially in regard to how foreign policy and national security were managed, was in serious need of reorganization. Indeed, the presidency Nixon inherited had been reorganized multiple times, with varying degrees of success. Previous presidents had felt stymied in their responsibilities and by the limits of the power they inherited. As a result, they continuously skirted the law and attempted to create new mechanisms—both ad hoc and institutional—to institutionalize the stretch of presidential power. By the time Nixon entered the Oval Office, the president was at the apex of power, with a national security architecture more akin to a Jenga tower than a well-built structure, with mechanisms that did not mesh together. When Nixon entered the Oval office, the office of the presidency and the structure of the executive branch bore only limited resemblance to the days of Washington and Jefferson, even if the Constitutional outlines of the executive branch were identical. The presidency, to state the matter bluntly, had become a far stronger institution. The office carried many more responsibilities and the American people expected far more from it.

In this chapter, I argue, as many others have, that the structures of the federal government and the presidency, integral to foreign policy creation and national security oversight, changed fundamentally but unevenly during the twentieth century. The most fundamental change in the power and scope of the national security presidency occurred with the landmark National Security Act of 1947. This Act transformed the very architecture of the United States government. It gave far more power and institutional capacity to the executive, mostly at the

expense of Congress. To understand the institutional problems of the presidency Richard Nixon inherited and to show how he sought to restructure it, the story of the NSC—why it was created and what the 1947 Act was meant to remedy—must first be explored. But to get to the 1947 Act, a brief history of the modern presidency, beginning with Abraham Lincoln, is first necessary. So, too, is an accounting of the transformative presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose crisis management during both the Great Depression and World War II set the stage for the post-war reforms. This chapter will conclude by examining the evolution of presidential power and the evolution of the National Security Act of 1947 and the political debates about executive reorganization, in regard to national security, that shaped the pre-Nixon presidency.

The Evolution of the Presidency

The presidency was built to be a weak institution with considerable boundaries on its power. The founders concluded that one of the chief lessons of the American Revolution was that power was better in many hands. They worried about monarchy, and about the threat posed by a strong, singular head of state, even as they conceded the need for a central, singular figure. These beliefs led them to impose restrictions on the president's power. Principally, the founders limited the president's constitutional power by denying him the right to declare war or to raise an army.[14] The founders firmly believed that Congress, and Congress alone, had the power and prerogative to declare war. At this point, as political scientist David Gray Adler argues, "no member…held a different understanding of the war clause" or believed "executive power includes the right to make war or even to initiate hostilities."[15] The founders' beliefs about delegation of power also meant that Congress held more power than the executive. As historian Benjamin Ginsberg notes, for most of its history, "the presidency was a weak institution" in

---

[14] Benjamin Ginsberg, *Presidential Government* (Yale University Press, 2016): 14.
[15] David Gray Adler, "The Constitution and Presidential War-making: The Enduring Debate," *Political Science Quarterly* 103:1 (Spring, 1988): 8, 17.

which "most presidents held little influence."[16] While the Constitutional powers of the president, as the founders' intended, are limited, the powers the president is granted—as many scholars have argued—are also only loosely defined, allowing a good deal of flexibility as the responsibilities of the American State evolved.[17] As a result, the scope and power of the executive changed dramatically as the United States developed from a small coastal nation to a global superpower.

The Civil War and the latter decades of the nineteenth century were critical catalysts to the enlargement of the presidency. The wartime environment provided impetus to Lincoln's stretch of presidential powers. While Lincoln did not legally change the mandate of the presidency, his time in office was critical to the expansion of presidential power and the evolution of a system in which the president was the apex of the US government. The massive scope of the war meant that the federal government was paramount and more involved in the lives of its citizens. Lincoln was the central figure in this transformation, directing the effort to save the nation and representing the government to the people. As noted by historian Jeremi Suri, "Lincoln made the president into a true national executive, articulating a transformative vision and forcing the nation's resources and policies in that direction."[18] Lincoln did not structurally change the federal government but, through his actions, he established new norms and expectations.

President Theodore Roosevelt championed the development of the stronger presidency, pushing at the constitutional limits of his position. Roosevelt believed that he, as President,

---

[16] Ginsberg, *Presidential Government,* ix.
[17] Jeremi Suri, *The Impossible Presidency: The Rise and Fall of America's Highest Office* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 22.
[18] Suri, *The Impossible Presidency,* 100.

should be directing the future of the United States. Influenced by the Progressive movement, Roosevelt believed the presidency could be a stronger institution. He thought, "executive power was limited only by the specific restrictions and prohibitions appearing in the Constitution or imposed by the Congress."[19] He was also convinced that the President could take on additional responsibilities, and refused to believe that "what was…necessary for the nation could not be done by the President."[20] As a result of these beliefs, Theodore Roosevelt formed the Keep Commission to study departmental procedures. He sought recommendations for improving the executive branch, including how to make it more efficient.[21] Roosevelt's reform attempt was largely unsuccessful. Congress, guarding its own power, would not allow it. Very few of the commission's recommendations were enacted and ultimately it had little to no impact on executive operations.[22] Nonetheless, Roosevelt brought new attention to the structure of the executive branch and attempted to expand the reach of presidential power.

Despite Theodore Roosevelt's inability to strengthen the foreign policy and national security tools of the presidency, by the end of the First World War the president's hand had grown more powerful. The calamity of the conflict, along with the need to mobilize the entire nation, enshrined the president's control of the executive branch and forced Congress to give more power to the President.[23] As historian Bruce D. Porter argues, the First World War saw "the dissolution of former restraints on the establishment of government agencies…and the first

---

[19] Ginsberg, *Presidential Government,* 86; As quoted in, Arnold, *Making the Managerial Presidency*, 24.
[20] As quoted in, Arnold, *Making the Managerial Presidency*, 24.
[21] Arnold, *Making the Managerial Presidency*, 19.
[22] Richard Polenberg, *Reorganizing Roosevelt's Government, 1936-1949: The Controversy over Executive Reorganization* (Harvard University Press, 1966), 4.
[23] William E. Pemberton, *Bureaucratic Politics: Executive Reorganization during the Truman Administration* (University of Missouri Press, 1979), 10.

direct federal aid to state and local governments."[24] Essentially, the wartime climate provided President Woodrow Wilson with a prime opportunity to stretch the boundaries of presidential power. He believed a stronger presidency was necessary to control and direct the rise of federal power, and more generally, to manage the expanding role of the US in the world.[25] Specifically, Wilson thought the president had to be at the center of the American government, with the authority to speak directly to the nation.[26] He wanted the president to connect the nation and Congress, interpreting the public will and directing his political party's work in the legislature.[27]

Not only did Wilson firmly believe in presidential power; Congress also accepted the necessity for increased executive power in wartime. As a result, during World War I, the President gained additional congressionally authorized powers. The Overman Act gave Wilson authority to change the mandates of government agencies.[28] Additional legislative acts gave Wilson control over food and fuel production, and the power to force factories to sell to the government at predetermined prices.[29] Wilson's additional war powers faded or were rescinded in the wake of the conflict, but the precedent of increased presidential power remained. Congress had accepted the need for additional executive powers and presidential initiatives during times of crisis. This forever altered the congressional-presidential relationship and the balance of powers.[30] These precedents would be critical for presidencies during the Great Depression, WWII, and, critically for Richard Nixon, the Cold War.

---

[24] Bruce D. Porter, *War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern Politics* (The Free Press, Macmillan, Inc., 1994), 269.
[25] Arnold, *Remaking the Presidency,* 9.
[26] Arnold, *Remaking the Presidency,* 194.
[27] Arnold, *Remaking the Presidency,* 137.
[28] Polenberg, *Reorganizing Roosevelt's Government*4.
[29] Porter, *War and the Rise of the State,* 271.
[30] Pemberton, *Bureaucratic Politics,* 10.

As historian Ernst May notes, the First World War "revealed defects" in all the involved departments, which resulted in post-war reforms.[31] The National Defense Act of 1920 established a Joint Army-Navy Munitions Board.[32] Following World War I, a Standing Liaison Committee was also established. The committee was intended to increase communication between the Army, Navy, and State Departments, and seemingly provided a format to share plans and policy thinking. However, the lack of foreplanning and coordination continued as it had before the First World War. Attempts at policy coordination, or even communication between departments, were largely lackluster and unsuccessful.[33] The organizations involved in US foreign policy continued to act as separate kingdoms and remained outside the president's control.

Roosevelt, Wilson, and their allies had sought to make significant changes in the nature of the executive office and the US military establishment during the progressive era and the First World War. To an extent, they had succeeded. They owed some of their success to Abraham Lincoln and his efforts to increase presidential power during the Civil War. Still, for those who believed that the United States' increased role in the world demanded greater presidential authority and capacity, much remained to be done, especially regarding the coordination of military and foreign policy.

Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Growth of the Presidency

President Franklin Roosevelt directly addressed these issues. Roosevelt worked to create the modern presidency, with the president at the apex of national power. His crisis management

---

[31] May, "The Development of Political-Military Consultation in the United States," 167.
[32] Dorwart, *Eberstadt and Forrestal,* 10.
[33] May, "The Development of Political-Military Consultation in the United States," 166, 172.

during both the Great Depression and World War II set the stage for the post-war reforms and that led, most significantly, to the National Security Act of 1947. This section will trace how Roosevelt stretched the boundaries of his presidential prerogatives and demonstrates how the ad hoc nature of FDR's wartime governance set the stage for post-war reforms.

In the early 1930s, as the Great Depression worsened, Congress conceded that the country's dire situation called for strong leadership and new presidential powers. To this end, Roosevelt was provided with authority over the US financial system, including powers over currency and international trade.[34] But, for all the exceptional presidential powers and discretion Roosevelt gained, the legislation was broad and unspecified.[35] He often lacked the required resources and government structure to direct his new found authority and to implement the economic and social reforms he wanted. As a result, as historian Matthew Dickinson explains, Roosevelt utilized "a jerry-rigged administrative system…composed primarily of four staff components: an expanded cabinet and staff secretariat; institutional staff agencies, particularly the Bureau of the Budget; a corps of White House Aides,…and an assortment of friends, politicos, and other advisers."[36] As a result, Roosevelt's ad hoc government system—which would be a hallmark of his foreign policy system, too—began to coalesce during the New Deal. As Dickinson points out, Roosevelt "tended" to use his government architecture "in an ad hoc contingent fashion, haphazardly drawing bargaining resources from it as needed."[37]

Roosevelt also used the crisis environment to cement the president's position at the center of the US government He refused to delegate any presidential authority. The New Deal

---

[34] Suri, *The Impossible Presidency,* 155.
[35] Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, W.W. Norton & Company, 2013), 123.
[36] Matthew J. Dickinson, *Bitter Harvest: FDR, Presidential Power and the Growth of the Presidential Branch* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 45.
[37] Dickinson, *Bitter Harvest,*71.

legislation was almost entirely proposed, and detailed, by the executive branch, and he allowed only limited Congressional debate.[38] As a result, the New Deal was a paradigm shift for the US government, bringing the president to the apex of power with congress looking to him for direction.[39]

This paradigm shift in presidential responsibility was not an easy or comfortable change for those who played key roles in the American polity. Especially as international tensions escalated, some groups, within and without government, believed that the president's power and ambition represented a significant threat to America's non-aligned status. Congress, for example, attempted to limit FDR's foreign policy inclinations and ability to act unilaterally in support of Nazi Germany's enemies by passing strict neutrality legislation in 1937. Isolationists and others warned the American people that Roosevelt aimed to drag the country into war without consulting Congress: an early version of fears about an imperial presidency.[40]

In the late 1930s, Roosevelt fought these efforts to limit his presidential reach. Building on the power he had gained in crafting the New Deal state during the struggle to end the Great Depression, FDR began a fight to restructure the presidency to meet the fast-growing international crisis. For Roosevelt, the looming crisis of the Second World War gave him the opportunity to further expand his presidential powers.[41] As Historian William E. Leuchtenburg notes, "Under Roosevelt, the White House became the focus of all government—the fountainhead of ideas, the initiator of action, the representative of the national interest."[42]

---

[38] Katznelson, *Fear Itself,* 123.
[39] Dickinson, *Bitter Harvest,* 47.
[40] Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1932-1945* (University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 222, 266.
[41] Suri, *The Impossible Presidency,* 168.
[42] William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal: 1932-1940* (Harper Torchbooks, 1963), 327.

Roosevelt made himself integral to the functioning of the US government.[43] He directed both the government and the war effort. He would come to assert power as "Commander in Chief in wartime," issuing emergency proclamations and taking over significant parts of the economy.[44]

During World War II, President Roosevelt recognized that the existing national security structures were inadequate for waging a global war and he was convinced that the nation's best interests and security would be served by executive reorganization and better presidential management.[45] Congress, however, thought differently and Roosevelt's attempts at institutionalizing his changes to the national security structure were largely stymied, thus leaving his wartime alterations ad hoc, and designed to fit his own, personalized, system of governance.

Even before the American entry into the conflict, Roosevelt had tried to take significant steps towards reorganization and changing policy formation structures. One of Roosevelt's first big changes was in July 1939. He brought the Army-Navy Munitions Board, as well as the Chiefs of Staff into the office of the President. As historian William O'Neill explains, Roosevelt viewed centralization as critical, and "in war, as in peace, all roads would lead to the White House."[46] With Executive Order 8248, of 8 September 1939, Roosevelt furthered this centralization, hoping to solve problems that he believed plagued both domestic and foreign policy making. The executive office was formalized with the White House moved into its domain. Roosevelt's Order also placed the Bureau of the Budget in the Executive Office.[47] The establishment of the executive office was a critical move in consolidating the president's position at the apex of the US government. It meant Roosevelt had resources at his disposal to facilitate

---

[43] Suri, *The Impossible Presidency,* 154.
[44] Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Imperial Presidency* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004), 115.
[45] Polenberg, *Reorganizing Roosevelt's Government,* 7
[46] William L. O'Neill, *A Democracy at War: America's Fight at Home and Abroad in World War II* (Maxwell MacMillan International, 1993), 79.
[47] Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal,* 327.

policy from his office. With the establishment of the Executive Office, as historian Stanley Falk contends, Roosevelt was provided with "a steady flow of facts on top-level problems, to help him in anticipating and planning for future programs, to protect him from the annoyance of minor and time-consuming details and to insure the implementation and coordination of policy."[48]

Roosevelt's executive power significantly expanded after the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor and other US possessions and the quick entry of the United States into global war. Similar to the situation during World War I, Congress recognized the need for stronger, presidential wartime powers and temporarily ceded significant powers to Roosevelt. But as Historian Jeremi Suri explains, Roosevelt knew this newfound power was tenuous, and he "had to convince followers, including those in government, that he had morality, justice, and necessity on his side."[49] The First War Powers Act, of December 1941, gave the president significant authority over the domestic economy. Roosevelt now had the ability to change government contracts, increase production speeds, seize foreign property and regulate international trade. The March 1942 Second War Powers Act increased the president's authority. The act meant Roosevelt could "allocate resources for defense purposes, 'in such manner, upon such conditions and to such extent as he shall deem necessary in the public interest.'"[50]

Congress recognized the need for new government agencies to facilitate the enormous scale of the Second World War. As a result, Congress enacted multiple agencies to help manage the war effort and the growing US economy. These new agencies encompassed a variety of domains, from war production to domestic morale to troop mobilization. But the crux of the

---

[48] Stanley L. Falk, *The National Security Structure* (Washington: Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 1967), 12.
[49] Suri, *The Impossible Presidency,* 154.
[50] Katznelson, *Fear Itself,* 342.

matter was that Congress did not retain control of these new bodies. Congress gave control of the wartime agencies to Roosevelt, thereby enhancing his presidential power. Nor was Congress capable of monitoring the new executive agencies, and the president had day-to-day management.[51]

During the Second World War, not only did Roosevelt gain considerable presidential powers but also the size of the government, including the executive office, increased, much to some congressmen's chagrin. These members recognized that their power was being diminished. They feared that the United States was becoming more like the European dictatorships America was battling. As Representative Andrew J. May of Kentucky declared, "Let us tell the world that the Congress is not impotent."[52] His sentiments were echoed by Ohio Representative, Arthur Lamneck, who argued that the Congress's continual delegation of their powers would erode their authority.[53] These concerns were echoed again by the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress in 1944. The Committee argued that Congressional power had declined, and if congress did not modernize, it would lose its rightful place as policy-makers.[54] Many members of Congress wanted to make sure that at war's end their power would be restored and that of the presidency would be weakened.

President Roosevelt did not share Congress's concerns. Even before the war he had believed that the presidency did not have the tools to manage national and international problems effectively. In 1937, he had instructed the Brownlow Committee, consisting of Louis Brownlow, Charles Merriam, and Luther Gulick, to plan a major reorganization of the executive branch.[55]

---

[51] Ginsberg, *Presidential Government,* 89-90.
[52] As quoted in, Polenberg, *Reorganizing Roosevelt's Government,* 166,
[53] Polenberg, *Reorganizing Roosevelt's Government,* 166.
[54] Louis Fisher, *Congressional Abdication on War and Spending* (Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 34.
[55] Falk, *The National Security Structure,* 12.

The Brownlow Committee began with the premise that the president was and should be at the center of the government, and that the prevailing system of governance did not give the president enough power to carry out his responsibilities. Committee chair Brownlow stated, "Not one of us harbored a single doubt that our task amid the gathering world storm was to strengthen the presidency." The Committee believed the President needed additional resources and organization "to manage the affairs of the government," concluding that "strong executive leadership is essential to democratic government today."[56] The committee concluded that the president had to have control over all executive Branch agencies and departments. It also recommended that Roosevelt be "equipped with adequate legal authority or administrative machinery" to allow him to exercise his prerogatives.[57] Specifically, the committee recommended new assistants for Roosevelt, and successfully proposed adding the Bureau of the Budget to the Executive Office, to enhance the president's ability to oversee the federal government's finances and spending so as to counterbalance Congress's appropriation power.[58]

During the run up to war, Roosevelt realized that the State Department was not prepared to offer him the advice and support he needed. The president believed the department would restrict his policy options, and thought the department was incapable of offering substantive advice.[59] Roosevelt viewed State as an antiquated, rigid organization. Roosevelt shared Nixon's eventual thinking that the State Department constricted the president's options and that the department was resistant to organizational change. The president once remarked, to Marriner Eccles of the Federal Reserve Board, that "you should go through the experience of trying to get

---

[56] As quoted in, Arnold, *Making the Managerial Presidency*, 103, 106.
[57] As quoted in, Arnold, *Making the Managerial Presidency*, 103.
[58] Arnold, *Making the Managerial Presidency*, 104-106.
[59] Sarah-Jane Corke, *US Covert Operations and Cold War Strategy: Truman, Secret Warfare, and the CIA, 1945-53* (Routledge, 2008), 65.

any changes in the thinking, policy and action of the career diplomats and then you'd know what a real problem was."[60]

Roosevelt recognized that the State Department had very little expertise in international or European affairs. For much of the 1930s, ignoring the rising calamity in Europe, the State Department had focused on Latin American issues, keeping its attention on the "good neighbor policy" and international economic matters.[61] As Dean Acheson later wrote, "If the Army and Navy were unprepared for war, the State Department was no less so. It never did seem to find its place."[62] In Acheson's opinion, "few [State Department officials] made any contribution to the conduct of the war or to the achievement of political purposes through war."[63] Roosevelt's mistrust of the State Department was compounded by the department's own misguided belief that they had no wartime role.[64] Secretary of State Cordell Hull believed that war and diplomacy were distinct areas of policy. After the US formally entered hostilities, Hull concluded that the Department should prepare for peacetime and act only as a diplomatic adjunct.[65]Roosevelt's treatment of State complicated the design of a postwar National Security architecture. The department was largely ill-prepared for the Cold War without a clear internal role or a defined relationship with the different military departments.[66]

As a result of his mistrust in the State Department, Roosevelt established an early version of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), then known as the Joint Board, to provide policy guidance and

---

[60] As quoted in, Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (Oxford University Press, 1995), 532.
[61] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 321.
[62] Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1969), 38.
[63] Acheson, *Present at the Creation,* 38.
[64] Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 321.
[65] Mark A. Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and US Strategy in World War II* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), x.
[66] Howard Jablon, *Crossroads of Decision: The State Department and Foreign Policy, 1933-1937* (The University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 31.

coordinate American military efforts.[67] Roosevelt also established the JCS as a solution to critical, pre-existing problems with the US military establishment. He recognized that his predecessors had held only nominal control of the defense establishment, and that the different military departments acted as separate kingdoms with significant coordination issues.[68] During World War II, the JCS, a Dickinson explains, "functioned as the supreme American military command staff within solely American areas of influence, and it represented the United States on the combined staff with the British."[69] Roosevelt's restructuring of the JCS isolated the Secretaries of War and Navy and excluded them from strategic decisions and grand allied decisions.[70] Roosevelt brought the Joint Chiefs, not the Secretary of State, to his summit conferences, and Secretary Hull did not even receive JCS conference minutes.[71] As a result, State became, as noted by Ernest May, "almost an auxiliary arm of the military services" and "uniformed officers meanwhile filled the chairs left vacant by diplomats.[72] Roosevelt's wartime structure and trust in the JCS established it as a significant part of the postwar US National Security architecture.[73]

---

[67] Corke, *US Covert Operations and Cold War Strategy,* 64-65.
[68] Demetrios Caraley, *The Politics of Military Unification: A Study of Conflict and the Policy Process* (Columbia University Press, 1966), 19-20; Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *Driven Patriot: The Life and Times of James Forrestal* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 227. The Joint Chiefs of Staff was composed of Admiral W.D. Leahy, the President's Chief of Staff and senior naval officer; General Marshall, Chief of Staff of the Army; Admiral E.J. King, Chief of Naval Operations, and Major General H.H. Arnold, senior Army Air Corps officer.; Gordon W. Keiser, *The US Marine Corps and Defense Unification, 1944-47: The Politics of Survival* (National Defense University Press, 1982), 5.
[69] Dickinson, *Bitter Harvest,* 188.
[70] Caraley, *The Politics of Military Unification*, 227.
[71] Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries,* 146.
[72] May, "The Development of Political-Military Consultation in the United States," 146-147.
[73] Charles E. Neu, "The Rise of the National Security Bureaucracy" in Louis Galambos, ed., *The New American State: Bureaucracies and Policies since World War II* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 86.

Roosevelt created a highly personalized national security architecture. Essentially, the president ignored formal information networks and played associates off each other.[74] He once declared, "I never let my right hand know what my left hand does…I am perfectly willing to mislead and tell untruths if it will help me win the war."[75] By pitting departments and subordinates against each other, and duplicating advisory work across the US government, Roosevelt himself, as Dallek explains, "became a court of last resort on major issues and kept control in his own hands."[76] The system allowed Roosevelt to retain his authority, deflecting partisan and interest groups while not allowing the bureaucracy to dictate his options or decisions.[77] Because of congressional resistance and his own governing style, Roosevelt's changes were highly personalized and ad hoc, setting the stage for piecemeal, ineffective post-war reforms. Simply put, Roosevelt created a system that only worked for him, but nevertheless influenced post-war attempts to reform US National Security architecture.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt created a White House system of operations that worked for him and offered the men who followed him some useful, if limited, methods of running the executive branch. FDR formally changed government architecture where he could, but also invented and used ad hoc agencies to handle domestic and foreign affairs. Although Roosevelt had a multitude of advisors, he kept control of American foreign policy. In general, the American political establishment, including President Truman, viewed Roosevelt's system as a success because of the Second World War. They largely attributed the American wartime success to their

---

[74] Richard E. Schroeder, *The Foundation of the CIA: Harry Truman, the Missouri Gang, and the Origins of the Cold War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2017), 43; Neu, "The Rise of the National Security Bureaucracy," 86.
[75] As quoted in, Schroeder, *The Foundation of the CIA,* 43.
[76] Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy,* 532.
[77] O'Neill, *A Democracy at War,* 102.

seemingly superior organizations and coordinated strategic planning.[78] The Joint Chiefs of Staff system in particular, was viewed by Truman as one of the prime reasons that the United States won the Second World War. Truman apparently remarked that "if the Confederacy had had a military organization like the JCS, the South would have won the Civil War."[79] As a result, there were calls to institutionalize and streamline Roosevelt's reforms and ad hoc agencies. However, Roosevelt's system of organized chaos was impossible to replicate, and that impossibility complicated the formation of US National Security policy during the Cold War. Nonetheless, Roosevelt's war-time actions became a significant precedent for future administrations.[80] His war powers would be outclassed by the administrations that followed, including that of Richard Nixon, as presidents assumed the power to declare war and to keep military actions from the public.

The National Security Act of 1947

Following the Second World War, Congress believed it needed to formalize Roosevelt's administrative structure while making the architecture less personalized. For Congress, the National Security Act was intended to ensure presidents had formalized administrative support, and to enshrine the notion of the president consulting with foreign policy experts in all areas of government.[81] Many in Congress believed that Truman was a weak, incapable leader and that an institution like the National Security Council would, according to political scientist Robert

---

[78] Steven L. Rearden, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Volume I: The Formative Years, 1947-1950* (Historical Office: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1984), 16-17.
[79] As quoted in, Lawrence J. Korb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff: The First Twenty-five Years* (Indiana University Press, 1976), 15.
[80] Suri, *The Impossible Presidency,* 169.
[81] Dickinson, *Bitter Harvest,* 165.

Johnson, "provide a partial institutional substitute for a more adequate President."[82] Congress, as a whole, judged Truman was incapable of guiding the United States in the emerging Cold War environment, and believed that he needed formalized assistance.[83]

Congressional proponents of the National Security Act also pushed permanent government reorganization as a Cold War measure. They believed that, with the rising threat of communism and the emerging conflict with the Soviet Union, the United States could not return to its prewar, uncoordinated system.[84] The Act's stakeholders were confident that, with the advent of the Cold War national security encompassed more than traditional foreign policy. They recognized that multiple departments, not just the State Department, were involved in protecting American national security. As such, proponents of the Act argued that the president needed a way to coordinate national security policy and to organize the information and recommendations from all pertinent departments and agencies.[85] Congressional leadership, along with President Truman, concluded (in the words of historian Stanley L. Falk) that the United States needed "a far better and more sophisticated national security structure" than ever before.[86] That need was intensified by ongoing questions about the US military. The United States was unwilling to demobilize completely, given the emerging Cold War pressures, and congress and had to decide on the fate of the wartime agencies. Chief among these agencies was the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Office of Strategic Services. Congress and the president had to figure out if these agencies were to have formal statutes, and where they would reside within the structures of the

---

[82] Robert H. Johnson, "The National Security Council: The relevance of its past to its future," *Orbis* 13:3 (Fall 1969), 711.
[83] Anna Kasten Nelson, "President Truman and the Evolution of the National Security Council," *The Journal of American History* 72:2 (Sept., 1985), 361.
[84] Dickinson, *Bitter Harvest,* 165; Rearden, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense,* iii.
[85] Sidney W. Souers, "II. Policy Formulation for National Security," *The American Political Science Review* 43:3 (June 1949), 535.
[86] Falk, *The national Security Structure,* 4.

federal government.[87] The National Security Act of 1947 represents the government's attempt to institutionalize war-time decision-making structures and prepare the United States for the Cold War. This Act, particularly with the creation of the National Security Council, would permanently alter the architecture of the United States' government.

Truman initially supported the creation of a new National Security system with the understanding that he needed assistance in managing the new postwar world. He acknowledged that the post-war world made it imperative to change the national security architecture and shared Roosevelt's belief that the president needed new capacities. But Truman did not want to replicate Roosevelt's architecture. He believed Roosevelt's method of governance had actually hurt FDR's policy making abilities. FDR, Truman thought, had been forced "to make decisions sometimes 'by guess and by God,'" and Truman viewed that as "not a very satisfactory way to do business."[88] Truman also recognized that the burgeoning Cold War environment made changes to the national security architecture imperative. Truman believed the US government architecture and "antiquated defense setup of the United States had to be reorganized quickly as a step toward insuring our safety and preserving world peace."[89] As historian Anna Kasten Nelson argues, Truman believed they were "living in a world as sensitive as a can of nitroglycerin" and he needed an "exact weighing of political and military factors" for decision-making.[90]

Policymakers recognized the utility of the JCS, particularly in controlling the seemingly independent military departments. Truman also wanted to take the JCS one step further and unify

---

[87] Dorwart, *Eberstadt and Forrestal,* 69.
[88] As quoted in, Sarah L. Sale, *The Shaping of Containment: Harry S. Truman, the National Security Council, and the Cold War* (Brandywine Press, 1998), 15.
[89] As quoted in, Sale, *The Shaping of Containment,* 16.
[90] Nelson, "President Truman and the Evolution of the National Security Council," 361.

the American armed services. The president and other proponents thought unification would strengthen the military establishment and improve coordination between the diplomatic and military sides of US foreign policy.[91] General George C. Marshall, the Army's Chief of Staff during WWII, was one of the first to suggest that a single military department be created out of the existing War and Navy Departments.[92] Political insiders, however, knew that interservice cooperation and coordination, nevermind unification, was no easy matter. As Bert Cochran aptly explains, "the Army and Navy had historically developed as separate sovereignties" that only cooperated in extreme circumstances and the iron control of the wartime JCS.[93]

In Truman's assessment, military unification was one of the necessary administrative changes to ensure better decision-making.[94] The new president wanted a unified military system with a singular chief executive responsive directly to him.[95] Truman thought he "should not personally have to coordinate the Army and Navy and Air Force" and "should be able to rely for that coordination upon civilian hands at the Cabinet level."[96] In his postwar redesign plans, Truman was inspired by his own observations as Chairman of the Senate Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program. He was also drawing on the War Department program of military unification, originally proposed by George C. Marshall, in 1942.[97] The Army program, as historian Aaron O'Connell explains, entailed a "single, hierarchical system of staff

---

[91] Douglas T. Stuart, *Creating the National Security State: A History of the Law that Transformed America* (Princeton University Press, 2008), 73; Robert Cutler, "Foreword" in Timothy W. Stanley, *American Defense and National Security* (Washington, D.C.,: Public Affairs Press, 1956), v.
[92] Caraley,*The Politics of Military Unification,* ix.
[93] Bert Cochran, *Harry Truman and the Crisis Presidency* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1973), 284.
[94] Pemberton, *Bureaucratic Politics,* 48.
[95] Brian Waddell, *Toward the National Security State: Civil-Military Relations during World War II* (Praeger Security International, 2008), 131.
[96] As quoted in, Caraley, *The Politics of Military Unification,* 84.
[97] Hoopes and Brinkley, *Driven Patriot,* 325; Anna Kasten Nelson, "National Security I: Inventing a Process (1945-1960)," in Hugh Helco and Lester M. Salamon, eds., *The Illusion of Presidential Government* (Westview Press, 1981), 231.

organization" headed by "a chief of staff of the armed forces—a single military officer, serving under the secretary of defense."[98]

When Truman proposed military unification, in a message to Congress on 20 December 1945, he called upon the experiences of the Second World War. He contended "there is enough evidence now at hand to demonstrate beyond question the need for a unified military department." In his proposal, Truman argued that the United States "paid a high price for not having" a unified establishment, and that they "had two completely independent organizations with no well-established habits of collaboration and cooperation."[99] The president acknowledged that the Joint Chiefs of Staff was temporary solution, but he contended that the JCS was not enough. In Truman's understanding, the JCS required "voluntary cooperation" that might not be present in the postwar period when "defense appropriations grow tighter" and "conflicting interests make themselves felt in major issues of policy and strategy."[100] For Truman, military unification was key to presidential control of the armed services and ensuring United States national security in the postwar world.

However, Truman's reorganization desires would not come to fruition, and the subsequent fights over the shape of the national security architecture and military unification would cast a long shadow. Simply put, the struggles over military unification and the resultant National Security Act were tense and unresolved, and they left loosely-framed statues and unclear roles. The Department of the Navy and the Marine Corps complicated the issues of military unification. In particular, the Navy wanted to keep its autonomy and feared becoming

---

[98] Aaron B. O'Connell, *Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps* (Harvard University Press, 2012), 119.
[99] As quoted in, Hoopes and Brinkley, *Driven Patriot,* 327.
[100] As quoted in, Hoopes and Brinkley, *Driven Patriot,* 327.

controlled by the Army, while the Marines feared unification would lead to their demise as a separate service. The Navy felt coordination, not unification, was the solution.[101] Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal was firmly opposed to unification, publicly couching his opposition in ideas of state and government centralization. He argued that unification would concentrate too much power in the hands of too few, and could lead to a dictatorship.[102] Navy Representatives also argued that the proposal for a Secretary of Defense would create too much authority in one man, and that collective decision-making led to more rational, considered decisions.[103] In his Congressional testimony, Forrestal refuted the president's logic. He contended that the lesson of the Second World War was that existing arrangements were ideal, for they had "in less time than was believed possible, attained complete victory in the greatest war of history."[104] The Navy, in public statements and Congressional testimony, also emphasized that unification was not necessary. The department argued that unification may be an impediment to the smooth operation of the armed forces, contending that a single department would be too large.

The Navy fought Truman's unification plans with the Eberstadt Report. Forrestal understood that he needed an alternative plan to present in the unification controversy. Congress was pushing hard to reform the current system, recognizing that the national security policymaking architecture was inadequate in the Cold War system, and Forrestal needed to address these concerns. He sought the advice of his friend Ferdinand Eberstadt, an investment banker and lawyer. In his letter, on 19 June 1945, Forrestal asked Eberstadt to address whether unification would actually help US National Security, and if not, what would assist the United

---

[101] Robert J. Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945*-1948 (University of Missouri Press, 1977), 139.
[102] Dorwart, *Eberstadt and Forrestal,* 86.
[103] Caraley, *The Politics of Military Unification,* 50.
[104] As quoted in, Caraley, *The Politics of Military Unification,* 50.

States in protecting its National Security?[105] In his answers, Eberstadt argued that while the Second World War demonstrated coordination problems, unification was not the answer, but rather a "dangerous experiment."[106] He emphasized that the current plans would not bring "stronger organizational ties" or improve United States National Security.[107] In his pivotal report, Eberstadt suggested that the Joint Chiefs of Staff be institutionalized, with the Secretaries of War, Navy and Air as members. He also proposed a National Security Council and a National Security Resources Board (NSRB) to assist in the creation of US National Security Policy.[108]

Eberstadt's Report was problematic. It was produced for the Navy and held to the party-line that centralized authority would produce flawed decision-making. Eberstadt also erroneously assumed that the JCS could continue to effectively function in its wartime form.[109] Nonetheless, the Eberstadt report provided the Navy with an alternative vision for the postwar world and set the stage for a lengthy unification battle.[110]

Truman's plans for military unification also faced severe opposition from the Marine Corps. The Marines' believed unification would severely minimize their role, if not destroy the Corps altogether.[111] Similar to the Navy, the Marines believed unification would give the Army too much power. The Corps publicly contended that unification plans would erode the principal of civilian control and bring militarism into national politics.[112] The Marines drew on larger concerns about growing presidential power in their opposition to unification. In the aftermath of World War II, there were renewed concerns about presidential power and overreach. The

---

[105] Caraley, *The Politics of Military Unification*, 40.
[106] As quoted in, Caraley, *The Politics of Military Unification*, 41.
[107] As quoted in, Caraley, *The Politics of Military Unification*, 40.
[108] Caraley, *The Politics of Military Unification*, 41; Hoopes and Brinkley, *Driven Patriot,* 321.
[109] Hammond, *Organizing for Defense,* 206.
[110] Stuart, *Creating the National Security State,* 89-90.
[111] Jon T. Hoffman, *Once a Legend: 'Red Mike' Edson of the Marine Raiders* (Presidio Press, 1994), 340.
[112] O'Connell, *Underdogs,* 102, 119.

Marines distributed a briefing memorandum with these concerns to Congress. The memorandum argued that Truman's plans represented "an unprecedented invasion of the fundamental rights of Congress," and thereby were "the greatest and most subtle threat to our form of democratic government."[113] These arguments were effective in a Congress worried about their own postwar position. In the words of historian Aaron O'Connell, Congress "plucked the low-hanging fruit offered them by the Marines and threw it at the President and the Army."[114] The Marines' played on larger Congressional concerns about the balance of power, reacting to the president becoming the apex of power with too much power over the military establishment.

Defense reorganization was just one issue among many on the president's plate, and Truman did not have enough power or clout to force his unification plans. Truman was an inexperienced president in the midst of a tumultuous international situation, with the conclusion of the Second World War and the escalating slide towards the Cold War.[115] While unification was just one issue for Truman, it was a heady issue for the different departments. The different services thrust their own opinions and post-war plans into the void left by Truman.[116] Ultimately, Truman was forced to concede. The president did not have enough power to achieve the reorganization plans he sought.[117] The Navy and the Marines both had allies in the halls of Congress and there were also committee reorganizations, complicating how the unification legislation moved through Congress. The Military Affairs and Naval Affairs committees were

---

[113] As quoted in, O'Connell, *Underdogs,* 135.
[114] O'Connell, *Underdogs,* 139.
[115] Waddell, *Toward the National Security State,* 131.
[116] Waddell, *Toward the National Security State,* 132.
[117] Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis,* 202.

merged into the Armed Services Committee, with sectional divisions particularly strong in the Senate Committee.[118]

Still, as the Cold War heated up, there was renewed pressure from both Congress and the executive branch to 'fix' the US National Security Architecture to better prepare the United States for the perilous struggles ahead. In response to that pressure the Secretaries of the Army and Navy reached a compromise agreement that would form the basis of the National Security Act of 1947. The Patterson-Forrestal agreement proposed separate military departments, but with a Secretary of National Defense to coordinate operations. The Secretaries also agreed that the United States needed a National Security Resources Board and a National Security Council. They also advocated for the permanence of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[119] The opposition to military unification, from the Navy and Marine Corps, and the drawn-out battles about the US defense establishment complicated the eventual legislation. The statutes that resulted from these turf battles were severely crippled; they were compromises, not rational structures, and problems existed from the very beginning.

Regardless of its flawed, compromised statutes, the National Security Act of 1947 changed the landscape of the US Government. The Act established the Air Force as a separate service and made the Joint Chiefs of Staff permanent. By statute, the JCS were to be the primary military advisors. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had the mandate to plan for US military and aid programs, including contingency plans.[120] In the initial legislation, the JCS did not have a chief of staff, institutional access to the president, or control over the military budget.[121] The National

---

[118] Allan R. Millett, *In Many a Strife: General Gerald C. Thomas and the US Marine Corps, 1917-1956* (Naval Institute Press, 1993), 254.
[119] Rearden, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense,* 22.
[120] Korb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff,* 7.
[121] Caraley, *The Politics of Military Unification,* 182.

Security Act also instituted a Secretary of Defense. The new secretary had four responsibilities: including establishing "general policies and programs" for the US armed forces, exercising "general direction, authority, and control" over the different military branches, eliminating "unnecessary duplication or overlapping" and assisting with the military budget.[122] The Act did not establish a Department of Defense.[123]

The Origins of the National Security Council

Critically, for Nixon and the future of the presidency, the struggle over military unification resulted in the formation of the National Security Council. This powerful institution would be critical to President Nixon's architecture for National Security. As part of his report for the Navy, Eberstadt proposed a body to help the president coordinate national security policy. He believed that the relevant departments needed to "be in harmony with the main stream of problems," with access to all pertinent information. He thought this method would provide "a balanced judgment" and "effect a decentralized execution of their decisions."[124] Remember that Eberstadt's report was commissioned by the Navy who wanted a decentralized system. As a result, Eberstadt suggested a National Security Council to ensure the different bodies worked together.[125] In the Eberstadt report, the NSC was proposed as a "policy forming and advisory body."[126] But Eberstadt's suggestion contained the erroneous assumption that the NSC could be a war cabinet, and take over responsibility, which did not fit the US presidential system.[127] The concept of the NSC was carried forward in the long-winded National Security Act negotiations. But it was never entirely clear what role the Council would perform. While Eberstadt and the

---

[122] As quoted in, Rearden, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense,* 25.
[123] Caraley, *The Politics of Military Unification,* 182.
[124] As quoted in, Dorwart, *Eberstadt and Forrestal,* 101.
[125] Dorwart, *Eberstadt and Forrestal,* 101, 106.
[126] As quoted in, Keiser, *The US Marine Corps and Defense Unification,* 18.
[127] Hammond, *Organizing for Defense,* 211.

Navy conceived of the council as performing the executive secretary role, it still remained in the National Security Act even after the Act legislated a Secretary of Defense.[128] As well, how precisely the NSC would fit in the US government and relate to the presidency continued to vacillate. Different people advocated for different roles for the council: an advisory body, a coordinating council, a war cabinet, and an executive secretary, among others.

Proponents of the National Security Council concept, including Eberstadt, were influenced by the British Committee of Imperial Defense, and the chaos of the Roosevelt administration. The Committee of Imperial Defense was an ad-hoc committee instituted to coordinate British defense policy and serve as a war cabinet for the Prime Minister. For some in the US military establishment the idea of something akin to the British committee to help manage their war effort held promise. The idea of the NSC gained traction in Congress; members were concerned about the growth of presidential power under Roosevelt and Truman's inexperience. For these proponents, the NSC held the promise of rebalancing the relationship between Congress and the president, including molding presidential behavior. As political scientist Paul Hammond points out, "No doubt some of its supporters had wanted to devise an arrangement which would prevent a President from running things in the disorderly fashion that seemed to characterize Franklin D. Roosevelt's performance in the White House."[129]

Proponents of military unification had discussed the concept of a Defense Committee during the Second World War. US Army Chief of Staff Marshall had conferred with Churchill on the matter. Marshall also circulated Churchill's notes about the Committee to others in the US military establishment, including Roosevelt's Chief of Staff, Admiral William Leahy; James

---

[128] Hammond, *Organizing for Defense,* 211.
[129] Hammond, *Organizing for Defense,* 353.

Forrestal, the Secretary of the Navy; and Henry Stimson, US Secretary of War.[130] Ideas about an American version of the British Committee of Imperial Defense were complemented by previous attempts in the US government to coordinate US military efforts or have a war cabinet.[131] As well, the State, War, Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC), which was formed in 1945, was an early forerunner of the National Security Council. The SWNCC had emerged out of the weekly Secretaries meetings though the SWNCC was composed of the respective department's assistant secretaries.[132] Essentially, members of both Congress and the military establishment acknowledged that the military-diplomatic-political relationship did not work and was not appropriate for the burgeoning Cold War environment; the crucial question was what new structures should look like.

The designers of the National Security Council were caught up in the unification debates. As a result, the NSC was not carefully planned or designed to fit the US Government or help the President. Rather, the NSC was a mismatch of examples and concepts, and the product of compromise. As historian Michael J. Hogan explains, stakeholders' diverse positions and debates "produced a compromise that contained some of the worst features of both alternatives: a relatively decentralized system of decision-making that might be dominated by the military departments."[133] The council's inclusion in the National Security Act was part of the price Truman had to pay to gain support for his unification proposal, and he thought accepting the NSC would appease the Navy.[134] The president was more interested in having a Secretary of

---

[130] Alfred D. Sander, "Truman and the National Security Council: 1945-1947," *The Journal of American History* 59:2 (Sept., 1972), 369.
[131] Hammond, *Organizing for Defense,* 899.
[132] Lowenthal, *The National Security Council,* 7.
[133] Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 54.
[134] Nelson, "National Security I," 231; Rearden, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense,* 118.

Defense, and needed Forrestal's support in that area. [135] But, Truman only accepted a version of the council that did not force the president to attend meetings. By doing so, he kept himself from being forced to use the NSC or be bound by its advice.[136]

Within the drawn-out controversy over military unification the National Security Council was little more than a footnote, and little consideration was given to how the NSC would interact with other critically important executive branch actors, agencies, and departments. As political scientist, Amy Zegart argues, "the NSC system was never a major bone of contention" but rather "more of an accident—a by-product of a protracted, contentious battle between the president, the War Department, and the Navy Department."[137] In the Senate Armed Services Committee hearings, very few of the testimonials even touched upon on the NSC.[138] The notable exception is the testimony of Secretary of State George C. Marshall who foresaw the significant changes the NSC would wrought on US National Security policy. He noted, in a letter to Truman in early 1947, that the proposed council would bring "fundamental changes in the entire question of foreign relations."[139] This statement, however, was the limit of Marshall's critiques. The State Department, as a whole, did not worry about the proposal, or consider how the department would relate to the council. It is likely that the State Department did not perceive how important the National Security Council would become, viewing the debates as "inter-service squabbles" and not something that would affect the State Department.[140] Congress, too, accepted the need for the National Security Council, without fully reckoning with its possible impacts on its own

---

[135] Nelson, "National Security I," 232.
[136] Sander, "Truman and the National Security Council," 376-377.
[137] Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed by Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC* (Stanford University Press, 1999), 55.
[138] Nelson, "National Security I," 233.
[139] As quoted in, Nelson, "National Security I," 233.
[140] Sander, "Truman and the National Security Council," 380.

prerogatives.[141] The Congressional debates surrounding the NSC were shallow, and centered on membership and concerns about military domination of the new organization.[142]

Congress failed to clarify or legislate its own relationship with the National Security Council in the National Security Act of 1947. The NSC had been partially conceived by Congress, and many within the legislative branch believed it could help control presidential behavior, forcing the president to consult with pertinent departments and use specific decision-making channels. However, the actual National Security Council "did precious little to tie the fortunes of the NSC system to Congress," as Zegart notes.[143] There were no representatives of Congress as statutory council members, and the NSC was not bound to include Congress in its discussions or decisions. As well, in an oversight that many presidents including Nixon would take advantage of, NSC staff members were not subject to Senate confirmation or testimony.[144] Indeed, McGeorge Bundy, President John F. Kennedy's National Security Advisor, would later declare that the separation between Congress and the NSC was ideal. He noted, "Congress can't get into it. That's the most interesting thing about it."[145]

Proponents of the NSC designed the Council to both coordinate national security policy and assist the President.[146] In particular, the NSC was directed "to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign and military policies relating to the [US's] national security" and "to assess and appraise the objectives, commitments, and risks" as they related to the United States' "actual and potential military power and to make recommendations to the

---

[141] Lowenthal, *The National Security Council,* 11.
[142] Lowenthal, *The National Security Council,* 11.
[143] Zegart, *Flawed by Design,* 94.
[144] Zegart, *Flawed by Design,* 94.
[145] As quoted in, Zegart, *Flawed by Design,* 94.
[146] Nelson, "National Security I," 229-230; Andrew Preston, *The War Council: McGeorge Bundy, the NSC, and Vietnam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 39.

President on these matters."[147] The act's language was markedly ambiguous and did not direct how the NSC should be established or operated. As historian Douglas Stuart points out, the sections pertaining to the National Security Council, "fulfilled Napoleon's guidelines for a good constitution—they were short and vague."[148] The statutes served the interests of Congress, in enabling them to conclude the military unification battles. They also served Truman's interests, in not binding him to any type of assistance and allowing him to decide if and how to use the council.[149] Almost no one seemed to realize that the creation of the National Security Council was a paradigm shift in how the presidency could oversee and direct the emergent national security state. In fact, the Act was not necessarily revolutionary. However, it was a dramatic shift in that, presidents could, overtime, use its authority to permanently alter the architecture of the American government and the balance of power between Congress and the president.[150]

The Truman Presidency: The National Security Council and Presidential Power

From the beginning, presidential advisors realized that there were immediate structural problems with the National Security Council. The statutes simply did not lay out how the Council would operate, and it was not clear how the president or the Council's statutory members would relate to the new body. As a result, Council members intensely competed over the design and make-up of the NSC. Forrestal, in his new position as Secretary of Defense, expected to take control of the National Security Council, and recommended the NSC be

---

[147] As quoted in, Rearden, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense,* 118.
[148] Stuart, *Creating the National Security State,* 143.
[149] Stuart, *Creating the National Security State,* 143.
[150] David C. Unger, "The Politics, and Political Legacy, of Harry S. Truman's National Security Policies," in Mary Ann Heiss and Michael J. Hogan, eds., *Origins of the National Security State and the Legacy of Harry S. Truman* (Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2015), 165.

"housed as close as possible to the Secretary of Defense."[151] As John Ohly, a close associate of Forrestal, recalls, the new secretary "considered himself a kind of catalyst to make the Council operate" and his office requested "a very large portion of the policy papers."[152] Meanwhile, Secretary of State Dean Acheson worried that the NSC would become an interference on his department and responsibilities. As historian Douglas Stuart notes, the State Department "was trapped between an impossible option (challenging the logic of national security) and a deeply disadvantageous option (supporting the logic of national security that favored the agencies created by the 1947 National Security Act)."[153] Acheson feared that the military establishment and the new Secretary of Defense would diminish the role of State and run roughshod over foreign policy decision-making.[154] As a result, State alternated between pushing their positions on the Council and delaying responses to Council business.[155] But, the State Department became critical to the operation of the National Security Council. The NSC did not have a sufficient staff complement to prepare policy documents. As a result, State officials were integral to the preparation of policy papers, and their positions became dominant in the studies produced.[156] In his Jackson Subcommittee testimony, the NSC's first chairman, Sidney Souers acknowledged State's dominance of the Council. He testified that the Secretary of State "must inescapably be 'first among equals'" and be "the President's principal advisor on foreign policy."[157]

---

[151] Dorwart, *Eberstadt and Forrestal,* 176; As quoted in, Nelson, "President Truman and the Evolution of the National Security Council," 364.
[152] As quoted in, Rearden, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense,* 121.
[153] Douglas Stuart, "Preparing for the Next Pearl Harbor: Harry S. Truman's Role in the Creation of the US National Security Establishment," in Mary Ann Heiss and Michael J. Hogan, eds., *Origins of the National Security State and the Legacy of Harry S. Truman* (Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2015), 22.
[154] Robert J. Beisner, *Dean Acheson: A Life in the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 123.
[155] Johnson, "The National Security Council," 712.
[156] Nelson, "President Truman and the Evolution of the National Security Council," 369-370.
[157] Sidney W. Souers, "Statement of Adm. Sidney W. Souers, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, General American Life Insurance Co." in United States Senate, Committee on Government Operations, Subcommittee on

In the competition over how the NSC should operate and how the statutes should be interpreted, the Bureau of the Budget, and its Secretary James E. Webb, played a significant role in the eventual shape of the National Security Council. In gaining the blessing of the president to design NSC operations, Webb framed the NSC as a "further enlargement of the Presidential staff," and contended that it could help Truman "if organized and utilized in the proper manner." For Webb, the "proper manner" meant that the president's prerogative was retained, and Truman could make his own decisions.[158] Webb contended that Truman should not attend NSC meetings, thereby making the council advisory, and protecting the president's decision-making. As Webb noted, these adjustments were critical "to assure that the President's views are incorporated in policies and plans before they become so well matured that their rejection amounts to a reversal of interested officials."[159] In his design Webb drew on the expertise of Donald C. Stone, from the Bureau of the Budget, Division of Administrative Management. In his proposal, Stone maintained the President's control of the council, including ensuring Truman did not have to consult the council. Stone's amendments eliminated Senate confirmation of the Council (a crucial amendment for the future of the National Security Council). The Budget Bureau's suggestions enshrined the president's direction of the NSC and reaffirmed the president's ultimate control over foreign policy.[160]

Truman strongly distrusted the National Security Council and was adamant it would not erode any of his power. He believed it was infringement on his presidential power and refused to consult the NSC until the Korean War. As historian Robert Beisner notes, Truman "suspected"

National Policy Machinery, Organizing for National Security, Eighty-Sixth Congress, Second Session (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1960), 561.
[158] As quoted in, Nelson, "National Security I," 234-235.
[159] As quoted in, Sander, "Truman and the National Security Council," 384.
[160] Sander, "Truman and the National Security Council," 379.

the NSC "of being a Republican-invented Trojan horse that would strip him of his rightful authority in foreign affairs."[161] He contended in a July 1948 Council memorandum that the NSC was not to "determine policy or supervise operations" or implement policy.[162] Rather, Truman conceived the Council as an advisory board, "to formulate national security policy for the consideration of the President" who retained the "complete freedom to accept, reject, and amend the Council's advice."[163] Truman accepted that the NSC could be "a channel for collective advice and information…regarding the national security."[164] He later acknowledged that the NSC provided a venue to discuss foreign and national security policies. He wrote that it provided "a running balance and a perpetual inventory of where we stood and where we were going on all strategic questions affecting the national security."[165] Essentially, for President Truman, the Council was to be a Presidential tool, but only one of many in his toolbox and he reserved the right to take, modify or reject the council's advice. Truman wanted to retain his presidential prerogatives. Truman did not want any of his authority eroded and recognized that proponents of the NSC were inspired by the British Imperial Defense Committee, which rested on cabinet government and group responsibility.[166]

Truman's desire to retain presidential control of the National Security Council was supported by Sidney Souers, the first NSC Executive Secretary. Souers worked to ensure that the NSC was responsible only to the President.[167] In the work process, Souers ensured that all policy matters for discussion were cleared by Truman and focused on analyzing immediate problems

---

[161] Beisner, *Dean Acheson,* 123.
[162] As quoted in, Rearden, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense,* 120.
[163] As quoted in, Rearden, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense,* 120.
[164] As quoted in, Rearden, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense,* 120.
[165] As quoted in, Falk, *The National Security Structure,* 36.
[166] Hammond, *Organizing for Defense,* 230; Falk, *The national Security Structure,* 406.
[167] Hoopes and Brinkley, *Driven Patriot,* 354.

and issues most pertinent for Truman.[168] Souers agreed with the conception of the National Security Council as a presidential tool. In his testimony before the Jackson subcommittee, he argued that the NSC was a presidential mechanism. Souers also noted that consideration had been given "to prevent [the NSC] from becoming a decision-making agency in the foreign field."[169] Souers' successor as NSC Executive Secretary, James S. Lay, Jr., agreed with this conception of the NSC as an advisory body for the President. For Lay, as he wrote for *World Affairs* in 1952, the President's decisions were paramount and therefore the Council ensured that he "has the benefit of all the facts, views, and opinion of the responsible officials…and their considered collective judgment as to the best solutions."[170] But under Truman the role of the NSC advisor remained minimized. During the Truman presidency, the role was that of an executive secretary whose job was administrative not advisory. Souers, in particular, saw himself as a "neutral coordinator," making sure that all pertinent departments and agencies were represented.[171] He later wrote that "the executive secretary, an anonymous servant of the Council, operates only as a broker of ideas in criss-crossing proposals among a team of responsible officials" thinking himself to "be a non-political confidant of the President."[172]

During the Truman administration, the president was dissatisfied with the operation of the NSC. He believed the pertinent departments were jealously guarding their prerogatives and

---

[168] Hoopes and Brinkley, *Driven Patriot,* 354; James F. Lay, Jr., "Testimony," in Francis H. Heller, ed., *The Truman White House: The Administration of the Presidency, 1945-1953* (The Regents Press of Kansas, 1980), 206.
[169] Sidney W. Souers, "Statement of Adm. Sidney W. Souers, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, General American Life Insurance Co." in United States Senate, Committee on Government Operations, Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery, Organizing for National Security, Eighty-Sixth Congress, Second Session (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1960), 560.
[170] James S. Lay, Jr., "*World Affairs,* Summer 1952, 'National Security Council's Role in the US Security and Peace Program,' by James S. Lay, Jr., Executive Secretary, National Security Council," in United States Senate. Committee on Government Operations, Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery, Volume II; Studies and Background Materials (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1961), 159.
[171] Nelson, "President Truman and the Evolution of the National Security Council," 369.
[172] Souers, "II. Policy Formulation for National Security," 537.

individual viewpoints, and providing him with vague, compromise-riddled policy papers. As Souers acknowledged, "the Council is, and can be, no more than the product of interplay among its members."[173] During Truman's presidency, departmental subordinates were the key discussants in Council meetings, and staff were drawn from the different departments.[174] The composition of the NSC meant, as Policy Planning Staffer Paul Nitze, noted, that discussions were "a negotiation of the bureaucratic interests of the people involved" with "policy often a compromise" between the departments involved, containing vague language and no options.[175] George Kennan also noted these deficiencies in the Council. He testified to the Jackson Subcommittee that the Council "leads to endless compromises, both of substance and of language" and "weak recommendations."[176]

More than just the NSC, Truman was not satisfied with the whole of the National Security Architecture. He believed the presidency did not have the required support for its expansive national security role. In response to emerging problems, Truman ordered the Hoover Commission inquiry. Formally titled the Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch, the Hoover Commission worked from 1947 to 1949. It was a bipartisan effort, led by the former president, that investigated the executive branch and national security architecture.[177] Hoover's final report focused on how the president could receive better and more useful foreign policy information and assistance. As historian Anna Nelson explains, the Commission argued that Truman required "machinery to bring him more competent, complete advice, as well as to handle

---

[173] Souers, "II. Policy Formulation for National Security," 542.
[174] Corke, *US Covert Operations and Cold War Strategy,* 66.
[175] As quoted in, Corke, *US Covert Operations and Cold War Strategy,* 66.
[176] George F. Kennan, "Statement of Hon. George F. Kennan, Formerly Director of the Policy Planning Staff, Department of State, and US Ambassador to the Soviet Union," in United States Senate, Committee on Government Operations, Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery, Organizing for National Security, Eighty-Sixth Congress, Second Session (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1960), 808.
[177] Louis Galambos, "By Way of Introduction" in Louis Galambos, ed., *The New American State: Bureaucracies and Policies since World War II* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 2.

the prompt resolution of interdepartmental disputes."[178] The Commission also successfully argued that the president needed a larger staff complement. In Hoover's understanding, in order for Truman to "be held responsible and accountable to the people and the Congress" he needed "authority—the power to direct."[179] Continuing on, Hoover argued that a clear line of presidential authority needed to be established, with "a return line of responsibility and accountability from the bottom to the top."[180] Many of the Hoover commissions recommendations were implemented, particularly in strengthening civilian authority over national security affairs and increasing the Secretary of Defense's authority and control over military affairs.[181] The Hoover Commission's report was also critical in the 1949 National Security Act amendments.[182] The Hoover Commission critically helped to enshrine the strengthened authority of the President and consolidate the executive branch. Former President Hoover had successfully advocated for greater presidential authority; he believed the president was manager of the executive branch and needed the tools to fulfill that essential role.[183]

The Hoover Commission was not alone in seeking to reform the president's national security apparatus during the Truman administration. In particular, key figures of the military establishment recognized that there were problems in how the JCS, and new Secretary of Defense operated. Forrestal and Eberstadt believed the National Security Act was not living up to their high expectations. Initially, Forrestal and Eberstadt had pushed for the Council to be housed within the newly created Pentagon; they thought they could fix the flaws.

---

[178] Nelson, "National Security I," 240.
[179] As quoted in, Arnold, *Making the Managerial Presidency*, 148.
[180] As quoted in, Arnold, *Making the Managerial Presidency*, 148
[181] Galambos, "By Way of Introduction,"; Nelson, "National Security I," 240.
[182] Sale, *The Shaping of Containment,* 25.
[183] Pemberton, *Bureaucratic Politics,* 95.

Trying to repair the problems they perceived in the National Security Act of 1947, Forrestal and Eberstadt were critical to the 1949 amendments. Eberstadt's committee concluded that the newly created Secretary of Defense was weak and successfully argued for a Department of Defense to support his authority. The 1949 amendments also changed the JCS; Eberstadt successfully argued for a JCS chairman to improve and coordinate the work of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[184]Essentially, with Eberstadt's changes, the military services became departments in the Department of Defense rather than executive departments, and the individual secretaries were now under the "direction, authority and control" of the Defense Secretary.[185] The 1949 legislation also changed the composition of the National Security Council. The Vice President and the Joint Chiefs became statutory members and the service secretaries were removed from the Council.[186] Truman also shifted the NSC into the executive office and more directly under his control. The 1949 amendments consolidated presidential control of the NSC, making it a more of a malleable presidential tool. However, the amendments also strengthened the military establishment and made it more capable of interfering with the president's policies.

The foundations for Richard Nixon's reworkings of presidential power were laid during the immediate post-World War II years. During those years, under the pressures of the nascent Cold War, Truman and his advisors stretched the mandate of the presidency far beyond its original outlines. To contest Soviet power and to make the United States a global hegemon, Truman and his advisors believed it was necessary to put the United States on a permanent war footing and that only the president could manage that new national security imperative. In

---

[184] Rearden, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense,* 40; Dorwart, *Eberstadt and Forrestal,* 176.
[185] As quoted in, Waddell, *Toward the National Security State,* 146.
[186] Beisner, *Dean Acheson,* 123; Rearden, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense,* 118.

fundamental ways, Truman assumed the Congressional power to make war.[187] The Cold War environment and Truman's drive to manage that environment forced Congress to cede extraordinary powers to the presidency, including the ability to use nuclear weapons, negotiate tariffs, order military assistance and allocate funds abroad.[188] Truman believed even those powers were not enough to tackle the exigencies of the emergent new national security environment. In directing America's role in the world, he fundamentally did not believe he had to be responsive to Congress.[189] As Truman later wrote, "the Executive must decline to supply Congress with information" particularly when "Congress encroaches upon the Executive prerogatives."[190] In the face of the international challenges and political pressure at home, leading Congressmen believed that they had to accept the increased power of the president. The Speaker of the House, during Truman's administration, Sam Rayburn, aptly sums up Congressional acceptance of presidential power, arguing "America has either one voice or none, and that voice is the voice of the President."[191] As historian Bert Cochran so adeptly concludes, "the scepter remained" in Truman's control, as "the initiative, the big prestige, and with it, much of the power, had passed to the Executive." Essentially, Congress became subordinate and was split in different directions, with too many special interests, to be effectively involved in decision-making in anything more than an obstructionist role.[192]

The most extraordinary change in presidential power was the ability to go to war without a declaration from Congress. Truman took extraordinary powers in deploying American military

---

[187] Ginsberg, *Presidential Government,* 384; Mary Graham, *Presidents' Secrets: The Use and Abuse of Hidden* Power (Yale University Press, 2017), 83.
[188] Thomas G. Paterson, "Presidential Foreign Policy, Public Opinion, and Congress: The Truman Years," *Diplomatic History* 3:1 (Winter, 1979), 14.
[189] Larry Blomstedt, *Truman, Congress, and Korea: The Politics of America's First Undeclared War* (University Press of Kentucky, 2016), 183.
[190] As quoted in, Paterson, "Presidential Foreign Policy, Public Opinion, and Congress," 14.
[191] As quoted in, Paterson, "Presidential Foreign Policy, Public Opinion, and Congress," 14.
[192] Cochran, *Harry Truman and the Crisis Presidency,* 332; Falk, *The National Security Structure,* 131.

power.[193] Not only did Truman drop the atomic bomb without seeking Congressional approval, or even discussing the matter with Congress, but he also took US troops into Korea and started the Korean War without a Congressional declaration of war. Not only is it extraordinary that Truman did not seek a war declaration, but it is also notable that the decision was not controversial at the time. Congress accepted presidential power and Truman's decision to embroil the United States in a war, disguised as a police action. The acceptance of Congress is well illustrated by Senator Paul H. Douglas who contended that "the speed of modern war requires quick executive action."[194] The Korean War and the lack of a war declaration are the biggest illustrations of why it is no longer adequate to look to the founders to define the powers of the presidency. The Cold War President was established under Truman.

By the end of the Truman administration the president's power had expanded far beyond that envisioned by the writers of the Constitution. The institution of the presidency and the overall architecture of the United States government had already been dramatically transformed during the first half of the twentieth century. The president, incrementally and then all of a sudden, had become the undisputed leader of the United States, with vast powers over the US national security system, and new mechanisms, such as the National Security Council and an enlarged executive office, allowed the president to manage that power. But the new institutions and presidential power were more akin to a Jenga stack than a well-built tower and it left extensive room for Nixon's maneuvering, change, and manipulation.

---

[193] Paterson, "Presidential Foreign Policy, Public Opinion, and Congress," 14.
[194] As quoted in, Robert P. Saldin, *War, the American State, and Politics since 1898* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 162.

Chapter II: The Apprentice: Nixon Learning Under Eisenhower

In May 1958 Vice President Richard M. Nixon went on a goodwill tour for President Eisenhower in Latin America.[195] Nixon believed he was playing a critical role in improving the image of America abroad, and pushing back the tide of communism. But the trip nearly turned catastrophic in Venezuela, when Nixon and his wife Pat were assaulted at the airport and their motorcade was attacked. As Nixon later recalled, in his pre-presidential memoirs, the experience "was a real baptism" with "not just one but hundreds of people…on the balcony spitting down on us" as "Pat's new red suit, which she had purchased especially for this trip, being splotched."[196]The experience itself was humiliating for Nixon, but for the vice president the situation was made worse by the Department of State. In his understanding, the State Department's ineptitude had put him in a dire situation.[197]

Nixon's experience in Venezuela, and the vice presidency more generally, was a crucial learning experience for the future president. But, despite Nixon's own statements that his time under President Eisenhower was influential to his thinking on the presidency and foreign policy creation, scholars have only recently examined the relationship between Eisenhower and Nixon. Even then, there has been relatively little discussion of what Nixon gained from the experience and how it influenced the architecture of his presidency. Aside from the masterful analysis by Irwin F. Gellman, *The President and the Apprentice*, who focused more on Nixon's role in domestic politics, relatively little attention has been paid to the Nixon's place in the Eisenhower

---

[195] The following chapter is drawn from my published article in Presidential Studies Quarterly, published by Wiley. Ashley Lorraine Neale, "Presidential Preview: Nixon's Vice Presidency and Role in the Vietnam War, 1953-1955," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 49:2 (June 2019): 394-416.
[196] Richard M. Nixon, *Six Crises* (New York: Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1962), 215.
[197] Marvin R. Zahniser and W. Michael Weis, "A Diplomatic Pearl Harbor? Richard Nixon's Goodwill Mission to Latin America in 1958," *Diplomatic History* 13:2 (Spring 1989), 176-182.

administration or what he learned from his vice presidency. Instead, scholarship surrounding Nixon's role in the Eisenhower White House continues to follow old tropes that the two men disliked one another, or that they hardly met or spoke.[198] For instance, historian Jeffrey Frank only focused on a psycho-analysis of the relationship between Eisenhower and Nixon, advancing the ideas that Eisenhower was harsh and cold towards his vice president, and that Nixon sought to win the older man's approval.[199]

This chapter argues that Nixon, while he was vice president, learned about the administrative problems of both the presidency and the newly created national security structure. He also witnessed, first-hand, the problematic working relationship between the presidency and Congress, as well as the barriers the executive branch and bureaucracy placed before presidential policymaking. Specifically, Nixon's vice-presidential experiences taught him valuable lessons about the presidency that shaped his approach to the architecture of the US government and to the utility of the National Security Council within that policymaking architecture. In this chapter, I will first examine Vice President Nixon's developing relationships with Congress, the State Department and Defense Department. I will then analyze the creation and role of the National Security Council under Eisenhower, and Nixon's introduction to the NSC policy process. The last section will analyze critiques of the NSC and what Nixon may have learned from the Jackson subcommittee.

It is a familiar story to most 20th century US historians that Nixon craved a foreign policy decision-making structure that would allow him to construct foreign policy from the Oval Office.

---

[198]Irwin F. Gellman, *The President and the Apprentice: Eisenhower and Nixon, 1952-1961* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); See also: John W. Malsberger, *The General and the Politician: Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, and American Politics* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014); Jeffrey Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998); And for all the value of Gellman's work he focuses more on the domestic political relationship and the role Nixon played in bipartisan politics. Kimball's work focuses more on the policy lessons Nixon took from his time under Eisenhower.

[199] Jeffrey Frank, *Ike and Dick: Portrait of a Strange Political Marriage* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013).

As many scholars have argued, Nixon mistrusted the Washington bureaucracy. In particular, he could not stand the State Department. He believed that State Department officials willfully constrained his options and presidential authority.[200] Nixon believed the ranks of the government were inundated by elites from the Northeast who held him in disdain. Upon entering the presidency, Nixon did not mince words: he told his chief of staff, H.R. Haldeman, "Down in the government are a bunch of sons of bitches…We've checked and found that 96 percent of the bureaucracy are against us; they're bastards who are here to screw us."[201] Not only did Nixon believe that Democrats controlled Washington, but he also insisted the bureaucracy was incapable of fulfilling the needs of Americans, complaining that "we want voters to decide policies not bureaucrats who have never seen a farm or factory."[202] Nixon's critiques were largely formed during his vice presidency, as the observed the inner workings of the Executive Office, and its relationship to the bureaucracy. Nixon's increasingly fractious relationships with those bureaucrats during his vice presidency influenced how he would craft his presidency.

Developing Problems: Nixon and Rival Power Centers

Nixon was selected for the vice presidency largely as a result of his position in the House Committee for Un-American Activities (HUAC). His key role in the perjury conviction of suspected communist spy Alger Hiss elevated him into the front ranks of the Republican Party. However, the Hiss affair also made him serious enemies within the liberal government

---

[200] Nixon, Richard M. *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon,* 351-358.
[201] Haldeman Diaries, 20 June 1971, pg. 374.
[202] As quoted in, Margaret C. Rung, "Richard Nixon, State and Party: Democracy and Bureaucracy in the Postwar Era," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29:2 (June 1999): 421-437, www.jstor.org/stable/27551997, 442.

establishment or as Nixon saw it, the East-Coast Ivy-league educated elites. The affair also fueled Nixon's own mistrust of the State Department.[203]

Nixon understood how important the Hiss case was to his political advancement; it led directly to his selection as Eisenhower's running mate. But he also believed that much of the establishmentarian distrust of him was a result of his status as an outsider who had successfully taken down the ultimate East Coast elite insider, Alger Hiss. In Nixon's pre-presidential memoirs, he wrote that the case brought him "national fame" but also "left a residue of hatred and hostility" towards him.[204] Nixon believed this at the time, as well. He remarked during the 1953 presidential campaign that "[d]uring the Hiss-Chambers trail I was told in no uncertain terms that I had better be right concerning Hiss, or I would be a dead duck! I am convinced that I was right, but I am even more convinced that some sources still hope to make me a dead duck."[205] For Nixon, those sources were in the government, and in particular, the State Department.

Nixon's heightened concerns added to his already existing disdain for the East-Coast Ivy-League elite. For Nixon, Hiss and Truman's Secretary of State Dean Acheson were representatives of the East-Coast elite insiders.[206] As Nixon later recalled, government officials, including those in the State Department, objected to his "role in exposing Alger Hiss because they considered our investigation to be an attack on the liberal foreign-policy establishment."[207] Nixon also thought the mistrust of him in government stemmed from the fact that he brought to

---

[203] Jon Roper, "Richard Nixon's Political Hinterland: The Shadows of JFK and Charles de Gaulle," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 28:2 (Spring, 1998), 426.
[204] Nixon, *Six Crises,* 69.
[205] As quoted in, Gellman, *The President and the Apprentice,* 80.
[206] Perlstein, *Nixonland,* 31.
[207] Nixon, *In the Arena,* 249.

light a Communist conspiracy in the government, which meant that anti-communist investigations "could not automatically be dismissed as McCarthyism."[208]

Another effect of the Hiss Crisis, Nixon believed, was that press was out to get him. He had reasons to feel that way. Reflecting on the situation in his pre-presidential memoirs, Nixon argued, "One of the personal aftermaths of the Hiss case was that for the next twelve years of my public service in Washington, I was to be subjected to an utterly unprincipled and vicious smear campaign."[209] Apparently Nixon had been cautioned during the trial by Bert Andrew of the *New York Herald Tribune* that, "The worst thing you can do to a member of the press corps is to prove that he had been wrong on a major issue."[210] In Nixon's understanding, he had proceded to do just that. Nixon was convinced that during the case, the majority of the media had assumed that Hiss was innocent and thus, after he had proven them wrong, they were inclined to defame him to vindicate their own reputations.

The Hiss affair made Nixon distrust the State Department. But he had more reasons for distrusting the role of the State Department in the making of foreign policy. Indeed, Nixon came out of the vice presidency with contempt for the State Department. Worse, he believed that State was an ineffectual department. Nixon asserted that State forced its positions on the president. He argued that during his time as vice president he had seen how the department's position papers gave the President no options aside from those desired by the State Department.[211] Years later, he told Henry Kissinger that while, vice president, "he had seen the homogenized 'position' papers slowly wind their way to the top, giving the Chief Executive no choices other than what

---

[208] Nixon, *In the Arena,* 254.
[209] Nixon, *Six Crisis,* 70.
[210] Nixon, *Six Crisis,* 191.
[211] Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall, *America's Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 256.

'they wanted.'"[212] Kissinger, in his own memoirs, wrote that Nixon had told him that he had come to hate the State Department during his vice presidency. Nixon, he went on, "had very little confidence in the State Department. Its personnel had no loyalty to him; the Foreign Service has disdained him as Vice President and ignored him the moment he was out of office."[213] Nixon would come to have no reason to turn to the State Department when he entered the presidency.

Nixon mistrust of the State Department emerged throughout his vice presidency. Early on, he sought to limit or control the department's role in his various duties and actions. During his 1953 trip to Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Nixon gave explicit instructions to his staff to exclude the bureaucracy from his private meetings. His staff directions noted that "unless there is a necessity to have somebody for translating purposes the V.P. does not want to have anyone with him when he talks with representatives of foreign countries."[214] Nixon singled out the State Department for exclusion, directing that he did not want "any state dpt. Personnel or anyone else unless it is absolutely necessary for him to have an interpreter."[215] As well, Nixon complained to his administrative assistant Chris Herter, Jr., that although he was very happy with Herter's report after the Far East trip, it was unfortunate that Herter "did not get the dope wanted on the State Department."[216] Apparently Eisenhower had told Nixon "about some of the Foreign Service people slobbering over Adlai Stevenson when he visited over there" and wanted to know if it was true.[217] For Nixon, this information demonstrated the political biases of the supposedly

---

[212] As quoted in, Roger Morris, *Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), 63.
[213] Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1979), 11.
[214] "Trip: Far East Trip—1953 RN's Handwritten Notes" Laguna Nigel 1953 Far East; Richard M. Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers 1953 Far East Trip Subject File Box 1, RNPLM.
[215] "Trip: Far East Trip—1953 RN's Handwritten Notes" Laguna Nigel 1953 Far East; Richard M. Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers 1953 Far East Trip Subject File Box 1, RNPLM.
[216] "December 22, 1953 [Memorandum to Chris Herter Jr.]" Laguna Nigel 1953; Richard M. Nixon Pre Presidential Papers, Far Eastern Trip, 1953, Box 1, Folder: Far East Trip—1953 RN's Handwritten Notes, RNPLM.
[217] "December 22, 1953 [Memorandum to Chris Herter Jr.]" Laguna Nigel 1953; Richard M. Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers, Far Eastern Trip, 1953, Box 1, Folder: Far East Trip—1953 RN's Handwritten Notes, RNPLM.

non-partisan Department of State. Additionally, the vice president believed the State Department was prejudiced against him because he was not part of the East Coast establishment. Nixon complained that the State Department and Foreign Service had deliberately crafted a terrible schedule for his Far Eastern Trip, and planned "to hand in derogatory report on our posts with the exception of three of them" believing that "in most places they didn't cooperate, they didn't work out the schedules, etc."[218] Nixon's relationship with the State Department continued to decline throughout his vice presidency.

This deteriorating relationship hit rock bottom in May 1958, when Nixon was on another fact-finding mission and goodwill tour for Eisenhower, this time in Latin America. Because, the State Department misread the strength of Third World Nationalism and anti-US sentiment in Latin America, Nixon suffered a series of embarrassments during the trip. Specifically, Assistant Secretary of State Rubottom gave Nixon the impression that Peru would be a "pleasant interlude after some rather difficult experiences on some of our previous stops."[219] Rubottom assured Nixon that, despite some minor tensions in Peruvian-American relations, the country would still provide a gracious welcome and would not give the vice president any problems. However, Rubottom's advice could not have been farther from the truth. The vice president was pelted with fruit and met with a massive protest when he tried to visit the University in Lima. This humiliating ordeal was followed by a worse experience in Venezuela, when the president's motorcade was attacked and almost destroyed. American troops were deployed in a ready position in case of escalation or further attack to rescue the vice president. Nixon railed against

---

[218] "December 22, 1953 [Memorandum to Chris Herter Jr.]" Laguna Nigel 1953; Richard M. Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers, Far Eastern Trip, 1953, Box 1, Folder: Far East Trip—1953 RN's Handwritten Notes, RNPLM.
[219] As quoted in, Zahniser and Weis, "A Diplomatic Pearl Harbor" 174.

the troop deployment, and felt it not only diminished his stature, but would raise further issues with the ruling junta and further inflame anti-American sentiments.[220]

Nixon did have some good experiences with the State Department during his vice presidency. He got along well with Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. The Secretary, also politically savvy, sought out Nixon's advice on foreign policy and congressional relations. For instance, in August 1954, the two men discussed the administration's plans to offer flood relief to China. Nixon suggested which congressmen to consult and mused with Foster Dulles on how the aid might be received.[221] Nixon agreed that offering flood relief to China would be a good Cold War psychological victory.[222] The Secretary of State also notably consulted with Nixon about the American presence at the Geneva Conference. In a phone call on 9 July 1954, the two men shared their mutual concerns about the possible treaty giving credibility to Communism and wondered about the necessity of American intervention.[223] But for all Nixon's good relations with Foster Dulles, he still mistrusted the State Department and did not trust their policy advice.

Nixon also did not trust the State Department's expertise on preserving and promoting American international credibility. He believed the United States' international reputation and credibility were critical. But Nixon did not think the State Department was correctly dealing with this vital area of national security policy. Nixon understood that the Cold War was, in part, a psychological battle against communism, and worried about the international opinion of the United States. For instance, in an NSC meeting Nixon argued that American credibility was

---

[220] Zahniser and Weis, "A Diplomatic Pearl Harbor", 176-182.
[221] "August 9, 1954, Telephone Call to the Vice President," Dulles, John Foster, Telephone Conversation Series, Box 2, DDEL; "July 2, 1954, Telephone Call from the Vice President," Dulles, John Foster, Telephone Conversation Series, Box 2, DDEL; "August 3, 1954, Telephone Call to Mr. Nixon," Dulles, John Foster, Telephone Conversation Series, Box 2, DDEL
[222] "August 9, 1954, Telephone Call to the Vice President," Dulles, John Foster, Telephone Conversation Series, Box 2, DDEL.
[223] "July 9, 1954, Telephone Call to the Vice President," Dulles, John Foster, Telephone Conversation Series, Box 2, DDEL.

"lower now than ever before."[224] Nixon complained about State's approach to United States' international credibility. For example, in his handwritten notes before his 1953 Southeast Asia Trip, Nixon commented that the government did not acknowledge its "own limitations in understanding world problems" and refused to listen to the rest of the world. He also criticized the State Department's expertise, noting that their prowess expertise lay solely in Europe. For Nixon, State's knowledge gaps and lack of experts on Asia hampered their propaganda efforts. He argued that the State Department, and the US government more broadly, needed to "add to our knowledge of their backgrounds, their problems, their aspirations in order to enrich our understanding."[225] Nixon thought State was not doing enough to improve the American image abroad.

Nixon believed he had to act independently to improve the United States' international credibility; he had to work outside the State Department's ineptitude. In this vein, Nixon saw his international trips as both fact-finding expeditions and occasions to improve US credibility and perception abroad. As he privately noted before his trip to Southeast Asia in 1953, the purpose was to both "report to President" and "convey genuine affection of people of US for people of Asia—our desire to work with them for peace and freedom."[226] He also directed his staff to ensure that pictures were taken of him greeting local dignitaries on his overseas trips, believing the photographs would engender good will.[227]

---

[224] Memorandum by the Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Mutual Security Affairs (Nolting) to the Secretary of State, December 7, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, General: Economic and Political Matters, vol. 1, Part 1, eds. David M. Baehler et al. (Washington, DC, 1983), doc. 221.
[225] "Notes for Vice President's Press Conference on Trip to Far East, South and Southeast Asia, [September 15, 1953" Laguna Nigel 1953 Far East; Richard M. Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers 1953 Far East Trip Subject File Box 1, Folder: Trip to Far East—Press Conference, RNPLM.
[226] "Handwritten Notes" Laguna Nigel 1953 Far East Trip Subject File Box 1; Richard M. Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers 1953 Far East Trip Subject File Box 1, Folder: Trip to Far East—Press Conference, RNPLM.
[227] "Melbourne, Australia, October 18, 1953; Memorandum: To: Caraway, Herter, MacGregor ,and Watts" Laguna Nigel 1953 Far East Trip Subject File Box 1; Richard M. Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers 1953 Far East Trip Subject File Box 1, Folder: Trip to Far East—Press Conference, RNPLM.

Nixon's growing disdain for the State Department was matched by his growing mistrust for Congress. While Nixon often acted as a congressional liaison in the Eisenhower administration, his own relationship with Congress was never easy. Nixon had occasion to be outraged at congressional activities, which he believed undermined presidential policymaking. Nixon was particularly galled by Congressional interference in his own international efforts. For instance, on the eve of Nixon's 1959 summit with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, Congress proclaimed "Captive Nations Week." Congress did so, in an attempt to assert power in foreign policy. Congress was drawing attention to the Communist dictatorships and attempting to condemn the Soviet Union in the ongoing propaganda war. Khrushchev saw Congress's proclamation as inflammatory and immediately criticized Nixon and the US government. While Nixon attempted to explain the separation of powers in the US government to Khrushchev, the shadow of Congress's provocative criticism remained over most of Nixon's summit with the Soviets. As Nixon saw it, Congress had embarrassed him on the world stage.[228] For Nixon, his increasingly fractious relationships were the lens in which he understood his vice presidency and began shaping his own eventual presidential architecture.

Nixon in the Eisenhower National Security Architecture

Nixon's key introduction to the presidency was through the weirdness of the vice presidency.[229] Eisenhower believed that the vice president had to be included in the policy process. Having seen firsthand how woefully unprepared Truman was to assume the presidency upon the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Eisenhower wanted to ensure that Nixon would not be in the same situation should the worst happen. In his press backgrounder on the

---

[228] Hitchcock, *The Age of Eisenhower,* 419.
[229] For more on this topic see Lorraine Neale, "Presidential Preview: Nixon's Vice Presidency and Role in the Vietnam War, 1953-1955," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 49:2 (June 2019): 394-416.

duties of the vice president, Nixon noted this desire to have him involved and "know what is going on."[230] To that end, Eisenhower kept Nixon informed of the majority of his decisions, while welcoming the vice president's advice during NSC meetings. Nixon was a statutory member of the NSC, but his role was not a mere formality. The president made sure that the vice president was a welcomed member of the Council.

However welcome Nixon was during NSC meetings, he did not take on the full statutory responsibilities of his position. When Eisenhower was incapacitated by multiple heart attacks, the operation of the US government fell to a committee of presidential advisors, not Nixon directly. As historian William Hitchcock explains, "the senior members of the Eisenhower administration quickly moved to limit Nixon's authority" and Chief of Staff Sherman Adams and Attorney General Brownell initiated a staff system to manage the administration.[231] Nixon went along with these limitations, personally worrying about overstepping his boundaries. He did not want the public to believe he was attempting to take power from the beloved president and war hero. As Nixon later recorded, his movements "had to be made with caution, for even the slightest misstep could be interpreted as an attempt to assume power."[232] Therefore, for all Nixon learned in his vice presidency, he never played a direct role in exercising executive power.

Despite such limits, during his time as vice president, Nixon watched closely as President Eisenhower reinvented the national security decision-making process by revamping the power and purpose of the National Security Council. As discussed in the first chapter, the National Security Council was originally designed at the onset of the Cold War to organize the information and recommendations from all pertinent departments and agencies for the president.

---

[230] "Richard Nixon Handwritten Notes; Duties of the Vice President," Pre-Presidential Executive Branch, Box 3, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum (RNPLM).
[231] William I. Hitchcock, *The Age of Eisenhower: America and the World in the 1950s* (Simon & Schuster, 2018), 283-284.
[232] Nixon, *Six Crisis,* 134.

The belief was that US foreign policy and National Security concerns had grown too large to be the purview of only one agency.[233] Under President Truman, the NSC was not utilized; Truman saw it as both inconsequential to his policymaking and a threat to his authority. But upon becoming president, Eisenhower was determined to create a streamlined process that would better serve his foreign policy making. He wanted a body to advise him on foreign policy like the way cabinet-level executive departments counseled the president on domestic policy considerations.

To accomplish this task, Eisenhower turned to the NSC. Eisenhower believed in the original rationale that had led to the creation of the NSC; that the Council would help the United States effectively wage the emerging Cold War. During his presidential campaign, he had promised to revitalize the NSC. He had openly criticized President Truman's failure to take advantage of the new agency.[234] Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, agreed that that under Truman the NSC did not fulfill its intended purpose. Dulles believed that Truman's NSC had failed to serve presidential decision-making. He thought the NSC had actually made problems worse and redirected even more responsibility onto the Secretary of State.[235]

Nixon watched as Eisenhower reconstructed the NSC to bring key people across the executive branch together to create strategic frameworks for foreign policy. As General Andrew Goodpaster, Eisenhower's staff secretary, later recalled, for Eisenhower, "the guiding purpose" of the NSC was to "aid the President in the discharge of his responsibility" in national security

---

[233] Stanley L. Falk, *The National Security Structure* (Washington, DC: Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 1967), 4.
[234] Anna K. Nelson, "The 'Top of Policy Hill': President Eisenhower and the National Security Council," *Diplomatic History* 7:4 (Fall 1983): 307-326, 308.
[235] Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (Oxford University Pres, 1998), 68.

decisions.[236] Nixon believed that Eisenhower used the NSC to successfully create a system where the right people could come together to weigh in on and discuss policy options and all of their relevant implications, as individuals and not as representatives of their departments.[237] Essentially, for Eisenhower, the NSC would help to organize involved parties, as well as the relevant and pertinent information for decisions. In Eisenhower's policymaking architecture, the NSC was a vital tool in assessing crisis areas, and creating the president's desired strategic frameworks.[238] The NSC helped ensure constant focus on national security concerns. Eisenhower later remarked, "planning is everything" for "if you haven't been planning, you can't start to work, intelligently at least."[239] As historian William Hitchcock explains, "in the hour of crisis Ike wanted a disciplined, well-trained staff and system already in place, ready to work"; the NSC filled that need.[240] Nixon watched Ike's NSC operations with enthusiastic interest. He observed how Eisenhower used the NSC to reach sound decisions; the NSC enabled the president to gather pertinent individuals and work out, in advance of crises, suitable responses to national security problems.

During his vice presidency, Nixon witnessed exactly how President Eisenhower transformed the National Security Council into an effective mechanism to help drive the president's decision-making. To redesign the NSC, Eisenhower had turned to Robert Cutler, a former Army officer and assistant to the War Secretary.[241] Working closely with the president, Cutler made the NSC into a highly-structured and important policy planning system which

---

[236] Emphasis in original "15 December 1968; Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger," General Goodpaster, National Security Council Files Henry A. Kissinger Office Files HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 1, RNPLM.
[237] Gellman, *The President and the Apprentice*, ix.
[238] Bowie and Immerman, *Waging Peace,* 43, 68.
[239] As quoted in, Hitchcock, *The Age of Eisenhower*, xix.
[240] Hitchcock, *The Age of Eisenhower,* xix.
[241] Robert Cutler, *No Time for* Rest (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1965), 150, 219.

informed and coordinated Eisenhower's decisions.[242] Under Eisenhower, the NSC had responsibility for both generating its own policy reports and assisting relevant departments.[243] The NSC also became an open forum for regular discussions about national security problems. The open nature of the NSC was a crucial part of the changes, as Cutler recalls. Eisenhower enjoyed listening to advisors debate, believing that "out of the grinding of these minds comes a refinement of the raw material into valuable metal."[244] Eisenhower used the NSC as a way to regularly analyze national security issues; it helped prepare him for foreign policy decisions and crises. While Nixon was not a central player in those NSC meetings, he regularly attended. He watched and learned not only about what was being discussed but how the president used the NSC to engineer his decisions.

Nixon also observed how Eisenhower changed the leadership of the NSC. One of the critical changes to the NSC under Eisenhower was the implementation of a Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. Truman had made a point of not having any one individual elevated in the National Security Council.[245] But, under Eisenhower, the new official was designated to head the Planning Board and help coordinate the operations of the National Security Council. The role was first fulfilled by Robert Cutler, who directed the development of comprehensive policy guidance, making sure that all pertinent bodies were included in the consideration.[246] However, within Eisenhower's NSC, Cutler was more of a facilitator and did not weigh in on policy discussions, nor try to interfere in relationships between the President and his advisors. In his Senate testimony, Cutler insisted that no personnel or "arrangement should

---

[242] Cutler, *No Time for Rest,* 366.
[243] Editorial Note, *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1952-1954, National Security Affairs, vol. 11, Part 1, eds. Lisle A. Rose and Neal H. Petersen (Washington, DC, 1979), doc. 49.
[244] Robert Cutler, "The Development of the National Security Council," *Foreign Affairs* 34:3 (Apr., 1956), 443.
[245] Nelson, "The 'Top of Policy Hill,'" 309.
[246] "Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, 15 December 1968," National Security Council Files Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 1, Folder: General Goodpaster, Nixon Library.

be proposed or put into action which will tend to cut across the lines of responsibility which run directly from the President or to his responsible department or agency."[247] Eisenhower also made use of Pete Carroll, and later General Andrew Goodpaster, as staff secretaries. These men were responsible for arranging the agenda and functions of the NSC and liaising with the pertinent departments.[248] But, there was no independent NSC staff in the Eisenhower system, as would develop during Nixon's administration. The NSC staff continued to be drawn from the departments involved. In fact, Cutler insisted that staff arrangements remain as they were, successfully arguing to the president that an independent staff would be "sterile and divorced from operational responsibility" and "would tend to intervene between the President and his cabinet ministers."[249] Nixon observed the importance of the National Security Advisor in the running of the NSC. He commented in September 1955 that Eisenhower "has so developed and organized the National Security Council that, even in his absence, continuity in carrying out the purposes and policies of the President is assured."[250] Nixon would build on Eisenhower's changes to the NSC, strengthening the role National Security advisor role, and creating an independent NSC staff.

Nixon observed the development of the Planning Board as a crucial element of Eisenhower's NSC. This new board was directed, by the President, to "facilitate the formulation of policies" and produce policy reports that avoided "undesirable compromises" which did not

---

[247] "Statement of Gen. Robert Cutler," United States Senate, Committee on Government Operations, Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery, Organizing for National Security, Eighty-Sixth Congress, Second Session (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1960).
[248] "The National Security Process Chapter III: National Security Staffing in the White House; November 1968; International Social Studies Division," National Security Council Files Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files, Transition, Box 1, Folder: National Security Planning Material [3 of 4].
[249] As quoted in, Nelson, "The 'Top of Policy Hill,'" 313.
[250] "Outline of comments by the Vice President at NSC meeting; Thursday, September 29, 1955," September 1955, Richard M. Nixon Pre-Presidential Executive Branch Files, Box 5, Nixon Library.

"conceal or gloss over real differences."[251] As Cutler noted in a 1956 article, "in the acid bath of the Planning Board, all points of view are represented, heard, explored and contested. There is in this process a guarantee against *ex parte* judgments against imprecise guidance to the Chief Executive and against suppression of conflicting views."[252] Nixon observed how the Planning Board facilitated the work of the Council discussions, by preparing briefing papers. The Board worked to ensure different viewpoints were laid out and that all members understood the nuances of a foreign policy issue.[253] Or as Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Dillon Anderson noted, in his 1956 article in *The Atlantic,* the planning board enabled every policy suggestion to be "tested in lengthy discussions" and incorporate the views of the participating departments.[254] Nixon would have also heard Eisenhower instruct participants to see themselves as advisors, not departmental representatives, and attempted to break departmental loyalties.[255] The planning board also had the side effect of forcing agencies to think about critical national security issues, and, as historian Anna K. Nelson explains, often "served to resolve petty interdepartmental quarrels while co-opting the participants into support of the final papers that defined general policy."[256] Nixon observed how the Planning Board played a crucial role in the NSC by gathering intelligence, generating policy suggestions, and breaking departmental loyalties.

---

[251] *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1952-1954, National Security Affairs, Vol. II, part 1, eds. Lisle A. Rose and Neal H. Petersen (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1979), document 49.
[252] Cutler, "The Development of the National Security Council," 444.
[253] Statement of Gen. Robert Cutler, Formerly Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. United States Senate. 1960. Committee on Government Operations. Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery: United States Government Printing Office.
[254] Dillon Anderson, "The President and National Security," *The Atlantic* (Jan., 1956), 44.
[255] Fred I. Greenstein and Richard H. Immerman, "Effective National Security Advising: Recovering the Eisenhower Legacy," *Political Science Quartery* 115:3 (Autumn, 2000), 340.
[256] Anna K. Nelson, "The Importance of Foreign Policy Process: Eisenhower and the National Security Council," 111-125, in Gunter Bischof and Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: A centenary Assessment* (Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 124.

Nixon also observed the creation of the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) as the other central aspect of the Eisenhower redesign. The OCB was designed to ensure that presidential decisions were carried out and to coordinate the agencies involved. Cutler tasked it with "better dovetailing of the programs of the departments and agencies responsible for carrying out approved national security policies."[257] As Special Assistant Anderson noted, the OCB was "designed to round out the policy cycle by gearing departmental action to the achievement of national security objectives."[258] Nixon watched as the OCB extended the responsibility of the NSC as a whole to help the president manage national security, by coordinating policy execution.[259] While Nixon was not directly involved in the operations of either the Planning Board or the Operations Coordinating Board, he had the opportunity to closely observe their functioning and how Eisenhower used them.

Along with observing the utility of the formal side of the NSC, Nixon also saw the growing strength of the Central Intelligence Agency and Eisenhower's reliance on the Agency's covert operations for solving foreign policy issues. As a part of Eisenhower's change to American strategies for combating the Cold War, the president shifted to using covert action. He felt covert operations represented "an inexpensive alternative to military conflict."[260] The shift began with Operation Ajax to depose the Prime Minister of Iran, Muhammad Mossadegh, and Operation Pbsuccess to overthrow the democratically elected government of Colonel Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954. Nixon likely did not know the full extent of Eisenhower's reliance on the CIA for foreign policy, as growth of the CIA's covert activities was kept from almost all the administration.

---

[257] Cutler, "The Development of the National Security Council," 448.
[258] Anderson, "The President and National Security," 45.
[259] Statement of Gen. Robert Cutler, United States Senate, 1960.
[260] As quoted in, Nick Cullather, *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952-1954* (Standford: Standford University Press, 1999), 35.

Even as Vice President Nixon was studying President Eisenhower's developing policy process, it is important to note that he only received a limited view of presidential machinery and operations in the Eisenhower White House. For Eisenhower, the NSC was only one part of his foreign policy decision-making process.[261] Despite how vital Eisenhower considered the National Security Council, he did not make decisions there. Rather, the president had a routine of consulting with his advisors in small groups and making decisions in the Oval Office. As political scientist Fred L. Greenstein explains, in the Eisenhower presidency, "the formal and informal national security processes…complemented one another" and the formal NSC process was critical for "informing Eisenhower's principal national security aides and welding them into a cohesive team" as well as for creating the important formal strategic frameworks.[262] Nixon's view of Eisenhower's political machinery was also limited because Eisenhower was not always truthful to the Council. Eisenhower often used the NSC to test foreign policy ideas, not presenting his true opinions for consideration.[263] As well, Eisenhower had a habit of meeting off the record with key advisors, particularly Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.[264] Nixon was almost never privy to those meetings. As a result, Nixon did not have a complete view of the Eisenhower architecture.

Nixon's role in the Eisenhower White House limited his view of Eisenhower's foreign policy decision-making. During the Eisenhower administration, the NSC was primarily used for contemplative, long-range planning, and drawn out crises like Vietnam. As historian Anna K. Nelson points out, "It was easier for the NSC to play a role in a crisis that could be anticipated

---

[261] Nelson, "The Importance of Foreign Policy Process," 113.
[262] Fred I. Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1982), 337.
[263] Lloyd C. Gardner, *Approaching Vietnam: From World War II Through Dienbienphu* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1988), 200.
[264] Richard H. Immerman, *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War* (Princeton University Press, 1990), 13.

than one which appeared unexpectedly."[265]As a result, Nixon was largely unexposed to crisis decision-making. For instance, the National Security Council and Nixon were not involved in decision-making around the Suez crisis in August 1956, which came as a surprise to the Eisenhower administration.[266] When the Suez crisis erupted, Foster Dulles successfully argued to Eisenhower that the NSC should not be brought in, particularly since the fast-changing nature of the conflict meant that the NSC's advice would be quickly outdated.[267] Similarly, once a decision had been reached and foreign policy implemented, areas of concern moved away from the Council's purview. For example, after Eisenhower had decided on the US commitment to the Vietnam, the matter was increasingly in the hands of the military and was not a significant matter for NSC discussion. Thus, Nixon had an incomplete view of the presidency, with his involvement largely restricted to the NSC and formal decision-making structures. Nevertheless, as the next section will demonstrate, Vice President Nixon did gain valuable insights about how information and decisions could be filtered and disseminated though the presidency.

Nixon's Understanding of the Eisenhower Architecture

While Nixon did not have a central position in the Eisenhower administration's policymaking, his experiences in and around the presidency proved foundational in determining how he understood the architecture for National Security decision-making. In particular, Nixon was closely involved in the administration's decision-making on Vietnam, which allowed him to observe how that structure worked under Eisenhower.

Nixon's experiences with the Eisenhower administration and Vietnam influenced his notions of presidential authority. Nixon disagreed with Eisenhower's decision to commit the

---

[265] Nelson, "The 'Top of Policy Hill,'" 318.
[266] Although the NSC had previously considered policies for the region, it did not anticipate any conflicts.
[267] Nelson, "The 'Top of Policy Hill,"" 318.

United States to the concept of united action for Indochina.[268] Nixon had the impression that Eisenhower had privately decided against American involvement in any form. Though Eisenhower spoke of an joint allied effort, he did not personally work towards that reality. The president did not press his allies for support and only contacted British Prime Minister Winston Churchill once about the prospect of a coalition.[269] Nixon also knew that the president had let Congress constrict his options.[270] Nixon observed the limitations Congress placed on Eisenhower's ability to wage war. These experiences likely played a role in Nixon's preference for secrecy and exclusion of Congress in his own administration, which heightened the power of the presidency.

Nixon watched as Eisenhower committed the United States to Vietnam and let the military take control of decision-making. On 7 May 1954, the Vietminh overran the French garrison, and shortly afterwards France sued for peace with the Geneva Accords. The Accords changed how Vietnam was perceived in the administration. As historian Fredrik Logevall explains, the Eisenhower administration may not have intervened at Dien Bien Phu but "in the years thereafter, they gambled that they could build a new state in southern Vietnam with a mercurial and unproven leader."[271] The Eisenhower administration continued economic and technical assistance to France and the emergent South Vietnamese government. The supposed

---

[268] Richard M. Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 199), 151; Immerman, *John Foster Dulles,* 137. Memorandum of Conversation by the Counselor (MacArthur), May 11, 1954, *FRUS,* 1952-1954, Indochina, vol. XIII, Part 2, eds. Neil H. Petersen (Washington, DC, 1982), doc. 861; The Ambassador at Saigon (Heath) to the Department of State, July 27, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Indochina, vol. XIII, Part 2, eds. Neil H. Petersen (Washington, DC, 1982), doc. 1089; The President to General J. Lawton Collins, November 3, 1954, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Indochina, vol. XIII, Part 2, eds. Neil H. Petersen (Washington, DC, 1982), doc. 1298.

[269] Memorandum of a Conference at the White House, May 5, 1954, *FRUS,* 1952-1954, Indochina, vol. XIII, Part 2, eds. Neil H. Petersen (Washington, DC. 1982), doc. 831.

[270] Melanie Billings-Yun, *Decision Against War: Eisenhower and Dien Bien Phu, 1954* (Columbia University Press, 1988), 111-113.

[271] Fredrik Logevall, *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* (New York: Random Hose Trade Paperbacks, 2013), 697.

"day we didn't go to war" was "merely postponed" and the US continued to take steps down the rabbit hole.[272] Though Eisenhower entangled the United States in the defense of South Vietnam from Communism, the issue was moved to the backburner and increasingly the matter was in the hands of the military. As historian David Anderson argues, "Vietnam ceased to be perceived as a crisis issue…and hence was less demanding of presidential attention."[273] As a result, Nixon watched Eisenhower relinquished some of his power; the military made decisions on Vietnam going forward, not the president.

Nixon observed the construction of the military industrial complex and the increasing congressional threat to presidential power and prerogatives. Coming into the presidency, Eisenhower vowed to restore American dominance while at the same time decreasing the defense budget.[274] To achieve this, Eisenhower's New Look emphasized covert action and a more cost effective military structure that was mobile and relied on nuclear intimidation and joint taskforces.[275] But, Eisenhower's New Look defense strategy ran into increasing political problems and was eroded by Congress and the military. The New Look was built on Eisenhower's military reputation, but Congress began to doubt Eisenhower's national security philosophy. During Eisenhower's second term, Nixon watched as members of Congress increasingly criticized the New Look program. He observed prominent members on both sides of the aisle express misgivings about reducing Army airpower and procurement procedures.[276] As historian E. Bruce Geelhoed points out, "The general in the White House provided the New

---

[272] George C. Herring and Richard H. Immerman, "Eisenhower, Dulles, and Dienbienphu: 'The Day We Didn't Go to War' Revisited," *The Journal of American History* 71:2 (Sept., 1984), 362-363.
[273] David L. Anderson, *Trapped by Success: The Eisenhower Administration and Vietnam, 1953-1961* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 204.
[274] Cullather, *Secret History,* 32, 35.
[275] Cullather, *Secret History,* 32, 35.
[276] *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1955-1957, National Security Policy, Volume XIX, eds., William Klingaman, David S. Patterson, and Ilana Stern (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1990), Document 2, Document 8.

Look with a respectability it might not have had otherwise" but "the New Look's political immunity wore thinner and thinner with each passing year."[277] As a result, Nixon observed growing Congressional-lobbyist factions threaten presidential programs.

Nixon also watched as Eisenhower let Congress, and fears of congressional intervention, dictate his policies in Vietnam. In the summer of 1954, US personnel in Vietnam, particularly Eisenhower's Special Representative in Saigon, General J. Lawton Collins, raised serious questions about Vietnamese Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem's suitability for leadership. Collins argued that Diem was becoming a dictator with no popular support base.[278] But Eisenhower was paralyzed with indecision, preoccupied with the Formosa crisis, and largely gave the decision to Secretary Foster Dulles. Nixon watched as Eisenhower choose to continue the American commitment to Vietnam, despite reservations. He saw how Eisenhower refused to confront Congress. The majority of Congress were enamored with Diem and thought he was the George Washington of Vietnam. As well, significant members of Congress put restrictions on Eisenhower's decisions, making their support of the American presence in Vietnam contingent on Diem's continued leadership.[279] For example, Senator Mike Mansfield forcefully recommended continuing assistance to Vietnam, and Diem in particular, to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Mansfield even suggested that Diem's continued presence was a requirement for continued humanitarian aid to Vietnam.[280] Nixon watched as the Eisenhower

---

[277] Bruce E. Geelhoed, *Charles E. Wilson and Controversy at the Pentagon, 1953 to 1957* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 117-118.
[278] David L. Anderson, "J. Lawton Collins, John Foster Dulles, and the Eisenhower Administration's 'Point of No Return' in Vietnam," *Diplomatic History* 12:2 (Spring, 1988), 127.
[279] As quoted in, Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 66.
[280] Anderson, "J. Lawton Collins, John Foster Dulles, and the Eisenhower Administration's 'Point of No Return,'" 134-135, 141.

administration was cowed by Congress and continued to support the increasingly unpopular South Vietnamese prime minister.

An Unstable Architecture: Continuing Problems in the Executive Office and National Security Architecture

Nixon had come to admire Eisenhower's management style, particularly his use of the National Security Council. But Nixon also had serious concerns about Eisenhower's architecture. He saw Congress and the military establishment erode presidential power. And inside the White House, Nixon believed that Eisenhower's National Security Council had some significant flaws. In 1958, when Special Assistant Gray attempted to improve the functioning of the NSC, among others Nixon pointed to the heavily formulaic council meetings as a problem. The vice president believed council meetings were overly lengthy and time consuming, particularly since, in Nixon's opinion, the meetings got too caught up in word choice.[281]

In 1960, Nixon began thinking seriously about what he had learned about the presidency. He was, of course, running to become Eisenhower's successor and he began planning what he would do were he to become the next president of the United States. Nixon's director of research, George Grassmuck, looked for expert advice. The campaign staff had already secured a copy of Henry A. Kissinger's work on the American international position and diplomacy. Then Grassmuck reached out directly to Kissinger. Grassmuck wanted Kissinger's views on how best to organize national defense. In a letter, Grassmuckk asked Kissinger, about his "current views on optimum organization for national security" and how to ensure that civilians, and the President in particular, remained in control of the military establishment. Grassmuck also asked

[281] Nelson, "The 'Top of Policy Hill,'" 323.

Kissinger for his opinion on the structure of the Defense Department and the role of the Navy in the Cold War.[282]

Nixon spoke directly with historian and State Department consultant William Y. Elliott about government architecture. Nixon wanted Elliott's opinions on how to improve the national security apparatus. Elliott forwarded Nixon a proposal on White House reorganization in which he argued that the National Security Council was crucial but needed to be improved to better respond to the president's will. Elliott told Nixon that Eisenhower and Cutler had blocked his proposed changes to the NSC. In his memorandum to Nixon, Elliott argued that Eisenhower failed to utilize the National Security Council to its full potential, particularly since the president had no National Security Advisor to help delineate priorities, and because the NSC staff was "completely incompetent to do this job and…[was] never conceived for that end."[283] He further argued the Council needed its own staff, concluding that the current NSC structure failed to strengthen presidential prerogatives. In Elliott's analysis, the current NSC structure meant that the president was:

> Prevented from having a really meaningful choice for decision by poor staff work and that is what the elaborate structure of compromise between the representatives of the Departments, with very different philosophies and interests, is likely to achieve without some better catalytic agent and more powers and central guidance than is presently afforded.[284]

Nixon found Elliott's arguments compelling. He would remember them. While he would not be able to implement such changes in 1961, Nixon's day would, of course, come.

---

[282] "August 29, 1960; To Kissinger" Folder: Kissinger, Henry A., Laguna Nigel; Richard M. Nixon Pre Presidential Papers Vice President General Correspondence; Box 414, RNPLM.
[283] "Memorandum: July 31, 1958; To: Nixon; From; William Y. Elliott," Folder: 1958 NSC, Pre-Presidential Papers of Richard Nixon; Robert E. Cushman, Jr. Files; PPS 325 Box 9, RNPLM.
[284] "Enclosure: Memorandum on Organization, July 31, 1958, in Memorandum: July 31, 1958; To: Nixon; From; William Y. Elliott," Folder: 1958 NSC, Pre-Presidential Papers of Richard Nixon; Robert E. Cushman, Jr. Files; PPS 325 Box 9, RNPLM.

During his vice presidency, Nixon began thinking about how best to organize the presidency and Oval Office. Nixon recorded in his post-presidential memoirs that he gained from the Eisenhower presidency an understanding that "the key to a successful presidency is in the decision-making process," and specifically that "matters brought before a President for decisions should be only those that cannot or should not be made at a lower level."[285] While respectful of Eisenhower's efforts, Nixon also saw problems. In his memoirs, he wrote that Eisenhower's "staff had too often cluttered his schedule with unimportant events and bothered him with minor problems that drained his time and energy."[286] As early as his 1959 speech to the Academy of Political Science, Nixon had already hinted at some of his concerns. Nixon argued that the current government structure was flawed. He observed that a better decision-making apparatus would allow the president to fulfill his election mandate. He told the Academy audience that "the primary function of the practicing politician…is to find ways and means for people to get those things they think about; to make the impractical practical; to put idealism into action."[287] Nixon's time would come but in the meantime he had clear ideas about how best to reconfigure national security architecture.

Nixon recognized that not only were there significant problems with government architecture but also that Eisenhower was part of the problem. Nixon shared Foster Dulles' belief that Eisenhower himself was part of the problem. The Secretary of State complained to former White House aide, C.D. Jackson, that although Eisenhower had been the best hope to "reorganize and reinvigorate" the US Government, it remained "unwieldy" and "practically unworkable."[288] Jackson concurred, privately recording his diary, that Eisenhower was "not a national or political

---

[285] Nixon, RN, 337.
[286] Nixon, RN, 337.
[287] Richard M. Nixon, "Reducing International Tensions," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 26:4 (May, 1959), 10.
[288] As quoted in, Brands, "The Age of Vulnerability," 985.

leader" and complaining that the president could "become momentarily fascinated by individual pieces of the international jigsaw puzzle" but that Eisenhower "does not seem to be able to see what the picture would look like when all the pieces were put together."[289] Nixon personally complained that Eisenhower got bogged down in the minor details and problems.[290] As a result, Nixon observed a still unstable architecture.

Nixon first encountered the NSC as a new institution. He watched as Eisenhower's initial structure faltered and was part of attempts to make it run more effectively. During Eisenhower's second term, Cutler instructed Nixon and other NSC members on how the NSC could best serve the president. Cutler reminded members that national security needed departmental integration and that Eisenhower's policy was to "not permanently…assign an area of national security policy formulation as the responsibility of a department, agency, or individual."[291] Nixon also received Cutler's instructions to the NSC that council papers need to better consider broad policies, and that planning board papers should be shorter and more precise.[292] Late in Eisenhower's administration, Nixon also watched the president once again try to improve the NSC. In April 1958, the president instructed Cutler to ensure that future papers focused more on "provocative issues which required high-level thought."[293] Eisenhower also wanted NSC meetings to mirror Cabinet proceedings, with a half-hour session for verbal discussions, rather than a focus on the formal papers.[294]

Nixon also observed his own role as vice president get called into question during attempts to improve the national security architecture. The vice president was a statutory member

---

[289] As quoted in, Brands, "The Age of Vulnerability," 986.
[290] Nixon, *RN,* 337.
[291] *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1955-1957, National Security Policy, Volume XIX, Document 104.
[292] *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1955-1957, National Security Policy, Volume XIX, Document 104.
[293] As quoted in, Nelson, "The 'Top of Policy Hill,'" 322.
[294] Nelson, "The 'Top of Policy Hill,'" 322; Paul D. Miller, "Organizing the National Security Council: I Like Ike's," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 43:3 (Sept, 2013), 600.

of the NSC but under Eisenhower Nixon's role was more than mere formality. Nixon was a welcomed member of the Council. The president often turned to Nixon for advice, singling him out for comment. But regardless of Eisenhower's choices towards Nixon, the vice presidency was still a vaguely defined role.[295] During discussions of reorganizing the NSC in January 1957, it was also suggested that Nixon, as vice president, should take over the chairmanship of the OCB from the Undersecretary of State. However, Foster Dulles fiercely objected. Foster Dulles wrote Eisenhower, arguing that the change would erode the power of the State Department.[296] He contended that "the Secretary of State should always have direct access to the President" and if this was interrupted "it would seriously impair the constitutional functioning of government."[297] Dulles fiercely protected his prerogatives and access to the President, resisting change to the NSC and Nixon's role.[298]

Nixon was not the only one to notice problems with the Eisenhower administration and the running of the presidency and the National Security Council. Part of the problem was that the president never translated his popularity to the party and was not helping party politics. Valid criticisms of the Eisenhower National Security architecture got mixed up in Nixon's 1960 presidential election. As historian Paul D. Miller explains, the president's domestic adversaries "in the process of fabricating the image of a passive, absentee president too busy playing golf to attend to pressing matters of state, argued that the NSC was a bloated, rigid 'paper mill' and that outsourcing national security to a committee only guaranteed dangerously unimaginative

---

[295]Technically, the vice president was an afterthought in the federal convention and only had the statutory duties of presiding over the Senate and standing ready in case of presidential death or incapacitation
Harold C. Relyea, "The Executive Office of the Vice President: Constitutional and Legal Considerations," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 40:2 (June, 2010), 327-329.
[296] Nelson, "The 'Top of Policy Hill,'" 314.
[297] As quoted in, Ronald W. Pruessen, "John Foster Dulles and the Predicaments of Power," In Richard H. Immerman, ed., *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War* (Princeton University Press, 1990), 28.
[298] Pruessen, "John Foster Dulles and the Predicaments of Power," 27-28.

policy."[299] The hearings of the Senate Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery led many of the critiques of the Eisenhower administration. Senator Henry Jackson (D-WA), from the Committee on Government Operations, introduced a resolution during the summer of 1959 calling for an investigation of the National Security infrastructure in the Eisenhower administration. The subsequent inquiry, from 1959-1961, came to be known as the Jackson Subcommittee, or Jackson Hearings.[300]

Nixon watched as Senator Jackson attacked the Eisenhower architecture, kicking off the inquiry process with an inflammatory speech at the National War College in April 1959. Jackson declared that Eisenhower's policy process, and the NSC in particular, were not producing coherent US policies and were endangering America.[301] He stereotyped the Council as a façade for a non-functioning National Security program and proposed a Congressional study on the processes and decision-making behind US National Security policy.[302] Eisenhower was horrified by these attacks on his architecture, seeing it as an affront to his presidential prerogatives, but he was unsuccessful in his attempts to stop Jackson's attacks. In July 1959, the Democratic Senate leaders appointed Jackson to head a study of the Eisenhower national security structure.[303] This special Committee concluded that the NSC should primarily be for coordination and should be "critical and cautionary, not creative."[304]

Jackson was scathing in his assessment of the Eisenhower administration. In a partisan attack, he argued that the council was ineffective, ill-suited to its role, and possessed an "over-

---

[299] Miller, "Organizing the National Security Council," 600.
[300] Nelson, "The 'Top of Policy Hill,'" 320.
[301] Nelson, "The 'Top of Policy Hill,'" 321.
[302] Falk, *The National Security Structure,* 426.
[303] Recihard, *Politics as Usual,* 150.
[304] Jackson, *The National Security Council,* 15.

crowded agenda" along with "overly elaborate and stylized procedures."[305] The final report recommended that the president rely less on the NSC and to start delegating responsibilities to individual departments. The committee argued that the Council "cannot develop bold new ideas or translate them into effective action," taking a stab at the planning and operations coordinating boards.[306] The committee also recommended a primary place for the Secretary of State in the foreign policy architecture, arguing that the Secretary should be "the First Secretary of the Government."[307] In the final report Jackson also pushed back against the increasing power of the presidency, arguing that "the contribution of the legislative branch to national security policy is indispensable" and "sets the broad framework for that policy."[308] The Jackson Committee report damaged the reputation of the National Security Council. It contributed to the image of the NSC as a mostly useless operation that endlessly generated needless policy reports.[309]

The Jackson committee was not only critic of President Eisenhower's NSC. Henry A. Kissinger, from his perch at Harvard, frequently criticized the US National Security architecture during this period. In an article entitled "The Policymaker and the Intellectual," published in *The Reporter,* that found its way to the Jackson subcommittee, Kissinger lambasted the Eisenhower administration's approach to national security issues. In the article, Kissinger argued that within the Eisenhower administration "issues are reduced to their simplest terms" and "decision-making is increasingly turned into a group effort."[310]

---

[305] Jackson, *The National Security Council,* 39.
[306] Jackson, *The National Security Council,* 26-28.
[307] Jackson, *The National Security Council,* 27.
[308] Jackson, *The National Security Council*, 15.
[309] Nelson, "The 'Top of Policy Hill,'" 320.
[310] "The Policymaker and the Intellectual" by Henry A. Kissinger, *The Reporter,* Mar. 5, 1959, in United States Senate. Committee on Government Operations. Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery. Organizing for National Security. Volume II: Studies and Background Materials. (Washington, DC.: United States Government Printing Office, 1961), 255.

Kissinger also insisted that the government architecture needed to change with the Cold War environment. In a 1956 *Foreign Affairs* article, Kissinger contended that the Cold War reality of limited war set new expectations on the government. As Kissinger explained, with total war the capabilities of the military set the limits on war, but with limited wars, "there are ground rules which define the relationship of military to political objectives" and "the political leadership must therefore assume the responsibility for defining the framework within which the military are to develop plans and capabilities."[311] As a result, Kissinger argued for more effective architecture to integrate the military and the political, combined with surrendering "the notion that policy ends when war begins or that war has goals different from those of national policy."[312]

Kissinger followed up on many of these critiques in his subsequent 1957 article in *Foreign Affairs,* entitled "Strategy and Organization." He openly criticized Eisenhower's national security architecture, arguing that "the decisions of the Joint Chiefs and of the National Security Council give a misleading impression of unity of purpose."[313] Kissinger contended that Eisenhower's National Security Council failed to integrate the departments for national security purposes as intended. He concluded the departments came to the table as sovereign entities. In his "Strategy and Organization" article, Kissinger also criticized the emerging military industrial complex, arguing that fiscal considerations had come to dominate national security considerations, particularly as it related to the defense department. He claimed that "budgetary requests are not formulated in the light of strategic doctrine; rather doctrine is tailored and if

---

[311] Henry A. Kissinger, "Force and Diplomacy in the Nuclear Age," *Foreign Affairs* 34:3 (Apr., 1956), 357.
[312] Kissinger, "Force and Diplomacy in the Nuclear Age," 357.
[313] Henry A. Kissinger, "Strategy and Organization," *Foreign Affairs* 35 (Apr., 1957), 380.

necessary invented to fit budget requests."[314] Kissinger's fix for this was not the complete military unification that Truman had failed to accomplish, but rather to find a unified strategic doctrine between the United States' armed forces.[315] As much as Kissinger found problems with the existing national security architecture, he still recognized the need for an integrated national security architecture. He acknowledged that Cold War US foreign policies required multiple departments to come together, writing that "as a nation of specialists we like to believe that a problem is either political or economic or military" but that the day's challenges require "a combination of all these factors."[316] While Nixon was not interacting with Kissinger during this time, obviously he would soon. And Kissinger's critiques, which dovetailed with some of Nixon's own, would gain currency with Nixon.

Nixon watched as Eisenhower tried and failed to restructure the national security architecture. Nixon observed Eisenhower's attempts to improve the US government. The future president gained a critical, deeper understanding of the presidency and National Security architecture. Nixon had an opportunity to study, critique, and learn from the Eisenhower administration. He learned critical lessons about how the National Security Council could filter government information and ideas and would later resurrect much of the Eisenhower NSC structure. But, for all Nixon gained from his vice presidency, his time in office soured his relationships with the bureaucracy and the State Department.

---

[314] Kissinger, "Strategy and Organization," 380-383.
[315] Kissinger, "Strategy and Organization," 390-394.
[316] Henry A. Kissinger, "Nuclear Testing and the Problem of Peace," *Foreign Affairs* 37:1 (Oct., 1958), 18.

Chapter III: Nixon's Evolution and Thinking: The Wilderness Years and Campaign

Following his defeat in the 1962 California gubernatorial race, Nixon unleashed his fury and disappointment at the press, declaring, "You won't have Nixon to kick around any more, because, gentlemen, this is my last press conference."[317] In 1962 Richard M. Nixon was a two-time loser. The former vice president had failed to win both his presidential and gubernatorial campaigns, and the newspapers were running his political obituary. After his California defeat, Nixon retreated. He took a well-paying position at a prestigious conservative New York law firm. Almost immediately, despite his statement to the press, the former vice president began to plot his return to politics.

Nixon viewed himself as the American version of French President Charles de Gaulle or British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. He believed that they, after a time in the political wilderness, returned to politics better equipped to bring their countries through their periods of turmoil and crises. Nixon believed that Churchill's time out of office had helped to equip the British Prime Minister to "lead Britain in its darkest hour." Similarly, Nixon wrote, deGaulle "was the indispensable man" after more than a decade away from French politics.[318] Nixon thought he could do the same.

As such, Nixon characterized this period in his life as *his* wilderness years. In one of his later memoirs, *In the Arena: A Memoir of Victory, Defeat and Renewal,* Nixon characterized this time away from political office as critical to his presidency. Drawing on British historian Arnold Toynbee, Nixon described the Wilderness syndrome, as "the phenomenon of withdraw and

---

[317] *NYT,* 8 November 1962.
[318] Nixon, *In the Arena,* 27.

return…of the creative personality from his social milieu and his subsequent return to the same milieu transfigured in a newer capacity with new powers."[319] In early 1968, when he announced his presidential candidacy in a letter to residents of New Hampshire, Nixon declared that his time as a private citizen had allowed him to reflect, and "find some answers" for the challenges facing the United States.[320] His time in the wilderness had not been pointless.

In his post-presidential memoirs, *RN,* Nixon maintained that it was a hard decision for him to recommit to a presidential race, claiming he did not settle on running again until the end of December 1967.[321] While he may not have publicly decided or even privately committed to running, the former vice-president took critical steps during the 1964 and 1966 electoral cycles to position himself as a foreign policy and government expert, as well as the defacto Republican Party leader. Nixon's campaigning efforts for GOP candidates in the 1964 and 1966 electoral cycles, along with his frequent articles on foreign policy, allowed him to increase his public profile and test out his ideas on national security.[322] In fact, Nixon's position as a former politician rather than a current stakeholder allowed him to criticize the Johnson administration without worrying about his own immediate electability.[323] Nixon also travelled extensively during his "wilderness" years as a private citizen, including multiple trips to Southeast Asia. Going abroad to see his law firm's international clientele, Nixon also renewed political contacts and met with opposition leaders.[324]

---

[319] Nixon, *In the Arena,* 26.
[320] Cohen, 192.
[321] Nixon, *RN,* 291.
[322] LaFeber, 102.
[323] Johns, 318
[324] Nixon, *RN,* 256; Department of State, July 19, 1966, For: Mr. Walt W. Rostow, From: Benjamin H. Read, Executive Secretary, Folder: Nixon Trip—1966, National Security File, International Meetings and Travel File, Box 32, LBJ Library. Nixon, *RN,* 251.

This chapter explores the development of Nixon's ideas and beliefs about presidential power during his time as a private citizen and then presidential candidate, from January 1962 to November 1968. Although Nixon was out of office, he re-energized his efforts to think through the office of the presidency and sought to maximize his personal connections. Nixon did this in three critical ways: he deepened his analysis of US national security architecture; he further pondered the involvement of the State Department and the media in national security policy creation; and he developed an even greater antipathy to Congressional involvement in presidential decision-making. All of these concerns—compounded by his fierce ambition to win back the presidency—contributed to his fateful and infamous 1968 decision to sabotage President Johnson's Vietnam War peace negotiations. Between 1962 and his election to the presidency in 1968, Nixon developed a certainty that the president needed to be, as much as possible, an autonomous actor, unhindered by countervailing centers of power and authority.

Nixon Keeps Thinking: Ideas about Government Architecture and the Military

Nixon's electoral defeats, in both 1960 and 1962, did not stop him from thinking about the presidency. He continued to ponder how the presidency could be better organized to produce better policy, especially in matters of national security. Nixon closely followed how Presidents Kennedy and Johnson restructured the procedures and policy apparatuses set up during the Eisenhower administration.

Kennedy, Nixon observed, rejected much of what Eisenhower had done. Inspired by the Jackson Subcommittee report, Kennedy knocked down much of Eisenhower's carefully constructed National Security Council architecture. Kennedy abolished the Operations Coordinating Board. He claimed that the OCB subverted the authority of individual executive departments. More generally, Kennedy simply downgraded the importance of the National

Security Council.[325] Essentially, Kennedy rejected Eisenhower's attempts to institutionalize formal structures of government. Instead, Kennedy chose to reach out to departments personally.[326]

From the wilderness, Nixon viewed Kennedy's changes with contempt. Nixon complained about the Kennedy changes in a letter to Brigadier General A.J. Goodpaster, in January 1961. The former vice president argued "the papers these days are full of reports of the Kennedy task forces in which virtually everything this Administration has done has been brought into question or downgraded." He continued on to contend that Kennedy's changes were a mistake as the reform-minded Eisenhower administration had "set a higher standard for honesty, efficiency and dedication."[327] Kennedy, Nixon believed, did not understand how to run the presidency.

Nixon watched as Kennedy's more personal approach failed him during the Bay of Pigs debacle. In the aftermath of that mess, on 20 April 1961, Kennedy asked Nixon to advise him how to proceed with Cuba and continue to combat communism. As a result, Nixon had a front-row seat at the White House when Kennedy lambasted his national security team. He later recalled that Kennedy's "anger and frustration poured out in a profane barrage" as the president "cursed everyone who had advised him."[328]

Additionally, Nixon believed that the United States' traditional government structure, with the division of powers between Congress and the President, was no longer adequate. In

---

[325] Destler, 96.
[326] Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, The Riverside Press, 1965), 681.
[327] "Letter to Goodpaster; January 13, 1961" Laguna Nigel General Correspondence, Richard M. Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers, General Correspondence, Box 295.
[328] Nixon, *RN,* 234.

Nixon's understanding of the national security state, the American branches of the government were no longer equal, particularly when it came to protecting the United States. These long developing ruminations were clearly articulated in a November 1967 address on the National Education Television Network. Nixon was blunt: "Congress is ineffective in Foreign affairs and has lost its constitutional power to declare war." He argued, "there will never be another declaration of war...[T]hat time is gone…whether it is rightly or wrongly, because of the development of nuclear weapons, it is gone."[329] In the same address, Nixon tentatively proposed that there needed to be fewer restraints on the chief executive. He suggested the president should consult with the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees but did not have to consult with Congress as a whole. Nixon argued, "Let's not restrict our presidents so much that they can't do what is necessary to defend the national interest."[330] Nixon rarely revealed his thoughts on presidential power so publicly, but, privately, he was more open about his views.

Nixon privately worried about the United States' international prestige and credibility and the need for presidential leadership in the international arena. For Nixon, fewer restrictions on the president, like the type he was proposing, would allow the Chief executive to protect the United States' international position and prestige. He was particularly worried about American's declining international reputation, something he had been musing about since his days as vice president. Looking back at his "Wilderness years," Nixon contended, "Everywhere I went I heard about America's declining prestige, and I heard expressions of dismay that the world's strongest nation was showing so little positive leadership."[331] During his 1964 Asia trip, Nixon

---

[329] "TX2 Thompson—Nixon By Robert E. Thompson, Chief, Washington, Bureau," President, 1963-1965, EX F0 7 10/24/66, Box 67, LBJ Library.
[330] "TX2 Thompson—Nixon By Robert E. Thompson, Chief, Washington, Bureau," President, 1963-1965,EX F0 7 10/24/66, Box 67, LBJ Library.
[331] Nixon, *RN,* 256.

noted these concerns, worrying after a conversation with French Premier Charles de Gaulle that American international power had been diminished after the Korean War had ended in a stalemate.[332] Nixon's views on America's faltering prestige during these years were largely informed by his own international travels, but he did receive briefing materials on United Nations and American aid efforts, particularly in Vietnam. These materials largely pointed out that American international assistance was inadequately staffed and severely limited in its activities.[333]

Despite being out of public office, Nixon never stopped thinking about the presidency. And when he became the Republican presidential nominee in July 1968, those efforts, not surprisingly, accelerated. In the early fall of 1968, he began working on government reorganization ideas. At Nixon's request, Morton H. Halperin, who would become Nixon's Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, began organizing policy and reorganization task forces at the end of September 1968. As Halperin described them, these task forces would "look into the whole range of country problems and functional issues" and anticipate "what the transition demands will be."[334] The task force looking at national security reorganization caught Nixon's eye. He eventually forwarded the report to Kissinger when the former professor came on board. The report's stated purpose was "ways in which [Nixon] might most quickly gain control of the labyrinthine bureaucracies that handle diplomatic, intelligence, military and foreign economic affairs."[335] To that end, the task force suggested Nixon better staff the executive office and

---

[332] Notes, Wilderness Years Collection, Series II: Trip File (Asia Trip), PPS 347, Box 4, Nixon Library.
[333] Letter, To: Nixon, From: L. Wade Lathram, Acting Director, US AID Mission to Vietnam, August 13, 1966, Saigon, Wilderness Years Collection, Series II, Trip File, PPS 347, Box 8.
[334] "Memorandum for Policy Planning Staff, 30 September 1968," Papers of Morton H. Halperin Box 3, Dr. Halperin Chron File, Aug—Dec 1968 [2 of 2], LBJ Library.
[335] November 1, 1968, Memorandum for Mr. Nixon, Task Forces, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 3, Nixon Library.

"create a small research staff."[336] Nixon was particularly attracted to this suggestion; checking it off on the memorandum. Assuming correctly that Nixon would want to act as his own Secretary of State, the report also suggested he "have someone at State who can mobilize and manage the diplomatic corps and related groups with effectiveness comparable to that of the Secretaries of Defense and the Treasury."[337] The task force also warned that, "in the past, new presidents and presidential staffs have always been at a temporary disadvantage in the national security area because of their relative lack of information as compared with departments and executive agencies."[338] Nixon understood that problem and had no intention of falling prey to it.

One of Nixon's growing government architectural concerns during his wilderness years was America's military configuration and its relation to presidential authority. For Nixon, national security and government architecture were intertwined. He believed that he needed to alter American government architecture to ensure the president could protect national security. Nixon thought the president had to take greater control over military strategy and policy, more generally. Kennedy and Johnson, he believed, had given the military too much leeway and not enough direction. As a result, after his 1964 Asia trip, Nixon emphasized in his personal notes that the United States military establishment was not prepared to meet a direct communist threat, noting that it was "something two generations of US leaders have not adequately understood."[339]

Nixon believed the American military was not properly structured to meet contemporary threats. On his various pre-presidential press and campaign tours, Nixon often spoke out about

---

[336] November 1, 1968, Memorandum for Mr. Nixon, Task Force, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 3, Nixon Library.
[337] November 1, 1968, Memorandum for Mr. Nixon, Task Force, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 3, Nixon Library.
[338] November 1, 1968, Memorandum for Mr. Nixon, Task Force, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 3, Nixon Library.
[339] Untitled Notes, Notes, Wilderness Years Collection, Series II: Trip File (Asia Trip), PPS 347, Box 4, Nixon Library.

military readiness concerns. He argued that the military had not adapted to nuclear technology. He insisted, "that future wars either will involve nuclear weapons or will be fought in the manner of the present war, thus demanding a highly trained army of specialized fighting units."[340] At a fall 1967 address in New Hampshire, shortly after declaring his presidential candidacy, Nixon also called for the United States to reevaluate its naval strength. He worried that the Soviet Union was close to matching the strength of the United States, and that the United States would suffer grave consequences if they lost naval supremacy. He argued, "Supremacy on the seas by the free nations is essential for our security and our progress. It is as vital that we deny the Soviets supremacy on the seas…as it is that we deny them military supremacy in the space above us."[341] Nixon believed the president needed authority over the US military establishment in order to protect US national security from the threat of communism. For Nixon, the military readiness concerns he spoke about were proof that Kennedy and Johnson's reorganizations had failed and that they had given the military too much leeway.

Old Resentments: The Press and State Department

Nixon's disdain for the State Department grew during his wilderness years. He continued to believe that the Department was incompetent and unable to offer adequate foreign policy advice. In his 1964 *Readers' Digest* reflection on Cuba, he criticized the State Department for not taking the threat of Fidel Castro's revolution seriously. He contended that the State Department had mischaracterized Castro as a liberal, rather than a communist, and that Castro "had come to power with the tacit support and encouragement of the majority of the foreign-policy experts in the State Department, as well as with the enthusiastic approval of powerful

---

[340] Pt. 1 Nixon Position, Office Files of Frederick Panzer, Box 145, LBJ Library.
[341] "Nixon Sourcebook" WHCF: SMOF, Anderson, Martin, Nixon Presidential Returned Materials, White House Central Files, Box 32, Nixon Library.

elements of the American press."[342] Nixon also criticized the State Department in his personal notes, commenting to himself that the State Department misconstrued the Cold War and erroneously believed they were winning. He also contended that State's on-the-ground international efforts were not working and commented that the Southeast Asian foreign ministries were "large, no brains."[343]

Nixon's disdain and mistrust of the State Department was matched by his hatred of and fury toward the press. This disgust dated back to his congressional years and his disdain for how the press treated his revelations about Alger Hiss. But Nixon's disgust grew even more during his bid for the California governorship in 1962. Following his defeat in that race, Nixon famously unleashed his fury and disappointment at the press. He contended that the press was part of his failure and declared, "You won't have Nixon to kick around any more, because, gentlemen, this is my last press conference."[344] He complained, "For 16 years…you've had a lot of fun—that you've had an opportunity to attack me and I think I've given as good as I've taken. It was carried right up to the last day."[345]

Nixon's mistrust of the press was heightened by the 1960s media landscape. He watched the press become increasingly critical of the Johnson administration. For instance, Nixon would have watched Walter Cronkite, "the most trusted newscaster in the US," denounce the Johnson administration and the war in Vietnam.[346] Entering his wilderness years Nixon already mistrusted the press but the critical media landscape of the 1960s hardened his determination to create a structure that excluded the press.

---

[342] Nixon, "Special Feature: Cuba, Castro and John F. Kennedy: Reflections on US Foreign Policy," Readers Digest, November 1964, 284.
[343] Notes, Wilderness Years Collection, Series II: Trip File (Asia Trip); PPS 347, Box 4, Nixon Library.
[344] NYT, 8 November 1962.
[345] NYT, 8 November 1962.
[346] S. Mintz, "Walter Cronkite's 'We are Mired in Stalemate' Broadcast 27 February 1968," *Digital History*.

The former vice president's belief that the press was prejudiced against him grew throughout his wilderness years. Nixon was actively working to reestablish himself politically and be poised to take the Republican party nomination. He did not want the press to ruin his chances of becoming the president. Nixon worried about how his multiple international trips and campaigning would come across publicly, and if the press would misconstrue his public appearances or remarks. For instance, in his personal notes, Nixon worried about how his 1964 Asia trip would be perceived. He noted, "RN press – Ok here; may hurt self at home."[347] Nixon worried that the press could thwart his political ambitions.

Although Nixon despised the press, blaming them for his electoral losses, during his wilderness years he began learning how to use the press to pressure Johnson and get his own messaging across; crucial lessons for his own presidency. As historian Andrew Johns argues, Nixon used his position as de facto Republican party leader to force the Johnson administration to acknowledge and respond to his rhetoric."[348] Nixon also began using the high-circulation, "middle-America' oriented magazine, *Readers' Digest,* to air his views on Vietnam. For example, in an August 1964 article, "Needed in Vietnam: The Will to Win," Nixon argued that the United States was going to lose the war in Vietnam if it did not commit to the conflict. He continued many of these themes a year later, in a December 1965 article. Nixon also published articles in *Readers' Digest* discussing American relations with the Soviet Union and Cuba.[349]

Nixon's mistrust of the press was on full display during his presidential campaign. He sought to take his message to the American people without the involvement of the national press. He made choreographed appearances in major centers, and then used regionally directed

---

[347] Asia Trip Notes, Wilderness Years Collection, Series II: Trip File, PPS 347, Box 7, Nixon Library.
[348] Johns, 317.
[349] Nixon, *Readers' Digest*

television commercials to reach the electorate "over the heads" of the media.[350] During his wilderness years, Nixon's disdain and mistrust for both the press and the State Department grew. For Nixon, these sentiments were further impetus to a presidential reorganization that would diminish the power of State and exclude the press.

Nixon and Congress

For Nixon, there was a value in secrecy and not conducting politics in the public eye or in front of congress. Nixon's views about the need for secrecy in order to reduce Congressional interference continued to grow while he was out of office and would be key in how he operated when he became president. The political situation of Johnson's administration worried Nixon. President Johnson was dealing with increasing Congressional resentment and involvement in the war effort. By and large, congress had grown frustrated with US efforts in Vietnam and had begun trying to curtail American international involvement. In August 1968, a survey of US Senators reported that a majority did not believe in Johnson's ability to prosecute the war and that the Vietnam War had become much more than the original mission. Some Senators even commented that Johnson was "misleading" the public and was too optimistic.[351] Members of Johnson's own party also spoke out against the conflict.

Senate Majority leader Mike Mansfield led the charge. He called for restraints on further US involvement in Southeast Asia. Mansfield argued, "Reports of progress are strewn, like burned-out tanks, all along the road which led this nation ever more deeply into Vietnam and Southeast Asia during the past decade and a half."[352] Beginning in February 1966, the Senate

---

[350] Polsby, 169.
[351] Cohen, 41.
[352] As quoted in, Cohen, 41.

Foreign Relations Committee confronted Johnson's policy-making with public hearings on US involvement in Vietnam. These hearings were widely broadcast and represented, in the words of one contemporary journalist, "the most searching public review of US wartime policy."[353] In particular, during the hearings, prominent Senator J. William Fulbright (D-Ark) directly challenged Johnson administration policies and rejected "the notion that South Vietnam was essential to American interests and that the United States therefore, had no choice but further escalation of the war."[354]

Nixon also saw how Congress's public questioning of Johnson's war policies emboldened public war critiques. As historian Gary Stone explains, "the public airing of a debate within an elite created new opportunities for the growth of a mass movement with a radical leadership" and "the hearings helped to give their movement a new legitimacy and a heightened capacity to persuade other Americans of the righteousness of their cause."[355] The anti-war movement grew rapidly after the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings. Increasingly, that movement allied with a bipartisan anti-war Congressional coalition.[356] By the time Nixon took office in 1969, fifty-seven percent of Americans believed the time had come "to begin to reduce month by month the number of US soldiers in Vietnam."[357] This increasingly fractious US political environment fed Nixon's predilection for secrecy in national security policy and mistrust of Congress.

Though Nixon was relatively quiet in public about his specific government reorganization plans, he did forcefully rail against what he viewed as Congressional interference

---

[353] Stone, 71.
[354] Zelizer, 530.
[355] Stone, 74.
[356] Zelizer, 534.
[357] Caldwell, "The Legitimation of the Nixon-Kissinger Grand Design and Grand Strategy," 633.

in presidential affairs, in general, and the Vietnam War effort, in specific. Nixon believed that the United States' traditional division of powers between Congress and the President in national security affairs was inadequate to the challenges America faced. Correspondingly, Nixon believed Congress should play a subordinate role in foreign affairs and congressmen should stop publicly criticizing the president's policies. "The President and Vice President," he argued in the pages of *Readers' Digest,* "[must] be shown the respect to which their offices entitled them." He concluded, "Disagreement with his [the president's] views is no excuse for discourtesy to the office of the President of the United States."[358]

As such, Nixon called out Democratic Party critics, and suggested they were betraying their party and president.[359] He lambasted anti-war critic Senator William Fulbright in a December 1965 *Readers' Digest* article, "Why Not Negotiate in Vietnam?" Referencing Fulbright, Nixon argued that "more disturbing than these scattered and irresponsible outcries are the powerful and respected voices calling for a negotiated truce in Vietnam."[360] He argued, "those who urge appeasement and retreat do not understand that the course they advocate is filled with far more danger of war than any other that could be presented." [361]

Nixon believed that Congress was destroying the president's ability to wage war. In his private notes, Nixon contended that "The [Vietnam] war will be won or lost in DC."[362] As early as September 1965, he wrote to General William C. Westmoreland, "the greatest danger which confronts us now in Viet Nam is not the risk of military defeat but the possibility of diplomatic negotiation ending in a settlement which might be interpreted as a retreat or defeat on our

---

[358] Nixon, "Special Feature: Cuba, Castro and John F. Kennedy: Reflections on US Foreign Policy," Readers' Digest, November 1964, 297.
[359] *NYT,* 11 July 1965; Dietz, 92.
[360] Nixon, Readers' Digest, "Why Not Negotiate in Vietnam?" 50
[361] Nixon, Readers' Digest, "Why Not Negotiate in Vietnam?" 50
[362] Asia Trip Notes, Wilderness Years Collection, Series II: Trip File, PPS 347, Box 7, Nixon Library.

part."[363] Nixon thought negotiation was akin to defeat, and that Congress's suggestions of ending American involvement were only hurting Johnson's strategies and played into the communists' hands. In his personal notes about communism, he contended that communist foreign policy was to "demand what you are not entitled to, threaten war if you don't get it, agree to negotiate to avoid war," and "settle for ½ of what you aren't entitled to."[364] Nixon also publicly commented, "to negotiate with the enemy before we have driven him out of South Vietnam would be like negotiating with Hitler before the German armies had been driven from France."[365] He argued that Congressional protests were giving hope to the enemy: Hanoi believed "that the United States is so divided that they can win in Washington and the United States the victory they cannot win the battlefield."[366] Nixon thought he was watching Congress's public criticism of the war destroy Johnson's chances of victory in Vietnam. Nixon believed he needed to alter how the White House made national security policy to weaken congressional interference so the same would not happen to him.

Nixon was not alone in his concerns about Congress hurting the American war effort. His worries about Congressional critiques and US domestic political debates giving aid to the enemy were seemingly confirmed by briefing materials provided to him by the State Department for his 1967 Southeast Asian trip. A report on Vietnamese communist propaganda noted the North Vietnamese government continually compared the present situation to the early war against the French, asserting "that the Americans have the same contradictions in domestic political support

---

[363] Nixon to General William C. Westmoreland, September 13, 1965, Saigon Correspondence, Wilderness Years Collection, Series II: Trip File, PPS 347, Box 5, Nixon Library.
[364] Communism, Notes, Wilderness Years Collection, Series II: Trip File (Asia Trip), PPS 347, Box 4, Nixon Library.
[365] Nixon, Readers' Digest, "Why Not Negotiate in Vietnam?" 50
[366] *NYT,* 25 April 1967.

of the war that the French had."[367] Representative Robert Ellsworth (R-KA), who would later serve as one of Nixon's assistants, echoed these ideas after his own trip to Europe and Asia in spring 1967. Ellsworth concluded "Ho Chi Minh is not interested in peace—he wants revolution and conquest. Now, after he has softened up our public and world opinion with his campaign could proceed, and we would be prevented from doing anything about it."[368] For Nixon, the public and congressional war debates were only helping the enemy; he knew he needed to move his policies out of the public eye and away from the purview of Congress.

Running for the presidency while preparing the presidency

During his 1968 presidential campaign Nixon began seriously planning his presidential architecture. Nixon's planning was partially facilitated by President Lyndon B. Johnson, who built from a tradition of Cold War presidential transitions when he began preparing in the spring of 1968 for the upcoming handover of power. During the Cold War, government circles placed a new emphasis on the presidential transition, with the belief that the stakes of US governance and national security were too high to allow an unprepared, uninformed man to take on the highest office.[369] These briefings helped shape Nixon's thoughts about national security architecture. Nixon's vice-presidential experience working with Eisenhower and the NSC enabled him to make use of the briefings he received in 1968 and early 1969 to shape US National Security policy and, specifically, his strategy for the war in Vietnam.

---

[367] Trends in Hanoi/Viet Cong Propaganda, South Vietnam, Wilderness Years Collection, Series II: Trip Files, PPS 347, Box 11, Nixon Library.
[368] Attachment: Summary/Conclusion after Europe-Asia Trips, Spring 1967, Letter, To: Nixon, From: Robert Ellsworth, July 8, 1967, Summaries of 1967 Europe and Far East Trips, Wilderness Years Collection, Series II, Trip Files, PPS 347, Box 11, Nixon Library.
[369] Laurin L. Henry, *Presidential Transitions* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1960), vii, 3.

Nixon's government restructuring plans and firm belief that Congress needed to be further excluded from national security affairs were strengthened by these 1968 election briefings.[370] During the presidential election cycle, Nixon received policy briefings from Johnson and his advisors. Johnson arranged briefings for the Republican front-runners, including Nixon, and tried to obtain their support for his Vietnam War negotiating position.[371] The briefings allowed Nixon to lay the groundwork for his war in Vietnam strategy. They clarified the major problems and gave Nixon insight into how his architecture might best be structured to achieve 'peace with honor' in Vietnam. The briefings also allowed Nixon to observe Johnson's architecture from a front-row seat and deepened his convictions that the current system was failing the president.

Nixon's planning was facilitated by Charles S. Murphy, who led Johnson's transition team. Murphy worked to prepare the US government for the presidential turnover of power. Not only did Murphy coordinate with transition teams from each of the major presidential candidates, he also arranged briefing books that were to be handed over to the new administration.[372] For instance, in the case of the State Department, these briefing materials were designed to give the new Secretary an overview of key foreign policy problem areas, as well as suggest the "major issues and problems to be faced by the new administration in its first 90 days in office."[373] In fact, during the interregnum, through State Department contacts, Kissinger received copies of these briefing papers, which urged better consideration of long-term foreign policy objectives

---

[370] Democratic party nominee Hubert Humphrey and independent candidate George Wallace also received these briefings.
[371] Hughes, 10.
[372] October 2, 1968, To: The President, From Charles S. Murphy; Subject: Transition—Status Report, Memoranda—8-68-10-68, Personal Papers of William M. Blackburn, Box 6, LBJ Library.
[373] "Department of State Executive Secretariat; September 19, 1968," RG General Records of the Department of State, Transition Records of the Exec. Secretariat; Transition/BKGD to Miscellaneous Transition papers, Folder: Transition/BKGD Docs, Box 2, NARA.

and suggested a planning group for these purposes.[374] Nixon appointed Franklin E. Lincoln, Jr. as his transition representative, seeking to move as quickly as possible in his reorganization efforts. Lincoln met with Murphy about the process and arrangements if Nixon was successfully elected.[375] At the end of October 1968, Murphy drew up instructions for the critical first days after the election. Key in Murphy's suggestions was continued briefings for the president-elect, along with briefings by agency heads to their appointed successors. Murphy also put an emphasis on Vietnam, suggesting that "the day to day development on Vietnam are likely to be of such critical importance during the transition period that the fullest possible exchange of information should be sought."[376]

For Nixon, the policy briefings not only gave him insight into the failings of Johnson's architecture, but they also strengthened his belief that Congress must take a subordinate role in national security policy creation. Nixon's first election briefing was on 19 July 1968, after he declared his Republican candidacy. During the briefing, Johnson's foreign policy team covered relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the situation in Czechoslovakia and the Middle East, as well as the Vietnam War. According to the report afterward, "Nixon was particularly interested in our estimate of the present political and military situation."[377] During the briefing, Nixon's frustration with Congress was evident. The briefing report recorded Nixon asking, "repeatedly why so many, particularly on the Hill, who had previously supported the war

---

[374] Attachment: The Planning Process in Foreign Affairs, December 5, 1968; From Henry Owen, National Security Council Planning Material [2 of 4], National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 2, Nixon Library.
[375] October 10, 1968; To: The President; From Charles S. Murphy; Subject: Transition: Conversation with Frank Lincoln; Transition material; Personal Papers of William M. Blackburn, Box 7, LBJ Library.
[376] October 29, 1968, To: The President, From: Charles S. Murphy; Subject: Presidential Transition, Memoranda—Transition 8-68-10-68, Personal Papers of William M. Blackburn, Box 6, LBJ Library.
[377] Attachment: Briefing of Former Vice President Nixon, July 19, July 26, 1968 Memorandum for the President; Subject: Appointment with Richard Nixon, Foreign Affairs Briefing of Major Presidential Candidates, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Subject File, Box 16, LBJ Library.

effort were now saying that the war is lost."[378] Johnson also invited Nixon to the White House for a discussion on Vietnam on 26 July 1968. The president and Secretary of State Dean Rusk briefed Nixon on the current situation in Vietnam, as well as American conditions for a possible bombing halt.[379] During the meeting, Nixon again spoke out against the pressure on the government to negotiate.[380]

When Nixon secured the Republican party nomination in August 1968, LBJ arranged for him to receive a "general review of the international situation."[381] The Director of Central Intelligence, Richard Helms, briefed Nixon and vice-presidential candidate Spiro Agnew on the critical international situations of the time. In response, Nixon questioned whether the North Vietnamese believed the United States had given up, to which Johnson replied, "They think we believe that we lost the war."[382] One of the key American negotiators for Vietnam, Cyrus Vance, also briefed Nixon and Agnew on the status of the negotiations, including the involvement of the South Vietnamese communist guerrilla group, the National Liberation Front.[383] With Vance, Nixon repeated his frustration with media and Congressional interference complaining, "We have people on our side who are constantly screwing us on propaganda." He also contended that, "We have got to tell our people to remember that every word they write will be read by

---

[378] Attachment: Briefing of Former Vice President Nixon, July 19, July 26, 1968 Memorandum for the President; Subject: Appointment with Richard Nixon, Foreign Affairs Briefing of Major Presidential Candidates, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Subject File, Box 16, LBJ Library.
[379] Nixon, *RN,* 308.
[380] July 26, 2968—7pm; Meeting with Richard Nixon, The Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Tom Johnson Notes of Meetings, Box 3, LBJ Library.
[381] John L. Helgerson, *Getting to Know the President: CIA Briefings of Presidential Candidates, 1952-1992* (Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1996), 79.
The August meeting was the only pre-election meeting between Johnson and Nixon, but the two men spoke frequently on the phone as Johnson continued to brief Nixon, particularly as the Paris peace negotiations heated up.
[382] Notes on Briefing of Former Vice President Nixon and Governor Agnew; August 10, 1968, The Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Tom Johnson Notes of Meetings, Box 3, LBJ Library.
[383] Appointment File [Diary Backup] August 10, 1968, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969, The President's Appoint File, Box 108, LBJ Library.

Hanoi."[384] Nixon also met with Rusk on 7 October 1968, in New York. During the conversation, the two men discussed the situation in Vietnam and the peace negotiations. According to Rusk, Nixon commented that the Democrats "had a bad deal on the public support."[385] For Nixon, these briefings confirmed that Congressional involvement—meddling, as Nixon saw it—was dangerously restricting Johnson's Vietnam War policy options.

In response to these briefings and in accord with his long developing thinking about presidential power, Nixon saw the imperative need for a new national security architecture. His plans coalesced around the National Security Council. Nixon's experiences working with Eisenhower and the NSC taught him the utility and power of the Council. His time in the wilderness had convinced Nixon that in order to side-step an ineffectual State Department, exclude Congress, and weaken the ability of the press to criticize him, a stronger NSC apparatus was needed. To assist him in building an effective NSC, Nixon would recruit Henry Kissinger.

As much as Nixon hated the liberal "Ivy League" elite establishment, he turned to Harvard's Henry A. Kissinger to run his National Security Council. Nixon did not, as a rule, like or trust Harvard men, but Kissinger's ideas about national security resonated and he believed he could use Kissinger. During the 1960s, Kissinger had written and spoken out about national security architecture. Nixon liked what he had read. Kissinger had warned about the complications of nuclear power for government structures in a July 1962 *Foreign Affairs* article. He theorized that nuclear power, even if it was never used, complicated the use of military power. He argued, "*Any* war will be nuclear…in the sense that deployment—even of conventional forces—will have to take place against the backdrop of tactical nuclear weapons,

---

[384] Notes on Briefing of Former Vice President Nixon and Governor Agnew; August 10, 1968, The Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Tom Johnson Notes of Meetings, Box 3, LBJ Library.
[385] FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume VII, Document 52.

and the risk of escalation, even under conditions of mutual invulnerability, can never be wholly removed."[386] In a July 1964 article, Kissinger also contended that the complexity of modern government created problems in international alliances. He argued, "Nations sometimes find it so difficult to achieve a domestic consensus that they are reluctant to jeopardize it afterwards in international forums."[387] Kissinger also expressed concerns that Congressional representatives were too focused on their individual constituencies to effectively evaluate foreign policy. In an address to the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, on 29 January 1962, Kissinger theorized that, "Because of the orientation of American politicians toward individual states, it follows that any statement that they make does not represent American foreign policy, any more than the statement of a Harvard Professor."[388] Nixon had been following Kissinger's career and had copies of some of the professor's earlier works in his files.[389]

Nixon needed someone who shared his critiques of the national security architecture and who could help him strengthen presidential power. Kissinger's articles illustrated clear concern about the US government architecture in the Cold War. Kissinger theorized about international affairs and their relation to domestic political structures in a Spring 1966 *Daedalus* article. His fundamental premise was "when the domestic structures are based on fundamentally different conceptions of what is just, the conduct of international affairs grows more complex."[390] He argued that in the nuclear age domestic structures were even more important as issues had become too vast and interconnected, to be solved by personal intuition. But the issue was that

---

[386] Henry A. Kissinger, "The Unsolved Problems of European Defense," *Foreign Affairs* 40:4 (July 1962), 526.
[387] Henry A. Kissinger, "Coalition Diplomacy in a Nuclear Age," *Foreign Affairs* 42:4 (July 1964), 539.
[388] Henry A. Kissinger, "Some Aspects of American Foreign Policy," *Pakistan Horizon* 15:2 (Second Quarter, 1962), 103.
[389] Kissinger, Henry A., Laguna Nigel General Correspondence; Richard M. Nixon Pre Presidential Papers, Vice President General Correspondence Box 414.
[390] Henry A. Kissinger, "Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy," *Daedalus* 95:2 (Spring, 1966).

those same structures could become codified and rigid. Kissinger contended that, "Planning involves a quest for predictability and, above all, for 'objectivity.' There is a deliberate effort to reduce the relevant elements of a problem to a standard of average performance. The vast bureaucratic mechanisms that emerge develop a momentum and a vested interest of their own."[391] He argued that when bureaucracy was not sufficiently designed it could control the executive, or at least heavily absorb the president's time. Essentially, "serving the machine becomes a more absorbing occupation than defining its purpose" and "success consists in moving the administrative machine to the point of decision, leaving relatively little energy for analyzing the merit of this decision."[392] These ideas, about the problems of the national security structures resonated with Nixon. While it was Kissinger who wrote that government architecture could "structure and sometimes compound the issues which it was originally designed to solve," it could just as easily have been Nixon, who had written about the same problems during his vice presidency.[393] For both men simplifying and streamlining decision-making was the key to building a successful national security architecture.

However, for all of Nixon's attraction to Kissinger's academic work, it was Kissinger who maneuvered to get close to Nixon. Kissinger actively courted candidates, seeking a government position. Kissinger developed many of his political credentials and contacts during his Harvard career. His advisor, William Y. Elliott, encouraged Kissinger's political forays. As historian Jeremi Suri notes, Kissinger and Elliott "shunned the traditional paths for academic recognition" and "instead…focused on leveraging the prestige and the public salience of the

---

[391] Kissinger, "Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy," 507.
[392] Kissinger, "Domestic Structures and Foreign Policy," 507-508.
[393] Kissinger, "Domestic Structures and Foreign Policy," 509.

Cold War to pursue activities that would create a new audience."[394] Through support from Harvard, private foundations, as well as the CIA, Kissinger used his International Seminar, with Elliott's backing, to create a broad and powerful network of Cold War leaders, with himself at the center. Essentially, Kissinger's knowledge of the Cold War system, and nuclear weapons, helped him rise to become one of the key grand strategists of the 1950s and 1960s.[395] Kissinger's political career led him to a role as Nelson Rockefeller's campaign foreign policy advisor. But after Rockefeller lost the Republican nomination in 1968, the Harvard professor worked to make inroads with both the Nixon and the Humphrey campaigns.[396]

During the 1968 presidential campaign Kissinger discreetly advised Nixon. Through contacts in the Johnson administration, Kissinger was able to monitor the progress of the Paris Peace negotiations. He had previously consulted on the 1967 bombing halt initiative and had contacts with the 1968 negotiating team.[397] In 1968, Kissinger passed on what he learned to the Nixon campaign through Richard Allen, Nixon's principal foreign policy aide, and John Mitchell, who was to become Nixon's Attorney General.[398] Kissinger first approached the Nixon campaign team with his services through Mitchell, on September 12. Kissinger also visited Paris at the end of September on the pretense of article research to gain additional information for the Nixon campaign. He used his contacts, Daniel Davidson, a former lawyer on Bundy's staff, and Richard Holbrooke, a foreign service officer, to gain information on the peace negotiations and efforts to break the impasse.[399] In September 1968, Kissinger advised Mitchell that "something

---

[394] Suri, 116.
[395] Suri, 123, 143.
[396] Cohen, 322.
[397] Hughes, 2; Sieg, 1069; Nixon, *RN,* 323.
[398] Jeremi Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century,* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 189-191, 202.
[399] Sieg, 1069; Small, 526; Nixon, *RN,* 323.

big was afoot regarding Vietnam," and not to present "any new ideas or proposals" in the coming week.[400] He also cautioned the Nixon team against making an issue of the bombing halt. However, Nixon and Kissinger were by no means close and had extremely limited contact until Kissinger was named National Security Advisor in late November 1968. The two men met briefly at a cocktail party in 1967 but did not discuss foreign policy or government restructuring until after Nixon's election.[401]

Even as Nixon was thinking hard about reshaping the presidency and architecture of the US government, he was also initiating more underhanded efforts to build up his own foreign policy initiatives. Most famously, by July 1968 Nixon was directly subverting Johnson's peace efforts. Nixon brazenly, through intermediaries, sent multiple messages to the South Vietnamese government, implying that South Vietnam would get a better deal with him as president and that they should delay the peace talks until after the election. Nixon's two central emissaries were South Vietnamese ambassador Bui Diem and lobbyist Anna Chennault.[402] Nixon had met Chennault during his vice presidency at a Taiwan banquet, and had renewed his acquaintance again in 1965 when he visited Taipei on business.[403] Essentially, as historian Larry Berman explains, "Chennault, with Nixon's encouragement encouraged Thieu to defy Johnson," passing "information through Bui Diem to President Thieu."[404]

The scheme began in July 1968 when Chennault and Bui Diem met with Nixon and his campaign manager, John Mitchell, at the Nixon campaign headquarters in New York City. Nixon told Bui Diem that he considered Chennault his representative to the Vietnamese government,

---

[400] Robert Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power* (HarperCollinsPublishers, 2007), 70, 72; Nixon, *RN,* 323-324.
[401] Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Simon & Schuster, 1979), 9-10.
[402] Longley, 234.
[403] Chennault, 163, 168.
[404] Berman, 32-33.

and that any messages could be passed through her.[405] Nixon instructed Bui Diem to use Chennault "as the only contact between myself and your government" and further promised that if he was elected, Diem could "rest assured I will have a meeting with your leader and find a solution to winning this war."[406] Nixon also suggested to Bui Diem that South Vietnam could receive better peace accords with him.[407] In her memoirs, Chennault recalled that she "continued to travel to Vietnam as a weekly columnist for a leading Chinese daily, while continuing to keep Nixon and Mitchell informed about South Vietnamese attitudes vis-à-vis the peace talks."[408]

Nixon's messages were successful in interfering with the Thieu government. In one cable, sent October 23, Bui Diem wrote to Thieu, stating "Many Republican friends have contacted me and encouraged us to stand firm. They are alarmed by press reports to the effect that you had already softened your position."[409] In another cable, this time sent on October 27, Bui Diem confirmed his connections to the Nixon campaign team and urged Thieu to stand firm, writing "The longer the present situation, the more we are favored."[410] These messages successfully swayed South Vietnamese leaders, and shortly afterwards Thieu refused to send a delegation to Paris for peace negotiations.

While Nixon's attempts were unarguably subversive, that is not how Nixon saw them. He believed LBJ's open diplomacy had allowed for this sort of outside interference and that Congress had pushed Johnson into dangerous and ill-considered peace negotiations. As Nixon saw it, Johnson was at fault for creating the conditions that allowed for Nixon's necessary—necessary, at least, in Nixon's eyes—act of sabotage. For Nixon, his ability to destroy Johnson's

---

[405] Hughes, 9; Chennault, 175.
[406] Chennault, 175.
[407] Longley, 235.
[408] Chennault, 184.
[409] Bui Diem, 244.
[410] As quoted in, Berman 33.

peace negotiations illustrated the importance of personal diplomacy and demonstrated that public negotiations were open to interference. His own subsequent attempts at achieving peace would, consequently, be much more removed from the public eye. Nixon believed secrecy was the key to success. Reflecting later on his successful opening of China, Nixon contended that "without negotiations in secret, there will be few agreements to sign in public."[411] Nixon began learning this lesson about the perceived value of secrecy during his wilderness years.

Nixon believed he was justified in sabotaging Johnson's peace efforts. He thought Johnson's peace accords would not achieve peace or stability in Southeast Asia. Nixon was also convinced that Johnson's deal would irrevocably destroy American prestige and international credibility. Nixon knew his actions were illegal, but he thought they were justified and necessary to preserve American credibility. Nixon believed that only he could successfully resolve the war in Vietnam, and only by altering the way in which national security policies were conceived and implemented.

Overarchingly, Nixon believed that the traditional US government division of powers between Congress and the president was antiquated and no longer sustainable. Nixon thought that the Cold War and the advent of nuclear power meant that the president needed to be firmly in control of national security, unimpeded by Congress. In 1968, specifically, Nixon believed Congress was forcing Johnson into a terrible peace deal that would damage America's long-term international security. Nixon thought that if he could reorganize and strengthen the presidency, he could achieve an honorable peace in Vietnam; he only needed a chance.

---

[411] Nixon, *In the Arena;* Nixon, *RN.*

Nixon believed that his time "in the wilderness" had served him well. Like Winston Churchill had done in Great Britain, Nixon would return to power during the United States' hour of need and bring the country through its crises. Nixon had spent his time away from formal office not only plotting and positioning himself for the presidency, but also thinking about how best to reorganize the architecture of the National Security State to assure that his presidency would be an effective one. Nixon had come to believe that the president needed additional powers to keep the United States safe and strong. Nixon's hatred for Congress had only grown during this time out of office. Nixon watched with disgust as Congress publicly questioned Johnson's foreign policies and seemingly interfered with the president's prerogatives and foreign policy. Nixon believed the US government architecture needed to change. He was convinced the president needed room to act and should not have to consult with Congress. Nixon saw his ability to sabotage Johnson's peace efforts as final proof that the president needed to be at the apex of a secretive national security architecture.

Chapter IV: Nixon's Interregnum: Remaking the National Security State

When Richard M. Nixon became the thirty-seventh president of the United States, he faced a polarized citizenry, a dissenting press, and a Democratic Congress. The Vietnam War was tearing apart the country. Nonetheless, Nixon believed he was ready for the challenges that lay ahead. He had been working on US foreign policy and national security problems for decades and had been involved in US decisions about the fate of Vietnam since the early 1950s. Nor was the White House wholly unfamiliar territory for the former vice president.

Nixon knew that he was taking on an office ripe for reorganization. When Nixon was elected, the powers and architecture of the Cold War presidency were still open questions. The Cold War had dramatically reshaped the public's expectations of the highest office and the responsibilities of the president. Still, key executive branch bureaucracies that were expected to help the president, such as the National Security Council, were relatively new, poorly developed, and were built on vague and malleable statutes. Nixon understood that the executive branch was primed for reorganization and he had plenty of room to maneuver. In particular, for all his mistrust of the Washington bureaucracy, Nixon did trust the NSC, having seen how it could function under Eisenhower. Nixon understood, too, that the malleable statutes that enabled the NSC meant that he could shape it for his own purposes.

Nixon wanted to build a new presidential policymaking architecture with centralized control from the White House and he made no secret of his plans. During a news conference, on 19 June 1969, he condemned Senator Fulbright's proposal to limit the president's military powers. He argued that the president must not "be tied down by a commitment which will not allow him to take the action that needs to be taken to defend American interests and to defend American lives where there is not time to consult." Nixon contended that forced consultation was

not possible in the Cold War and would only hurt the interests of the United States. Demonstrating his awareness of the political climate, he did, however, offer the Senate an olive branch, suggesting that he would attempt to consult with the Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees to the greatest extent possible.[412] Nixon's hard line stance against what he perceived to be congressional meddling was long-standing and central in his plans for government reorganization; he was determined not to relinquish any power.

For President Nixon, the war in Vietnam was a central impetus for transforming the architecture of his national security policymaking apparatus. Nixon believed he needed a new executive office structure to resolve the war in Vietnam. Nixon noted, in an interregnum briefing memorandum to Kissinger, that Vietnam was to be "the first test of the new NSC structure. Very early on we will…present the full range of options to the NSC for consideration."[413] In this briefing memorandum, he also noted that "the NSC task will be to make a rational whole of all our programs, and to end the tendency to make policy by answering cables from Saigon and Paris."[414]

Kissinger, Nixon's National Security Advisor and head of the NSC, not surprisingly concurred: the NSC needed to be central in Vietnam decision-making. During his own interregnum Cabinet briefing, Kissinger argued: "our success depends in large measure to our ability to interrelate our economic, political and military policies into a coherent whole."[415] Kissinger believed there was not enough coordination in foreign policy creation and that it was up to the president to bring the disparate elements of the executive branch together. He thought

---

[412] FRUS 1969-1976, Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy, Volume II, Document 382.
[413] "Cabinet Briefing, December 12, 1969," National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 1, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum (RNPLM).
[414] "Cabinet Briefing, December 12, 1969," National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 1, RNPLM.
[415] "Cabinet Briefing, Dec 12" Folder: Briefings, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 1, RNPLM.

the NSC could play this role for Nixon and, thus, allow the president to more fully control American policy in the war in Vietnam.

Nixon drew upon his extensive government experience and ruminations about government to shape his architecture for national security policy creation. But Nixon's reshaping of the executive branch was not without its own issues and it was influenced by the ongoing anti-war movement and congressional opposition to enhanced presidential power. Moreover, the NSC was still a department in flux and development, with its structure and purpose in the US government ill defined. Nixon was able to reshape the NSC to suit his purposes and keep policy making under his control. It is through Nixon's creation of the modern NSC that he changed the power of the presidency.

Interregnum Planning

Nixon had philosophized about government reorganization for decades, but the real planning began in November 1968, after he was elected president. As such, the interregnum provided Nixon with the time he needed to begin reshaping the architecture of the national security state. Most critically, Nixon wanted to control his own foreign policy and strategy for the war in Vietnam. As such, Nixon redesigned the architecture of his presidency to channel information and policy through the National Security Council and thus safeguard his presidential prerogative. The interregnum gave Nixon the time and authority he needed to reshape the NSC, and, with it, the presidency.

Nixon was determined that decision-making reside solely with the President because, in his understanding, "the President of the United States does not delegate this responsibility."[416] For Nixon, the key to controlling policymaking was to control the architecture of the national security state. Kissinger confirmed the president's ideas in his initial reorganization proposal: "If the President wants to control policy, he must control the policy making machinery."[417] Nixon viewed the NSC as the ideal mechanism for controlling policy. As vice-president, he had observed how President Eisenhower had used the NSC to help inform and streamline his decision-making and knew what possibilities it offered. Nixon wrote: the Council meetings had allowed Eisenhower "to try out his ideas on his most trusted associates, to probe for their ideas, and, most important, to enlist their support for his decision."[418] The NSC, as an executive branch department beholden only to the president, was also crucial in shaping Nixon's control. The NSC did not have to report to Congress and could be reconfigured to provide critical research and decision-making support.

Kissinger was given control of the reorganization, with the mandate to allow Nixon to make his own choices. Kissinger echoed Nixon's commitment to building up the centrality of the NSC. But he also needed to reconfigure the NSC to ensure its members would be responsive to Nixon and act "with a Presidential rather than departmental perspective" when preparing papers and decision-making material.[419]

---

[416] "The Role of the National Security Council, by Brigadier General Alexander M. Haig, Jr., Presented at the National War College, 6 October 1971," Folder: Classified Speeches, National Security Adviser Kissinger-Scowcroft West-Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, Box 6, Ford Library.
[417] FRUS 1969-1976, Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy, Volume II, Document 3.
[418] Richard M. Nixon, *In the Arena: A Memoir of Victory, Defeat, and Renewal* (Simon & Schuster, 1990), 331.
[419] Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* (Little, Brown and Company, 1979), 41; Memorandum for the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs-Designate (Kissinger) to President-Elect Nixon, January 7, 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, vol. II, Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy, Document 3.

Kissinger did want to keep the interdepartmental nature of the NSC, even as he made it the central forum for national security issues; that required coordination between multiple agencies. To do so, Kissinger augmented the NSC structure. He designed an NSC Review Group, to not only further his control over the department but also to check and examine research and reports from other executive departments before they were submitted to the Council.[420] He also brought in General Alexander Haig, Jr., who would become his deputy, to take part in the reorganization effort and help coordinate the NSC.

Kissinger enlisted support during his interregnum planning, meeting with future NSC staffers to put concrete shape to Nixon's administrative philosophies. He used his last semester at Harvard to gather intelligence and ideas, meeting with policymakers he invited to guest lecture. As well, Kissinger enlisted former academic colleague Morton Halperin and Foreign Service officer Lawrence Eagleburger to assist him in reshaping the national security architecture. He instructed Halperin and Eagleburger to research new policy design processes and cement Kissinger's position in control of the NSC.[421] Drawing upon the NSC structure created during the Eisenhower administration, Halperin and Eagleburger helped Kissinger design a system that made the NSC in control at every stage of the decision-making process.[422]

In another planning meeting, in December 1968, Haig, Kissinger, and General Andrew Goodpaster discussed problems with the existing architecture. Goodpaster had served as staff secretary for President Eisenhower and helped run the NSC in that administration. As Haig later recalled in a National War College address, they discussed the problems with Kennedy's ad hoc

---

[420] Robert D. Schulzinger, *Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 22-24.
[421] John Gans, *White House Warriors: How the National Security Council Transformed the American Way of War* (Liveright Publishing Corporation, W.W. Norton & Company, 2019), 36-38.
[422] Daalder, Ivo H. and I.M Destler, eds. "The Nixon Administration National Security Council," in *The National Security Council Project: Oral History Roundtables* (Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, and The Brookings Institution, 1998), 6.

decision-making style and the "anti-organizational bias" of the Johnson administration. As well, in what was to become a familiar refrain, the three men denigrated the bureaucracy's ability to help the president. In thinking reminiscent of Nixon's own, Haig contended the bureaucracy tried to constrain the president's decisions. He recalled that during a meeting, he had argued that department heads "look at each other and say, 'What should the President do? We'll decide what the President should do because we know best.'" Haig believed these bureaucrats then crafted the first option to be "solid gold" while simultaneously building "a couple straw men that they nestle on each of its flanks."[423] Kissinger's December meeting focused on rooting out or minimizing this type of bureaucratic overreach.

During the redesign process, Nixon drew upon his political experiences in the Eisenhower administration.[424] In fact, Kissinger recalled in his memoirs that Nixon's redesign "was not particularly novel" and "was, in effect, the Eisenhower NSC system" weighted differently.[425] Or, as Haig recalls, Kissinger made clear to him that Nixon wanted to "restore the NSC…to its former status under Eisenhower as the President's chief instrument of foreign policy."[426] In particular, in the Nixon NSC system, similar to the Eisenhower administration's planning and operations boards, the policy papers would move through a system of "panels" comprised of the CIA and Joint Chief of Staff directors along with the State and Defense deputies as members, but controlled by Kissinger.[427]

---

[423] "The Role of the National Security Council, by Brigadier General Alexander M. Haig, Jr., Presented at the National War College, 6 October 1971," Folder: Classified Speeches, National Security Adviser Kissinger-Scowcroft West-Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, Box 6, Ford Library.
[424] For more on this topic see Ashley Lorraine Neale, "Presidential Preview: Nixon's Vice Presidency and Role in the Vietnam War, 1953-1955," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 49:2 (June 2019): 394-416.
[425] Kissinger, *White House Years,* 44.
[426] Alexander M. Haig, Jr., *Inner Circles: How America Changed the World, A Memoir* (New York, 1992), 191.
[427] Memorandum from the Staff Secretary, NSC (Watts) to Kissinger, September 14, 1969, *FRUS,* 1969-1976, vol. II, Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy, eds. David C. Humphrey (Washington, DC, 2006), doc. 72; Memorandum from the Director of the Planning Staff, NSC (Osgood) to Kissinger, September 25, 1969, *FRUS*,

In redesigning the NSC during the interregnum, Kissinger also drew upon advice from former members of the body during the Eisenhower years. They were some of his best guides, as the council had largely fallen into disuse under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.[428] Kissinger relied in particular on Goodpaster, who had been appointed by the Johnson administration "to help the Nixon Administration set up its national security machinery and assist in the transition."[429] Goodpaster prepared informational memoranda about the Eisenhower executive office structure, and the organization of the NSC. He emphasized that "national security policy and planning" were the purview of the NSC, and that "the guiding purpose for the organization employed for the conduct of national security affairs should be to aid the President in the discharge of his responsibility in this field."[430] During the interregnum, Kissinger also met with former President Eisenhower, who recommended that the influence of the Senior Interdepartmental Group (SIG) and State Department needed to be minimized, and insisted that "for all his admiration for [Secretary of State] Dulles, he [Eisenhower] had always insisted on keeping control of the NSC machinery in the White House."[431]

Despite their admiration of the Eisenhower presidency, Nixon and his men were careful which lessons they took from Eisenhower's national security systems. Nixon believed there were problems with Eisenhower's structure. Kissinger concurred. While they wanted a defined structure and systematic approach, as Kissinger later noted, the two men felt Nixon's system "should avoid the rigorous formalism of the Eisenhower administration, in which the

---

1969-1976, vol. II, Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy, eds. David C. Humphrey (Washington, DC, 2006), doc. 77; Bundy, *A Tangled Web,* 55.
[428] Haig, *Inner Circles,* 191.
[429] "Memorandum to the President, December 17, 1968," Folder: Walt Rostow Volume 110, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969, National Security File, Memos to the President, Walt Rostow, Box 43, LBJ Library.
[430] Emphasis in original. "15 December 1968; Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger," General Goodpaster, NSC Henry A. Kissinger, Box 1, RNPLM.
[431] Kissinger, *White House Years,* 43.

policymaking process had too often taken on the character of ad hoc treaties among sovereign departments."[432] As well, in recalling his time as vice president, Nixon insisted, "By God, there's one thing I don't want. That's the kind of formality, the kind of bulkiness that President Eisenhower had in his system."[433] In fact, in response to Jackson subcommittee inquiries, Nixon and Kissinger insisted they had not just copied the Eisenhower architecture. They pointed out their efforts to ensure the system did not constrain them, including flexibility with scheduling. They also pointed to their efforts on making policy papers clear and focused on options for Nixon; problems Nixon had observed under Eisenhower.[434]

Others echoed Nixon's concerns about Eisenhower's formalism. Secretary of Defense Laird agreed that flexibility was necessary, or they would face a "return to the practices of the 1950s when NSC topics were determined months in advance and subjects were considered largely without regard to current developments."[435] Nixon wanted to ensure the NSC responded to him, not the other way around as it sometimes had during the Eisenhower administration.

Nixon also wanted to change the structure of NSC meetings. He believed the meetings had ballooned during the Eisenhower years, with too many State and Defense staffers attending. Nixon limited the number of personnel at NSC meetings. As Haig later recalled, Nixon "was quite brutal in the early days of this system. He purged out all the wall-sitters. He purged out all the peripheral interest groups and generally held it right down to the statutory membership."[436]

---

[432] Kissinger, *White House Years,* 11.
[433] As quoted in, "The Role of the National Security Council, by Brigadier General Alexander M. Haig, Jr., Presented at the National War College, 6 October 1971," Folder: Classified Speeches, National Security Adviser Kissinger-Scowcroft West-Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, Box 6, Ford Library.
[434] "March 3, 1970, Letter to Senator Jackson," Folder: Davis, Jeanne W.—Personal File—NSC Organization and Administration (3), U.S. National Security Council Institutional Files, Box 85, Ford Library.
[435] "May 8, 1969, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger," Folder: Davis, Jeanne W.-Personal File—NSC Organization and Administration (2), U.S. National Security Council Institutional Files, Box 85, Ford Library.
[436] "The Role of the National Security Council, by Brigadier General Alexander M. Haig, Jr., Presented at the National War College, 6 October 1971," Folder: Classified Speeches, National Security Adviser Kissinger-Scowcroft West-Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, Box 6, Ford Library.

As Nixon insisted in one of the interregnum meetings, "If you cannot develop a system…that insures that factually the information that comes to me is sound, you have failed in the first place, and no last-minute sharpie [staffer] is going to put the proper perspective on it or is going to correct it for me in a meeting."[437] Nixon even went as far as to exclude the Attorney General, tightening the list to statutory members.[438]

While Nixon drew critical inspiration from the Eisenhower national security architecture, he made critical changes. One central change in Nixon's system was the role played by the National Security Advisor. In Eisenhower's NSC, the National Security Adviser was a facilitator and did not weigh in on policy discussions or try to interfere in the relationships between the president and his advisors. In his testimony before the Jackson subcommittee, Cutler insisted no personnel or "arrangement should be proposed or put into action which will tend to cut across the lines of responsibility which run directly from the President to his responsible department or agency."[439] Nixon disagreed. He wanted his National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, both to control the National Security Council and to advise him. The incoming president drew critical lessons from the Eisenhower administration about the importance and structure of the National Security Council, but he was careful to eschew what he believed to be the excessive formalism and bureaucratic nature of the Eisenhower-era NSC.

---

[437] "The Role of the National Security Council, by Brigadier General Alexander M. Haig, Jr., Presented at the National War College, 6 October 1971," Folder: Classified Speeches, National Security Adviser Kissinger-Scowcroft West-Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, Box 6, Ford Library.

[438] Politically his administration also justified the decision by pointing to the Jackson Subcommittee's recommendations of making the NSC "a small, select group of key advisors." Attorney General Mitchell; 1/22/69, Folder: 21-31 Jan 1969, Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telcons) Chronological File, Box 1, RNPLM. ; "November 12, 1969, Memorandum for Mr. Ehrlichman," Folder: CHRON File, Aug-Dec. 1969, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Rodman Subject and Chron., Aug. 1969-Aug. 1974, Box 13, RNPLM.

[439] Statement of Gen. Robert Cutler, United States Senate. 1960.

During the interregnum redesign process, Nixon and Kissinger received multitudes of policy studies, from groups inside and outside the government. These reports generally emphasized the need for long range planning and policy guidance, often suggesting the NSC for these roles. One of the most influential of these reports was the Lindsay Task Force on Reorganization of the Executive Branch, submitted by Franklin A. Lindsay. Nixon had met with Lindsay before the election (perhaps on the recommendation of Kissinger) and trusted him.[440] Lindsay's task force urged Nixon to expand the executive branch, and suggested there needed to be a White House body responsible "for in-depth analysis of problems…foreseeably important to the President."[441] The Task Force report emphasized that the NSC needed to be strengthened to provide better analysis and staff resources.

Lindsay's report confirmed Nixon's belief that government agencies and departments, including the State Department, operated with their own "self-interested view of what is best for the nation."[442] The group suggested that if Nixon was to act as his own Secretary of State then he needed reliable personnel within the department to "mobilize and manage the diplomatic corps and related groups," as well as expanding and mobilizing the executive office staff.[443] Nixon

---

[440] Lindsay was a former government employee, and part of the Cambridge intellectual community. As well, the task force was originally conceived by political scientist Richard Neustadt. Kissinger had once been a member of the Harvard-based task force
Wood, Robert C. *Whatever Possessed the President? Academic Experts and Presidential Policy, 1960-1988* (The University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 89-92.

[441] Attachment: Summary of Recommendations; ITEK Corporation, December 17, 1968, Memorandum to the President-Elect, Lindsay Task Force (1 of 2), National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 2, Nixon Library.

[442] "November 1, 1968; Memorandum for Mr. Nixon; National Security Organization," Folder: Task Forces, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 3, RNPLM.

[443] "November 1, 1968; Memorandum for Mr. Nixon; National Security Organization," Folder: Task Forces, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 3, RNPLM.

readily accepted these suggestions, noting to Kissinger, "this is a good idea" and make sure it is "set up with Laird." [444]

Similar recommendations were received from a National Security Council Study, headed by Colonel J.M. Chambers. This report noted that the failure of the Johnson administration to make use of the NSC resulted in ad hoc, chaotic national security policies. The Chambers study recommended the NSC be reestablished and expanded to consider the connections between domestic and foreign policy problems.[445] Chambers argued that Kennedy had fallen to political pressure from the Jackson subcommittee when it turned away from NSC input. Chambers insisted the NSC was vital to decision-making in the Cold War environment. He also suggested that the Eisenhower approach had value but that the Nixon administration had to be firm and "determine in advance what it will do to make certain that the President is getting the required objective analysis of national security problems."[446] Chambers' advice was reminiscent of Nixon's own thinking about government structure. The incoming president welcomed this input and ensured it was shared with Kissinger.[447]

A study by the International Social Studies Division (ISSD) also caught Nixon's attention and confirmed his belief that Kennedy and Johnson had neglected the National Security Council. The study argued that Kennedy relied on de facto interagency coordination, suggesting Kennedy

---

[444] "November 1, 1968; Memorandum for Mr. Nixon; National Security Organization," Folder: Task Forces, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 3, RNPLM.
[445] Attachment: Suggested Revitalization for the National Security Council, Prepared by Colonel J.M. Chambers, December 9, 1968; To Col.J.M. Chambers, National Security Planning Material [2of 4], National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 2, Nixon Library.
[446] "Suggested Revitalization for the National Security Council, Prepared by Colonel J.M. Chambers," Folder: National Security Planning Material [2 of 4], National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 2, RNPLM.
[447] "December 9, 1968, To Col. J.M. Chambers, From Bryce N. Harlow," Folder: National Security Planning Material [2 of 4], National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 2, RNPLM.

had attempted to use State and NSC interchangeably, without effective coordination.[448] The ISSD argued that while "there is no historical precedent for a truly White House centered system," the "principal advantage of a White House centered system would be the degree of control which it would afford the President."[449] However, the ISSD also warned that a White House centered system "could result in a new national security bureaucracy and add to, rather than subtract from, the President's burdens."[450] While Nixon welcomed the confirmation of the value of the NSC, he ignored the warnings about the burden it could represent.

During the interregnum, Kissinger also commissioned his associate Leon Gloss to advise on national security organization. Gloss argued the government needed a well-designed national security architecture to help formulate and implement presidential decisions. Similar to Nixon's thinking, he argued that Eisenhower's architecture was solid in concept but flawed in execution. He contended that Eisenhower's system had become "so bureaucratized that policy papers tended to represent the lowest common denominator of conflicting agency views" and "did not provide clear policy guidance."[451] Gloss also argued that Eisenhower's Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) had no clear operating guidelines, leaving it in conflict with State and Defense. Rather than an OCB, the report recommended that Kissinger establish "people in the key jobs in

---

[448] "The National Security Process Chapter III: National Security Staffing in the White House; November 1968; International Social Studies Division," Folder: National Security Planning Material [3 of 4], Folder: National Security Planning Material [2 of 4], National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 2, RNPLM.
[449] "The National Security Process Chapter III: National Security Staffing in the White House; November 1968; International Social Studies Division," Folder: National Security Planning Material [3 of 4], Folder: National Security Planning Material [3 of 4], National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 2, RNPLM.
[450] "The National Security Process Chapter III: National Security Staffing in the White House; November 1968; International Social Studies Division," Folder: National Security Planning Material [3 of 4], Folder: National Security Planning Material [3 of 4], National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 2, RNPLM.
[451] "December 21, 1968, Memorandum for Dr. Henry Kissinger, Organizing the National Security Machinery," Folder: Staff Reports, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 3, RNPLM.

agencies," such as State and Defense, "who have a national orientation rather than an agency one and who know how to get things done."[452] Nixon gratefully accepted these policy studies; he had studied government for decades and welcomed the confirmation such reports offered to his own ideas.

Nixon based his system on his years of experience in government and his extensive studies of the Kennedy and Johnson architecture. As Kissinger reiterated to Senator Jackson, "President Nixon's decisions as to the new role and structure of the NSC were influenced by his direct experience with the NSC machinery as it was used during the Eisenhower Administration, and also by the accumulated national experience of a variety of approaches to the utilization of the NSC machinery."[453] Nixon was no neophyte.

Architecture

Nixon was determined that the NSC would be responsive to him and only him, thereby helping retain his decision-making autonomy. From the start, Nixon asserted his authority. At the first NSC meeting on 21 January 1969, he told those gathered, "I will make the decisions. To do this, I will need all points of view. I will then deliberate in private and make the decision. In this process, I might talk to individuals prior to finalizing my decision."[454] He asserted that decisions were his, and only his, and thus NSC papers were privileged documents that "must be preserved for high-level deliberation on them in complete privacy."[455]

---

[452] "December 21, 1968, Memorandum for Dr. Henry Kissinger, Organizing the National Security Machinery," Folder: Staff Reports, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 3, RNPLM.
[453] Kissinger was responding to the ongoing efforts of the Jackson subcommittee. "March 3, 1970, Letter to Senator Jackson," Folder: Davis, Jeanne W.—Personal File—NSC Organization and Administration (3), U.S. National Security Council Institutional Files, Box 85, Ford Library.
[454] *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. II, Organization and Management of U.S. Foreign Policy, Document 15.
[455] "NSC Meeting, January 21, RN Talking Points," Folder: NSC Procedures and Meeting Schedule, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, National Security Council Meetings, Box H-019, RNPLM.

In a nutshell, the NSC reorganization represented Nixon's philosophies about presidential power and experience in government built into a system and designed to protect his autonomy. It was structured to assist the president and, as Kissinger explained, create "an orderly procedure for making the decisions."[456] In an interregnum phone call with presidential assistant Robert Ellsworth, Kissinger confirmed the importance of the NSC, arguing that "the machinery was there to support the President.[457] Ellsworth agreed; the NSC was critical in ensuring Nixon's "decisions were implemented and holding departments to his procedures."[458]

Nixon's NSC was a critical break from his predecessors. It helped to prevent carryover policies from the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and policy did not emanate from just one department or agency. As Kissinger explained to Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard, the NSC ensured policy "is to be done on inter-departmental basis in so far as policy and doctrinal considerations."[459] Nixon's architecture was designed to ensure no one department could take control of the policy construction process and that there was coordination before analyzes reached the president.

During the interregnum and his first weeks in office, Nixon had created a presidential-driven architecture. Within this architecture, the responsibility for final decisions rested solely with Nixon. Responding to earlier accusations by the Jackson Subcommittee that the NSC tried to usurp presidential decision-making, Nixon and Kissinger contended, "it is not, of course, the NSC which makes decisions. The President makes decisions, in accordance with his

---

[456] "Robert Ellsworth; 1/22/69," Folder: 21-31 January 1969, Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telecons) Chronological File, Box 1, RNPLM.
[457] Robert Ellsworth; 1/22/69, Folder: 21-31 Jan 1969, Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telcons) Chronological File, Box 1, RNPLM.
[458] Robert Ellsworth; 1/22/69, Folder: 21-31 Jan 1969, Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telcons) Chronological File, Box 1, RNPLM.
[459] Sec Packard; 1/28/69, Folder: 21-31 Jan 1969, Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telcons) Chronological File, Box 1, RNPLM.

Constitutional responsibility, and the NSC remains an advisory body as conceived by the 1947 National Security Act."[460] Nixon viewed the NSC meetings, in particular, as solely advisory and a chance to gather information and policy viewpoints. As Haig confirmed, in a procedural memorandum to Kissinger, it is paramount "not to give the impression that NSC meetings are decision meetings."[461] In fact, during meetings Nixon was careful not to divulge his own policy viewpoints.[462] As such, under Nixon the NSC continued to coordinate the diverse elements involved in the foreign policy process, with the additional capacity to formulate but not determine policy.[463]

Nixon's 1970 report to Congress on US Foreign Policy summed up his approach to national security policymaking and argued for the tools he believed he needed to best make those policies. The president insisted that in order to provide clear international leadership, US foreign policy needed to be supported by a systematic policy creation structure with clear intelligence gathering, policy choices for the President, and strict mechanisms for implementation. He contended, "too often in the past, the process of policymaking has been impaired or distorted by incomplete information" and, therefore, the revamped NSC was essential "to elicit, assess, and present…all the pertinent knowledge available."[464] For Nixon, the new system was meant to

---

[460] "March 3, 1970, Letter to Senator Jackson," Folder: Davis, Jeanne W.—Personal File—NSC Organization and Administration (3), U.S. National Security Council Institutional Files, Box 85, Ford Library.
[461] Emphasis in Original. "February 7, 1969, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger," Folder: NSC Meeting—January 29, 1969, Nixon Presidential Materials Staff, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, NSC Draft Minutes, Box H-120, RNPLM.
[462] "Interview with William Watts, Sept. 21, 1977," Folder: Foreign Policy, Watts, William, A. James Reichley Interview Transcripts, Box 1, Ford Library.
[463] Jussi M. Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 27.
[464] "Enclosure: The National Security Council System," "March 3, 1970, Letter to Senator Jackson," Folder: Davis, Jeanne W.—Personal File—NSC Organization and Administration (3), U.S. National Security Council Institutional Files, Box 85, Ford Library.

"[give] us the means to bring to bear the best foresight and insight of which the nation is capable" for American foreign policy.[465]

Nixon and Kissinger's national security architecture put the NSC, and by extension the White House, much more fully in control of decision-making and foreign policy. Starting with seemingly simple things like communications, Kissinger ensured that the NSC was in control. On Kissinger's early recommendation, all communications and policy papers were routed through the NSC. As well, Kissinger chaired all policy issues, ensuring that no department could gain predominance.[466] Similarly, meeting materials were routed through Kissinger and the NSC. Meeting briefing materials were sent to Nixon via Kissinger along with covering memoranda and draft decision memoranda. These cover memoranda were only seen by Kissinger and Nixon, and they detailed key pertinent details for the president. The design called for NSC staffers to be in control at every stage of the decision-making process. As former staffer Philip Odeen recalls, "It was clear when I was there that we, as staff, absolutely had to drive and dominate the whole committee structure" ensuring "the studies got done, and go done right, and by the right people."[467] Or, as Staffer Winston Lord recalls, "Kissinger was very conscious about chairing most of the key committees, and having his staff people essentially run them."[468] But according to former NSC secretary William Watts, this system was open to abuse; Kissinger's ideas often

---

[465] "Enclosure: The National Security Council System," "March 3, 1970, Letter to Senator Jackson," Folder: Davis, Jeanne W.—Personal File—NSC Organization and Administration (3), U.S. National Security Council Institutional Files, Box 85, Ford Library.
[466] "The Role of the National Security Council, by Brigadier General Alexander M. Haig, Jr., Presented at the National War College, 6 October 1971," Folder: Classified Speeches, National Security Adviser Kissinger-Scowcroft West-Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, Box 6, Ford Library.
[467] Daalder, Ivo H. and I.M Destler, eds. "The Nixon Administration National Security Council," in *The National Security Council Project: Oral History Roundtables* (Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, and The Brookings Institution, 1998), 6.
[468] Daalder, Ivo H. and I.M Destler, eds. "The Nixon Administration National Security Council," in *The National Security Council Project: Oral History Roundtables* (Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, and The Brookings Institution, 1998), 32.

went to Nixon unchecked.[469] And strengthening Kissinger's control of the NSC was Alexander Haig. Although his position was not formalized until later in the administration, from the start Haig was Kissinger's deputy, dictating NSC staff responsibilities and dealing with procedural details.[470]

In fact, the National Security Council staff formed a crucial component of Nixon's reorganization. Filling a variety of research, coordination and policy formulation roles, the NSC kept policy within Nixon's preferred body. In fact, as Winston Lord recalls, Nixon wanted quality analyses coming from the White House, with both "conceptual strength" and "very strong staff" right in the White House.[471] In particular, the planning staff identified "potential problems in the near and middle-range future," as well as "developing think-pieces, policy options, and alternative approaches on the entire range of National Security Affairs issues."[472] Operations staff had designated areas of geographic responsibility.[473] Similarly, Assistants for Programs prepared "studies analyzing US objectives, policies, and programs in designated countries and regions."[474] As the name implies, Assistants for Planning had primary preparation of planning papers, including long-range planning and special studies..[475] Kissinger met regularly with these senior NSC staff personnel. He felt meetings would ensure the primacy of the administration's

---

[469] "Interview with William Watts, Sept. 21, 1977," Folder: Foreign Policy, Watts, William, A. James Reichley Interview Transcripts, Box 1, Ford Library.
[470] "Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, From: Al Haig, February 7, 1969," Folder: National Security Organization—(2), William J. Baroody, Jr. Papers, 1961-1968, Department of Defense Papers: Subject File, Box 21, Ford Library.
[471] Daalder, Ivo H. and I.M Destler, eds. "The Nixon Administration National Security Council," in *The National Security Council Project: Oral History Roundtables* (Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, and The Brookings Institution, 1998), 8.
[472] "Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, From: William Watts, September 14, 1969," Folder: National Security Council Organization—(5), National Security Advisor, Kissinger-Scowcroft West Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, Box 46, Ford Library.
[473] "Memorandum for Mr. Halperin, March 28, 1969," Folder: NSC/RG, Papers of Morton H. Halperin, Box 5, LBJ Library.
[474] "Memorandum for Mr. Halperin, March 28, 1969," Folder: NSC/RG, Papers of Morton H. Halperin, Box 5, LBJ Library.
[475] "Memorandum for Mr. Halperin, March 28, 1969," Folder: NSC/RG, Papers of Morton H. Halperin, Box 5, LBJ Library.

"concerns and needs, both in terms of his own current thinking and within the framework of current Presidential requirements."[476]

The National Security staff also helped ensure control through the Review Group. Kissinger designed the Review Group to check NSC papers, making sure that only pertinent issues went to the Council. In particular, he tasked it with checking that "all realistic alternatives are presented" with "department and agency reviews…fairly and adequately stated." In the configuration of the NSC, the Review Group dealt with policy issues, with day-to-day foreign policy details relegated by Kissinger to the Under Secretaries Committee. The Review group was one more way to ensure that everything went through the NSC and served as a check on advisory materials. However, the Group could not make policy recommendations.[477] The Review Group helped the NSC monitor the departments and control the policy formulation process.[478]

One key function of the National Security Council, in Nixon's quest to retain control of foreign-policy decision-making, was its ability to order National Security Study Memoranda. These were requests for in-depth investigation on the specifics of a particular foreign policy issue completed by the various bureaucracies, including Treasury, State and Defense. Through the National Security Study Memorandum (NSSMs) Nixon and Kissinger obtained authority over the agendas of the various departments, with the ability to dictate their work and consequently prevent, or at least minimize, courses of action contrary to White House lines.[479] The study memorandums allowed the White House to use the bureaucracy for information and options

---

[476] "August 29, 1969, Subject: Kissinger Staff Meetings," Folder: National Security Council Organization—(5), National Security Advisor, Kissinger-Scowcroft West Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, Box 46, Ford Library.
[477] "H.A.K. Talking Points (Review Group meeting, January 23, 1969)" Folder: Chron. File—Jan-March 1969, Papers of Morton H. Halperin, Box 3, LBJ Library.
[478] "The Role of the National Security Council, by Brigadier General Alexander M. Haig, Jr., Presented at the National War College, 6 October 1971," Folder: Classified Speeches, National Security Adviser Kissinger-Scowcroft West-Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, Box 6, Ford Library.
[479] Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect,* 24.

without having to reveal their plans. When they ordered a study, they were able to receive input from relevant departments for an issue under White House consideration, or in backchannel negotiations.[480] For all these departments knew, these memoranda were simply aimed at long-range planning or were intended merely to provide possible approaches to hypothetical issues.[481] Former NSC staffer Michael Guhin argued that part of the value of the NSSMs was this raw material that they offered.[482] Lord later recalled, "The NSSMs helped provide intellectual fodder" and formed a base of knowledge that Nixon and Kissinger "could draw upon."[483] As Kissinger reminded his NSC staff, the NSSMs were of primary importance, and they needed "to make clear by what you say and by the attention you yourself give the studies that they are important."[484] The NSSMs were an integral part of the White House's control over the foreign-policy machinery as they allowed Nixon and Kissinger to control the bureaucracy and gain information without having to reveal their plans or strategy.

The NSSMs also kept the bureaucracy occupied while Nixon and Kissinger implemented their foreign policy initiatives. As senior NSC aide Helmut Sonnefeldt recalled, the "utility of a NSSM is right, and the make-work role of the NSSM writers and drafters and negotiators is also right. In fact, it tied up people who might have smelled a rat if they hadn't been so busy doing the NSSMs."[485] The study memoranda were of particular use at the beginning of the

---

[480] Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (Simon & Schuster, 2005), 155.
[481] Kissinger, *White House Years,* 47.
[482] Daalder, Ivo H. and I.M Destler, eds. "The Nixon Administration National Security Council," in *The National Security Council Project: Oral History Roundtables* (Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, and The Brookings Institution, 1998), 14-17.
[483] Daalder, Ivo H. and I.M Destler, eds. "The Nixon Administration National Security Council," in *The National Security Council Project: Oral History Roundtables* (Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, and The Brookings Institution, 1998), 18.
[484] "HAK Talking Points; Staff Meeting on NSC System," Folder: National Security Council Organization—(5), National Security Advisor, Kissinger-Scowcroft West Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, Box 46, Ford Library.
[485] Daalder, Ivo H. and I.M Destler, eds. "The Nixon Administration National Security Council," in *The National Security Council Project: Oral History Roundtables* (Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, and The Brookings Institution, 1998), 17-18.

administration—with their detailed requirements and small completion periods—as the two men used them to simultaneously make their mark and inundate the bureaucracy. To this end, twenty-two study memoranda were requested during the first month of the administration alone.[486] As well, during the first one hundred days of the administration, Nixon and Kissinger requested fifty-five study memoranda.[487] NSSMS were extraordinarily detailed and needed to be accompanied by a plethora of materials, such as summarizing papers, which included the issues for debate, agency viewpoints, and recommendations.[488]

Nixon's plan to overwhelm the bureaucracy with the NSSMs worked almost too well. Haig noted to Kissinger in early May 1969, that the NSSMs had "over-extended the bureaucracy in a way which will work to our distinct disadvantage if we do not place an immediate clamp on the issuance of NSSMs."[489] Haig contended that ordering excessive NSSMs would likely lead to receiving ill-conceived papers and fomenting resent within the bureaucracy.[490] Haig's warnings were echoed by State and the CIA. Both departments complained that the "work load is too heavy" and that there was not enough time to prepare or review papers.[491]

As part of his redesign of the NSC, Nixon instituted a policy of using options papers. During the first NSC meeting, Nixon implemented this policy, insisting, "I will make the

---

[486] Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (Summit Books, 1983), 35.
[487] "The National Security Council," by John M. Collins and John Steven Chwat, March 28, 1975, Folder: NSC General [II], Papers of Bromley K. Smith, Box 35, LBJ Library.
[488] "Procedures for Processing of NSSM's and for Preparation for Review Group and NSC Meetings," Folder: Halperin Chron File, Mar-Jul 1969, II [3 of 3], Papers of Morton H. Halperin, Box 4, LBJ Library.
[489] "Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, From: Al Haig, May 3, 1969," Folder: National Security Council Organization—(4), National Security Advisor, Kissinger-Scowcroft West Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, Administrative File, Box 45, Ford Library.
[490] "Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, From: Al Haig, May 3, 1969," Folder: National Security Council Organization—(4), National Security Advisor, Kissinger-Scowcroft West Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, Administrative File, Box 45, Ford Library.
[491] "Talking Points on NSC Organization and Personnel," Folder: New NSC System, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, NSC System, Box H-299, RNPLM.

decisions. To do this, I will need all points of view."[492] Nixon demanded he receive all pertinent information and points of view. He also wanted all the possible courses of action clearly identified and delineated. Nixon insisted that he wanted to see all points of view, including any minority views, if they existed. Kissinger reinforced Nixon's comments, contending the president did not want a consensus-driven decision, but real options.[493]

Nixon further reinforced his control over the decision-making process with the Vietnam Special Studies Group (VSSG). The creation of the Vietnam Special Studies Group was prompted by NSC staffer Laurence E. Lynn, Jr., who presented his concerns about current analysis to Kissinger in August 1969. Lynn argued the administration was letting its "preconceptions about Vietnam lead [them] astray even though readily available facts would have told [them] differently." Citing problems with the Strategic Hamlet program, bombing campaigns, and the Tet Offensive itself, Lynn argued, "this paucity of analysis at a time when major changes are taking place in our policy could be extremely costly if we cannot anticipate or understand developments in Vietnam." The NSC staffer also argued that although NSSM 1 had helped shape the administration's strategy and provided a wealth of information that degree of analysis had not continued. He contended that a "special mechanism of a semi-permanent nature" was needed "to provide continuity to the analysis and serve as a touchstone for those in Washington and elsewhere who can make analytical contributions."[494] Kissinger eagerly accepted Lynn's suggestions and wrote to Nixon about the "need for systematic analysis of US policies and programs in Vietnam." He argued the Nixon administration needed "a special group

---

[492] *FRUS, 1969-1976,* Vol. II: Organization and Management of U.S. Foreign Policy, Document 15.
[493] *FRUS, 1969-1976,* Vol. II: Organization and Management of U.S. Foreign Policy, Document 15.
[494] "August 25,1 969, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Analysis for Vietnam," Folder: VSSG Meeting, 10-20-60, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Committee Files, Vietnam Special Studies Group (VSSG) Meetings, Box H-001, RNPLM.

with semi-permanent status to give continuous direction to the analyses and serve as a touchstone for those in Washington and elsewhere who can make analytical contributions."[495]

Nixon set up this special NSC group on 16 September 1969, with National Security Decision Memorandum 23.[496] As Nixon explained in his letter to Congress, "The Vietnam Special Studies Group gathers…the fullest and most up-to-date information on trends and conditions in the countryside in Vietnam. This group is of key assistance in our major and sustained effort to understand the factors which will determine the course of Vietnamization."[497] The Vietnam Special Studies Group was an interagency analysis group, within the NSC, directed to continuously monitor US activities in Vietnam. While not in charge of day-to-day decision-making, the VSSG was directed "to initiate and review studies and to supervise the preparations of issues papers for consideration by the President and the National Security Council."[498] As an interagency group, drawn from the lower levels of both State and Defense, the VSSG helped to further remove power from the Secretaries of State and Defense. Simply put, this was yet another venue the Secretaries and their key assistants were not invited to participate in, even as their departments' resources were used to provide the work product. Kissinger ran the VSSG.[499]

In all, Nixon and Kissinger substantially increased the size and power of the NSC. Their redesign significantly increased the size of the NSC staff.[500] Before Nixon's inauguration, the

---

[495] "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Analysis for Vietnam," Folder: Vietnamization, Vol. I, Sept 67-Dec 69, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 91, RNPLM.
[496] "September 16, 1969, National Security Decision Memorandum 23," Folder: National Security Decision Memorandum, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Subject Files, Box 363, RNPLM.
[497] "Enclosure: The National Security Council System," "March 3, 1970, Letter to Senator Jackson," Folder: Davis, Jeanne W.—Personal File—NSC Organization and Administration (3), U.S. National Security Council Institutional Files, Box 85, Ford Library.
[498] "September 16, 1969, National Security Decision Memorandum 23," Folder: National Security Decision Memorandum, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Subject Files, Box 363, RNPLM.
[499] "September 16, 1969, National Security Decision Memorandum 23," Folder: National Security Decision Memorandum, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Subject Files, Box 363, RNPLM.
[500] Karen M. Hult, *Empowering the White House: Governance under Nixon, Ford and Carter* (University Press of Kansas, 2004), 137.

NSC had already increased to forty officers and secretaries, up from twenty-four members. An additional twenty-eight staffers joined later in 1969.[501] The budgets reflect the NSC expansion. Under Johnson in 1968 the NSC's budget was $700,000; Nixon increased the NSC's budget to $2.2 million by 1971.[502]

Nixon's NSC Structure: Mistrust

In creating his architecture for National Security, Nixon was influenced by his mistrust of the departmental bureaucracy; the Departments of State and Defense, above all. As such, in his redesign, Nixon isolated the State and Defense Departments, as much as possible. Kissinger shared Nixon's mistrust of the State Department, and he worked hard to reduce its power. Kissinger also denigrated State and its abilities, particularly in advising the president in his redesign proposal. Writing to the president-elect, Kissinger argued that State could not present Nixon with policy options or alternatives. He contended that State did not use its own planning council and insinuated that the whole department was incapable of performing its responsibilities. Kissinger asserted, "the [State Department] staff is inadequate to the task of planning or of management," arguing their "studies have been unrelated to real problems" and "have had no effect on policy."[503] He claimed State was incapable of providing the president with valid alternatives as "their forte is in compromising differences and avoiding a confrontation of conflicting points of view."[504] As well, Kissinger denigrated President Johnson's use of the State Department and the informal Tuesday Lunch system. Kissinger argued that Johnson's system left policy makers inadequately briefed, and unaware of critical nuances.

---

[501] "January 16, 1969, Memorandum for Robert Haldeman," National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 1, RNPLM.
[502] Walter Issacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (Simon & Schuster, 1992), 204.
[503] *FRUS,* 1969-1976, Volume II: Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy, Document 3.
[504] *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume II: Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy, Document 3.

He also complained that Johnson's system did not have "any formal method for assuring that decisions are adequately implemented."[505]

Nixon's disdain for the State Department became apparent when he nominated William P. Rogers for the position of Secretary of State. Rogers had previously served as Attorney General under President Eisenhower and was one of Nixon's political advisors. While Nixon did trust Secretary Rogers, who had been counseling him since the slush find crisis of 1952, he did not respect Rogers's abilities in the foreign policy arena.[506] But Nixon saw Rogers' inexperience as helpful, for it meant the new Secretary of State did not have the experience to interfere in Nixon's White House driven foreign policy.[507] According to White House counsel Leonard Garment, "Rogers didn't know enough to get in the way of Nixon's intention to hold all the strategic strings."[508] Rogers went into the position aware of how limited a role he was being asked to play. Indeed, he had told Nixon that he had scant foreign policy knowledge but Nixon responded that his lack of knowledge actually made him perfect for the job. Rogers later admitted to a biographer, "I recognized that he wanted to be his own foreign policy leader and did not want others to share that role…I knew that Nixon would be the principal actor."[509] Nixon planned for Rogers to be a front man, useful primarily for relaying policy actions and decisions to Congress and the media.[510]

Nixon conducted a multi-front institutional war on the State Department. On 30 June 1969, Nixon sent a memorandum to Haldeman seeking "the immediate removal, where possible,

---

[505] As quoted in, Robert D. Schulzinger, *Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy* (Columbia University Press, 1991), 24.
[506] Leonard Garment, *Crazy Rhythm: From Brooklyn and Jazz to Nixon's White House, Watergate, and Beyond* (Da Capo Press, 2001), 185.
[507] Robert Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power* (Harper, 2007), 83.
[508] Garment, *Crazy Rhythm,* 185.
[509] Hersh, *The Price of Power,* 32.
[510] Garment, *Crazy Rhythm,* 186.

and transfer where not possible, of certain individuals in the State Department." He wanted the "sterilization" or isolation of various State Department analysts and research groups. Nixon also pursued evidence of leaking at State, seeking to fire those responsible. Some of the president's efforts were successful. President Assistant Peter Flanigan noted that one State official "has been reassigned to the Inspection Corps which is reported to be 'Siberia.'"[511]

Following Nixon's lead, Kissinger quickly dismissed the effectiveness of Secretary Rogers and the State Department. Kissinger did not believe they could make valuable contributions to foreign policy. In fact, Kissinger commented to director of personnel Harry Fleming that even if Rogers was controlled by career bureaucrats it did not matter because State was inconsequential and could be safely sidelined.[512] As well, Kissinger and Rogers did not work well together. As Kissinger later reflected, "Rogers must have considered me an egotistical nitpicker who ruined his relations with the President; I tended to view him as an insensitive neophyte who threatened the careful design of our foreign policy. The relationship was bound to deteriorate."[513]

Nixon had a more complex relationship with his Secretary of Defense. Nixon recruited Melvin Laird for the position because he prized his knowledge of Congress and because he believed Laird would avoid the spotlight.[514] Laird, however, was no Rogers. He was unwilling to play a marginal role and had his own agenda for the war in Vietnam. As Laird's aide, William Baroody, recalls, Laird came into office convinced that the United States needed to get its troops

---

[511] "June 30, 1969, Memorandum for Mr. Haldeman," Folder: July 1969, White House Special Files, President's Office Files, President's Handwriting, Box 2, RNPLM.
[512] "Harry Fleming (August 29, 1977)" Folder: Nixon White House, Fleming, Harry, A. James Reichley Interview Transcripts, Box 1, Ford Library.
[513] Kissinger, *White House Years,* 31.
[514] Robert K. Brigham, *Reckless: Henry Kissinger's Responsibility for the Tragedy in Vietnam* (PublicAffairs, 2018), 9.

out of Vietnam and that Vietnamization was the only way forward.[515] A savvy political in-fighter, Laird recognized Nixon's centralization plans even before Nixon's inauguration and fought efforts to limit his power. He made his position clear to Kissinger on 9 January 1969. Laird argued the new structure, "would institute…a 'closed loop'" in which information would be channeled through the NSC, and that "such an arrangement…would or could isolate not only the President from direct access to intelligence community outputs but also the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and other top-level members of the President's team."[516] Laird was a savvy insider who had no intention of being sidelined by either Kissinger or Nixon.

As well, the Nixon White House could not completely circumvent the Secretary of Defense and, by extension the Department of Defense. Nixon's inability to sideline Laird and the Defense Department was, above all else, the result of the nature of how defense policy worked then (and now, for that matter!). The president cannot administer the defense establishment himself, in large part because it is not possible to formulate defense budgets or overall programs without the Secretary's involvement.[517] As well, Laird remained the conduit to military commanders.[518] Nonetheless, Kissinger tried to circumvent Laird. He often contacted Laird's deputies and other high-ranking members of the armed forces to influence their views on policy positions.[519] Kissinger and Laird fought over the role of the defense establishment would play in influencing Nixon and in formulating policy in Vietnam.[520]

---

[515] "Interview with Bill Baroody Jr., Sept. 27, 1977," Folder: Ford White House, Baroody, William, A. James Reichley Interview Transcripts, Box 1, Ford Library.
[516] "Memorandum; January 9, 1969." National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Transition, Box 1, RNPLM.
[517] Peter W. Rodman, *Presidential Command: Power, Leadership, and the Making of Foreign Policy from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush* (Vintage, 2010), 61.
[518] "Interview with Melvin Laird, March 31, 1978," Folder: Foreign Policy, Laird, Melvin, A. James Reichley Interview Transcripts, Box 1, Ford Library.
[519] Roger Morris, *Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (Harper & Row, 1977), 135.
[520] "Interview with Anthony Lake, October 28, 1977," Folder: Foreign Policy, Lake, Anthony, A. James Reichley Interview Transcripts, Box 1, Ford Library.

Nixon—and by extension Kissinger—sought not only to marginalize State and Defense in the policymaking process, but also to reign in the Central Intelligence Agency. Nixon's mistrust of the CIA also profoundly influenced his national security architecture. He disregarded the intelligence agency from the start. During an early speech to Agency personnel, he warned them, "I surveyed the field [before rehiring the executive leadership]. I checked the qualifications of all the men, or, for that matter, any women who might possibly be Director of the CIA. That could happen…You have plenty of opposition."[521]

As Richard Helms noted in an 1982 interview, "From the very beginning of the Nixon administration, Nixon was criticizing Agency estimates" and he "had a barb out for the Agency all the time because he really believed" that the "'Missile Gap' question was the responsibility of the Agency" and that it had cost him the 1960 election.[522] Kissinger echoed Helm's conclusions about Nixon's attitude toward the Agency. He noted that Nixon "felt ill at ease with Helms personally, and suspected that Helms was well liked by the liberal Georgetown social set to which Nixon ascribed many of his difficulties."[523] Nixon viewed the CIA in the same light as the State Department; it was a duplicitous entity that tried to control the president and national security policy.

Nixon took the threat of the CIA to his policy agenda seriously. As Kissinger recalled in his memoirs, Nixon "felt it imperative to exclude the CIA from the formulation of policy."[524] Nixon's mistrust of the Central Intelligence Agency led him to establish the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. With an executive order on 20 March 1969, Nixon changed the intelligence community landscape. Nixon dictated that the Board would not only review the

---

[521] Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *The CIA and the American Democracy* (Yale University Press, 1989), 177.
[522] John L. Helgerson, *Getting to Know the President: Intelligence Briefings of Presidential Candidates* (Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2013), 93.
[523] Kissinger, *White House Years,* 36.
[524] Kissinger, *White House Years,* 11.

activities of the CIA and other intelligence bodies, but that it would also "advise the President concerning the objectives, conduct, management and coordination of the various activities making up the overall national intelligence effort."[525] As Haig later concluded, Nixon did not want the CIA to have exclusive control over the US's intelligence efforts.[526]

While Nixon fervently believed that a new national security architecture was critical to resolving the war in Vietnam, he also believed he needed to control key government departments and agencies. The president believed that State, Defense, and the CIA tried to control decision-making and mistrusted their advisory capabilities. Nixon's mistrusts shaped his national security architecture, giving prominence to the NSC and putting checks on departments and agencies involved in foreign policy. But Nixon's national security architecture ensured the original interagency nature of the NSC was retained.

Architectural Problems

Nixon's executive reorganization faced pushback. The departmental bureaucracy did not offer full cooperation. Using delaying tactics and noncompliance, State and Defense pushed back against Nixon's reorganization. The pushback caused some unexpected problems for Nixon, including complicating policy analysis and creation. It also forced the president to continue to reorganize the executive branch to protect his prerogatives.

Nixon's executive reorganization faced pushback with the NSC staff, many of who were keenly aware of growing resentment in the State Department. NSC staff quickly found that their counterparts in State refused to relinquish control of the policy process and did not cooperate with NSC procedures. In an early memorandum, NSC staff complained that State refused to

---

[525] FRUS 1969-1976, Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy, Volume II, Document 188.
[526] FRUS 1969-1976, Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy, Volume II, Document 194.

comply with Review Group procedures and had a "lack of responsiveness to Presidential/NSC deadlines." They grumbled that State was habitually late with briefing books and requests for background information.[527] White House staffers also complained State pushed its positions on the President. NSC staffers argued that State had pursued a ceasefire (cessation of hostilities without a formal agreement) without presidential authorization and did not abide with American negotiating position for the war in Vietnam.[528]

Nixon wanted the NSC to sideline State. However, an NSC report produced in October 1969 demonstrated that State was fighting back. The report found that State had failed "to provide requested comments on NSC action documents re Vietnam" and had "marginal adherence to Presidential policy particularly with regards to ceasefire, unilateral withdrawal, initial negotiating positions, etc. re Vietnam."[529] A further NSC staff assessment found that State failed to comply with NSC procedures. This assessment charged that State did not coordinate cables or official visits and had engaged in leaking foreign policy details and unprofessional reactions to Nixon's policies. Nixon's executive reorganization faced pushback from State department officials and NSC staffers were keenly aware of growing resentment of Nixon's efforts to keep them on the margins of policymaking.

Kissinger, too, believed that State was hurting the Nixon administration. In a September 1969 memorandum, Kissinger complained to Attorney General John Mitchell about the State Department and the federal bureaucracy more generally. He groused that, he had "seen a series

---

[527] "White House Memorandum; Subject: Problems with State," Folder: State/WH Relationship Vol. 1, January 28-October 31, 1969, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, US Domestic Agency Files, Box 148, RNPLM.
[528] "White House Memorandum; Subject: Problems with State," Folder: State/WH Relationship Vol. 1, January 28-October 31, 1969, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, US Domestic Agency Files, Box 148, RNPLM.
[529] "Problems with State; 1969," Folder: State/WH Relationship Vol. 1, January 28-October 31, 1969, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, US Domestic Agency Files, Box 148, RNPLM.

of incidents in which the bureaucracy was either unresponsive to the President's desires or displayed an extraordinary inability to coordinate matters within itself."[530] Kissinger believed that "failures of this are increasing in frequency, and if something is not done soon, the interests of the United States and the Presidency could be seriously damaged."[531] In his memorandum to Mitchell, Kissinger cited apparent continued leaks, and problems with State clearing cables with the White House. Kissinger also groused about the failure of Defense to clear reduced troop levels in Vietnam with the White House. Kissinger, in what would become a familiar refrain, also complained about Secretary of State Rogers. Kissinger lambasted Rogers, grumbling that the Secretary of State seemed to be engaging in a "serious sort of bureaucratic guerrilla war," while simultaneously insinuating that Rogers' behavior would "have very serious consequences for the management of our foreign affairs."[532] Kissinger believed that the State Department was noncompliant with the NSC and was sabotaging Nixon's efforts in Vietnam.

Deputy NSC advisor Haig jumped on the anti-State bandwagon. In an October 1969 memorandum for Kissinger, Haig argued that the State-White House relationship continued to deteriorate. He asserted that the State Department consistently failed to "to cooperate with this office, to adhere to broad policy lines approved by the President and to abide by established ground rules for minimum coordination of policy matters across a broad spectrum of foreign policy issues."[533] He contended that State was deliberately uncooperative, arguing "we have received several indications that guidance has been issued to at least some bureaus and members of the State Department staff that they should strictly limit coordination and collaboration with

---

[530] "Memorandum for the Attorney General," Folder: State/WH Relationship Vol.1, January 28-October 31, 1969, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, US Domestic Agency Files, Box 148, RNPLM.
[531] "Memorandum for the Attorney General," Folder: State/WH Relationship Vol.1, January 28-October 31, 1969, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, US Domestic Agency Files, Box 148, RNPLM.
[532] "Memorandum for the Attorney General," Folder: State/WH Relationship Vol.1, January 28-October 31, 1969, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, US Domestic Agency Files, Box 148, RNPLM.
[533] FRUS 1969-1976, Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy, Volume II, Document 85.

members of the NSC staff."[534] In this October 1969 memorandum, Haig also argued that the State Department was hurting the American position in Vietnam by pushing for a negotiated peace.[535] Haig also asserted that State was undermining Nixon's position on the SALT talks by discussing the negotiations with the Soviets without Nixon's approval.[536]

Haig's complaints about the State Department were corroborated by NSC staffer W. Anthony Lake. In his own memorandum for Kissinger, Lake argued that the two organizations increasingly viewed each other as adversaries, with the State Department refusing to cooperate with NSC's procedures. Lake contended, "working relations between the NSC staff and the State Department are at their lowest ebb in years." He argued "this is most obvious in the extraordinary failures of the State Department to coordinate its activities with this staff in a number of important ways."[537] Lake charged that State deliberately sent materials to the NSC late, and that its papers "do not produce realistic alternatives for the President to consider but rather put the entire weight on the favored State position."[538] He also argued that State had proceeded with a Vietnam troop assessment despite Nixon's directive to pause such studies.[539] Lake also contended, in language ensured to catch Nixon and Kissinger's attention, that "specific

---

[534] "October 27, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger," Folder: State/WH Relationship Vol. 1, January 28-October 31, 1969, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, US Domestic Agency Files, Box 148, RNPLM.
[535] "October 27, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger," Folder: State/WH Relationship Vol. 1, January 28-October 31, 1969, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, US Domestic Agency Files, Box 148, RNPLM.
[536] "October 27, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger," Folder: State/WH Relationship Vol. 1, January 28-October 31, 1969, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, US Domestic Agency Files, Box 148, RNPLM.
[537] "November 14, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger," Folder: State/WH Relationship Vol. 2, November 1, 1969-January 31, 1970, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, US Domestic Agency Files, Box 148, RNPLM.
[538] "November 14, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger," Folder: State/WH Relationship Vol. 2, November 1, 1969-January 31, 1970, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, US Domestic Agency Files, Box 148, RNPLM.
[539] "August 28, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger," Folder: State/WH Relationship Vol. 1, January 28-October 31, 1969, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, US Domestic Agency Files, Box 148, RNPLM.

Presidential orders and policy guidelines have been ignored. This has, of course, happened in past Administrations—but never in recent history to such a degree, particularly with regard to press statements."[540]

Lake blamed the substantial problems on Rogers' fractured relationships with Nixon and Kissinger. He suggested that State Department insecurity and resentment at the increased involvement of the NSC played a part in the poor State-White House relations.[541] Lake's views on the strained relationship were echoed by fellow NSC staffer, William Watts. In his own memorandum, dated 15 November 1969, Watts suggested "with the mistrust and suspicion that now exist, it is inevitable that [Rogers] will seek to circumvent and undermine your efforts."[542] Though Watts suggested Kissinger work on improving his relationship with Rogers, he also contended that State would continue to be a problem because of State's insecurity. He concluded that President Nixon "clearly looks to you for his most sophisticated advice and counsel, and this is now sufficiently obvious to everyone that it is bound to exacerbate the entire State/NSC relationship."[543] For Nixon, these reported incidents only reinforced his belief that the State Department undermined his policies by attempting to foist their policies on him.

As well, Defense Secretary Laird fought the White House and the NSC's attempts to be the primary managers of Vietnam policy. In his battles, Laird was far more resourceful and had more tools at his disposal than did Rogers and the State Department. The experienced politician

---

[540] FRUS 1969-1976, Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy, Volume II, Document 86.
[541] "November 14, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger," Folder: State/WH Relationship Vol. 2, November 1, 1969-January 31, 1970, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, US Domestic Agency Files, Box 148, RNPLM.
[542] "November 15, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger," Folder: State/WH Relationship Vol. 2, November 1, 1969-January 31, 1970, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, US Domestic Agency Files, Box 148, RNPLM.
[543] "November 15, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger," Folder: State/WH Relationship Vol. 2, November 1, 1969-January 31, 1970, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, US Domestic Agency Files, Box 148, RNPLM.

had previously recognized Nixon's attempts to circumvent his authority during the interregnum and remained on guard. In October 1969, Laird insisted that all NSSMs and NSDMs for the Department of Defense would come through him and his "office would then convert them as required into a directive from Laird." This attempt by Laird did have an inside advantage, as Haig noted to Kissinger, in "limit[ing] information disseminated to the Departments." In another attempt to regain control of his Department's agenda, Laird tried to assert more control over the NSSMs and his departmental agenda. Laird believed the NSC "should coordinate more carefully the development of NSSMs to ensure that they do not conflict with on-going Departmental projects and that established deadlines are realistic."[544]

In their retooling of the national security architecture, Nixon and Kissinger did attempt to take some of the internecine criticisms into consideration. At the end of summer 1970, Kissinger and Laird agreed that, although "the system is working well generally," priorities needed to be better established and specific guidelines put in place for required materials from the departments.[545] On Laird's advice, Kissinger also recommended that the NSC agenda needed to be periodically reviewed and to "place increasing reliance on Under Secretaries' Committee for operational matters."[546] In a Kissinger-requested study of the NSC after its first six months, NSC staffer Morton Halperin acknowledged that "the new NSC system has functioned far better during its first six months than we had any right to expect." He argued that the new structure "was actually [being] used and has resulted in Presidential decisions on a number of issues." Halperin also acknowledged "the bureaucracy has begun to think in terms of options and

---

[544] "Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, October 20, 1969," Folder: Items to Discuss with the President, 8/13/69-12/30/69, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Subject Files, Box 334, RNPLM.
[545] "September 18, 1970, Memorandum for: The Secretary of Defense," Folder: New NSC System, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, NSC System, Box H-299, RNPLM.
[546] "Talking Points on NSC Organization and Personnel," Folder: New NSC System, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, NSC System, Box H-299, RNPLM.

alternatives rather than a single course of action."[547] But Halperin suggested that issues, including the war in Vietnam, had begun to be dealt with on ad hoc basis, outside the NSC structure.[548] He also pointed out that deadlines on the important NSSMs were not being met.

To improve the system, Halperin suggested that Nixon be more open about his decisions and policy. He argued that the "lack of concrete results from NSC meetings undercuts the morale of the bureaucracy which labors to produce the papers and prepare for the meetings."[549] Halperin also suggested Nixon's secrecy was hurting the council's recommendations. He contended, "NSC discussion thus far has probably suffered because of a lack of knowledge on the part of the NSC members as to what items the President wished to focus on and what policy issues he wished to have their advice on."[550] Other suggestions from NSC staff ranged from allowing more time for the completion of the studies, to more specific guidance from the White House on areas of concern.[551] Director of the Planning Staff Osgood suggested that his staff needed to step up and participate "more directly in the formulation and consideration of policies and policy options" to ensure that policy studies "are coordinated with one another according to a coherent concept of American interests."[552]

NSC staffers Richard T. Kennedy and William Watts similarly contended that although major changes were not required, the system could be improved. In particular, Watts suggested that the planning group needed time to consider near and middle-range problems and work on "developing think-pieces, policy options, and alternative approaches on the entire range of

---

[547] FRUS 1969-1976, Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy, Volume II, Document 66.
[548] FRUS 1969-1976, Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy, Volume II, Document 66.
[549] "Attachment: The NSC and New Initiatives; August 5, 1969, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger," Folder: Halperin, Morton H., Staff Memos, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Name Files, Box 817, RNPLM.
[550] "Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger Subject: NSC Procedures," Folder: Chron. File, Mar-July 1969, Papers of Morton H. Halperin, Box 3, LBJ Library.
[551] "November 6, 1969, Memorandum to Mr. Henry A. Kissinger," Folder: Davis, Jeanne W.—Personal File—NSC Organization and Administration (2), U.S. National Security Council Institutional Files, Box 85, Ford Library.
[552] FRUS 1969-1976, Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy, Volume II, Document 77.

National Security Affairs issues."[553] In a joint memorandum, Kennedy and Watts argued that "the system is suffering an overload" and that many issues did not require a full NSC meeting. In a joint assessment, Watts and Kennedy also suggested the Review Group be strengthened to check the power of the State Department. They suggested reforms were essential or State would "dominate the process of issue formulation subject only to the check-rein of the NSC staff" and that "the NSC staff will be forced into open opposition to State to maintain the integrity of the policy formulation process."[554] The two staffers also cautioned against ad-hoc groups, suggesting that such a system produced resentment and "increasing isolation of the NSC system" making "implementation of decisions more and more difficult."[555]

Nixon also faced pervasive leaks from within the executive branch, which he viewed as a personal attack on him and a threat to his policies. During the first NSC meeting, Nixon directed that leaks and sharing of confidential information must be stopped and that "security is maintained."[556] Nixon also ruled that NSC papers "be treated as privileged documents" and that "the proceedings of the NSC must be kept completely private." But Nixon faced real problems with information security and leaks. As Haig recalled, "The very first National Security Council Memorandum was leaked to the *New York Times* less than forty-eight hours after the President had signed it."[557] That pattern continued. After this initial leak there were nineteen stories

---

[553] FRUS 1969-1976, Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy, Volume II, Document 72.
[554] "April 3, 1970, Memorandum for Mr. Kissinger," Folder: New NSC System, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, NSC System, Box H-299, RNPLM.
[555] "April 3, 1970, Memorandum for Mr. Kissinger," Folder: New NSC System, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, NSC System, Box H-299, RNPLM.
[556] "NSC Meeting, January 21, R.N. Talking Points," Folder: Chron. File—Jan-March 1969, Papers of Morton H. Halperin, Box 3, LBJ Library.
[557] Haig, *Inner Circles,* 210.

derived from highly confidential material published in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* by the start of June 1969.[558]

Leaks would continue throughout Nixon's administration, thereby sustaining the president's anger and feeding his penchant for secrecy. Highly classified NSC material was consistently leaked to both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post.* Stories based on NSC files included information on Nixon's options for the war in Vietnam, US involvement in Middle East peace negotiations, studies of American nuclear forces and overseas bases, as well as US reconnaissance of the Soviet Union. As Haig disingenuously explained, "for a President who wants to be forthcoming, who wants to share problems with this great bureaucracy, the kind of leakage that we have experienced just forces him to pull back."[559] While Nixon never intended for his presidency to be an open book, the pervasive leaks only forced him to be more secretive, which his national security architecture allowed him to do.

The world of Nixon's presidency

Even as Nixon and Kissinger were restructuring the national security architecture, they were also confronting a fundamental change in America's international status. The United States, they believed, could no longer afford to project power around the globe. They could not ignore the American people's increasing skepticism about the war against communism; the anti-war movement was becoming ever more popular and powerful. Although Nixon believed the United States could still be dominant on the world stage, he recognized that the public was not willing to

---

[558] Haig, *Inner Circles,* 210.
[559] "The Role of the National Security Council, by Brigadier General Alexander M. Haig, Jr., Presented at the National War College, 6 October 1971," Folder: Classified Speeches, National Security Adviser Kissinger-Scowcroft West-Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, Box 6, Ford Library.

support an expansive US international policy.[560] Nixon knew he faced new public limits on his foreign policy.[561] As such, entering office Nixon believed he had to tread cautiously or risk being driven from office.

The anti-war movement was, indeed, a significant force during Nixon's presidency. By the time Nixon took office fifty-seven percent of Americans believed the time had come "to begin to reduce month by month the number of US soldiers in Vietnam."[562] During the Easter weekend in 1969, there were massive demonstrations across the United States and symbolic crucifixions in front of the White House.[563] The Easter Sunday demonstrations were followed by the Nationwide Moratorium against the war.[564] Held on 15 October 1969, the Moratorium included a torrent of demonstrations across the country. Another series of demonstrations took place between November 13-15, with an estimated 500,000 protesters in the capital alone.[565]

Nixon believed the anti-war movement acted as a brake on his ambitions to end the Vietnam War. The president worried that an aggressive offensive would result in considerable uproar in the United States and internationally. Nixon "doubted whether I could have held the country together for the period of time needed to win," if he resorted to any of these methods. The president believed any significant military maneuvers would see "antiwar protesters…explode in riots."[566] As such, for Nixon, the antiwar movement was a further impetus to changing his government architecture and ensuring his prerogatives. As historian Gregory

---

[560] "Interview with Anthony Lake, October 28, 1977," Folder: Foreign Policy, Lake, Anthony, A. James Reichley Interview Transcripts, Box 1, Ford Library.
[561] "Interview with Winston Lord, October 19, 1977," Folder: Foreign Policy, Lord, Winston, A. James Reichley Interview Transcripts, Box 1, Ford Library.
[562] Caldwell, "The Legitimation of the Nixon-Kissinger Grand Design and Grand Strategy," *Diplomatic History* 33:4 (Sept. 2009), 633.
[563] Tom Wells, *The War Within: America's Battle Over Vietnam* (Open Road Distribution, 2016), 294.
[564] Melvin Small, *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves* (Rutgers University Press, 1988), 182.
[565] Gregory A. Daddis, *Withdrawal: Reassessing America's Final Years in Vietnam* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 116-117.
[566] As quoted in, Wells, *The War Within,* 289, 306-307.

Daddis argues, "the anti-war movement…forced [Nixon] to contemplate restraining the use of military force overseas."[567] Nixon and his advisers recognized that these antiwar protests could have a spiraling effect, influencing overall public opinion, congressional decisions, and press coverage.[568] As a result, Nixon believed he needed to isolate his policy from what he perceived as dangerous outside interference, including interference from the American people. He believed a new national security architecture would protect his decision-making autonomy.

Nixon recognized that the Congressional anti-war faction had placed tremendous pressure on Johnson's Vietnam War policies and did not want the same to happen to him. As historian Gregory Daddis explains, "Without question, Nixon saw the legislative branch as a special danger looming in the wings. As an institution most responsible to public opinion, the House of Representatives could transmit pressure from its constituencies to the White House."[569] Increasingly, the Congressional doves worked to constrict the war effort and force the president to withdraw American troops. As historian Fredrik Logevall explains, government anti-war activists believed "by carefully choosing issues, and by highlighting the Senate's constitutional obligations regarding foreign policy, the doves could hope to start squeezing the war, working at its margins in order to compress it."[570] In January 1969, longtime war critic Senator Fulbright set up the Symington Committee to hold hearings on American national security and international commitments, focused on Southeast Asia.[571] In March 1969, Senator Fulbright publicly challenged the administration's Vietnam War policy. He visited the president, personally

---

[567] Daddis, *Withdrawal,*141.
[568] As quoted in, Wells, *The War Within,* 306.
[569] Daddis, *Withdrawal,* 59.
[570] Fredrik Logevall, "A Delicate Balance: John Sherman Cooper and the Republican Opposition to the Vietnam War," in *Vietnam and the American Political Tradition,* Randall B. Woods, eds., (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 253.
[571] Robert D. Schulzinger, "Richard Nixon, Congress, and the War in Vietnam, 1969-1974," in *Vietnam and the American Political Tradition,* Randall B. Woods, eds., (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 285.

warning Nixon his 'honeymoon' would not continue.[572] Fulbright's critiques were quickly followed by public denouncements of the war effort by Averell Harriman, the former head US negotiator in Paris and one of the earliest proponents of containment, and by Clark Clifford, the former Secretary of Defense. Both men called for negotiations. In particular, Clifford argued that Nixon's policies could only lead to casualties.[573]

During 1969 there were multiple anti-war resolutions, attempting to restrict the president's funding and military options. One unsuccessful amendment proposed 1 December 1970 as the cut-off point for funding the American military efforts in South Vietnam.[574] But, by December 1969, Congress approved restrictions on US operations in both Laos and Thailand.[575] As well, on 30 June 1970, the Senate approved the revised Cooper-Church amendment. It dictated that "absent approval from Congress there could be neither funding for US troops in Cambodia, nor military instruction, nor air combat activity in support of the Cambodian government."[576] Similar anti-war efforts, aimed at restricting the president's decisions, continued throughout Nixon's presidency. For instance, in July 1970 the Senate passed an amendment proposed by Senator Cooper to "cut off all funding of US forces in Indochina in four months without conditions." In fact, as Logevall explains, the Nixon administration was forced "to sacrifice its entire military assistance bill rather than have it pass with the end-the-war amendment included."[577] Nixon viewed these Congressional attempts as a constriction of his policymaking and further proof that he needed to change presidential architecture to protect his presidential prerogatives. The story of Nixon's paranoia and secrecy is a familiar one. However,

---

[572] Zelizer, Julian E. "Congress and the Politics of Troop Withdrawal," *Diplomatic History* 34:3 (June 2010), 534.
[573] Daddis, *Withdrawal,* 59.
[574] Hersh, *The Price of Power,* 123.
[575] Small, *Johnson, Nixon and the Doves,* 178.
[576] Logevall, "A Delicate Balance: John Sherman Cooper and the Republican Opposition to the Vietnam War," 255.
[577] Logevall. "A Delicate Balance: John Sherman Cooper and the Republican Opposition to the Vietnam War," 257.

it is essential to acknowledge that Nixon did have real enemies. The president faced determined adversaries seeking to curtail his presidential power and force his hand in Vietnam.

Nixon's national security architecture was a product of his long-standing experience in and knowledge of the American government. Nixon mobilized the administration and policymaking apparatus to protect his decision-making autonomy and prosecute the war in Vietnam. The incoming president faced real deterrents to his foreign policy and needed a more secure system. But Nixon also recognized the utility of the National Security Council in the Cold War environment for engaging experts from across the government in thinking about the multi-faceted nature of United States foreign policy. While Nixon was protecting his autonomy, he also created a system that avoided dependence on executive departments and provided him with the necessary policy considerations and intelligence. In short, Nixon's system was more than a product of his personality quirks and suspicions, but rather a carefully considered product of the Cold War environment and his government experience.

Chapter V: The Architecture and Policy Formation

On inauguration day, January 20, 1969, President Richard Nixon thought he had the administrative tools he needed to get the United States out of the war in Vietnam. He had meticulously revised the national security architecture of the presidency. By so doing, Nixon believed he had protected his decision-making autonomy, placed Congress and the public on the outside, and secured key executive agencies under his control. This political and policy-making arrangement, Nixon believed, would give him the freedom he needed to act as he saw fit to bring the Vietnam War to a satisfactory conclusion.

During the first months of Nixon's administration, the president's reconfigured system appeared to be working and standing up to the hard realities of crafting policy for the Vietnam War. Nixon trusted the NSC for research and analysis, and his reconfigured architecture played a major role in shaping his first major initiatives in the bombing of Cambodia, backchannel diplomacy, and Vietnamization

But all was not as it seemed. Before Nixon's first year in office had ended, cracks had begun to appear in the administrative structures he had built. Hairline at first, these cracks began to expand. The NSC-centered policy process began to break down. The NSC was unable to protect Nixon's autonomy or successfully control policymaking for the war in Vietnam. Moreover, Nixon often widened such cracks by his own actions. Despite his plan to use the NSC to keep external interference in the policymaking process to a minimum, he often allowed media reports and other outside information to distract him and to redirect his efforts and that of his administrative team. Then, too, and predictably, Nixon was unable to wall off Congress. Finally, Nixon could not constrain the power of the Defense Department. Defense Secretary Melvin

Laird, operating outside of the NSC-system and using his department's massive capacities, began to develop his own agenda. Within a year's time, Nixon's ability to act freely had been dramatically limited; his national security architecture was not working as he had planned.

Nixon and the National Security Council

Coming into office, Nixon was determined to get the United States out of the war in Vietnam. But he had two important caveats: he needed to protect what he viewed as American prestige and credibility and he did not want to be viewed as the president who lost the war. Ending the war with national and personal reputation intact required, he believed, the survival of the South Vietnamese state and government. As key NSC staffer Winston Lord explains, Nixon "would accept almost any sort of settlement with the Communists, except that it would not impose a Communist government on South Vietnam."[578]

Nixon's basic war strategy was evident from the first National Security Council meetings. Nixon believed military pressure would help create a negotiated political settlement.[579] But Nixon also acknowledged there would be a series of reductions in American force strength.[580] Nixon's dual imperatives would structure his strategy. The president refused to concede that his administration would not be able to push Hanoi to the bargaining table, and that US force reductions were likely irreversible once they began.[581]

---

[578] "Interview, Winston Lord," Folder: Foreign Policy Lord, Winston, A. James Reichley Interview Transcripts, Box 1, Ford Library.
[579] McMahon, Robert J. "The Politics and Geopolitics of American Troop Withdrawals from Vietnam, 1968-1972," *Diplomatic History* 34:3 (June 2010), 473.
[580] McMahon, "The Politics, and Geopolitics, of American Troop Withdrawals," 473.
[581] McMahon, "The Politics, and Geopolitics, of American Troop Withdrawals," 475; "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Vietnam Situation and Options," Folder: Vietnam, H.A. Kissinger, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 89, RNPLM.

In the Nixon administration's early days, the National Security Council quickly became Kissinger's domain and changed how information flowed to the president and how decisions were made. National Security Advisor Kissinger made sure that all key information went through him. Effectively, the only foreign-policy advisor with regular access to Nixon was Kissinger.[582]

Kissinger immediately began to use the NSC to address the war in Vietnam. He believed that ineffective policy in Vietnam had been caused, at least in part, by inadequate analysis produced by limited or flawed information. He told Nixon, "what makes the Vietnam problem so intractable is that people disagree not only about policy judgments but also about the facts."[583] Nixon agreed. At the first NSC meeting, Nixon reiterated his desire to rethink American strategy for the war in Vietnam. The president argued, "with respect to Vietnam…we must rethink all of our policy tracks."[584] Almost immediately, Nixon requested a full-scale formal review of the United States' policies in Vietnam.

As such, in the first National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) Kissinger inquired about planned offensives, enemy intelligence, attrition rates, and the strength of the South Vietnamese forces. He also asked questions about the Paris peace talks, the DRV's intentions, and the level of Chinese and Soviet influence.[585] In NSSM 1, Nixon requested an "evaluation of the situation in Vietnam," along with "a discussion of uncertainties and possible alternative

---

[582] "Interview with William Watts, Sept. 21, 1977," Folder: Foreign Policy, Watts, William, A. James Reichley Interview Transcripts, Box 1, Ford Library.
[583] "January 13, 1969, Memorandum for the President-Elect, Subject: Vietnam Questions," Folder: Haig's Vietnam File—Vol. 1, January-March 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Special File, Box 1007, RNPLM.
[584] "Minutes of the First Meeting of the National Security Council, January 21, 1969," Folder: NSC Meeting—January 21, 1969, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Minutes of Meetings, NSC Draft Minutes, Box H-120, RNPLM.
[585] "January 13, 1969, Memorandum for the President-Elect, Subject: Vietnam Questions," Folder: Haig's Vietnam File—Vol. 1, January-March 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Special File, Box 1007, RNPLM.

interpretations of existing data."[586] The original NSSM was an exhaustive list and represented "different independent viewpoints from various sources," which Special Assistant to the National Security Advisor Winston Lord recalls, "helped shape their [Nixon and Kissinger's] approach," particularly when it came to Vietnamization."[587]

Aside from the importance of the NSSMs in shaping policy and tactics, the NSC mechanism helped control the bureaucracy. In this case, the departments were given less than a month to complete the studies. As well, adding more burdens to the State and Defense departments, Nixon requested, "the Secretary of State's comments on the [Saigon] Ambassador's response, and the comments of the Secretary of Defense on the responses of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and MACV."[588] At the same time, Nixon requested "an 'inventory' of the international situation" and more detailed studies of major Vietnam negotiating issues at the Paris Peace negotiations, including the status of prisoners of war and restoring the demilitarized zone.[589]

As the administration progressed, the National Security Council played a crucial part in the preparation of information memoranda and national security analyses for the Nixon administration. Nixon and Kissinger leaned on the NSC to prepare independent studies and analyses of their diplomatic and military forays. Kissinger often sought a separate NSC analysis of the Paris plenary sessions, even though he was receiving reports from the State Department. For instance, in December 1969 senior analyst John H. Holdridge sparked Kissinger's interest.

---

[586] "National Security Study Memorandum 1" Folder: Chron. File, Jan-Mar. 1969, Papers of Morton H. Halperin, Box 3, LBJ Library.
[587] Daalder, Ivo H. and I.M Destler, eds. "The Nixon Administration National Security Council," in *The National Security Council Project: Oral History Roundtables* (Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, and The Brookings Institution, 1998), 19.
[588] "National Security Study Memorandum 1" Folder: Chron. File, Jan-Mar. 1969, Papers of Morton H. Halperin, Box 3, LBJ Library.
[589] "National Security Study Memorandum, Subject: Review of the International Situation" Folder: Chron. File, Jan-Mar. 1969, Papers of Morton H. Halperin, Box 3, LBJ Library; "National Security Study Memorandum, Subject: Papers for Vietnam Negotiations," Folder: Chron File, Jan-Mar. 1969, Papers of Morton H. Halperin, Box 3, LBJ Library.

Holdridge commented that Xuan Thuy's statement on prisoners "constitutes the first official recognition by Hanoi that its men are in South Vietnam."[590] In response, Kissinger instructed "Holdridge to prepare memo for Pres analyzing both Plenary and tea break session."[591]

The NSC also reported on the progress of Pacification and analyzed Secretary of Defense Laird's reports. For instance, in July 1969, NSC analysts critiqued Laird's pacification program report. While the NSC transmitted Laird's argument that the program was improving, the NSC staff commented, "the reporting system overall appears to be only slightly more reliable now than it was in late 1967." The NSC staff argued the analysis was flawed, and depended on "subjective assessments and situations in which the US is dependent for any data or conclusions on the opinions of the Vietnamese who often tell us what they think we would like to hear."[592]

The NSC also coordinated intelligence requests. For instance, NSC staff used contacts at the Central Intelligence Agency to help plan attacks on North Vietnam. At the end of September 1969, NSC Assistant for Programs Laurence E. Lynn, Jr., received an "inventory of major physical facilities in North Vietnam that could be viewed as potential targets." Lynn was reassured by his CIA contact, George A. Carver, Jr., Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs,

---

[590] "December 4, 1969, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Xuan Thuy admits in Paris Talks that Northers are Present in South Vietnam," Folder: Paris Talks, Memos and Misc Memcoms, Vol V, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Paris Talks/Meetings, Box 183, RNPLM.
[591] [Henry Kissinger Handwritten Note] "December 4, 1969, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Xuan Thuy admits in Paris Talks that Northers are Present in South Vietnam," Folder: Paris Talks, Memos and Misc Memcoms, Vol V, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Paris Talks/Meetings, Box 183, RNPLM.
[592] "July 11, 1969, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, From: Dean Moor, Though: John Holdridge, Subject: Status of the US Reporting System on Pacification in South Vietnam," Folder: Vietnam (General Files), Jan 69-Aug 69, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 74, RNPLM.

that the process had been kept discrete. Carver promised "the number of people working [on the inventory] was held to an absolute minimum for security reasons."[593]

However, despite the regular research and analysis work provided by the National Security Council staff, Nixon was often distracted by press and news reports. While he mistrusted the American media and believed they were biased against him, he still worried that their reporting might contain elements his NSC team had missed. He frequently ordered NSC studies and investigations based on information gleaned from the media. For instance, in June 1969, Nixon directed Kissinger and Laird to "prepare a joint report or individual report on the combat effectiveness of the South Vietnamese armed forces" after viewing an "account which described the panicky action of a GVN military unit under fire."[594] After Kissinger and Laird responded (indicating that there were still serious issues with ARVN's combat effectiveness and logistics structures), Nixon ordered a further NSC study on what could be done to improve "logistics capabilities."[595] At the beginning of February 1969, news reports on the Paris peace talks and possible Communist initiatives spurred Nixon to action. Nixon insisted the United States must put pressure on the enemy in Vietnam, asking Kissinger to request military initiatives from Wheeler "to increase the pressure militarily without going to the point that we [the United States] break off negotiations."[596]

---

[593] "29 September 1969, Memorandum for: Dr. Laurence E. Lynn, Jr., Subject: North Vietnam Target Inventory," Folder: Vietnam Contingency Planning, Oct. 2, 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 89, RNPLM.
[594] "June 20, 1969, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Request from the President," Folder: Vietnam (General Files), Jan 69-Aug 69, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 74, RNPLM.
[595] "June 24, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: South Vietnamese Combat Effectiveness," Folder: Vietnam (General Files), Jan 69-Aug 69, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 74, RNPLM.
[596] "February 1, 1969, To: Henry Kissinger," Folder: Vietnam Vol. 1, Thru 3/19/69, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Country Files, Box 136, RNPLM.

The influence of the press on Nixon's requests continued. On 22 July 1969, he asked Kissinger to investigate claims by the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* that the Thieu government was failing to garner popular political support. Wanting Kissinger to investigate the prospect of polling the South Vietnamese, Nixon also asked about South Vietnamese popular opinion.[597] In response, Kissinger reminded Nixon that the NSC already collected and analyzed that information. He noted, "sampling of popular opinion in SVN is regularly carried out….and is used as background information for policy guidance." Kissinger acknowledged, "polling results are not made public, since this has resulted in charges in the past that the United States was attempting to manipulate public opinion." He also reminded the president that the latest results illustrated "no particular drop in confidence in the GVN or its policies."[598]

In another instance, Nixon requested that Kissinger report on conditions in North Vietnam because of a newspaper article. In *The New York Times* on 16 December 1969, the well-known journalist Fox Butterfield reported from North Vietnam: "there seems to be no sense of panic or depression in wartime Hanoi." He continued, "the people seem confident that they will eventually win the war."[599] Kissinger downplayed Butterfield's comments and reminded the president that he had more dependable sources upon which to base his policies: "Butterfield's impressions are not unusual for sympathetically-disposed observers paying their first visit to Hanoi." He went on to remind the president that US intelligence painted a different picture of

---

[597] "July 22, 1969, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Anti-Communist Prospects in South Vietnam," Folder: Vietnam, Vol. VIII, July 1-13, 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Country Files, Box 138, RNPLM.
[598] "July 22, 1969, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Anti-Communist Prospects in South Vietnam," Folder: Vietnam, Vol. VIII, July 1-13, 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Country Files, Box 138, RNPLM.
[599] "December 22, 1969, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger," Folder: Vietnam, Vol. XIV_1, 1-15 January 70, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Country Files, Box 142, RNPLM.

both economic and political strains in North Vietnam, including war-weariness, food shortages, and leadership debates.[600]

Nixon's pattern of reacting to news reports continued into 1970. In February 1970, Nixon requested a follow-up after a negative report on the South Vietnamese Armed Forces. Nixon asked Kissinger to "have the Department of Defense submit a report on the accuracy of the statement that ARVN troops know they are 'cursed' by their US counterparts privately and 'patronized' with terms like Vietnamization publicly."[601] Nixon also wanted the NSC to investigate CBS claims that ARVN "will be the last unit to receive US military support" and questioned "how much of this report is fact versus biasness on the part of the network."[602] Nixon's reaction to the media undercut the NSC's utility. The president allowed media reports and other outside information to distract him and to redirect his efforts and that of his administrative team.

Menu Bombings

Nixon's reconfigured architecture played a major role in shaping his first major initiative in the bombing of Cambodia. In the spring of 1969, Nixon made the decision to bomb communist sanctuaries in Vietnam. In an unauthorized, illegal extension of the US war effort, Nixon used the National Security Council to plan and execute the bombings, known as the Menu bombings. The operation was emblematic of Nixon and Kissinger's Vietnam strategies and

---

[600] "January 12, 1970, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Conditions in North Vietnam," Folder: Vietnam, Vol XIV-1, 1-15 January 70, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Country Files, Box 142, RNPLM.
[601] "February 18, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger," Folder: H-Z Memo-Feb, 1970, White House Special Files, Staff Member Office Files, H.R. Haldeman, Alpha Name Files, Box 58, RNPLM.
[602] "February 18, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger," Folder: Haig Chron.-Feb. 15-18, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 962, RNPLM.

decision-making structure. The operation was planned through the NSC and concealed from Congress and the American public.

The NSC-architecture was vital in designing and executing Operation Menu. During the interregnum, Nixon and Kissinger explored options for Cambodia and what could be done to destroy the Communist build-up. These options and queries about Cambodia were mixed in with over twenty-other questions in the first NSSM. The NSC's requests were fruitful, as the joint command believed they had located the communist headquarters in Vietnam.[603] Kissinger met privately with Laird and General Wheeler to follow up on this information. Kissinger also wanted military actions "which could convey to the North that there is a new firm hand at the helm."[604] Cambodia was also an ideal location because Nixon and Kissinger did not want to attack the North directly.[605] During the meeting, Wheeler suggested the United States could initiate "additional offensive operations in Laos or Cambodia" or "a foray by ground forces into North Vietnamese base areas, sanctuaries or logistics installations might prove effective."[606]

Nixon had hoped that his administrative reorganization would enable him to sideline the State Department's role in Vietnam war planning; Operation Menu revealed the success of that process. Nixon limited the planning and execution of the operation to his inner circle. Secretary of State Rogers was left completely out of the decision to bomb Cambodia, which had been

---

[603] "Telcon, The President (in Key Biscayne), Mr. Kissinger, 3/8/69," Folder: Telephone Conversations-Chron File, 3-13 Mar 1969, Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telcons), Chronological File, Box 1, RNPLM; *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976,* Volume VI, Vietnam, January 1969-July 1970, eds. Edward C. Keefer and Carolyn Yee (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2006), Document 4.
[604] "March 16, 1969, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Breakfast Plan," Folder: Breakfast Plan, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 89, RNPLM.
[605] "Telcon, The President (in Key Biscayne), Mr. Kissinger, 3/8/69," Folder: Telephone Conversations-Chron File, 3-13 Mar 1969, Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telcons), Chronological File, Box 1, RNPLM.
[606] "Meeting between Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Secretary of Defense and Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Secretary of Defense Conference Room, Thursday, January 30, 1969," Folder: SecDef Correspondence—White House/NSC (1), Melvin R. Laird, Papers, Department of Defense Papers: Subject File, Box D11, Ford Library.

made aboard Air Force One. In fact, Rogers was not included in the planning session, even though he was aboard the flight, accompanying the president on his European goodwill tour. Rather the Secretary of State was informed later and given only the barest of details.[607] In a phone call with Kissinger on 15 March 1969 Nixon "ordered immediate implementation of Breakfast plan." He dictated, "State is to be notified only after the point of no return. Lodge is to make no complaint" and "the order is not appealable."[608]

Nixon used his national security architecture to conceal the operation from both the public and the bureaucracy. He believed the operation would happen only if it was kept secret. Kissinger agreed. He worried that if news about the planned bombing appeared, the anti-war movement "could seize on this to renew attacks on war and pressure for quick US withdrawal" and that "Hanoi could try to buttress domestic critics with attacks aimed at gaining large US casualties."[609]

Nixon's reconfigured architecture was essential in hiding the operation from the president's domestic and foreign opponents. Nixon and Kissinger used a 'dual-reporting' system to conceal the bombings. The system used false missions to cover the real targets. In consultation with only Nixon, Laird and the Joint Chiefs of Staff designed attacks on the communist sanctuaries. These missions were given misleading public identifiers, with flight plans near the border. This deception extended to members of the bombing crews. Air crews were briefed as if the attack was on South Vietnam; only the pilot and navigator knew that they were actually

---

[607] Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War,* 133.
[608] "Telcon, The President, Mr. Kissinger, 3-15-69," Folder: Telephone Conversations-Chron File, 3-13 Mar. 1969, Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telcons), Chronological File, Box 1, RNPLM.
[609] "March 16, 1969, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Breakfast Plan," Folder: Breakfast Plan, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 89, RNPLM.

crossing into Cambodia.[610] Post-strike reports were completed with the coordinates of the cover targets. Records were created that hid the fact that targets in Cambodia had been bombed.[611]

Nixon continuously told his subordinates not to reveal the operation. The checklist for the menu bombings emphasized "there will be no publicity given specifically to the attacks on Cambodia" and the Breakfast Plan should not be linked "publicly with the 'appropriate response.'"[612] Kissinger reminded Laird in a phone call on 13 March 1969, that the "President feels very strongly that planning has to be kept to small circle—there can be no leaks beforehand."[613]

Nixon's restructured national security apparatus succeeded in concealing the bombings. On 19 March 1969, Kissinger reassured the President that "there has been no overt reaction to Breakfast Plan [Phase One of Operation Menu] from either Hanoi or Cambodia." Kissinger believed the lack of response was unsurprising, considering Hanoi "was not likely to acknowledge publicly any use of Cambodia."[614] The *New York Times* published a sketchy article by William Beecher on 9 May 1969 about the bombings but even as the Cambodian border attacks continued during the summer of 1969 no other information came out until the Watergate hearings.[615]

Nixon used the NSC to plan and execute the Menu bombings. Nixon's new policymaking architecture concealed the operation from Congress and the American public. The planning and

---

[610] Bernard C. Nalty, *Air War over South Vietnam, 1968-1975* (Air Force and Museums Program: United States Air Force, 2000), 129-130, 133.
[611] Shawcross, *Sideshow,* 31.
[612] "Checklist for Meeting with President, March 16, 1969," Folder: Breakfast Plan, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 89, RNPLM.
[613] "Telcon, Secy Laird—Mr. Kissinger, 3-13-69," Folder: Telephone Conversations-Chron File, 3-13 Mar. 1969, Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telcons), Chronological File, Box 1, RNPLM.
[614] "March 19, 1969, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Reaction to Breakfast Plan," Folder: Breakfast, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 103, RNPLM.
[615] John Correll, "The Shadow War in Cambodia," *Air Force Magazine* 101:1 (Jan. 2018): 54-58.

implementation of the operation represented a fundamental shift in the structure of the US government. Nixon had used a non-Congressionally confirmed body to illegally expand the war.

NSC Mechanisms

Nixon also asserted control of his Vietnam War policy through the NSC's various analysis groups and committees. One such group was the Vietnam Special Studies Group (VSSG). The NSC directed-interagency group sought greater clarity on the war effort. Using studies and reports generated by the various departments, as well as the NSC itself, the VSSG sought to enhance policymaking and fulfill Nixon's directives.

The VSSG provided Nixon with analysis on Vietnamization and pacification efforts. For instance, during a meeting on 18 November 1969, Kissinger directed the VSSG in an analysis of the pacification and communist activities in the Vietnam countryside.[616] At the end of November 1969, NSC staffer Laurence E. Lynn Jr., updated Kissinger on the VSSG's progress. Lynn noted the Group were "developing a conceptual framework" for analyzing the countryside and considering how to sustain American progress.[617] The VSSG followed up on these issues at a meeting in early December. Kissinger observed that the analysis illustrated "substantial improvement in GVN security and control in the countryside.[618] At the December 1969 VSSG

---

[616] "HAK Talking Points, Vietnam Special Studies Group, November 18, 1969," Folder: VSSG Meeting, 11-19-69, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Committee Files, Vietnam Special Studies Group (VSSG) Meetings, Box H-001, RNPLM.
[617] "November 29, 1969, Memorandum for Mr. Kissinger, Subject: Monday's Vietnam Special Studies Group Meeting," Folder: Vietnam Special Studies Group, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Special File, Box 1009, RNPLM.
[618] "HAK Talking Points, VSSG Meeting, December 1, 1969," Folder: VSSG Meeting, 12-1-69, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Committee Files, Vietnam Special Studies Group (VSSG) Meetings, Box H-001, RNPLM.

Meeting, Kissinger also requested follow-up papers analyzing the "changes in main forces, local forces, and enemy strategy and tactics [in] bringing about" the pacification improvements.[619]

In the spring of 1970, the Vietnam Special Studies Group analyzed the progress of Vietnamization and pacification for Nixon. In an April update for Kissinger, NSC staffer Laurence E. Lynn Jr., noted the VSSG was analyzing enemy manpower and conducting studies on the political situation in the Vietnamese countryside.[620] During July 1970, the VSSG focused on reviewing air activity. The group considered a "study of air activity in Southeast Asia" and assessed Laird's "proposal on sortie levels."[621] Using the Vietnam Special Studies Group, Kissinger also directed the Defense Department and the CIA to assess communist troop strength. Kissinger demanded detailed information in his request, asking for an analysis "of the trends in the strength, composition, structure, and disposition and dominant modes of employment of NVA/VC forces posing a threat to South Vietnam."[622]

The NSC Senior Review Group (SRG) also helped develop and coordinate Nixon's Vietnam War policy and control the bureaucracy. The SRG analyzed studies made by the NSC's myriad committees and directed further analyzes. For instance, at the 10 July 1969 meeting, the SRG reviewed an analysis of the Vietnam negotiations progress and process and directed follow-up reports. In particular, the Senior Review Group tasked the Vietnam Ad Hoc Group meeting with studying "the nature and operations of a mixed commission for elections" and

---

[619] "Attachment: Critical Points to Make at Today's VSSG Meeting, HAK Talking Points, VSSG Meeting, December 1, 1969," Folder: VSSG Meeting, 12-1-69, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Committee Files, Vietnam Special Studies Group (VSSG) Meetings, Box H-001, RNPLM.
[620] "Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Vietnam Special Studies Group Meeting, April 22, 1970," Folder: VSSG Meeting, 5-20-70, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Committee Files, Vietnam Special Studies Group (VSSG) Meetings, Box H-002, RNPLM.
[621] "Vietnam Special Studies Group Meeting, July 30, 1970," Folder: Vietnam Special Studies Group [4 of 4]. NSC Institution Files, Vietnam Special Studies Group, Box H-3, RNPLM.
[622] "Memorandum for: The Secretary of Defense, The Director of Central Intelligence, Subject: Order of Battle Study," Folder: Vietnam Special Studies Group [4 of 4], NSC Institution Files, Vietnam Special Studies Group, Box H-3, RNPLM.

"territorial/political accommodation as a means to a settlement." The SRG also requested further studies on force withdrawals and International verification.[623]

During the summer of 1970, Kissinger personally directed joint VSSG and SRG meetings on Vietnam. Kissinger wanted to ensure Nixon received the best possible analyzes. In particular, Kissinger wanted to make sure that "the conclusions of the VSSG study are reflected in the consideration of proposals for diplomatic initiatives." During one of these meetings, Kissinger called on those gathered to reorganize NSSM 94, on diplomatic initiatives. He complained "the paper is not now constructed in a way which would give the President alternative courses of action." He called on the groups to "eliminate options which are non-starters" and "package the various proposals" into coherent scenarios.[624]

The National Security Advisor hosted another of joint meeting a couple weeks later, on 16 July 1970. At this meeting, Kissinger asked committee members to develop new diplomatic options. Kissinger reminded members of the intense domestic and international pressure Nixon faced and asked the committee to explore two options: "careful negotiating steps" or "dramatic new initiatives."[625] During the meeting, Kissinger acknowledged the propaganda value of a dramatic initiative but suggested a private approach through the Soviet Union "may have more

---

[623] "Review Group Meeting, July 10, 1969," Folder: SRG Minutes Originals 1969, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Minutes of Meetings, Senior Review Group, Box H-111, RNPLM.
[624] "June 25, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Combined VSSG Meeting on Ceasefire Proposals and Senior Review Group Meeting on Diplomatic Initiatives (NSSM 94)," Folder: Senior Review Group—Indochina, 6/27/70, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, Senior Review Group Meetings, Box H-046, RNPLM.
[625] "Talking Points," Folder: Senior Review Group and VSSG Meeting-Indochina, 7/16/70, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, Senior Review Group Meetings, Box H-046, RNPLM.; "July 16, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Our Next Step in Negotiations," Folder: Senior Review Group and VSSG Meeting-Indochina, 7/16/70, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, Senior Review Group Meetings, Box H-046, RNPLM.

likelihood of success."[626] Likely, Kissinger was thinking of his own off-the-record diplomatic forays and backchannel discussions. Nixon and Kissinger continued to use the NSC and its special groups to help inform their strategic decisions while directing the work of the bureaucracy.

Despite a good deal of operational success, cracks in Nixon's newly built national security edifice began to form. The VSSG faced pushback from the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense. In April 1970, Lynn noted concerns about the progress of some of VSSG's work. He argued the political situation analysis "was assigned to State, and it fell into INR's hands. There has been virtually no progress on it, and the project will probably go nowhere until someone else is put in charge."[627]

In May 1970, Lynn again had to protect the integrity of the Vietnam Special Studies Group. He learned CIA Director Helms was attempting to intercede on the VSSG's Quarterly Report work. Helms wanted the report to "be divided among State, DOD, and CIA with each taking primary responsibility for that part closest to its traditional interest."[628] Lynn argued that Helms' plan "would subvert the process that has produced the only innovative and objective analysis we have had on Vietnam for several years." He contended the VSSG approach of

---

[626] "Talking Points," Folder: Senior Review Group and VSSG Meeting-Indochina, 7/16/70, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, Senior Review Group Meetings, Box H-046, RNPLM.
[627] The INR is State's internal research and intelligence agency. "Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Vietnam Special Studies Group Meeting, April 22, 1970," Folder: VSSG Meeting, 5-20-70, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Committee Files, Vietnam Special Studies Group (VSSG) Meetings, Box H-002, RNPLM.
[628] As quoted in, "May 19, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Director Helm's Memorandum on VSSG Activities," Folder: VSSG meeting, 5-20-70, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Committee Files, Vietnam Special Studies Group (VSSG) Meetings, Box H-002, RNPLM.

drawing the best government talent under the group's auspices "has resulted in high-quality contribution(s)" and "a non-bureaucratic response."[629]

Secretary of Defense Laird also attempted to undercut the Vietnam Special Studies Group. During the summer of 1970, Lynn complained Laird was attempting to downgrade the VSSG's work on ceasefire analysis and move it away from the Special Studies Group. Lynn believed the Department of Defense was afraid the VSSG were going to push for decisions on a ceasefire and felt moving it away from the body was "one way to kill a ceasefire proposal."[630]

Throughout the rest of 1970, the Vietnam Special Studies Group continued to face problems as the bureaucracy pushed back against Nixon's closely held, NSC-driven policymaking process. NSC Program Analyst K. Wayne Smith complained about State's lack of cooperation with the Vietnam Special Studies Group. In a November 1970 memorandum, Smith warned Kissinger that State had severely compromised the VSSG's work. He argued State was not following Nixon's directives for studies and failed to think through issues systematically in the ceasefire analysis. Smith also argued that State's work was inadequate and "does not solve our problem."[631] NSC groups, like the Review Group and the VSSG, helped Nixon derive his Vietnam strategy and analyze its effectiveness. But cracks were emerging as the traditional national security bureaucracy pushed back against the president's tight control.

---

[629] "May 19, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Director Helm's Memorandum on VSSG Activities," Folder: VSSG meeting, 5-20-70, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Committee Files, Vietnam Special Studies Group (VSSG) Meetings, Box H-002, RNPLM.
[630] "July 14, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Secretary Laird's Memorandum on Ceasefire and the Status of the Ceasefire Paper," Folder: Senior Review Group and VSSG Meeting-Indochina, 7/16/70, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, Senior Review Group Meetings, Box H-046, RNPLM.
[631] "November 9, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Ceasefire," Folder: Cease-Fire Vol. II, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 66, RNPLM.

Paris Peace Talks

Despite such setbacks, Nixon continued to rely on the NSC. In particular, he used the National Security Council architecture to carefully monitor the Paris Peace Talks. The president believed diplomacy, formal and backchannel, would be crucial to ending the war. Although the formal talks fell under the auspices of the State Department, Kissinger, using the NSC, personally reported to the President. Kissinger, under the president's direction, usurped the lines of communication between the State Department and the White House.

Kissinger, not State, controlled the reports on the formal negotiations. In his initial reports, Kissinger painted an optimistic picture of the formal negotiations. Kissinger argued the United States was making progress in the Plenary sessions. For instance, after the 25 March 1969 session, Kissinger reported the DRV had not rejected "a settlement based on continuation of the present Saigon regime." He argued this was "a change from the position that a peace cabinet had to be formed as a precondition to a settlement."[632] Reporting to the president after the 30 April 1969 session, Kissinger noted, "both Hanoi and the NLF once again chose to discuss some of the allied positions in detail, rather than simply rejecting them in flat terms as was done in early sessions."[633]

Kissinger also used the NSC to separately analyze the Paris Peace Talks. In May 1969, Kissinger passed on NSC reports indicating little to no progress. NSC staff analysis of the Paris sessions concluded, "Both the DRV and NLF came down hard on the theme that the US is

---

[632] "March 25, 1969, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Assessment of the March 22 Private Negotiating Session on Vietnam," Folder: Paris Talks, Memos and Misc/Memcons, Vol. III, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Paris Talks/Meetings, Box 182, RNPLM.
[633] "April 30, 1969, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Assessment of the 30 April Paris Plenary Session on Vietnam," Folder: Paris Talks, Memos and Misc/Memcons, Vol. III, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Paris Talks/Meetings, Box 182, RNPLM.

intensifying the war in the hope of fanning the [anti-war] sentiments."[634] NSC staff again passed on their own analysis after the 19 June 1969 Plenary Session. Haig reported the session "again appears to be entirely negative."[635] He noted criticisms of the Thieu government and Madame Binh's description of US troop withdrawal "as a perfidious act of colonialism."[636]

As the sessions continued to be unproductive, Nixon turned to the NSC with his concerns that the peace talks had become a Communist propaganda forum. Nixon asked the NSC to investigate the productivity and value of the formal sessions.[637] At the bottom of one of Kissinger's November 1969 updates, Nixon scribbled, "I have concluded that these plenary sessions are not in our interest—I want a plan developed to get us out of them—or to reduce the number. They have been used for a year to repeat old arguments."[638]

The NSC followed through on Nixon's request. A few days later, Haig asked Theodore L. Eliot, the State Department Executive Secretary, to examine the president's demand that the sessions be eliminated or reduced.[639] Nixon also sought Secretary Rogers' opinion on the continuation of the Paris Peace Talks. Rogers and Kissinger agreed, "If the only alternative is the total suspension of the meetings on the grounds that they have degenerated into a propaganda forum, we would lose more than we gain by appearing to contradict our statement that we will

---

[634] "May 29, 1969, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Assessment of the 29 May Plenary Session on Vietnam in Paris," Folder: Paris Talks, Memos and Misc/Memcons, Vol. III, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Paris Talks/Meetings, Box 182, RNPLM.
[635] "June 19, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Today's Paris Plenary Session," Folder: Paris Talks, Memos and Misc, June-November 69, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Paris Talks/Meetings, Box 183, RNPLM.
[636] "June 19, 1969, For the Record," Folder: Paris Talks, Memos and Misc, June-November 69, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Paris Talks/Meetings, Box 183, RNPLM.
[637] "October 10, 1969, Memorandum for the President," Folder: Oct. 1-10, 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, President's Daily Briefs, Box 11, RNPLM.
[638] "November 27, 1969, Memorandum for the President," Folder: 21-30 Nov 69, National Security Council (NSC) Files, President's Daily Briefs, Box 14, RNPLM.
[639] "December 10, 1969, Memorandum for: Mr. Theodore L. Eliot," Folder: 21-30 Nov 69, National Security Council (NSC) Files, President's Daily Briefs, Box 14, RNPLM.

persist through any means to seek a negotiated settlement."[640] But Nixon was unable to restrict the sessions. On 9 January 1970, Kissinger reported, "In yesterday's Plenary session, the Communists flatly rejected our proposal for restricted sessions."[641]

In response to this setback, in the summer of 1970, Nixon and Kissinger used the NSC to reconfigure negotiating tactics for the Paris peace talks.[642] National Security Study Memorandum 94 on Diplomatic Initiatives in Vietnam helped to inform Nixon's choices. The study considered both the desirability of a new diplomatic initiative in Vietnam, and whether the United States should change the forum or scope of negotiations. In the end, Nixon decided against a new diplomatic initiative. He was influenced by the cautions raised in NSSM 94. The NSC staff warned, "in order to get a new conference we may have to pay almost as high a price as to get a settlement. Hanoi will want assurances that we will discuss US withdrawal and coalition government, and it would ask us to accept its formulas in advance."[643] While State and Defense were pushing back against the NSC's power and authority, Nixon continued to rely on the NSC in planning his approach to ending US involvement in the Vietnam War.

Backchannels

Nixon also used his newly designed national security architecture to conceal, as well as conduct private, off-the-record backchannel negotiations with the North Vietnamese. Kissinger,

---

[640] "December 18, 1969, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Future of the Paris Talks," Folder: Paris Talks, Memos and Misc Memcoms, Vol V, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Paris Talks/Meetings, Box 183, RNPLM.
[641] "January 9, 1970, Memorandum for the President," Folder: January 1-14, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, President's Daily Briefs, Box 16, RNPLM.
[642] "Memorandum for the President, Subject: NSC Meeting July 21, 1970—Negotiating Strategy and Paris Talks," Folder: NSC Meeting-Vietnam: Ceasefire, Diplomatic Initiatives, 7/21/70, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, National Security Council Meetings, Box H-028, RNPLM.
[643] "Summary of Paper on Diplomatic Initiatives on Indochina (NSSM 94), Folder: NSC Meeting-Vietnam: Ceasefire, Diplomatic Initiatives, 7/21/70, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, National Security Council Meetings, Box H-028, RNPLM.

at Nixon's request and in his role as national security advisor, met privately with the North Vietnamese leadership. Kissinger believed these private talks represented a crucial avenue towards peace. Nixon and Kissinger used the new architecture to conceal the critical talks from the press, the American public and government. The talks circumvented the formal diplomatic channels of the State Department. These meetings, of dubious legality, were integral in securing the final peace settlement.

Nixon covertly messaged political contacts and arranged backchannel meetings. One such contact was Jean Sainteny, a former French politician. Sainteny had attempted to reincorporate Vietnam into the French Union after World War II, and still had communist government contacts.[644] Kissinger had first met Sainteny at his Harvard Seminars.[645] During the interregnum, Nixon had used Sainteny to pass a message to Hanoi indicating his willingness to begin his own peace talks.[646]

During the summer of 1969, Nixon and Kissinger also met covertly with Sainteny. They wanted his opinion on peace negotiations, based on his prior experience. Nixon and Kissinger snuck Sainteny into the United States without detection. Using a contact at US immigration, Kissinger and Haig not only arranged a "special passport" for Sainteny but also arranged for him to circumvent customs.[647]

Nixon's backchannel communications successfully began a round of exchanges. Kissinger met with Mai Van Bo to follow-up on his interregnum communications and indicated

---

[644] NYT, February 26, 1978, pg. 32
[645] NYT, Foreign Affairs, October 18, 1972, pg. 47
[646] "January 31, 1969, Memorandum for The Secretary of State, From: Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Communication with Hanoi Prior to January 20," Folder: Vietnamese War—Secret Peace Talks ['Mr. S. File'], (1), National Security Adviser, Kissinger—Scowcroft West Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, General Subject File, Box 38, Ford Library
[647] "July 11, 1969," Folder: Vietnamese War—Secret Peace Talks [Mr. S. File']-(2), National Security Adviser, Kissinger—Scowcroft West Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, General Subject File, Box 38, Ford Library.

that he was prepared to offer the North Vietnamese mutual withdrawals and 'free' elections.[648] This particular channel continued through February 1970. Sainteny relayed messages and sporadic meetings between Kissinger and the North Vietnamese leadership.[649]

Kissinger also used other backchannels to pursue negotiations. For instance, at the start of January 1970, Kissinger directed the Senior Military Attaché in Paris, Major General Vernon Walters, to "meet with the North Vietnamese delegation" to "propose a meeting between Xuan Thuy and me [Kissinger], or Xuan Thuy, My Van Bo, and me [Kissinger] in Paris, to be at a location distinct from the North Vietnamese compound." [650] These talks were, however, unproductive. Kissinger reported the talks were stalled by the issue of mutual withdrawals and communist leadership's demands that South Vietnamese prime minister Thieu be removed from office.[651] Nevertheless, Nixon and Kissinger persisted with the backchannel negotiations. Both felt that the covert, NSC-controlled negotiations would yield profitable results.

Nixon and Congress

Nixon believed that the United States' traditional government structure, with the division of powers between Congress and the President, was no longer adequate in the Cold War

---

[648] "Talking Points" Folder: Vietnamese War—Secret Peace Talks ['Mr. S. File'], (1), National Security Adviser, Kissinger—Scowcroft West Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, General Subject File, Box 38, Ford Library

[649] Though the backchannel initially proved largely unproductive as Communist leadership insisted the United States withdraw. "September 24, 1969, Memorandum for the President, From: Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Letter from Jean Saintenny," Folder: Vietnamese War—Secret Peace Talks ['Mr. S. File']—(5), National Security Adviser, Kissinger—Scowcroft West Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, General Subject File, Box 38, Ford Library; "Rough/Unofficial Translation, Message from Mai Van Bo—Paris, 1/13/69," Folder: Vietnamese War—Secret Peace Talks ['Mr. S. File'], (1), National Security Adviser, Kissinger—Scowcroft West Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, General Subject File, Box 38, Ford Library

[650] "Memorandum for: Major General Vernon Walters, Subject: Contacts with North Vietnamese in Paris," Folder: Haig Chron-Dec. 9-16, 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 960, RNPLM.

[651] "Meeting with President Thieu, April 13, 1970," Folder: Saigon to Washington, Dec. 15, 1969-Dec. 16, 1971 (2), National Security Advisor, Saigon Embassy Files Taken by Amb. Graham Martin (copies), 1963-1975, Box 1, Ford Library.

environment. Nixon had long believed that the American branches of the government were no longer, and should no longer be, equal participants in national security affairs. Nixon made no bones about his disdain for congressional interference in national security matters. A year before winning the presidency, he had made his position clear in an address on the National Education Television Network. Nixon was blunt: "Congress is ineffective in foreign affairs and has lost its constitutional power to declare war."[652] In the same address, Nixon tentatively proposed that there needed to be fewer restraints on the chief executive. He suggested the president should consult with the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees but did not have to consult with Congress as a whole.[653]

Kissinger agreed with many of Nixon's ideas about executive power. Kissinger had played a major role in rethinking the role of the National Security Advisor during his stint as Director of the 1956-1958 Rockefeller Brothers Fund Special Studies Project. During the course of his research for this project, Kissinger corresponded with Library of Congress Legislative Reference Service Chief and fellow academic, Roger Hilsman, about the role of congress in national security policymaking. Kissinger agreed with Hilsman's assessment that there was a "trend toward Presidential dominance of the decision-making process in the field of foreign policy."[654] Kissinger wondered whether Congress could effectively contribute to foreign policy decision-making, particularly "without the machinery and the method for developing alternative policy solutions." Kissinger did, however, express concern about executive dominance, arguing

---

[652] "TX2 Thompson—Nixon By Robert E. Thompson, Chief, Washington, Bureau," President, 1963-1965, EX F0 7 10/24/66, Box 67, LBJ Library.
[653] "TX2 Thompson—Nixon By Robert E. Thompson, Chief, Washington, Bureau," President, 1963-1965,EX F0 7 10/24/66, Box 67, LBJ Library.
[654] "March 19, 1957, Letter To: Roger Hilsman," Folder 22: Hilsman, Roger, Correspondence and Clippings, Record Group, V4A, Box 2, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Special Studies Project, Rockefeller Archives.

if the Congress was left in the position of only accepting or rejecting solutions then it "may discourage any real discussion of the major issues."[655]

Kissinger also expressed concerns about congressional-executive relations with fellow academic Stephen K. Bailey, from the Princeton University Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. Kissinger argued, "security restrictions, genuine differences within the executive on matters of policy (and of military strategy) and the readiness of some Congressmen to make partisan capital out of alleged mistakes by the administration all combine to make difficult real cooperation on major politico-military issues."[656] Kissinger believed Congress could no longer and should no longer play much, if any role, in shaping US foreign policy.

Nixon followed up on his ruminations about American government while in office. During a news conference on 19 June 1969, Nixon condemned Senator Fulbright's proposal to limit the president's military powers. He argued that the president must not "be tied down by a commitment which will not allow him to take the action that needs to be taken to defend American interests and to defend American lives where there is not time to consult."[657] Nixon contended that forced consultation with Congress was not possible in the Cold War and would only hurt the interests of the United States. Demonstrating his awareness of the political climate, he did, however, offer the Senate a concession suggesting that he would consult with the Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees if possible.[658]

---

[655] "March 19, 1957, Letter To: Roger Hilsman," Folder 22: Hilsman, Roger, Correspondence and Clippings, Record Group, V4A, Box 2, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Special Studies Project, Rockefeller Archives.
[656] "March 19, 1957, Letter To: Bailey," Folder: 483, Bailey, Stephen K., Correspondence, Record Group: V4F, Box 43, Rockefeller Brothers Fund Special Studies Project, Rockefeller Archives.
[657] FRUS 1969-1976, Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy, Volume II, Document 382.
[658] FRUS 1969-1976, Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy, Volume II, Document 382.

In fact, Nixon followed up on these consulting promises. On 11 June 1969, Nixon and Kissinger met with Senators Stennis and Russell to brief them on operations in Cambodia. Kissinger covered the decision-making process. He argued the bombings had been initiated after General Abrams provided intelligence on the so-called Communist headquarters and he, along with Ambassador Bunker recommended B-52 bombings. Kissinger also outlined the chronology. He noted that Nixon gave planning authorization on 14 February and on 18 March the operation began.[659] In the Senate consultation, Nixon and Kissinger argued that the strikes were in response to a "flurry of Communist attacks against South Vietnamese population centers." Nixon and Kissinger also admitted to the senators their work to conceal the strikes or explain them away as accidental strikes, if needed.[660]

Nixon and Kissinger told the senators that the operations were "highly effective" and "have consistently caused considerable destruction" of "highly lucrative target complexes." They also claimed the operations effectively deterred attacks on South Vietnamese population centers and demonstrated the United States' "resolve in a manner which has completely befuddled Hanoi, which has deprived them of a basis for harnessing world opinion in a manner that strikes against North Vietnam might have done." In fact, Nixon and Kissinger congratulated themselves for retaliating against "major Communist offensives without generating the kind of domestic or international pressure which other escalatory actions might have generated."[661]

---

[659] "June 11, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Briefing of Senators Stennis and Russell in the President's Office," Folder: Planning for Operations, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 105, RNPLM.
[660] "June 11, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Briefing of Senators Stennis and Russell in the President's Office," Folder: Planning for Operations, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 105, RNPLM.
[661] "June 11, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Briefing of Senators Stennis and Russell in the President's Office," Folder: Planning for Operations, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 105, RNPLM.

Kissinger also privately briefed Senator Stennis about Cambodia on 24 April 1970. Covering Nixon's aid request and the situation in Cambodia, Kissinger implored the Senator to support the president's policies. Kissinger promised that the President did not want a war in Cambodia. In a joint phone call afterwards, Stennis and Kissinger reported the Senator's support for military actions.[662] Nixon thanked Stennis for his support, and recognizing the political climate, promised the United States was "not going to get into a big aid program for Cambodia."[663]

Nixon and Kissinger's olive-branch-congressional-consultations continued. On 12 May 1970, Kissinger briefed a group of Congressmen about the Cambodian incursion. Arguing that the president had carefully considered the decision, Kissinger contended the operation was necessary to protect South Vietnamese and American forces. He argued, "if the Communists succeeded in knocking over the [Cambodian] Lon Nol government" and the United States did not intervene, "it would have had drastic consequences on our Vietnamization and troop withdrawal programs." Kissinger contended, "the President wants peace" and argued "the move into Cambodia was made in order to speed up the end of the war. People will look back and see this move as actually fostering a policy of disengagement from Southeast Asia."[664]

For all his ire towards Congress and his beliefs about the president's ultimate responsibility for foreign policy doctrine, Nixon did reach out to select members of Congress,

---

[662] "Telecon, The President/Mr. Kissinger, 4:06pm, April 24, 1970," Folder: Telephone Conversations-Chron File, 19-26 Apr 1970, Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telcons), Chronological File, Box 5, RNPLM.
[663] "Telecon, The President/Mr. Kissinger, 4:06pm, April 24, 1970," Folder: Telephone Conversations-Chron File, 19-26 Apr 1970, Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telcons), Chronological File, Box 5, RNPLM.
[664] "Memorandum for the Record, Subject: Remarks by Henry A. Kissinger to Senators and Representatives, on the Cambodian Decision," Folder: HAK Meeting with Senators and Representatives, 5/12/70, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Cambodian Operations (1970), Box 582, RNPLM.

including Senator Fulbright. Nixon had oft sparred with the Democratic Senator but in March 1969, Nixon met with Fulbright. In their meeting, Nixon brought up Fulbright's criticisms of the peace negotiations, contending that military policy would help at the negotiating table. Nixon also argued, "unilateral US de-escalation…will not contribute too a speedy and just war solution."[665] During another meeting with Fulbright, Nixon informed the Senator of Kissinger's private peace talks, arguing he saw promise in the backchannel negotiations. Nixon also chastened the Senator for his public anti-war sentiments. Nixon argued antiwar sentiment "encouraged Hanoi to believe that domestic support was fast running out and thus encouraged Hanoi's intransigence by giving rise to the hope that US domestic opposition would force us to withdraw."[666]

Despite these olive branch consultations, Nixon did not believe he needed to consult with Congress as a whole. Nixon believed his reconfigured national security architecture would protect his autonomy and allow him to consult Congress only when he found it useful. But the architecture did not hold Congress back: not all members accepted Nixon's restrictions. For instance, in October 1969, Nixon learned that Congressmen Don Riegle and Pete McCloskey planned "to hold a memorial service at Arlington Cemetery for Vietnam war dead on October 15." Nixon asked Kissinger to "call them and advise them of this highly unwise way in which they have revealed a White House talk" and told Kissinger, "don't see them again."[667] Nixon had also, through Secretary of State Rogers in March 1970, disclosed his intentions for Laos in a closed-door executive session of the Foreign Relations Committee. But, less than two weeks

---

[665] "March 17, 1969, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Appointment with Senator Fulbright," Folder: Senator Fulbright, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Name Files, Box 815, RNPLM.
[666] "March 27, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Meeting with Senator Fulbright," Folder: Senator Fulbright, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Name Files, Box 815, RNPLM.
[667] October 6, 1969, Memorandum for: Henry Kissinger," Folder: Cole, Kenneth R., National Security Council (NSC), Name Files, Box 811, RNPLM.

later, as an internal NSC report noted, "at a moment when the enemy as well as the United States and the rest of the world must have been in doubt about the course which events would take" Senator William J. Fulbright "saw fit to declassify this testimony, without the slightest effort to consider whether it might damage the national interest of the United States." The report further complained that Fulbright and other senators were pushing the Nixon administration to "'accept' North Vietnamese domination of all of Indochina."[668] While the national security architecture was in part designed to protect Nixon's autonomy cracks had begun to appear. Congress was largely unsatisfied with Nixon's olive branch consultations and his lack of consideration for their input. Nixon and Congress increasingly sparred over Nixon's attempts to make policy within the White House with little Congressional input.

Domestic Considerations

Congressional interference was, by no means, Nixon's only concern. The National Security Council, as envisioned by Richard Nixon, was designed to protect Nixon's Vietnam policy making autonomy from the increasingly militant anti-war movement. But the system did not always work, and cracks began to form here, too. Unhappily, the president and his men felt forced to reckon with the anti-war movement. Kissinger had warned Nixon, as early as January 1969, that he could not simply ignore anti-war activists—their power to influence both the broader public and congress was only growing. Kissinger argued, "There is little question that domestic controversy will begin to mount, certainly within a few months."[669]

---

[668] "Old Fallacies and New Myths," Folder: Congress, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, HAK Administrative and Staff Files—Rodman Subject and Chron., Aug. 1969-Aug. 1974, Box 15, RNPLM.
[669] "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Vietnam Situation and Options," Folder: Vietnam, H.A. Kissinger, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 89, RNPLM.

Nixon's attempts to use his insular policy making apparatus architecture to circumscribe public debate over the Vietnam war and move quickly forward in refashioning policy simply could not withstand the growing strength of the anti-war movement. Nixon complained in the summer of 1970 that the anti-war movement had taken over elements of the bureaucracy and had supporters even within his own administration. Even pro-war staffers and senior officials, he believed, were bowing to anti-war public opinion. In a phone call with Kissinger, Nixon argued, "Our people are snake bitten. Laird, Rogers, and beyond that you cannot get any one to say anything that's not cautious." Kissinger concurred, adding, "The civilians are extremely shell shocked. They are obsessed with the domestic situation."[670] Nixon's concerns about such "infiltration" would lead, seemingly inexorably, to his more reckless behavior: wiretapping and FBI investigations.

The president believed that anti-war activists were incapable of even understanding what he was trying to do to bring the war to an end. He lashed out in a March 1970 phone call with Kissinger, complaining that the anti-war movement was going to protest regardless of what he did. Given such implacable hostility, Nixon suggested, he might as well just "kick the shit out of them [the Vietnamese enemy]—anything—everything short of nuclear weapons."[671]

Nixon could not control Congress or the media. While he could isolate the public from his decision-making process and even from its effects, such as in Cambodia, Nixon increasingly had to reckon with the anti-war movement. The president believed, for example, that the anti-war movement's messaging and strength were being exploited by Communist leadership during the

---

[670] "Telcon, President/Kissinger, 4:55pm, 6/2/70," Folder: Telephone Conversations-Chron File, 1-5 June 1970, Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telcons), Chronological File, Box 5, RNPLM.
[671] "Telcon, Mr. Kissinger, The President, 3/20/70," Folder: Telephone Conversations-Chron File, 17-20 Mar 1970, Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telcons), Chronological File, Box 4, RNPLM.

peace talks. In July 1969, Kissinger drew Nixon's attention to comments made by Ha Van Lau, the Deputy Chief of the North Vietnamese Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks. The Deputy Chief had commented on intentions to continue military actions "to deprive the American people of any hope for a quick and acceptable solution to the conflict." Kissinger was outraged. The intercepted comments confirmed the communists were trying to "crack American resolve" and influence public opinion. For Kissinger, Ha Van Lau's comments also reinforced his fears that the Nixon administration could not simply ignore anti-war activists.[672] Nixon and Kissinger received a similar report on 17 September 1970 on intercepted intelligence. The report suggested the National Liberation Front (NLF) intended to "arouse international and American public opinion prior to the November elections."[673] In October 1969, Kissinger noted another attempt by Hanoi to flame anti-war sentiments. He argued that after a Paris press conference, "a DRV spokesman took the line that American wives of POWs in North Vietnam would be more likely to get information on the status of their husbands when they joined and supported the 'peace movement' in the US."[674] Nixon and Kissinger were increasingly forced to reckon with the anti-war movement, particularly as the North Vietnamese used US anti-war sentiments to strengthen their position in Paris.

Nixon's national security architecture may have been able to diminish Congressional oversight and involvement, but it could not totally exclude Congress from playing a role in Vietnam policy. Nixon faced increasing reports of the Communist negotiating team using US congressional criticisms against the US negotiators. During the 19 June 1969 Plenary Session,

---

[672] "July 11, 1969, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Comments of Ha Van Lau," Folder: Paris Talks, Memos and Misc, June-November 69, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Paris Talks/Meetings, Box 183, RNPLM.
[673] "September 17, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Additional Information items," Folder: Sept. 1, 1970-Sept. 17, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, President's Daily Briefs, Box 26, RNPLM.
[674] "October 11, 1969, Memorandum for the President," Folder: Haig Chron, October 1-October 15, 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 958, RNPLM.

communist leadership quoted comments made by US Senators, including Fulbright, to support their call for withdrawal of US troops.[675] In his 10 October 1969 daily briefing memorandum, Kissinger also noted, "Senators Fulbright and McGovern were quoted to illustrate the unreasonableness of the US Government." Kissinger argued, "This is yet another example of the North Vietnamese using themes from US sources critical of the war to support their own positions."[676] Nixon viewed the anti-war movement, including its congressional supporters, as a special threat: both hurting him domestically and fuelling the communist war effort. As a result, he jealously guarded the NSC and the protection the Council provided for his decisions. But Nixon's architectural edifice could not hide everything.

Laird

President Nixon, despite his efforts to use the NSC to control policy, faced a particular problem in restricting the power and place of the Department of Defense in determining the end game of the Vietnam War. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird did not have direct access to Nixon but his control over expenditures and the military budget was critical to the war effort and to the war's resolution. The president cannot administer the defense establishment himself, in large part because it is not possible to formulate defense budgets or overall programs without the Secretary's involvement.[677] Laird had his own approach to bringing the Vietnam War to an acceptable conclusion. He wanted to de-Americanize the war; getting American ground troops out of Vietnam was his primary goal. Using his control of the defense budget, Laird made

---

[675] "June 19, 1969, For the Record," Folder: Paris Talks, Memos and Misc, June-November 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Paris Talks/Meetings, Box 183, RNPLM.
[676] "October 10, 1969, Memorandum for the President," Folder: Oct. 1-10, 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, President's Daily Briefs, Box 11, RNPLM.
[677] Peter W. Rodman, *Presidential Command: Power, Leadership, and the Making of Foreign Policy from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush* (Vintage, 2010), 61.

withdrawing from Vietnam (or at the very least scaling the commitment back) an economic necessity. Laird effectively went around Nixon's carefully constructed policymaking apparatus.

The Secretary of Defense worked to shift United States policy to "military assistance, rather than…direct military action." In Vietnam, specifically, this meant turning towards "Vietnamization." Laird meant for the South Vietnamese, not the United States, to bear the burdens of the war.[678] He believed that Vietnamization would allow for the withdrawing of American troops. In turn, this substitution of Vietnamese troops for American troops would, he believed, shore-up waning public support for the war effort.[679] In a 1978 interview, Laird argued that Vietnamization was his idea and he—not President Nixon—began to immediately implement this plan to get American troops out of Southeast Asia.[680]

To bring US military involvement in the Vietnam War to an end, Laird began working with Congress to lower defense budgets and restrict military options. Not surprisingly, tensions began to rise between the White House and the Department of Defense over Laird's unilateral actions. On 26 March 1969, Haig reminded Kissinger to inform Nixon about the problems with Laird and the Defense Department. In particular, Haig reminded Kissinger to "discuss status of defense budgetary problem."[681] During a February 1970 Blue Ribbon Defense Panel meeting, Nixon expressed concern about the defense budget. He argued, "the defense budget, if anything,

---

[678] "Interview Bill Baroody Jr., Sept. 27, 1977," Folder: Ford White House, Baroody, William, A. James Reichley Interview Transcripts, Box 1, Ford Library.
[679] David L. Prentice, "Choosing 'the Long Road': Henry Kissinger, Melvin laird, Vietnamization, and the War over Nixon's Vietnam Strategy," *Diplomatic History* 40:3 (2016), 451.
[680] "Interview with Melvin Laird, March 31, 1978," Folder: Foreign Policy, Laird, Melvin. A. James Reichley Interview Transcripts, Box 1, Ford Library.
[681] "March 26, 1969, Memorandum for Henry Kissinger, Subject: Items to Discuss with the President," Folder: March 20-31, 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, President's Daily Briefs, Box 4, RNPLM.

had already been cut too much."[682] Nixon also thought Laird kept the US military on too short a leash. Even when Laird requested a restriction to the military's operating authority in March 1970, Nixon noted to Kissinger, "OK for now, But I think this is too restrictive—get the Joint Chiefs views."[683] Nixon would continue to have issues with Laird; the newly constructed policymaking architecture could not contain the Secretary of Defense.

Laird was restricted from contacting Nixon directly.[684] The Secretary of Defense initially tried to protect his access to the president. Laird confronted Kissinger on the national security advisor's pattern of contacting the Joint Chiefs of Staff directly, rather than through Laird. In an early February 1969 phone call, Laird chided Kissinger, sarcastically saying, "he hoped HAK would let him make any contacts with military for a while."[685] Additionally, when Laird learned that Kissinger had directly contacted General Earle Wheeler about South Vietnam, Laird intervened. He bypassed Kissinger and submitted Wheeler's response directly to the president.[686]

Laird adeptly cultivated his own backchannels within the Nixon administration and the military, even as he strengthened his control over the Department of Defense bureaucracy. He engendered loyalty in his ranks and had his own sources of information. As historian Dale Van Atta argues, while Nixon and Kissinger "cultivated 'backchannels' behind Laird not just to glean military advice and scuttlebutt but to convey secret orders…the truth was, however, that even if

---

[682] "February 23, 1970, Memorandum for Alexander Butterfield, Subject: The President's Meeting with the Blue Ribbon Defense Panel," Folder: Memoranda for the President, Beginning February 22, 1970, White House Special Files, President's Office Files, President's Meeting File, Box 76, RNPLM.
[683] "March 4, 1970, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Operating Authorities over North Vietnam," Folder: Haig Chron-Mar. 1-11, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 963, RNPLM.
[684] "Interview with William Watts, Sept. 12, 1977," Folder: Foreign Policy, Watts, William, A. James Reichley Interview Transcripts, Box 1, Ford Library.
[685] "Telcon, Secretary Laird, Mr. Kissinger, 2/5/69," Folder: Telephone Conversations-Chron File, 1-11 Feb 1969, Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telecons), Chronological File, Box 1, RNPLM.
[686] "Memorandum for the President," Folder: 8-F Reappraisal of Vietnam Commitment, Vol. I, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 64, RNPLM.

Laird was not a party to an order, he knew about it within hours after it was given and usually before it was carried out."[687] In particular, Laird established close relationships with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and General Abrams, who ensured that the Secretary was kept in the policymaking loop. Laird also had trusted associates in attendance at all key NSC committee meetings, including Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard.

Through these contacts, Laird remained aware of Kissinger's secret backchannel peace talks with the North Vietnamese. While Kissinger had arranged clandestine flights to Europe, insisting Laird and the JCS not be informed, Laird knew about all the 1970 private peace talks. He was notified by multiple sources. Laird even knew exactly what was discussed during these private discussions. The Defense Department's main intelligence shop, the National Security Agency, had cracked the North Vietnamese diplomatic code. Noel Gayler, the head of the NSA, routinely forwarded these decoded intercepts to Laird. In fact, it was not until 2001 that Kissinger learned that these decrypted intercepts existed, even as Laird regularly received them. As historian Dale Van Atta contends, "the tale of the NSA intercepts adds to evidence that Nixon and Kissinger could never significantly ignore Laird, even though he might sometimes oppose their maneuvers. And any expectation that they could keep him in the dark was folly."[688] Laird used the immense power and capacity of the Department of Defense to push forward his own agenda.

Laird adeptly widened the cracks within Nixon's national security policymaking architecture. As former NSC assistant Helmut Sonnenfeldt stated in a 1977 interview, Laird did not want to get into a contest over presidential access with Kissinger. Instead, he worked with

---

[687] Van Atta, *With Honor,* 154.
[688] As well, Kissinger would later find out that Nixon was regularly receiving these intercepts, and not sharing the information with Kissinger. Van Atta, *With Honor,* 224.

Congress to pursue policy changes.[689] Laird's background in Congress (he served in the House for sixteen years) put him a key position to influence key representatives and senators to support Vietnamization. The Defense Secretary was well liked and respected in Congress and, unlike the president, he was willing to play nice. He regularly made himself and his department available to Congress.[690] As historian Julian Zelizer argues, Laird "was the liaison to legislators who opposed the war," and the Defense Secretary "worked with legislators who assisted him in building support for the withdrawal plans."[691]Also, unlike Nixon, the longtime congressman had faith in the system and believed Congress reflected American public opinion.[692] Using the powers of the Department of Defense and his strong relationships with Congress, Laird gained increasing control over Vietnam War policy as the administration progressed.

Nixon and Kissinger were not blind to Laird's options. They created the interdepartmental Defense Program Review Committee (DPRC) as a check on Laird. The committee was designed in the fall of 1969 to help determine defense policy and protect Nixon's prerogatives. In the first DPRC review meeting, Kissinger stressed "that the DPRC is not intended to function as a day-to-day decision-making body for defense issues" but "rather, its purpose is to ensure that everyone is moving toward the same goals and that these goals are the ones set by the President."[693]

---

[689] "Interview with Helmut Sonnenfeldt, Oct. 12, 1977," Folder: Foreign Policy, Sonnenfeldt, Helmut, A. James Reichley Interview Transcripts Box 1, Ford Library.
[690] Van Atta, *With Honor,* 307.
[691] Julian E. Zelizer, "Congress and the Politics of Troop Withdrawal," *Diplomatic History* 34:3 (June 2010), 535.
[692] David L. Prentice, "Choosing 'the Long Road': Henry Kissinger, Melvin Laird, Vietnamization, and the War over Nixon's Vietnam Strategy," *Diplomatic History* 40:3 (2016), 453.
[693] "October 17, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Defense Program Review Committee Meeting," Folder: DPRC Meeting, 10-22-69, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, Defense Program Review Committee Meetings, Box H-099, RNPLM.

Through the summer of 1969, the Defense Program Review Committee analyzed the US defense posture and its economic implications. As Kissinger discussed with the DPRC, Nixon needed relevant analysis to design his fiscal policies and federal spending targets and decide "how to allocate outlays between non-defense and defense activities."[694] During the fall of 1969, the DPRC focused on various Vietnam troop withdrawal options. The DPRC also analyzed "problems relating to explaining the budget and withdrawal program to Congress, [and] alternative ways of meeting budget goals if the withdrawal timetable is upset."[695]

The DPRC, however, was ineffective as a check on Laird. In March 1970, NSC staffer Laurence E. Lynn, Jr. reported "DPRC troubles are mounting again." In his memorandum to Kissinger, Lynn informed the National Security Advisor that Laird had contradicted Kissinger's directions and instructed the Defense Program Review Committee "to confine its attention to national resource allocation issues and the overall size of the defense budget."[696] Lynn further stated, "there is considerable controversy in the Pentagon over the role of the DPRC and the way the work should be organized." He noted that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were largely concerned their "prerogatives may be usurped."[697] Laird, with the full support of the Joint Chiefs and critical members of Congress, had put a big crack in Nixon's policymaking edifice. Secretary of Defense Laird had power Nixon could not usurp or control.

---

[694] "HAK Talking Points, DPRC Review of Defense Posture, July 17, 1970," Folder: DPRC Meeting, 7-17-70, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, Defense Program Review Committee Meetings, Box H-099, RNPLM.
[695] "November 21, 1969, Memorandum for Mr. Kissinger, Subject: Preparations for Next DPRC Meeting," Folder: DPRC Meeting, 11-13-69, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, Defense Program Review Committee Meetings, Box H-099, RNPLM.
[696] "March 11, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: DPRC," Folder: DPRC Meeting, 3-11-70, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, Defense Program Review Committee Meetings, Box H-099, RNPLM.
[697] "March 11, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: DPRC," Folder: DPRC Meeting, 3-11-70, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, Defense Program Review Committee Meetings, Box H-099, RNPLM.

In November 1969 Nixon made his Silent Majority Speech. Nixon admitted to the American people that Vietnam was going to be a protracted war and he asked for their support in bringing the war to a satisfactory end. Prior to the speech the president had pondered launching a major offensive in Vietnam, an option pushed by Kissinger, but the president had decided the domestic risks of such a policy were too high. Just a year after winning the presidency, Nixon had realized that even his reconfigured national security architecture was not going to allow him to craft an easy fix to the Vietnam War. Despite his critical restructuring of government, Nixon was unable to quickly resolve the war in Vietnam. Still, Nixon's efforts to reshape how national security policy was made in the executive branch had fundamental impacts on the evolving structure and power of the modern presidency.

Chapter VI: Structural Deformities: Problems and Presidential Power

On 8 June 1969 President Richard M. Nixon stood with South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu at Midway Island and announced the first United States troop withdrawals. He did so without any agreement or deal from North Vietnam and without any concrete plans for ending the war in Vietnam. Nixon was effectively admitting there was no 'magic' solution for Vietnam.

During the first months of Nixon's administration, the president's reconfigured national security decision-making structure appeared to be working and standing up to the hard realities of crafting policy for the Vietnam War. But by the summer of 1969, Nixon had realized that not even his reconfigured national security architecture was going to allow him to craft an easy fix to the Vietnam War.

Nixon's policymaking architecture began to break down during the summer of 1969. His advisory team was split on how to end American involvement in the Vietnam War. There was profound infighting, with both the State and Defense departments resisting NSC procedures. In particular, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird operated outside of the NSC-system and used his department's massive capacities to push de-Americanization of the Vietnam War. Laird's control over expenditures and the military budget was critical to the war's resolution. While the power of the purse belongs to Congress, the Secretary of Defense designs the defense budget. Laird made withdrawing from Vietnam (or at the very least scaling the commitment back) an economic necessity. Laird effectively went around Nixon's carefully constructed policymaking apparatus.

State Department Resistance

Profound infighting continued to increase within Nixon's national security architecture, with the State Department resisting NSC procedures. Kissinger, assisted by Haig, attempted to protect the National Security Council and his own prerogatives. Kissinger repeatedly met with Under Secretary of State Elliot Richardson to monitor and influence State Department policy. For instance, on 23 October 1969, Kissinger asked Richardson to tamper down ceasefire and drawdown rumors.[698] Kissinger followed up on this conversation the next day, reiterating reiterated Nixon's orders to minimize speculation about his upcoming November 3 speech. Kissinger also asked Richardson to "attempt to squash the growing speculation on a unilateral ceasefire or a major troop reduction announcement."[699]

Despite Secretary of State William Rogers' early acquiescence to Nixon's control, senior State Department officials resented the reconfiguration and pushed back. Nixon discovered the State negotiating team in Paris was not following his orders. In a 10 April 1969 memorandum to Rogers, Nixon complained he had seen "a very disturbing report" indicating members of the US negotiating team "are actively involved in a disloyal campaign 'to save the President from himself.'"[700] Nixon discovered State personnel were actively corresponding with anti-war activists and leaking information to the press. He also learned State personnel were expressing anti-administration views to the press and foreign embassies. Nixon called on Rogers to reign-in

---

[698] "October 23, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Items to Discuss with the President, October 23," Folder: Haig Chron, October 16-October 31, 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 959, RNPLM.
[699] "October 22, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Items to Discuss with Elliot Richardson at Luncheon," Folder: Haig Chron, October 16-October 31, 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 959, RNPLM.
[700] "April 10, 1969, Memorandum for: Honorable William P. Rogers, Subject: Paris Negotiations," Folder: Haig's Vietnam File—Vol. 2, April-October 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Special File, Box 1008, RNPLM.

his department and reminded the Secretary of State that he expected "complete adherence to this policy throughout the Department."[701]

NSC staff increasingly found their State counterparts uncooperative. NSC staff repeatedly complained that State personnel refused to relinquish control of the policy process and were resistant to NSC procedures. In October 1969, Haig discovered, "word may have been put out within State that members of the Department are to minimize contacts with members of the NSC."[702] At the end of November 1969, Haig also argued State was circumventing "established procedures to force the United States to offer a new negotiating stance on cease-fire."[703] State department personnel noncompliance fractured NSC control over the policy creation process and weakened its effectiveness.

By February 1970, Kissinger argued that NSC-State Department relations had become untenable. Kissinger met with Nixon to discuss the ongoing problems. In his briefing memorandum, Haig contended that State continuously engaged in "systematic efforts to erode Presidential policy decisions." Haig also noted State's hostility and lack of cooperation with the Annual Foreign Policy Review.[704] During his meeting with Nixon, Kissinger hyperbolically threatened to leave his position because of the ongoing issues. He argued the current situation posed "serious risks to the national interest, if not to the future effectiveness of the President's

---

[701] "April 10, 1969, Memorandum for: Honorable William P. Rogers, Subject: Paris Negotiations," Folder: Haig's Vietnam File—Vol. 2, April-October 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Special File, Box 1008, RNPLM.
[702] "October 22, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Items to Discuss with Elliot Richardson at Luncheon," Folder: Haig Chron, October 16-October 31, 1969, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 959, RNPLM.
[703] "November 30, 1969, Memorandum for Henry Kissinger, Subject: Items to Discuss with the President," Folder: Haig Chron-November 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 959, RNPLM.
[704] "February 21, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Your Discussion with the President on Relationships with Secretary Rogers and the Department of State," Folder: State/WH Relationship Vol. 3, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, US Domestic Agency Files, Box 148, RNPLM.

authority within the bureaucracy."[705] During his conversation with Nixon, Kissinger reminded the president of Rogers' "consistent pattern of refusal…to carry out clear instructions." He also emphasized Rogers' "increasingly blatant efforts to bypass or ignore [Nixon] in the conduct of national security affairs." Kissinger asked Nixon to intervene and ensure Rogers' accepted Kissinger's position and control of communications.[706] Kissinger wanted to ensure State remained subordinate to the National Security Council.

Despite Kissinger's efforts, problems with State-White House relations continued. Robert Houdek, one of Kissinger's special assistants, compiled a list of Rogers' public complaints about the Cambodian incursion. Houdek highlighted a 2 May 1970 *Washington Star* article. Rogers was quoted as saying he was "firmly against the whole idea of sending Americans to fight in Cambodia. But he [Rogers] was overruled by the President." Houdek also reported other stories from *The New York Times, Washington News,* and *Star* in which Rogers complained about Nixon's decisions and being kept out of the loop. For instance, a *New York Times* article contended "there is no evidence [Rogers] is the President's principal advisor on foreign policy and that he [Rogers] is 'probably more unhappy about the present plight of the Administration than anybody else in Washington.'"[707]

Nixon and Kissinger also received criticisms of the State Department from Nixon's supporter, Ambassador Turner Shelton, formerly of the Foreign Service. Shelton wrote in April 1970 that State Department actions were willfully disrupting Nixon's policymaking processes.

---

[705] "February 21, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Your Discussion with the President on Relationships with Secretary Rogers and the Department of State," Folder: State/WH Relationship Vol. 3, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, US Domestic Agency Files, Box 148, RNPLM.
[706] "Attachment: Talking Points, February 21, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger," Folder: State/WH Relationship, Vol. 3, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, US Domestic Agency Files, Box 148, RNPLM.
[707] "May 13, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Press Reports of Rogers' Dissent on Cambodia," Folder: Robert Houdek's Chron, July-Dec 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Staff Files—Houdek Chron, Box 1042, RNPLM.

He contended that State was still trying to dominate foreign affairs and was unresponsiveness to White House directions. Shelton maintained the situation was unlikely to change. He further argued that even if State was loyal to Nixon, the departmental culture resulted "in a general void of originality and forcefulness." Nixon welcomed Shelton's comments and noted to Kissinger in the margins of the communiqué, "He's right of course."[708]

Nixon followed up on Shelton's criticisms in May 1970. Nixon asked Kissinger to be sure to get the list Shelton had promised of disloyal Foreign Service employees. He also proposed giving Shelton a position in the State Department, arguing "we know that he is loyal and would undoubtedly give us information on what is going on there."[709] Shelton delivered on the promise, providing an exhaustive list of problem departments and personnel he considered to be disloyal. Among other disparaging remarks, Shelton noted the Ambassador to Burma, Arthur W. Hummel, was a Kennedy protégé and "sarcastically critical of President Nixon," while Boars H. Closson, the Deputy Chief of Mission in the Soviet Union, was apparently unsuited for the position and "completely oriented to former administration's thinking." Shelton named more than a dozen high-ranking ambassadors before turning to State personnel in Washington. He complained that the Deputy Assistant for Congressional Relations, H.G. Tobert, Jr., "does not support President Nixon or his philosophy."[710] He castigated several others as disloyal to Nixon and his agenda. Shelton's information only reinforced Nixon's mistrust of the State Department and belief that he must subordinate State to the National Security Council.

---

[708] "April 10, 1970, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Letter from Turner Shelton," Folder: Haig Chron-April 13-15, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 965, RNPLM.
[709] "May 14, 1970, Memorandum for: Dr. Kissinger," Folder: Haig Chron-May 28-Jul 3, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 967, RNPLM.
[710] "June 13, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger," Folder: Haig Chron-June 11-22, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 968, RNPLM.

The State-NSC relationship deteriorated so badly that by the summer of 1970, *New York Times* Chief Washington Correspondent Max Frankel forwarded a report on State Department issues to Kissinger, likely seeking an aside. Frankel alleged, "the line coming from Secretary Rogers and State is either gross ineptitude or conscious mischief." Frankel maintained, "the whole situation adds up to a picture of growing differences between Rogers and the President" and concluded the situation "may also be fed by traditional State Department views."[711] Frankel's comments further cemented Nixon's mistrust of the State Department.

In the fall of 1970, Deputy National Security Advisor Alexander M. Haig Jr., implicated the State Department in a vast list of press leaks, claiming that State consistently leaked information in an attempt to distort and undercut White House policy. He noted State's continued attempts to dissociate themselves "from the Cambodian operation and to portray the Secretary as more interested in peace than the President." For instance, Haig highlighted a CBS evening report that aired on 23 November 1970, which quoted a State Department official arguing, "he wouldn't even attempt to assess the [negative] impact of the operation on the Paris negotiations" and dismissed the idea of trying to "bomb North Vietnam into negotiating."[712] Career State Department officials were in open rebellion. Nixon had tried to sideline State by reorganizing the national security policy process, giving the NSC primacy in planning and

---

[711] Frankel was head of the Washington bureau of the *New York Times* during the Nixon administration and met Kissinger on a semi-regular basis for backgrounders. Frankel recalled in his memoirs, "Only rarely could I lure Kissinger into indiscreet asides, most of which expressed contempt for the secretaries of state and defense and their bureaucracy.'" Max Frankel, *The Times of My Life and My Life with the Times* (Delta, 2000), 319.
"July 16, 1970, Memorandum for Bob Haldeman, Subject: State Department-White House Problems," Folder: July-August, 1970-Staff Memos, E-K, White House Special Files, Staff Member Office Files, H.R. Haldeman, Alpha Name Files, Box 65, RNPLM.

[712] Though Haig did note in his memorandum to the president, "in some cases of leaks, it is not exactly clear which agency is responsible for the story; Defense and CIA have indulged in similar practices, and some of the stories seem more indicative of interagency feuds than deliberate efforts to undercut the White House." "December 7, 1970, Memorandum for: The President, Subject: Press Leaks Attributable to State Which Undercut White House Policy," Folder: Haig Chron-December 1-8, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 974, RNPLM.

coordination; especially when it came to Vietnam. Nixon's structural reform was not working as well as he had hoped.

Vietnamization

Nixon's problems with State Department resistance to his policy agenda was not the president's biggest concern. Nixon could not discern an easy fix to the Vietnam War. His advisors offered radically different options. Kissinger fervently pressed for heavy military offensives and warned against de-escalation and withdrawal. Meanwhile, Laird pushed Vietnamization, wanting to transfer the military burden to the Vietnamese. Laird was concerned about the domestic sphere and believed the American people were no longer willing to support US troop deployments. In fact, during the November 1968-January 1969 interregnum, Laird acted as if Vietnamization was already settled policy. He urged Commander of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, General Creighton Abrams to meet with Thieu about Vietnamization. In late January 1969, Abrams and Thieu discussed the idea and the timing of US withdrawals.[713]

Nixon, initially, much preferred Kissinger's approach. On 16 March 1969, the president approved Operation Menu, to secretly bomb the Cambodia border area. But Nixon's uncertainty was also clear, and he straddled the two approaches. Even as the bombing commenced, he was simultaneously exploring the withdrawal of American troops. Nixon recognized the enormous domestic political value of bringing American troops home. As the Operation Menu bombings continued, Nixon requested NSC-led considerations of Vietnamization. At the 28 March 1969 NSC meeting, Nixon ordered studies on Vietnamization as an alternative to mutual

---

[713] "Assistant Secretary of Defense; Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense; 25 Jan 1969," Folder: Vietnam, Documents 9-10, Melvin R. Laird, Papers, Department of Defense Papers: Historical Project Files, Box C31, Ford Library.

withdrawal.[714] Nixon was at least willing to consider the concept, if only as a way to pacify the anti-war movement, and later committed to an initial withdrawal in the summer.[715]

Kissinger did not give up the policy battle and used his privileged position within the NSC to continue to argue against Vietnamization. In July 1969, he urged Nixon to "defer judgment on further withdrawals until early August."[716] In September 1969, Kissinger disparaged the progress of Vietnamization. He argued ARVN could not substantially improve and maintained that "withdrawal of US troops will become like salted peanuts to the American public," meaning the public will increasingly want more withdrawals. Kissinger suggested Nixon needed to do something substantial to change the situation in Vietnam.[717] While he did not directly suggest aggressive military actions, Kissinger alluded to his proposed plans for a fierce fall 1969 offensive.[718] Referring to the upcoming October Moratorium, Kissinger argued the American people could quickly turn against Nixon's war effort. He contended, "while polls may show that large numbers of Americans now are satisfied with the Administration's handling of the war, the elements of an evaporation of this support are clearly present."[719]

Kissinger followed up on his misgivings a day later. In a briefing memorandum for Nixon, Kissinger acknowledged the administration was "torn between the impatience of war-weary Americans and a commitment to reach a just settlement." To resolve the dilemma, he

---

[714] "31 Mar 1969, Memorandum for Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff," Folder: Vietnam, Documents 31-35, Melvin R. Laird, Papers, Department of Defense Papers: Historical Project Files, Box C31, Ford Library.
[715] "2 June 1969, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Vietnamizing the War," Folder: Vietnam, Documents 58-62, Melvin R. Laird Papers, Department of Defense Papers: Historical Project File, Box C32, Ford Library.
[716] "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Sequoia NSC Meeting on Vietnam," Folder: NSC Executive Committee, 7/7/69, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, National Security Council Meetings, Box H-023, RNPLM.
[717] "September 10, 1969, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Our Present Course on Vietnam," Folder: Special NSC Meeting, 9/12/69-Vietnam, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, National Security Council Meetings, Box H-024, RNPLM.
[718] Kissinger had pushed Duck Hook: bombing of Hanoi and mining of Haiphong Harbor
[719] "September 10, 1969, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Our Present Course on Vietnam," Folder: Special NSC Meeting, 9/12/69-Vietnam, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, National Security Council Meetings, Box H-024, RNPLM.

argued for a significant offensive, claiming that the lull in significant American offensives was damaging the war effort. Kissinger contended Nixon needed to "convince the enemy that they have nothing to gain by waiting" and suggested Nixon use military offensives to push for a political settlement while using Vietnamization to satisfy the American people.[720] Kissinger saw Vietnamization not as a legitimate strategy but as a deceptive way to satisfy American anxieties over the war. He continued to use his privileged position as National Security Advisor to push his views on Vietnamization.

By late 1969, Nixon's national security decision-making architecture began to crumble over the issue of Vietnamization. Kissinger told Nixon that he could still pursue multiple strategic avenues, even as his NSC staff warned him of the difficulties of such a position. In September 1969, Morton H. Halperin argued, "the time has come for us to alter our current strategy and choose to accent either Vietnamization, by putting it on a fixed schedule, or a political settlement, by moving toward a general ceasefire and territorial accommodation."[721] Halperin contended that although both plans had their own merits and disadvantages the importance was to "choose one now, before time runs out on our current course and we may be forced to choose later under more difficult conditions." In passing Halperin's NSC study to Nixon, Kissinger only transmitted the sections with which he agreed. Kissinger made sure Nixon saw Halperin's criticisms of Laird's Vietnamization plans. In the study, Halperin argued the administration did not have time "to play it [Vietnamization] out fully" and Vietnamization was

---

[720] "September 11, 1969, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Vietnam Options," Folder: Discussion on Vietnam in the Cabinet Room, 9:30 am, Sept 12, 1969," National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 70, RNPLM.
[721] "September 10, 1969, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Vietnam," Folder: Vietnamization, Vol. I, Sep 67-Dec 69, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 91, RNPLM.

"largely controlled by the other side's actions."[722] Kissinger, unknown to Nixon, was using his position as National Security Advisor to weaken the efficacy of the NSC in setting policy positions before the president.

Despite such underhanded maneuverings by his National Security Advisor, Nixon's policymaking autonomy was protected by the NSC architecture the president had devised; Nixon had time to think. That time allowed Nixon to waffle on Vietnamization throughout the fall of 1969. He pondered how quickly to withdraw American troops and analyzed the effect of troop withdrawals on the US's ability to respond to enemy offensives. In fact, in November 1969, Nixon worried about the impact a speedy withdrawal would have on the peace negotiations. Nixon wanted only a small withdrawal of American troops in late 1969, with the prospect of more in March and September 1970.[723] Nixon believed that his dramatic speech at the beginning of November, in which he had promoted the policy of Vietnamization, had neutralized the anti-war movement. Kissinger noted Nixon "doesn't want to get triggered on dramatic initiatives."[724]

Nixon's decision-making architecture could not provide him with concrete solutions for Vietnam. His advisors offered radically different solutions and used their own power to simultaneously drive Nixon's Vietnam policy in different directions. Nixon himself still thought the United States could achieve "peace with honor" and allowed the dual tracks in an attempt to force communist concessions at the bargaining table while also neutralizing the anti-war movement. [725] But that only resulted in a halting, unsure commitment to Vietnamization.

---

[722] "September 10, 1969, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Vietnam," Folder: Vietnamization, Vol. I, Sep 67-Dec 69, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 91, RNPLM.
[723] "November 4, 1969, To Laird, From: Nixon," Folder: SecDef Correspondence—Southeast Asia (1), Melvin R. Laird, Papers, Department of Defense Papers: Subject File, Box D11, Ford Library.
[724] "Telecon, Secretary Laird, 7:00pm, 11/14/69," Folder: Telephone Conversations-Chron File, 11-17 Nov 1969, Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telcons), Chronological File, Box 3, RNPLM.
[725] "Memorandum for Alexander Butterfield, Subject: Improvements in the Vietnam Situation," Folder: Vietnam Vol. X, Sept. 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Country Files, Box 139, RNPLM; "December

Cambodian Incursion

At the advent of 1970, Nixon fervently pursued his "peace within honor." He believed the time was ripe for a major US-South Vietnamese offensive to support Vietnamization and drive the North to the bargaining table. In a January 1970 phone call with Kissinger, Nixon argued, the communists "haven't got a lot to hit us with." He also suggested, "it isn't like the Germans in the Battle of Bulge. [The North Vietnamese] don't have the forces to mount any kind of sustained thing."[726] Nixon turned his attention to the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the communist sanctuaries in Cambodia.

Nixon used his national security architecture to gather information and conceal his intentions as he planned an incursion into Cambodia. He wanted to respond to the growing communist sanctuaries in Cambodia and military reports of escalating enemy activity in Vietnam. In February 1970, Nixon met with Kissinger, Laird, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to discuss possible US offensives.[727] While all the attack plans focused on Cambodia, with various combinations of ground, air and mining attacks on the table, the meeting did not result in any definitive plans.[728]

Nixon used the National Security Council staff to help plan and conceal the Cambodian operation. With the focus already on Cambodia and the Ho Chi Minh Trail, Nixon did not call formal Council meetings or order all-encompassing National Security Study Memorandums

---

15, 1969, Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, Subject: Vietnamization," Folder: Haig Chron-Dec. 9-16, 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 960, RNPLM.

[726] "Telcon; The President, 1/14/70," Folder: Vietnamese War—Secret Peace Talks ['Mr. S. File']—(7), National Security Adviser, Kissinger—Scowcroft West Wing Office Files, 1969-1977, General Subject File, Box 39, Ford Library.

[727] "February 3, 1970, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Meeting on Vietnam with the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Mr. Kissinger," Folder: Haig Chron-Feb. 1-7, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 961, RNPLM.

[728] "February 3, 1970, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Meeting on Vietnam with the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Mr. Kissinger," Folder: Haig Chron-Feb. 1-7, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 961, RNPLM.

(NSSMs) to further explore his options. He did use the NSC staff to analyze options and gather additional information for him to ponder privately. In particular, he tried to use his NSC staffers to blunt Secretary of Laird's autonomous operations. For example, he had NSC staffers sneak Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Moorer into the White House as a military adviser seemingly without Laird's knowledge.[729] Nixon also used his National Security Advisor to bypass Laird and investigate his options. He asked Kissinger to look into the effectiveness of the Menu bombings in destroying the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the communist sanctuaries.[730] Kissinger bypassed Laird and discussed possible operations directly with Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Command, Admiral John S. McCain, Jr., who admitted the need for more operations in Cambodia.[731]

Nixon used his architecture to plan the Cambodian incursion and prevent the State or Defense departments from challenging his military vision. On 28 April 1970 Nixon met with the Secretaries of State and Defense to discuss the Vietnam War. But Nixon was not seeking their advice and had already made his decision. During the meeting, the president announced his decision to authorize a joint US-South Vietnam operation against communist forces in Cambodia. Nixon presented his decision as *fait accompli* and the meeting notes record, "there was no discussion of the subject matter of the meeting by the others in attendance during the

---

[729] "Interview with William Watts, Sept. 21, 1977," Folder: Foreign Policy, Watts, William, A. James Reichley Interview Transcripts, Box 1, Ford Library.
[730] "February 28, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger," Folder: Haig Chron-Feb. 19-28, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 961, RNPLM.
[731] McCain revealed that the Cambodian border was wholly controlled by enemy forces and the communists were trying to isolate Phnom Penh. "April 20, 1970, Memorandum for Doctor Henry Kissinger," Folder: Cambodia—NSSM 99(1), National Security Adviser, NSC East Asian and Pacific Affairs Staff: Files, Country File, Box 2, Ford Library.

presence of the President."[732] Nixon excluded his constitutionally confirmed advisors from planning for a major military operation, relying instead on the NSC architecture.

Nixon's decision was controversial within the National Security Council. Laird was dismayed with Nixon's decision to commit American troops to the Cambodian incursion. He wanted to deploy ARVN troops to demonstrate Vietnamization's effectiveness.[733] NSC staffer Winton Lord raised a different concern with Kissinger over the planned Cambodian incursion. He argued, "We seem to have no clear idea what our permanent military gains might be from these operations, or where they are taking us." Lord argued the operation might destroy Nixon's public support.[734] Multiple NSC staffers agreed with Lord and resigned in protest, taking with them valuable institutional knowledge and experience.[735] Nixon's NSC, designed to give the president a loyal staff committed solely to presidential prerogatives, was imploding over Vietnam.

Still, as the Cambodian incursion commenced, Nixon leaned on the NSC for intelligence and analysis. The NSC continued to coordinate the daily reports from State, Defense, and the Central Intelligence Agency. These reports covered military operations in Cambodia, South Vietnamese President Thieu's actions, and any relevant international opinions or support.[736] NSC

---

[732] Nixon argued the operation was necessary to protect Vietnamization initiatives and "would possibly help in, but not detract from, US efforts to negotiate peace." "April 28, 1970, Memorandum of Meeting, Subject: Cambodia/South Vietnam," Folder: Haig's Vietnam File-Vol. 5, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Special File, Box 1009, RNPLM.
[733] "Interview with Melvin Laird, March 31, 1978," Folder: Foreign Policy, Laird, Melvin, A. James Reichley Interview Transcripts, Box 1, Ford Library.
[734] "April 24, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Cambodian Operations," Folder: Diplomatic [Planning Book for Cambodia Apr 70 Operation], National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 88, RNPLM.
[735] NYT, May 23, 1970, pg. 22
[736] "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Actions on Cambodia," Folder: Actions on Cambodia, April-May 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Cambodian Operations (1970), Box 579, RNPLM.

staffers compiled the agency reports and Kissinger summarized them for the president.[737] Kissinger did not pass the original reports onto the president; he continued to edit them as he saw fit. Thus, an unelected and unconfirmed official purposefully limited the President's field of vision, thereby reducing Nixon's ability to make informed decisions.[738]

As the Cambodian incursion went forward, Nixon continued to rely on the NSC to coordinate and monitor the Cambodian incursion. The Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG) devoted the spring of 1970 to monitoring the operations in Cambodia. The WSAG's 29 April meeting focused on operations in the Parrot's Beak region (the Cambodian territory protruding into Vietnam) and military assistance to Cambodia. The 11 May meeting focused on how to best support South Vietnamese forces. During the meeting, Kissinger worried about how far ARVN forces were moving into Cambodia. He argued, "if the South Vietnamese go deep into Cambodia and get in trouble, we may face a decision as to whether to bail them out with air or other support—this will be in the face of the President's stated limits of our action in Cambodia."[739] Nixon also implored the WSAG to help improve public and media perceptions of the incursion. During a spring 1970 WSAG meeting, Nixon emphasized that the United States "could lose psychologically rather than militarily" and thus "had to play a positive game" with

---

[737] "May 10, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Actions on Cambodia," Folder: Actions on Cambodia, April-May 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Cambodian Operations (1970), Box 579, RNPLM.
[738] "August 26, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Actions on Cambodia," Folder: Actions on Cambodia, Vol. VI, July-August 1970, National Security Council (NSC), Cambodian Operations (1970), Box 581, RNPLM; "August 19, 1970, Memorandum for the Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Actions on Cambodia," Folder: Actions on Cambodia, Vol. VI, July-August 1970, National Security Council (NSC), Cambodian Operations (1970), Box 581, RNPLM.
[739] "May 11, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: WSAG Meeting, Monday, May 11, 1970," Folder: WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 5-11-70, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, Washington Special Action Group Meetings, Box H-074, RNPLM.

"better press responses." Nixon asked the WSAG principals to work on shaping news reporting.[740]

Nixon's reliance on the NSC did help to blunt Defense department initiatives. The Defense department tried to propose formal limits on how far US-ARVN forces could proceed into Cambodia. Because the Defense plan would limit Nixon's control of the armed forces, NSC staff advised Nixon against imposing such limits. Nixon agreed. Although, he and Kissinger wanted to limit how far ARVN advanced into Cambodia, they did not want Defense to unilaterally make that decision or take away any options.[741]

In the summer of 1970, Nixon attempted to use his national security architecture to capitalize on perceived post-incursion military gains. He ordered a National Security Study memorandum on the military and political situation in Southeast Asia after the invasion and implored his key foreign policy departments to "submit [their] views…on possible follow-up actions to support our Vietnamization and negotiations objectives." In conjunction, Nixon asked these departments to assess the feasibility of new pacification efforts, continued operations against communist sanctuaries, and protections of the Cambodia-Vietnam border.[742] Nixon also ordered an NSSM review of American strategy and capabilities in Southeast Asia.[743]

---

[740] "Washington Special Actions Group, June 19, 1970," Folder: WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 6/19/70, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, Washington Special Action Group Meetings, Box H-078, RNPLM.
[741] "May 19, 1970, Memorandum for Mr. Kissinger, Subject: WSAG Meeting, Tuesday, May 19, 1970," Folder: WSAG Meeting, Cambodia, 5-19-70, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, Washington Special Action Group Meetings, Box H-074, RNPLM.
[742] "Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, Subject: Possible Actions in Support of Vietnamization and Negotiations." Folder: Cambodia—NSSM 99(1), National Security Adviser, NSC East Asian and Pacific Affairs Staff: Files, Country File, Box 2, Ford Library.
[743] NSSM 99 requested, "alternative statements of US interests" along with "assessments of the enemy's interests and goals," and "an analysis of enemy capabilities." "National Security Study Memorandum 99, August 17, 1970," Folder: Cambodia—NSSM 99(1), National Security Adviser, NSC East Asian and Pacific Affairs Staff: Files, Country File, Box 2, Ford Library.

The stresses within Nixon's policymaking architecture continued to build, however. NSC staff were unable to control the departments, especially Defense, involved in the post-incursion review. NSC Staffer K. Wayne Smith complained, "Laird followed the study and consistently 'gamed' his options to fit the outcome he is seeking."[744] Smith argued that Laird told his "representatives to insert an option calling for no additional assistance to Cambodia or RVNAF support whatever the consequences." Smith also noted that Laird imposed financial restrictions on the available options.[745] Nixon's national security architecture was critical in designing and monitoring the Cambodian incursion but infighting within the executive branch continued to weaken Nixon's policymaking autonomy. The NSC could not contain Defense Secretary Laird.

Melvin Laird, the Budget, and Vietnamization

Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird was not the willing soldier Nixon had expected. From the start of the administration, Laird worked to circumvent Nixon's policymaking architecture and withdraw American troops from Vietnam. As historian David Prentice explains, "Laird concluded the United States would have to begin bringing soldiers home to stop the unraveling of society and ease pressure to abandon South Vietnam."[746] The former congressman from Wisconsin also believed Congress reflected American popular opinion and took harsh congressional criticism of Nixon's Cambodian invasion as a further sign that the Nixon administration needed to get out of Vietnam.[747]

---

[744] "September 14, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: NSSM 99: Cambodia Strategy Study," Folder: Cambodia—NSSM 99(1), National Security Adviser, NSC East Asian and Pacific Affairs Staff: Files, Country File, Box 2, Ford Library.
[745] Laird "ordered that his option limited FY 71 funding to the $40 million already provided." "September 14, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: NSSM 99: Cambodia Strategy Study," Folder: Cambodia—NSSM 99(1), National Security Adviser, NSC East Asian and Pacific Affairs Staff: Files, Country File, Box 2, Ford Library.
[746] David L. Prentice, "Choosing 'the Long Road': Henry Kissinger, Melvin Laird, Vietnamization, and the War over Nixon's Vietnam Strategy" *Diplomatic History* 40:3 (2016), 453.
[747] Prentice, "Choosing 'the Long Road,'" 453.

Nixon's carefully constructed policymaking architecture could not control or co-opt the Defense department. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird held considerable power over the draft, expenditures and the military budget. Laird used his power to push back against Nixon's autonomous decision-making and to push for American withdrawal from Vietnam. Laird used his control over the defense budget to make withdrawing from Vietnam (or at the very least scaling the commitment back) an economic necessity.

Nixon and Kissinger fruitlessly tried to stop Laird's efforts. In the fall of 1969, Nixon and Kissinger could not even stop Laird from discussing Vietnamization. The President dictated, "there be no speculation whatever on troop withdrawal either in terms of schedule or numbers." In particular, he instructed Laird, "to give orders here and in Saigon that no one under pain of dismissal" should speculate on troop withdrawals.[748] In November 1969, Kissinger also tried to call Laird out for pushing Vietnamization. Kissinger had learned from Haig that Laird told reporters "he (Laird) didn't care what the President announced, he was going to continue withdrawing troops and that Laird hadn't paid any attention to the previous decision to withdraw."[749] Kissinger condemned Laird for diverging from the president and the NSC.[750] Laird refused to back down.

In December 1969, NSC staffer Laurence E. Lynn Jr., outlined the deteriorating NSC-Defense relationship. He argued the Defense department refused "to cooperate, even when the President himself has directed it." Lynn contended that Defense was not complying with NSC-directed reviews, including NSSM 77 on program budgets. Defense's noncompliance fractured

---

[748] "November 4, 1969, To Laird, From: Nixon," Folder: SecDef Correspondence—Southeast Asia (1), Melvin R. Laird, Papers, Department of Defense Papers: Subject File, Box D11, Ford Library.
[749] "Telecon, Secretary Laird, 10:40am, 11/27/69," Folder: Telephone Conversations-Chron File, 18-28 Nov 1969, Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telcons), Chronological File, Box 3, RNPLM.
[750] "Telecon, Secretary Laird, 10:40am, 11/27/69," Folder: Telephone Conversations-Chron File, 18-28 Nov 1969, Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telcons), Chronological File, Box 3, RNPLM.

the NSC architecture. Lynn pointed out that the department's lack of cooperation effectively "rescinded" NSSM 77 and gave Defense "the upper hand."[751] Lynn suggested the lack of cooperation "may eventually cost the President heavily in bad policies and programs, missed opportunities, and problems with Congress." Haig concurred, arguing the Defense department challenged "the system" and provided "an entrée for other agencies to follow similar practices."[752]

NSC staffers discovered, again and again that Laird was subverting and often ignoring Nixon's NSC-focused policymaking process. Regardless of NSC reports and Nixon's directives, Laird continued to develop plans for Vietnamization. In December 1969, senior NSC staffer Laurence Lynn reported to Kissinger that the Defense department was "underfunding Vietnam and probably raping various procurement and research and development accounts."[753] In March 1970, Lynn warned Kissinger that Laird was pushing ahead with Vietnamization regardless of the situation on the ground. He argued the defense budget was predicated on false assumptions, including Laird's belief he could "predict the rate of progress on Vietnamization" and that "no major unforeseen requirements will arise." Lynn contended, "Secretary Laird is trying to use the budget to run the war and discipline the military."[754] The NSC staff, as well as their boss Henry Kissinger, watched Laird's growing power and unwillingness to be subordinated to the NSC and were not sure what to do.

---

[751] "December 8, 1969, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Deteriorating Relationships with DOD," Folder: Haig Chron-Dec. 1-8, 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 960, RNPLM.
[752] "December 8, 1969, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger," Folder: Haig Chron-Dec. 1-8, 1969, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 960, RNPLM.
[753] "December 6, 1969, Memorandum for Mr. Kissinger, Subject: DPRC Activities," Folder: DPRC Meeting, 12-9-69, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Meeting Files, Defense Program Review Committee Meetings, Box H-099, RNPLM.
[754] "March 13, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: The Risks for Vietnamization," Folder: Vietnamization, Vol. 2, Jan 70-June 70, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 91, RNPLM.

Kissinger tried to fight back. In spring 1970 he delivered a scathing review of Laird's Vietnamization plans to Nixon. Kissinger contended that no evidence supported the Vietnamization gains Laird touted. Kissinger cautioned Nixon about Laird's reports. He explained that if Laird's optimistic predictions did not prove true then the United States' position in Vietnam would be compromised and the country would be forced to accept an unfavorable political settlement to the war.[755] Despite such clear misgivings about Laird's freewheeling operations, neither Kissinger nor Nixon did much to stop them.

Nixon and Kissinger increasingly understood that Laird's control over the Defense budget gave him the power to subvert Nixon's national security architecture. In March 1970, Lynn warned Kissinger about the Defense budget. Lynn argued that Laird actively manipulated the budget and forced decisions on the war effort. He noted the FY 70-71 defense budgets' "call for a cut of $4.2 billion," which would constrain Nixon's offensive options. Lynn insisted the budgets "are so tight…that any unplanned or combat support efforts required by unexpected war developments (such as the recent surge in B-52 sorties) cannot be funded except by diverting funds from other war programs."[756] He also argued, "combat and combat support programs are being terminated and 'trade-offs' are being made."[757] Kissinger was forced to recognize Laird's growing power and unwillingness to be subordinated to the NSC.

Kissinger warned Nixon about the increasing influence of the Defense Department and the subversion of Nixon's national security architecture. Building on NSC studies, in March

---

[755] "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Review of Vietnamization," Folder: Vietnamization, Vol. 2, Jan 70-June 70, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 91, RNPLM.
[756] "March 13, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: The Risks for Vietnamization," Folder: Vietnamization, Vol. 2, Jan 70-June 70, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 91, RNPLM.
[757] "March 13, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: The Risks for Vietnamization," Folder: Vietnamization, Vol. 2, Jan 70-June 70, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 91, RNPLM.

1970, Kissinger argued Laird was subverting Nixon's architecture to force an American withdrawal from Vietnam. Kissinger contended that Laird's recommendations for troop and operational support cutbacks to stay within budget ceilings were faulty. Kissinger cautioned Nixon about the conclusions. He maintained Laird based his analysis on uncertain and shaky assumptions. Kissinger also argued Laird actively sought to restrict Nixon's offensive options. He contended, "Secretary Laird has seen to it that budgetary restrictions will make it impossible for you to deliver on your [offensive] threat. Kissinger argued, "the established budget ceilings alone and the current manner in which they are enforced will restrain our forces." [758] Kissinger was increasingly aware that his original NSC design was being made ineffective by Laird and that the NSC did not have the tools to subordinate the Defense department to it.

Adding to the dire reports from NSC staffers and Kissinger, Assistant National Security Advisor Haig also believed that Laird was not even effectively fulfilling his mandate transmitting the JCS's recommendations to the NSC. On 17 March 1970, Haig, who had excellent and long-standing connections to the highest ranks within the military, had secretly received troop withdrawal recommendations from JCS Chairman Earle Wheeler. In passing on Wheeler's report to Kissinger, Haig underlined that he had not received the report from Laird but rather "in an unsigned, single page memorandum." He noted that Wheeler had provided Laird with a copy of the memo and requested that it "be transmitted to the President." Haig wrote, "it will be interesting to see whether Secretary Laird forwards the Chairman's memorandum." In this case, the memorandum was potentially explosive, as Wheeler and General Abrams challenged the current military budgets laid out by Laird. They insisted that Laird's budget

---

[758] "March 19, 1970, Memorandum for the President, Subject: The Risks of Vietnamization," Folder: VSSG Meeting, 5-20-70, National Security Council Institutional ('H') Files, Committee Files, Vietnam Special Studies Group (VSSG) Meetings, Box H-002, RNPLM.

would force "the issue of precipitous troop withdrawals." Abrams' saw such withdrawals as catastrophic and insisted on retaining "the current levels of attack air and B-52 operations."[759] Secretary Laird did finally pass along Wheeler's angry dissent from laird's budget recommendations but only weeks later, on 8 April 1970.[760]

Laird acted unilaterally through the spring of 1970. He kept pushing troop draw downs and ignored the JCS's concerns about Vietnamization and did his best not to pass along their concerns to the NSC or the president. In his April 1970 report on Vietnamization, Laird argued even more American troops needed to come home and noted the next two defense budgets were "predicated on substantial reductions" to American force levels. He also warned that JCS's advice to maintain current levels of bombing and air support "would cost $1.4 billion more than has been planned for in the budget."[761] Laird used his control of the defense budget to dictate strategy in Vietnam.

Kissinger continued to warn Nixon about Laird's increasing power and control over Vietnam policy. In an April 1970 memorandum, Kissinger pushed back against Laird's persistent

---

[759] "March 17, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Timing Alternatives for Phase IV Troop Withdrawals," Folder: Haig Chron-March 12-20, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 963, RNPLM.

[760] The Joint Chiefs were another powerful player in the Vietnamization debate, but they answered most directly to the Secretary of Defense and not to the NSC. So, under normal procedures their views were communicated to Laird. Chairman Wheeler made it clear in the 3 April 1970 report to Laird that he wanted to pause troop withdrawals. He suggested the Nixon administration needed "time to assess and consolidate the gains already made in Vietnamization." Wheeler contended, "the gains to this point are fragile." He also argued that despite the continued reduction in American force levels, "the increase in effectiveness of Government of Vietnam forces has barely compensated for the change."
"April 8, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: General Abrams' and JCS Views on Vietnamization," Folder: Haig Chron-April 1-7, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 964, RNPLM; "3 April 1970, Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, Subject: Force Planning—Republic of Vietnam," Folder: Vietnamization, Vol. 2, Jan 70-June 70, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Subject Files, Box 91, RNPLM.

[761] "4 April 1970, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Vietnam," Folder: Haig Chron-April 1-7, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 964, RNPLM.

calls for troop withdrawals.[762] He drew on a report from General Abrams, who concluded ARVN was already stretched to capacity. Abrams further warned that budget cuts would substantially degrade air support and argued Laird was arbitrarily reducing B-52 sortie levels, by approximately 500 each month.[763] Kissinger argued the American war effort was already feeling the impact of budget reductions. Kissinger contended that the administration was "making budget and troop withdrawal decisions today without fully examining the implications of these decisions for the future." [764] Kissinger was essentially warning Nixon that Laird was taking control of decision-making.

Alexander Haig fed his boss's anger over Laird's machinations. Haig told Kissinger that Laird "dramatizes the financial impossibilities of continuing with the conflict and now proposes that our only hope is a political solution." Haig also drew Kissinger's attention to Laird's suggestions that the United States "must continue to draw down as rapidly as possible and to, above all, prevent any further involvement in Southeast Asia."[765] Haig predicted Nixon would be unimpressed with Laird's reports and insisted Laird's report, "will cause the President to ask himself what in the hell Laird has been doing all these months." Haig also suggested Nixon would "gag upon reading this rambling, deceptive, and purposeless softening effort."[766] Haig was trying to buck up Kissinger but the tone of his memo reveals just how worried the NSC was over Laird's ability to use the Defense budget to shape Vietnam War strategy.

---

[762] "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Problems on Vietnamization," Folder: Vietnam, April 1, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Country Files, Box 145, RNPLM.
[763] "April 8, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: General Abrams' and JCS Views on Vietnamization," Folder: Haig Chron-April 8-12, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 964, RNPLM.
[764] "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Problems on Vietnamization," Folder: Vietnam, April 1, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Country Files, Box 145, RNPLM.
[765] "April 4, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Vietnam," Folder: Haig Chron-April 1-7, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 964, RNPLM.
[766] "April 4, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Vietnam," Folder: Haig Chron-April 1-7, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 964, RNPLM.

Haig also privately noted problems with Laird. In an unsent memorandum, dated 8 April 1970, Haig contended Nixon and Kissinger were unwilling "to face up to the problems which have been generated here at home and not on the battlefield in Vietnam." He argued the reconstructed policymaking architecture was breaking down and no systems analysis system or bright staffers were going to solve the withdrawal program. Rather, Haig believed, Nixon needed to confront Laird and "stand up to the American people and put the brakes on [withdrawals] immediately." Haig desperately wanted Nixon and Kissinger to confront Laird, slow down the withdrawals and figure out how to fund a robust and renewed offensive effort in Vietnam.[767]

Kissinger understood what was happening; he tried to limit Laird's power and protect Nixon's policy-making architecture. He was livid when he learned that Laird, acting on his own, attempted to discourage the Joint Chiefs from hitting surface-to-air Missile (SAM) sites. While fact-checking Laird—who had claimed that the JCS were against the plan to hit the SAM sites—Kissinger learned from Wheeler that Laird was lying and that the JCS wanted to hit the sites.[768] Kissinger was outraged, complaining to General Wheeler, "I suffer from the naïve idea that Presidential orders tend to get carried out."[769] In May 1970, Kissinger tried again to reassert control over Laird. He demanded that the Secretary of Defense wait for NSC studies before making policy decisions. Kissinger dictated, "no decision should be made on South Vietnam

---

[767] "April 8, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Vietnam," Folder: Haig's Vietnam File-Vol. 5, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Special File, Box 1009, RNPLM.
[768] "Telcon, Laird/Kissinger, 11:30am, 4/17/70," Folder: Telephone Conversations-Chron File, 1970, 15-18 Apr., Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telcons), Chronological File, Box 4, RNPLM; "Telcon, General Wheeler, Mr. Kissinger, April 17, 1970, 12 Noon," Folder: Telephone Conversation-Chron File, 1970, 15-18 Apr, Henry A. Kissinger Conversation Transcripts (Telcons), Chronological File, Box 4, RNPLM.
[769] "Telcon, General Wheeler, Mr. Kissinger, April 17, 1970, 12 Noon," Folder: Telephone Conversation-Chron File, 1970, 15-18 Apr, Henry A. Kissinger Conversation Transcripts (Telcons), Chronological File, Box 4, RNPLM.

force structure or US support until the Vietnamization study has been completed and reviewed by the President."[770]

Nixon did try to stop Laird. In April 1970, Nixon explicitly ordered "no further reductions in levels of tactical air and B-52 sorties." Nixon dictated that his orders be carried out regardless of budget requirements.[771] Despite Nixon's direct orders, Kissinger and Haig worried that Laird would not implement the President's policy. Haig noted, "if we give Laird any leeway he will reduce sortie levels regardless of the instructions that he is given." Haig suggested Kissinger give a copy of the instructions to Wheeler as a check against Laird.[772] Haig and Kissinger were justified in their concerns. By the end of May, Kissinger learned "there has been no significant action taken."[773] Nixon's policymaking architecture was increasingly fracturing, with Laird effectively subverting Nixon's decisions.

Laird was using his control over the budget to make Vietnamization inevitable. At the end of May 1970, Laird detailed severe defense budgetary cuts. He contended, "both the FY 71 and FY 72 defense budgets will impose severe fiscal problems." The Secretary of Defense informed Nixon that these budget levels would necessitate a decrease in US force levels. Laird argued that current American levels were "unrealistic" and that steps needed to be taken "to keep within current FY 71 budget levels." He suggested, "inactivation of two Army divisions,

---

[770] "May 25, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Lynn," Folder: Vietnam, May 1, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Country Files, Box 146, RNPLM.
[771] "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Problems on Vietnamization," Folder: Vietnam, April 1, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Country Files, Box 145, RNPLM; "Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, Subject: Air Support for Vietnam," Folder: Vietnam, April 1, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Vietnam Country Files, Box 145, RNPLM.
[772] "April 16, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger," Folder: Haig Chron-April 16-30, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 965, RNPLM.
[773] Kissinger noted, in a memorandum for Nixon, "a low-key message asking General Abrams' views on the feasibility of attacking reported COSVN locations elicited the reply which Secretary Laird now considers the basis for continuing to stick with the present limitations."
"May 20, 1970, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Use of Tactical Air in Cambodia," Folder: Haig Chron-May 19-22, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 965, RNPLM.

retirement of all anti-submarine warfare carriers, [and] reduction of 130 to 140 oldest B-52s." Most pertinent to the war in Vietnam, Laird suggested the "reduction of 800,000 military and civilian personnel."[774] For Laird the key point was that constrained budgets meant more troops needed to be withdrawn.

Kissinger was outraged at Laird's projected military reductions. He believed Laird was exceeding his mandate and forcing changes on the president. Attempting to push back, Kissinger denigrated Laird's suggestions in a late May 1970 memorandum for the president. He argued that Laird's memo was riddled with broad, unsupported fiscal generalizations. Kissinger claimed Laird's suggestions were overdramatic and "projected the most drastic reductions in our security posture." Kissinger pressed Nixon to halt the changes.[775] Kissinger realized Laird had effectively subverted Nixon's NSC-based policymaking architecture, using the budget to control Vietnam War strategy.

Through the spring and summer of 1970, Nixon tried but failed to protect his decision-making autonomy. At the start of June, Nixon attempted to turn the military pressure up but Laird sneakily resisted. Nixon "directed that US air operations over Cambodia not be constrained within existing authorities if appropriate targets should develop elsewhere in Cambodia."[776] But a few days later, Haig reported that the president's directive "was never really implemented."[777] Laird used a caveat in Nixon's order to avoid implementation. Haig concluded, "the foregoing

---

[774] "May 31, 1970, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Memorandum from the Secretary of Defense Outlining Budgetary Problems," Folder: Cambodia/Vietnam, 31 May 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Cambodian Operations (1970), Box 585, RNPLM.
[775] "May 31, 1970, Memorandum for the President, Subject: Memorandum from the Secretary of Defense Outlining Budgetary Problems," Folder: Cambodia/Vietnam, 31 May 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Cambodian Operations (1970), Box 585, RNPLM.
[776] "June 9, 1970, Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, Subject: Air Operations over Cambodia," Folder: Haig Chron-June 1-10, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 967, RNPLM.
[777] "June 9, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Air Operations over Cambodia," Folder: Haig Chron-June 1-10, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 967, RNPLM.

again confirms the refusal on the part of the Department of Defense to obey literally Presidential dictums."[778] Nixon's architecture was breaking down. He could not use the NSC to run the war from the Oval Office.

Nixon's budget and manpower problems only increased through the summer of 1970. Haig painted a dire picture of Laird's budget machinations. He argued, in a 9 August 1970 memorandum, "Laird has painted the President into a corner on our Vietnam troop levels." Haig explained, "Laird has under-funded the Army to a degree that it will no longer be possible to come anywhere near meeting the levels we had anticipated for the remainder of the fiscal year."[779] Laird took the withdrawal decisions away from Nixon.

Haig argued the army no longer had the manpower to support more expansive warfare. He explained Laird had lowered draft quotes and deprived "the Army of the ability to provide the force levels necessary to meet the goals we were considering even if the funds were made available." Haig argued the draft call reductions, combined with public souring of the draft, meant that the Nixon administration could not maintain Vietnam force levels even if they had the budget to do so. Haig also noted Laird's "disastrous bit of management chicanery" had resulted in Westmoreland proposing accelerated withdrawal schedules with "significantly larger than programmed manpower losses."[780] Laird had used his all-important power of budget design to constrain Nixon's Vietnam War options.

---

[778] As Haig noted to Kissinger, "In lieu of promulgating a directive, the Secretary merely had the Chairman ask General Abrams if he felt constrained in the conduct of his air operations in Cambodia or whether or not he thought there were remunerative targets outside the existing restraints." "June 9, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Air Operations over Cambodia," Folder: Haig Chron-June 1-10, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 967, RNPLM.

[779] "August 9, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Vietnam Troop Levels," Folder: Haig Chron-August 1-10, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 970, RNPLM.

[780] "August 9, 1970, Memorandum for Henry A. Kissinger, Subject: Vietnam Troop Levels," Folder: Haig Chron-August 1-10, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 970, RNPLM.

Kissinger passed on Haig's dire warnings to Nixon. Setting the stage, Kissinger reminded the president that he [Nixon] had planned on only 50,000 troops being withdrawn that year. Kissinger warned Nixon that this was no longer possible. He argued, "the way the Secretary of Defense has set up the budget and organized draft calls has made it infeasible for [the Joint Chiefs of Staff] to adhere to their previous recommendation." Kissinger also noted, "Even if sufficient funds could be made available, the past level of draft calls now makes it impossible to achieve the broad manpower base necessary for the force level in Southeast Asia which the Chiefs would support."[781]

Kissinger was furious. Laird's decisions had drastically reduced the available options. He informed Nixon, "our biggest bargaining chip between now and the end of Tet (February, 1971) was our ability to regulate the timing of the drawdown of our forces. This chip is no longer available." Kissinger recognized that Laird had removed Nixon's options. He contended, "fiscal constraints and more importantly, manpower decisions made outside the framework of the NSC system have deprived us of desirable flexibility in the critical months ahead." [782] The NSC had lost control of the war in Vietnam.

Later NSC studies confirmed the manpower and budget restrictions. NSC Program Analysis Director K. Wayne Smith noted the constrained options and argued, "scarce military manpower all but precludes manning a force in South Vietnam larger than that he [Laird] recommends." Smith argued that Laird controlled Nixon's options, and insisted "If an issue is left to Secretary Laird, the White House will always be left with one option—Secretary

---

[781] "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Withdrawal of US forces from South Vietnam," Folder: Haig Chron-August 11-[17], 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 970, RNPLM.

[782] "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Withdrawal of US forces from South Vietnam," Folder: Haig Chron-August 11-[17], 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 970, RNPLM.

Laird's."[783] By the end of 1970, Nixon's architecture was no longer in control of the war in Vietnam. Laird controlled the defense budget and draft calls. He used this control to dictate decisions on Vietnam, forcing troop drawdowns and lowered offensive levels. President Nixon had believed that he could use the NSC to supersede the power of cabinet-level officers, control national security policy, and manage the Vietnam War from the Oval Office. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird had proven him wrong.

---

[783] "September 24, 1970, Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, Subject: Vietnam Redeployments," Folder: Haig Chron-September 19-24, 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 972, RNPLM.

Conclusion

President Richard M. Nixon entered the Oval Office with the fervent belief that he alone could resolve the war in Vietnam. The new president was determined to achieve "peace with honor": he would preserve the Republic of South Vietnam while simultaneously maintaining American honor and credibility. But, before Nixon's first year in office had ended, cracks had begun to appear in the administrative structures he had built to manage the war. The NSC was unable to protect Nixon's autonomy or successfully control policymaking for the war in Vietnam. In particular, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird used his control over the defense budget and draft calls to dictate decisions on Vietnam, forcing troop drawdowns and lowered offensive levels.

In August 1970, Nixon and Kissinger recognized that Laird had limited Nixon's Vietnam War options. Kissinger told Nixon that Laird had made previous withdrawal plans impossible. He argued, "fiscal constraints and more importantly, manpower decisions made outside the framework of the NSC system have deprived us of desirable flexibility in the critical months ahead."[784] But Nixon chose not to contest the figures or fire Laird. He likely allowed himself to be boxed in by Laird. While Nixon was determined to achieve "peace with honor," he was far more ambivalent than Kissinger about how to resolve the war in Vietnam. Thus, when Kissinger challenged Laird's withdrawal figures, as historian Richard A. Hunt notes, "Nixon requested no action or change and merely placed a check mark on the document. Apparently, the president

[784] "Memorandum for the President, Subject: Withdrawal of US forces from South Vietnam," Folder: Haig Chron-August 11-[17], 1970, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Alexander M. Haig Chronological Files, Box 970, RNPLM.

had accepted faster withdrawals."[785] Nixon likely understood that he had very little freedom of movement in his Vietnam war strategy because of Congress and the anti-war movement and it was more realistic to allow Laird to push ahead with a Vietnamization strategy that appeared to be working.

Nixon also saw Laird's plans as more realistic and was inclined to allow the plans to proceed because he believed that the Cambodian incursion had been successful. In his post-presidential memoirs, Nixon maintained that the "operation had destroyed the Communists' capability of launching a spring offensive against our forces in South Vietnam." He also maintained that the ARVN's battlefield operations during the incursion convinced him that Vietnamization could work. Nixon noted, "the performance of the ARVN had demonstrated that Vietnamization was working. The 150,000-man troop withdrawal I had announced on April 20 could go forward on schedule."[786]

Of course, Nixon's reminiscences in his 1990 memoir do not tell the whole story. As historian Jeffrey Kimball argues, "even as the public furor over the Cambodian incursion had seemed to subside by late May or early June, Nixon and Kissinger came to feel they were walking a 'tightrope' between the steadfastness of their Vietnamese enemies and the end-the-war tendencies within Congress, the bureaucracy, and the citizenry."[787] Kimball contends, "Nixon was becoming concerned about the long-term impact of the war on the solidity of his political base as he looked forward to the 1972 presidential election." Similarly, in his own exploration of the end of America's involvement in the Vietnam War, Kissinger maintained that the administration "faced the certainty that a 'political solution' was elusive and the danger that the

---

[785] Richard A. Hunt, *Melvin Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military* (Historical Office: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2015), 138.
[786] Richard M. Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1990), 467-468.
[787] Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War,* 221.

domestic debate would turn on the rate of our unilateral withdrawal."[788] The domestic environment and ensuing bureaucratic environment pressured Nixon to waver on challenging Laird.[789]

Then, too, Nixon was not figuring Vietnam War policy in isolation; he had other key foreign policy objectives. In particular, Nixon wanted to pursue détente with the Soviet Union and rapprochement with China. The Vietnam War and the ongoing anti-war movement threatened to derail these foreign policy initiatives. As historian Jeffrey Kimball notes, Nixon "was impervious to the peace movement's arguments about the war's immorality and folly. He was attentive, however, to the political costs that dissent exacted: the erosion of support for him and the war; the division within his own bureaucracy; the constriction of his military options in Vietnam; and the growing challenge from an emboldened Congress to his control of foreign policy."[790] Vietnamization helped to quell the anti-war movement. As historian Richard A. Hunt explains, "In good measure owing to Laird's efforts, Vietnam did not pose a major political liability for Nixon in the 1972 presidential election. US forces in Vietnam had shrunk to a small number and the public found less reason to protest against an unfair selective service system."[791] Thus, when Vietnamization appeared to offer a chance of success and was tempering the anti-war movement, Nixon saw the utility of allowing Laird's plans to proceed.

However, allowing himself to be boxed in on troop withdrawals did not mean Nixon had abandoned the belief that air power and fierce military offensives could bring the North Vietnamese to the bargaining table. Historians William Burr and Jeffrey P. Kimball argue that

---

[788] Henry Kissinger, *Ending the Vietnam War: A History of America's Involvement in and Extrication from the Vietnam War* (Simon & Schuster, 2003), 186-187.
[789] Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War,* 227-229.
[790] Jeffrey Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War* (University Press of Kansas, 1998), 221.
[791] Richard A. Hunt, *Melvin Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military* (Historical office: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2015), 544.

for Nixon "military force continued to play a critical role in his prosecution of the war" particularly to protect "the progress of de-Americanization and Vietnamization while preserving the decent-change/decent-interval strategy."[792] Laird was also okay with this bargain. As historian David Prentice contends, "As negotiations failed to bear fruit, Nixon continued removing troops. Laird had achieved his goal. Certainly, Nixon would at times employ Kissinger's tactics and mad diplomacy, but Laird was a politician. He could accept the occasional escalation if it satisfied Nixon and the military and allowed him to keep withdrawing soldiers."[793] Thus, Nixon remained uncertain, straddling the two approaches with Laird making Vietnamization a reality and Kissinger pushing for heavy military offensives, sometimes successfully.

Permitting Vietnamization and American troop withdrawals to go ahead allowed Nixon to move forward on his other key foreign policy objectives. Laird may have neutralized the National Security Council for the hot war in Vietnam, but the National Security Council remained a potent and critical force in the Nixon administration. In fact, the nature of US foreign policy helped dictate the effectiveness of Nixon's national security architecture. The president cannot administer the defense establishment himself, in large part because it is not possible to formulate defense budgets or overall programs without the Secretary's involvement. The Secretary of Defense is also the critical conduit to military commanders. Thus, the presence or lack thereof of troops on the ground changes the president's national security architecture. Simply put, Nixon's reconstructed architecture was more effective and responsive to him when military forces were not involved.

---

[792] William Burr and Jeffrey P. Kimball, *Nixon's Nuclear Specter: The Secret Alert of 1969, Madman Diplomacy, and the Vietnam War* (University Press of Kansas, 2015), 318-319.
[793] Prentice, 473-474.

Nixon's reconstructed architecture was of particular importance in his other foreign policy ventures, namely the opening to China and detente with the Soviet Union. Relaxing of tensions with the Soviet Union was partially pursued through NSC-controlled backchannel discussions between Kissinger and Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin. The two men met frequently, even daily, for private discussions during which time they not only built a degree but also traded information and ideas.[794] The State Department was not notified when Dobrynin and Kissinger met, never mind receiving notes of what was discussed.[795]

Similarly, in Nixon's rapprochement with China the reconstructed national security architecture was critical. Coming into office, rapprochement with China was high on Nixon's priority list. Nixon believed that the recognition of a tripolar arrangement of international power, seeing China recognized as a superpower, along with the United States and the Soviet Union, would facilitate more moderate and controlled international relations. In his rapprochement with China, Nixon relied on the National Security Council. The high risk of failure associated with the initiative heightened the White House's desire for secrecy. Nixon made use of National Security Study Memorandums to gather information. Early in his administration, Nixon ordered a study on their policies relating to China, including detailing current US policies towards China and Taiwan, along with policy options and alternatives.[796] Nixon acted on some of the study's recommendations for deescalating tensions, including ordering an end to sweeps and then patrols of the Taiwan Straits in 1969.[797] Nixon ordered a further study on China policy in November 1970, which included questions on US policy goals and the US-Taiwan relationship. The second

---

[794] Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century,* 224.
[795] Bundy, *A Tangled Web,* 57.
[796] [U.S. China Policy] Classification Unknown, National Security Study Memorandum, NSSM 14, February 5, 1969, 1pp. Collection: Presidential Directives.
[797] Margaret MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao: The Week that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2007), 164.

NSSM inquired about the possible consequences of US-China policy changes on the Vietnam War and US-Soviet Union relations.[798]

Nixon successfully removed the State Department from rapprochement with China. He did so by having China options researched and analyzed in the NSC and having NSC staffers prepare all his materials, including controlling the critical NSSMs. Nixon also took rapprochement out of State's purview by not returning to the Warsaw channel, after the Chinese cancelled the first round of talks, and bringing communications into the White House. He also excluded the State Department when he selected Kissinger to be his envoy to China rather than the Secretary of State or a Foreign Service officer. Rogers' exclusion from the entire process was so extensive that Kissinger was on his way to China before the Secretary of State was even informed that the administration was trying to change their relations with China. Assistant National Security Advisor Alexander Haig later recalled, "As I laid out the details one by one, Rogers stared at me in shocked disbelief, as if each fact were a round from a pistol I was firing into the ceiling."[799] Nixon's reconstructed national security policymaking architecture was crucial in his rapprochement with China. Nixon's NSC was successful outside the hot war in Vietnam.

Nixon successfully refashioned the national security policymaking architecture of the US government to reduce the power of his rivals and to increase his own autonomous capacity to reshape the world. While Nixon was unable to quickly resolve the war in Vietnam, his efforts to rethink how national security policy was made in the executive branch had fundamental impacts not only on his own national security policies but on the evolving structure and power of the

---

[798] [China Policy] Unclassified, National Security Study Memorandum, November 19, 1970, 1pp. Collection: Presidential Directives.
[799] Haig, *Inner Circles,* 268.

modern presidency. Nixon was, in fact, in a long line of presidents who felt that the executive branch, especially in regard to how foreign policy and national security were managed, was in serious need of reorganization. Indeed, the presidency Nixon inherited had been reorganized multiple times, with varying degrees of success.

By the end of the Truman administration the president's power had expanded far beyond that envisioned by the writers of the Constitution. The president, incrementally and then all of a sudden had become, the undisputed leader of the United States, with vast powers over the US national security system, and new mechanisms, like the National Security Council and an enlarged executive office, allowed the president to manage that power. But the new institutions and presidential power were more akin to a Jenga stack than a well-built tower and there was extensive room for Nixon's maneuvering, change and manipulation.

Nixon's study of national security architecture began early; as a Congressman, Senator, and Vice President Nixon had an inside view into the US government. Nixon watched as Eisenhower tried and failed to restructure the national security architecture. He had a critical opportunity to study, critique and learn from the Eisenhower administration. In particular, Nixon learned critical lessons about how the National Security Council could filter government information and ideas. Nixon's watching and learning would continue during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Although he had a farther gaze on the US government's centers of power, Nixon used his time away from government office to continue to think about how best to reorganize the architecture of the National Security State to assure that his presidency would be an effective one. He came to believe that the president needed additional powers to keep the United States safe and strong, and believed the president needed room to act and should not have to consult with Congress.

As a result, Nixon's national security architecture was a product of his long-standing experience in and knowledge of the American government. The National Security Council gained real power during the Nixon administration, becoming the critical conduit to the president and the broker of information. Nixon created a system that avoided dependence on executive departments and provided him with the necessary policy considerations and intelligence. The president believed that State, Defense, and the CIA tried to control decision-making and mistrusted their advisory capabilities. Nixon's mistrusts shaped his national security architecture, giving prominence to the NSC and putting checks on departments and agencies involved in foreign policy. But Nixon's national security architecture ensured the original interagency nature of the NSC was retained.

Nixon believed his political and policy-making arrangement would give him the freedom he needed to act as he saw fit to bring the Vietnam War to a satisfactory conclusion. And for the first months of Nixon's administration, the president's reconfigured system appeared to be working and standing up to the hard realities of crafting policy for the Vietnam War. But all was not as it seemed. Before Nixon's first year in office had ended, cracks had begun to appear in the administrative structures he had built. Predictably Nixon was unable to wall off Congress and unexpectedly Nixon could not constrain the power of the Defense Department. Defense Secretary Melvin Laird, operating outside of the NSC-system and using his department's massive capacities, began to develop his own agenda for the war in Vietnam.

Despite Nixon's critical restructuring of government, he was unable to fulfill his major policy goal: quickly resolving the war in Vietnam. By the end of 1970 the die was cast: Nixon's administration had begun unilateral American withdrawals, peace talks were unproductive, and the defense budget was dwindling. Nonetheless the war would continue until 27 January 1973

when the Paris Peace Accords were signed. The remaining 2500 US combat troops were withdrawn on 29 March, after the repatriation of American Prisoners of War. US air strikes in Laos and Cambodia would continue until the middle of August 1975, when Congress cut off all funds for Southeast Asian military operations.[800]

But, despite Nixon and Kissinger's promises at the time, the Accords did not bring peace or stability to Vietnam. As historian Adrian Lewis explains, "The entire peace arrangement was orchestrated subterfuge" allowing "the United States to extricate itself from the war." The Accords allowed communist forces to remain in the South and was routinely flouted by North Vietnam.[801] North Vietnam successfully mounted a major offensive in 1975 to destroy South Vietnamese forces and government. On 30 April 1975 in dramatic scenes the last American helicopters fled and the South Vietnamese capital Saigon fell.[802] Shortly after the Accords were signed, Nixon himself was soon out of office, resigning to avoid impeachment over Watergate. But Nixon's presidency left an enduring legacy of presidential power and government reconstruction.

In the Nixon administration, the NSC "arose like a phoenix out of the ashes"—to borrow Robert Cutler's phrase—and became an institutionalized part of the US government.[803] The National Security Council became the president's personal section of the government, answerable only to him. As President George W. Bush once proclaimed, the National Security

---

[800] Charles A. Stevenson, *Warriors and Politicians: US Civil-Military Relations under Stress* (Routledge, 2006), 73.
[801] Adrian R. Lewis, *The American Culture of War, Third Edition: The History of US Military Force from World War II to Operation Enduring Freedom* (Routledge, 2018), 294.
[802] Stevenson, *Warriors and Politicians,* 73.
[803] Douglas T. Stuart, *Creating the National Security State: A History of the Law that Transformed America* (Princeton University Press, 2008), 277.

Council is the president's "personal band of warriors."[804] After the Nixon administration, the NSC remained a substantive force in the US government.

Following the Nixon administration and Kissinger's significant pattern of policy advocacy, there were calls for reform. In particular, there were suggestions, from both policymakers and academics, that the National Security Council and the National Security Advisor should return to the fabled 'Honest Broker' impartiality of the Eisenhower administration. But the NSC only grew in strength and the impartiality became both impossible and undesired. The National Security Council quickly became indispensable to the president; staff answerable only to him, and with the ability to seemingly cut through lines of bureaucracy and politicking.

While President Jimmy Carter initially contemplated abolishing the National Security Council, his NSC played a critical role in decision-making, particularly around the Iran hostage crisis. His National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinksi believed the Council could play a critical role in "helping the president make policy decisions" and advocated for such a role. By the Iran hostage Crisis, the NSC would be a crucial part of Carter's decision-making process.[805] A similar process happened during the Reagan administration. President Ronald Reagan promised to downgrade the importance of the NSC, backed by then Secretary of State Alexander Haig who had seen the power of the NSC firsthand under Nixon and Kissinger. But the new arrangement was ineffectual and did not last. When Reagan appointed his personal friend Judge William Clark as the National Security Advisor, the situation quickly changed. Clark's friendship with Reagan bolstered the importance of the National Security Council, and NSC staff

---

[804] John Gans, *White House Warriors: How the National Security Council Transformed the American Way of War* (Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2019), 2.
[805] Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed by Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC* (Stanford University Press, 1999), 90-91.

became critical for key foreign policy issues.[806] Ultimately, during the Reagan administration the NSC became a force of its own with secret activities. Though the NSC survived Iran Contra and only cemented its institutional importance. As political scientist John Gans notes, the NSC's survival only "underscored its institutional importance."[807]

The National Security Council's importance would only continue to grow. The NSC's significance to the president and American foreign policy creation was further institutionalized during George H.W. Bush's administration. National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft built on Nixon's structure and his own work with the post-Iran Contra Tower Commission investigation of government architecture. Scowcroft instituted a system of Principals and Deputies Committees. These committees supplanted the whole Council meetings and provided an institutional forum for high-level interagency cooperation, similar to Kissinger's Washington Special Actions Group. Subsequent administrations retained Scowcroft's Principals and Deputies Committees; further institutionalizing Nixon's NSC structure.[808] During Bush's administration, the NSC staff also continued to be the crucial source of information and analysis, particularly during the Gulf War.[809] Similarly, during George W. Bush's administration, NSC staffers were critical power-brokers, coordinating military initiatives, including the Surge in Iraq, pushing intelligence through separate channels and coordinating and developing policy.[810]

The National Security Council is a crucial power broker in the US government, beholden only to the president. As political scientist Michael J. Glennon contends, the NSC staff "sit at the pinnacle of… 'Washington's tight-knit national security culture'" and "wield immense,

---

[806] Zegart, *Flawed by Design,* 92.
[807] Gans, *White House Warriors*, 87.
[808] David Rothkopf, *Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power* (PublicAffairs, 2004), 267, 313.
[809] Gans, *White House Warriors,* 114.
[810] Gans, *White House Warriors,* 147, 161-164.

unnoticed power" drawing success "in being in the big meeting, reading the key memo—being part of the big decision."[811] NSC staffers are in all areas of US foreign policy. As political scientist John Gans explains, these men and women "have taken—and been expected to exert—greater and greater strategic and operational control, crafting military plans and orders, conducting diplomacy and coordinating operations." Staffers have the president's ear and sometimes more access than the Secretaries of State and Defense.[812]

The NSC is at the crossroads of how the president exercises power internationally. The NSC was originally created to deal with the new realities of the Cold War and constant American global power. As political scientist David Rothkopf points out, "the authors of the National Security Act of 1947 and the other foreign policy giants of that era were correct—there was no going back for America." The United States could no longer opt out of the international commitments.[813] In his redesign, Nixon reckoned with American global power. While he learned from Eisenhower, Nixon was far more conscious of rehabilitating the presidency to shape the 'American Century.' He recognized that a strong presidency and NSC was critical in reckoning with the Cold War and American power internationally. But, in doing so, Nixon helped shift the balance of powers and put the NSC and the presidency in uncharted waters. The founders could never have predicted the enormous growth of the US role internationally and massive technological changes. While the NSC was created to deal with the new realities of the Cold War it increases presidential power, thereby putting the president in conflict with the balance of powers as defined by the constitution.

---

[811] Michael J. Glennon, *National Security and Double Government* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 17.
[812] Gans, *White House Warriors,* 203-204.
[813] David Rothkopf, *Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power* (PublicAffairs, 2004), 447.

The presidency itself has transformed as subsequent administrations reckoned with America's role in the world. As historian Jeremi Suri notes, "In its extremes of power and responsibility, the US presidency is the most talked about and least understood office in the world."[814] The constitution is remarkably vague about the presidency. As political scientist Harold H. Bruff aptly explains, "the Constitution that presidents swear to defend is known for its brevity and occasional obscurity. Article II, which creates and empowers the executive branch, exemplifies both characteristics." As a result, the role of the president has remained an open question, reshaped and re-imagined by successive administrations. In particular, the president's role as commander in chief has changed immensely since the founders. As Bruff points out, the designation could imply "the president is merely the 'first general and admiral'…awaiting instructions from Congress" or "could conceivably be a grant of power to 'do anything, anywhere, that can be done with an army and a navy."[815] In fact, as political scientist Louis Fisher notes, "Presidents now regularly claim that the commander-in-chief clause empowers them to send American troops anywhere in the world, including into hostilities, without first seeking legislative approval."[816]

Congress attempted to reassert the balance of powers with the 1973 War Powers Resolution. The measure was intended to restore "the intent of the framers" and "ensure that the collective judgment of both the Congress and the President" applies to US force deployments.[817] But the Resolution is ineffective with subsequent administrations only paying it token credence

---

[814] Jeremi Suri, *The Impossible Presidency: The Rise and Fall of America's Highest Office* (Basic Books, 2017), xviii.
[815] Bruff, *Untrodden Ground*, 11, 20.
[816] Fisher, *Presidential War Power,* 291.
[817] As quoted in, Louis Fisher, *Presidential War Power, Third Edition, Revised* (University Press of Kansas, 2013), 144.

and Congress unable or unwilling to take a stand.[818] Even, one of its original architects, Senator Thomas Eagleton repudiated the final statute, arguing "the resolution had become 'a 60- to 90-day open-ended blank check.'"[819] The War Powers Act ratified a new balance of powers, in which the president could act without Congressional approval. As political scientist Sarah Burns explains, "under the guise of restricting the president, the War Powers Act then served as congressional acceptance of the legal assertions of power coming out of the executive branch, provided they fell below a certain duration and intensity."[820]

The president's power has only grown since the 1973 Act, with the chief executive becoming increasingly emboldened. President Donald Trump's recent impeachable behavior is just one such example in a long line of presidential imperialism. Presidential power is the new normal with presidents increasingly creating legal cover for extra-constitutional powers.[821] For example, President Reagan never sought Congressional approval, arguing he had the authority to deploy troops under the President's "constitutional authority with respect to the conduct of foreign relations and as Commander-in-Chief of the United States Armed Forces."[822] As well, during George W. Bush's administration, executive branch lawyers "claimed that, as commander in chief, the president can make any decision related to the conduct of a military campaign, including matters (such as surveillance or interrogation of prisoners) that do not directly involve the use of military force."[823]

---

[818] Sarah Burns, *The Politics of War Powers: The Theory and History of Presidential Unilateralism* (University Press of Kansas, 2019), 463.
[819] Gordon Silverstein, "Judicial Enhancement of Executive Power," in *The President, The Congress, and the Making of Foreign Policy,* Paul E. Peterson, eds. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 24.
[820] Burns, *The Politics of War Powers,* 180.
[821] Burns, *The Politics of War Powers*, 147.
[822] As quoted in, Yoo, *Crisis and Command*, 356.
[823] Chris Edelson, *Power Without Constraint: The Post-9/11 Presidency and National Security* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), 12.

While presidential power has undoubtedly grown, on the flip side, Congress does not always make foreign policy a priority or have the capacity to meaningful contribute to foreign policy creation. There are often not electoral incentives for legislators to make national security oversight a top priority, and many believe that the president should take the lead in foreign affairs. Additionally, Congress lacks many of the resources and channels to effectively participate in foreign policy creation.[824] As Burns contends, "the addition of lawyers to find legal justifications made it harder for Congress to fight back."[825] The balance of powers has irrevocably tipped in favor of the president.

While Nixon was aware of the growing powers of the presidency and the immense utility of the National Security Council, he was also reckoning with the growth of the US Defense establishment. The growth of the National Security Council was twinned with that of the Defense Department. Defense was becoming a monolith with vast political power. Not only did the Pentagon hold considerable power in foreign policy creation, it was also becoming a significant player in big business. While the Defense department has failed at unifying or adequately coordinating the branches of the US armed forces, the Department as an institution has increased the clout of the armed forces and is an active participant in foreign policy creation. As well, big business in the United States and internationally has been encouraged by defense spending. As historian Adrian Lewis explains, "the American defense industry serves not only the security needs of the United States and allies, but also the economic needs of states and communities throughout the country. They also help the US balance of trade. War and the

---

[824] Zegart, *Flawed by Design*, 36.
[825] Burns, *The Politics of War Powers*, 147.

preparation for war are not just matters of national security, they are big business."[826] Nixon discovered first hand the growing strength of the US Defense establishment.

The National Security Council is not going away. As political scientist Amy B. Zegart points out, "The National Security Council and its staff landed in the legislation by accident. They were political by-products, artifacts of compromise that no one much considered in the end."[827] But these artifacts quickly became the most important mechanisms in the United States government. The National Security Council has become a powerful part of the US government, beholden only to the president and operating outside of Congress's purview.

---

[826] Lewis, *American Culture of War,* 195-196.
[827] Zegart, *Flawed by Design,* 224.

References

Archives

Eisenhower Presidential Library

Gerald R Ford Presidential Library and Museum

LBJ Presidential Library

National Archives and Records

Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum

Rockefeller Archive Center

Sources

Aberbach, Joel D. and Bert A. Rockhman. "Clashing Beliefs within the Executive Branch: The Nixon Administration Bureaucracy." *The American Political Science Review* 70:2 (Jun., 1976): 456-468.

Abrahamsen, David. *Nixon v. Nixon: An Emotional Tragedy.* Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1997.

Adler, David Gray. "The Constitution and Presidential War-making: The Enduring Debate." *Political Science Quarterly* 103:1 (Spring, 1988).

Aitken, Jonathan. "The Nixon Character." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26:1 (Winter 1996): 239-247.

Ambrose, Stephen E. *Nixon: The Education of a Politician.* Simon & Schuster, 1987.

Anderson, David. *Trapped by Success: The Eisenhower Administration and Vietnam, 1953-1961.* Columbia University, 1991.

Anderson, David L. "J. Lawton Collins, John Foster Dulles, and the Eisenhower Administration's "Point of No Return' in Vietnam." *Diplomatic History* 12:2 (Spring, 1988).

Anderson, Dillon. "The President and National Security." *The Atlantic* CXCVII (January 1956): 42-46.

Arnold, Peri E. *Making the Managerial Presidency: Comprehensive Reorganization Planning, 1905-1996.* University Press of Kansas, 1998.

Arnold, Peri E. *Remaking the Presidency: Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson, 1901-1916.* University Press of Kansas, 2009.

Barrett, David M. *The CIA & Congress: The Untold Story from Truman to Kennedy.* Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005.

Barron, David J. *Waging War: The Clash Between Presidents and Congress, 1776 to ISIS.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016.

Beisner, Robert L. *Dean Acheson: A Life in the Cold War.* Oxford University Press, 2006.

Berman, Larry. *No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger, and Betrayal in Vietnam.* The Free Press, 2001.

Billings-Yun, Melanie. *Decision Against War: Eisenhower and Dien Bien Phu, 1954.* Columbia University Press, 1988.

Bischof, Gunter and Stephen E. Ambrose. *Eisenhower: A Centenary Assessment.* Louisiana State University Press, 1995.

Black, Conrad. *The Invincible Quest: The Life of Richard Milhous Nixon.* McClelland & Stewart, 2007.

Blomstedt, Larry. *Truman, Congress, and Korea: The Politics of America's First Undeclared War.* University Press of Kentucky, 2016.

Brands Jr., Henry William. "Johnson and Eisenhower: The President, the Former President, and The War in Vietnam." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 15:3 (Summer, 1985): 589-601.

Bruff, Harold H. *Untrodden Ground: How Presidents Interpret the Constitution.* The University Of Chicago Press, 2015.

Boggs, Carl. *Origins of the warfare State: World War II and the transformation of American Politics.* Praeger, 2018.

Bolton, Kent M. *The Rise of the American Security State: The National Security Act of 1947 and The Militarization of US Foreign Policy.* Praeger, 2018.

Bowie, Robert R. and Richard H. Immerman. *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy.* Oxford Unviersity Press, 1998.

Brands, H.W., "The Age of Vulnerability: Eisenhower and the National Insecurity State." *The American Historical Review* 94:4 (Oct., 1989): 963-989.

Brigham, Robert K. *Reckless: Henry Kissinger and the Tragedy of Vietnam*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2018.

Brodie, Fawn. *Richard Nixon: The Shaping of his Character.* W.W. Norton and Company, 1981.

Bundy, William. *A Tangled Web: The Making of Foreign Policy in the Nixon Presidency.* Hill And Wang, 1998.

Burke, John P. "The National Security Advisor and Staff: Transition Challenges." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 39:2 (June 2009).

Burke, John P. *Honest Broker? The National Security Advisor and Presidential Decision Making.* Texas A&M University Press, 2009.

Burns, Sarah. *The Politics of War Powers: The Theory and History of Presidential Unilateralism.* University Press of Kansas, 2019.

Burr, William and Jeffrey P. Kimball. *Nixon's Nuclear Specter: The Secret Alert of 1969, Madman Diplomacy and the Vietnam War.* Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2015.

Caldwell, "The Legitimation of the Nixon-Kissinger Grand Design and Grand Strategy." *Diplomatic History* 33:4 (Sept., 2009).

Capozzola, Christopher. *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen.* Oxford University Press, 2008.

Caraley, Demetrios. *The Politics of Military Unification: A Study of Conflict and the Policy Process.* Columbia University Press, 1966.

Catton, Philip E. "Refighting Vietnam in the History Books: The Historiography of War." *OAH Magazine of History* 18:5 (Oct., 2004): 7-11.

Chennault, Anna. *The Education of Anna.* New York: Times Books, 1980.

Clark, Keith C., and Laurence J. Legere, eds., *The President and the Management of National Security: A Report by the Institute for Defense Analyses.* Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1969.

Clymer, Kenton J. *United States and Cambodia, 1969-2000: A Troubled Relationship.* Routledge, 2000.

Cochran, Bert. *Harry Truman and the Crisis Presidency.* New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1973.

Cohen, Michael A. *American Maelstrom: The 1968 Election and the Politics of Division.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Cole, Wayne S. *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1932-1945.* University of Nebraska Press, 1983.

Corke, Sarah-Jane. *US Covert Operations and Cold War Strategy: Truman, secret warfare, and the CIA, 1945-53.* Routledge, 2008.

Correll, John. "The Shadow War in Cambodia." *Air Force Magazine* 101:1 (Jan. 2018).

Costigliola, Frank and Michael J. Hogan. *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations since 1951, 2nd Edition.* Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Craig, Campbell and Fredrik Logevall. *America's Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity.* The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.

Cullather, Nick. *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Accounts of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952-1954.* Stanford University Press, 1999.

Cutler, Robert. *No Time for Rest.* Little, Brown and Company, 1965.

Cutler, Robert. "The Development of the National Security Council." *Foreign Affairs* 34:3 (Apr., 1956).

Daddis, Gregory A. *Withdrawal: Reassessing America's Final Years in Vietnam.* Oxford University Press, 2017.

Dallek, Robert. *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945.* Oxford University Press, 1995.

Dallek, Robert. *Partners in Power: Nixon and Kissinger.* HarperCollins Publishers, 2007.

David, Paul T. and David H. Everson, eds. *The Presidential Election and Transition, 1980-1981.* Southern Illinois University Press, 1983.

Daugherty, William J. *Executive Secrets: Covert Action and the Presidency.* The University Press of Kentucky, 2004.

Destler, I.M. "National Security management: What Presidents have Wrought." *Political Science Quarterly* 95:4 (Winter, 1980-1981): 573-588.

Destler, I.M. *Presidents, Bureaucrats and Foreign Policy: The Politics of Organizational Reform.* Princeton University Press, 1972.

Diem, Bui, and David Chanoff. *In the Jaws of History.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987.

Dickinson, Matthew J. *Bitter Harvest: FDR, Presidential Power and the Growth of the Presidential Branch.* Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Dietz, Terry. *Republicans and Vietnam, 1961-1968.* New York: Greenwood Press, 1986.

Dingman, Roger. "John Foster Dulles and the Creation of the South-East Asia Treaty Organization in 1954." *The International History Review* 11:3 (Aug., 1989): 457-477.

Donohue, Kathleen G., eds. *Liberty and Justice for All? Rethinking Politics in Cold War America.* University of Massachusetts Press, 2012.

Donovan, Robert J. *Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945-1948.* University of Missouri Press, 1977.

Dorwart, Jeffery M. *Eberstadt and Forrestal: A National Security Partnership, 1909-1949.* Texas A&M University Press, 1991.

Edelson, Chris. *Power Without Constraint: The Post-9/11 Presidency and National Security.* The University of Wisconsin Press, 2016.

Falk, Stanley L. *The National Security Structure.* Washington: Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 1967.

Falk, Stanley L. "The National Security Council Under Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy." *Political Science Quarterly* 79:3 (Sept., 1964): 403-434.

Farrell, John A. *Richard Nixon: The Life.* Doubleday, 2017.

Fisher, Louis. *Congressional Abdication on War and Spending.* Texas A&M University Press, 2000.

Fisher, Louis. *Presidential War Power, Third Edition, Revised.* University Press of Kansas, 2013.

Frank, Jeffrey. *Ike and Dick: Portrait of a Strange Political Marriage.* Simon & Schuster, 2013.

Frankel, Max. *The Times of My Life and My Life with the Times.* Delta, 2000.

Frye, William. "III: The National Military Establishment." *The American Political Science Review* 43:3 (June, 1949): 543-555.

Fry, Joseph A. *The American South and the Vietnam War: Belligerence, Protest, and Agony in Dixie.* University Press of Kentucky, 2015.

Galambos, Louis, ed., *The New American State: Bureaucracies and Policies since World War II.* The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.

Gans, John. *White House Warriors: How the National Security Council Transformed the American Way of War.* Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2019.

Gardner, Lloyd C., *Approaching Vietnam: From World War II Through Dienbienphu.* W.W. Norton & Company, 1988.

Garment, Leonard. *Crazy Rhythm: From Brooklyn and Jazz to Nixon's White House, Watergate, And Beyond.* Da Capo Press, 2001.

Geelhoed, Bruce E. *Charles E. Wilson and Controversy at the Pentagon, 1953 to 1957.* Wayne State University Press, 1979.

Gellman, Irwin F. *The Contender: Richard Nixon The Congress Years, 1946-1952.* The Free Press, 1999.

Gellman, Irwin F. *The President and the Apprentice: Eisenhower and Nixon, 1952-1961.* Yale University Press, 2015.

Genovese, Michael A. *The Nixon Presidency: Power and Politics in Turbulent Times.* Greenwood Press, 1990.

George, Roger Z and Harvey Rishikof, eds. *The National Security Enterprise: Navigating the Labyrinth.* Georgetown University Press, 2010.

Gibson, Christopher P. *Securing the State: Reforming the National Security Decisionmaking Process at the Civil-Military Nexus.* Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008.

Ginsberg, Benjamin. *Presidential Government.* Yale University Press, 2016.

Glennon, Michael J. *National Security and Double Government.* Oxford University Press, 2016.

Graham, Mary. *Presidents' Secrets: The Use and Abuse of Hidden Power.* Yale University Press, 2017.

Greenstein, Fred I., eds. *Leadership in the Modern Presidency.* Harvard University Press, 1988.

Greenstein, Fred I. *The Hidden-hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader.* Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1982.

Haig Jr., Alexander M. *Inner Circles: How America Changed the World, A Memoir.* 1992.

Hammond, Paul Y. *Organizing for Defense: The American Military Establishment in the Twentieth Century.* Princeton University Press, 1961.

Hammond, Paul Y. "The National Security Council as a Device for Interdepartmental Coordination: An Interpretation and Appraisal." *The American Political Science Review* 54:4 (Dec., 1960): 899-910.

Hanhimaki, Jussi M. *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy.* Oxford University Press, 2004.

Heclo, Hugh and Lester M. Salamon. *The Illusion of Presidential Government.* Westview Press, 1981.

Heiss, Mary Ann and Michael J. Hogan, eds., *Origins of the National Security State and the Legacy of Harry S. Truman.* Truman State University Press, 2015.

Helgerson, John L. *Getting to Know the President: CIA Briefings of Presidential Candidates, 1952-1992.* Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1996.

Heller, Francis H., ed. *The Truman White House: The Administration of the Presidency, 1945-1953.* The Regents Press of Kansas, 1980.

Henry, Laurin L. *Presidential Transitions.* Washington, D.C.,: The Brookings Institution, 1960.

Herring, George C. and Richard H. Immerman. "Eisenhower, Dulles, and Dienbienphu: 'The Day We Didn't Go to War' Revisited." *The Journal of American History* 71:2 (Sept. 1984).

Hersh, Seymour M. *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House.* Summit Books, 1983.

Hitchcock, William I. *The Age of Eisenhower: America and the World in the 1950s.* Simon & Schuster, 2018.

Hoff, Joan. "Researchers' Nightmare: Studying the Nixon Presidency." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26:1 (Winter 1996): 259-275.

Hoffman, Jon T. *Once a Legend: 'Red Mike' Edson of the Marine Raiders.* Presidio Press, 1994.

Hogan, Michael J. *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954.* Cambridge University Press, 1998

Hoopes,Townsend and Douglas Brinkley. *Driven Patriot: The Life and Times of James Forrestal.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992.

Hughes, Ken. *Chasing Shadows: The Nixon Tapes, The Chennault Affair, and the Origins of Watergate.* University of Virginia Press, 2014.

Hult, Karen M. and Charles E. Walcott. *Empowering the White House: Governance under Nixon, Ford and Carter.* University Press of Kansas, 2004.

Hunt, Richard A. *Melvin Laird and the Foundation of Post-Vietnam Military.* Historical Office: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2015.

Hunt, Michael H. *Ideology and US Foreign Policy.* Yale University Press, 1987.

Hunt, Richard A. *Melvin Laird and the Foundation of the Post-Vietnam Military.* Historical Office: Office Of the Secretary of Defense, 2015.

Huntington, Samuel P. *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations.* The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957.

Immerman, Richard H., ed., *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War.* Princeton University Press, 1990.

Immerman, Richard H. *The Hidden Hand: A Brief History of the CIA.* West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2014.

Immerman, Richard H. *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War.* Princeton University Press, 1990.

Ink, Dwight. "Nixon's Version of Reinventing Government." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26:1 (Winter, 1996): 57-69.

Isaacson, Walter. *Kissinger: A Biography.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992.

Jackson, Henry M., eds. *The National Security Council: Jackson Subcommittee Papers on Policy-Making at the Presidential Level.* New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1965.

Jablon, Howard. *Crossroads of Decision: The State Department and Foreign Policy, 1933-1937.* The University Press of Kentucky, 1983.

Jeffreys-Jones, Rhodri. *The CIA and American Democracy.* Yale University Press, 1989.

Johns, Andrew L. "A Voice from the Wilderness: Richard Nixon and the Vietnam War, 1964-1966." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29:2 (Jun., 1999): 317-335.

Johnson, Robert H. "The National Security Council: The relevance of its past to its future." *Orbis* 13:3 (Fall 1969): 709-35.

Johnston, Andrew M. "Mr. Slessor Goes to Washington: The Influence of the British Global Strategy Paper on the Eisenhower New Look." *Diplomatic History* 22:3 (Summer 1998).

Johnstone, Andrew and Andrew Priest, eds., *US Presidential Elections and Foreign Policy: Candidates, Campaigns, and Global Politics from FDR to Bill Clinton.* University Press of Kentucky, 2017.

Karl, Barry D. *The Uneasy State: The United States from 1915 to 1945.* The University of

Chicago Press, 1983.

Kahin, George McT., *Intervention: How America Became Involved in Vietnam.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986.

Kasten Nelson, Anna., eds. *The Policy Makers: Shaping American Foreign Policy from 1947 to the Present.* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009.

Katznelson, Ira. *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time.* New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, W.W. Norton & Company, 2013.

Keefer, Edward C. "President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the End of the Korean War." *Diplomatic History* 10:3 (Summer 1986): 267-289.

Keiser, Gordon W. *The US Marine Corps and Defense Unification, 1944-47: The Politics of Survival.* National Defense University Press, 1982.

Kennedy, David M. *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945.* Oxford University Press, 1999.

Kissinger, Henry. *Diplomacy.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994.

Kissinger, Henry. *Ending the Vietnam War: A History of America's Involvement in and Extrication from the Vietnam War.* Simon & Schuster, 2003.

Kissinger, Henry A. "Force and Diplomacy in the Nuclear Age." *Foreign Affairs* 34:3 (Apr., 1956).

Kissinger, Henry A. "Strategy and Organization." *Foreign Affairs* 35 (Apr., 1957).

Kissinger, Henry A. "Nuclear Testing and the Problem of Peace." *Foreign Affairs* 37:1 (Oct., 1958).

Kissinger, Henry A. "The Unsolved Problems of European Defense." *Foreign Affairs* 40:4 (July 1962).

Kissinger, Henry A. "Coalition Diplomacy in a Nuclear Age." *Foreign Affairs* 42:4 (July 1964).

Kissinger, Henry A. "Some Aspects of American Foreign Policy." *Pakistan Horizon* 15:2 (Second Quarter, 1962).

Kissinger, Henry A. "Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy." *Daedalus* 95:2 (Spring, 1966).

Kissinger, Henry. *White House Years.* Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1979.

Kolodzieg, Edward A. *The Uncommon Defense and Congress, 1945-1963.* Ohio State University

Press, 1996.

Korb, Lawrence J. *The Joint Chiefs of Staff: The First Twenty-five Years.* Indiana University Press, 1976.

Kimball, Jeffrey P. "H-Diplo Roundtable Review," Review of Edwin E. Moise, *The Myths of Tet: The Most Misunderstood Event of the Vietnam War.* Volume XIX, No. 44 (16 July 2018): 8.

Kimball, Jeffrey. *Nixon's Vietnam War.* University Press of Kansas, 1998.

Kimball, Jeffrey. *The Vietnam War Files: Uncovering the Secret History of Nixon-Ear Strategy.* University Press of Kansas, 2004.

Knott, Stephen F., *The Lost Soul of the American Presidency: The Decline into Demagoguery And the Prospects for Renewal.* University Press of Kansas, 2019.

Kutler, Stanley I. *The Wars of Watergate: The Last Crisis of Richard Nixon.* Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1990.

LaFeber, Walter. *The Deadly Bet: LBJ, Vietnam, and the 1968 Election.* New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005.

Larrabee, Eric. *Commander in Chief: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, His Lieutenants, and their War.* Harper & Row Publishers: 1987.

Leffler, Melvyn. *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration and The Cold War.* Stanford University Press, 1992

Leuchtenburg, William E. *Franklin Dr. Roosevelt and the New Deal: 1932-1940.* Harper Torchbooks, 1963.

Lewis, Adrian R. *The American Culture of War, Third Edition: The History of US Military Force From World War II to Operation Enduring Freedom.* Routledge, 2018.

Locker, Ray. *Nixon's Gamble: How a President's Own Secret Government Destroyed His Administration.* Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.

Logevall, Fredrik. *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam.* Random Horse Trade Paperbacks, 2013.

Longley, Kyle. *LBJ's 1968: Power, Politics, and the Presidency in America's Year of Upheaval.* Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Lucks, Daniel S. *Selma to Saigon: The Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War.* University Press of Kentucky, 2014.

MacMillan, Margaret. *Nixon and Mao: The Week that Changed the World.* Random House, 2007.

Malsberger, John W. *The General and the Politician: Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, and American Politics.* Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

Martel, Gordon, eds. *American Foreign Relations Reconsidered, 1890-1993.* New York: Routledge, 1994.

May, Ernest R. "The Development of Political-Military Consultation in the United States." *Political Science Quarterly* 70:2 (June, 1955): 161-180.

Mazlish, Bruce. *In Search of Nixon: A Psycho-historical Inquiry.* Routledge, 1972.

Mazo, Earl. *Richard Nixon: A Political and Personal Portrait.* Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1959.

McMahon, Robert J. *Dean Acheson and the Creation of an American World Order.* Potomac Books, Inc., 2009.

McMahon, Robert J. "The Politics and Geopolitics of American Troop Withdrawals from Vietnam, 1968-1972." *Diplomatic History* 34:3 (June 2010).

Miller, Paul D. "Organizing the National Security Council: I Like Ike's," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 43:3 (Sept. 2013).

Millett, Allan R. *In Many a Strife: General Gerald C. Thomas and the US Marine Corps, 1917-1956.* Naval Institute Press, 1993.

Montgomery, Bruce P. "Nixon's Legal Legacy: White House Papers and the Constitution." *The American Archivist* 56:4 (Fall 1993): 586-613.

Morgan, Ruth P. "Nixon, Watergate and the Study of the Presidency." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26:1 (Winter 1996): 217-238.

Morris, Roger. *Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy.* Harper & Row Publishers, 1977.

Moss, Richard A. *Nixon's Back Channel to Moscow: Confidential Diplomacy and Détente.* University Press of Kentucky, 2017.

Moyar, Mark. *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965.* Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Nalty, Bernard C. *Air War Over South Vietnam, 1968-1975.* Air Force and Museums

Program: United States Air Force, 2000.

Natoli, Marie D. "The Vice Presidency: Stepping Stone or Stumbling Block?" *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 18:1 (Winter, 1988): 77-79.

Nelson, Anna Kasten. "President Truman and the Evolution of the National Security Council." *The Journal of American History* 72:2 (Sept., 1985): 360-378.

Nelson, Anna K. "The 'Top of Policy Hill': President Eisenhower and the National Security Council." *Diplomatic History* 7:4 (Fall 1983): 307-326.

Neustadt, Richard E. *Presidential Power and the Modern President: The Politics of Leadership From Roosevelt to Reagan.* Collier MacMillan Canada, 1990.

Nixon, Richard. *In the Arena: A Memoir of Victory, Defeat and Renewal.* New York Simon and Schuster, 1990.

Nixon, Richard M. *Six Crises.* Touchstone: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1962.

Nixon, Richard M. "Reducing International Tensions." *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 26:4 (May, 1959).

Nixon, Richard M. *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon.* New York: Touchstone, Simon & Schuster Inc., 1990.

O'Connell, Aaron B. *Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps.* Harvard University Press, 2012.

O'Donnell, Lawrence. *Playing with Fire: The 1968 Election and the Transformation of American Politics.* Penguin Press, 2017.

Offner, Arnold A. *Hubert Humphrey: The Conscience of the Country.* Yale University Press, 2018.

O'Neill, William L. *A Democracy at War: America's Fight at Home and Abroad in World War II.* Maxwell Macmillan International, 1993.

Parmet, Herbert S. *Richard Nixon and his America.* Little, Brown and Company, 1990.

Paterson, Thomas G. "Presidential Foreign Policy, Public Opinion, and Congress: The Truman Years." *Diplomatic History* 3:1 (Winter, 1979): 1-18.

Perlstein, Rick. *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America.* Scribner, Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2008.

Pemberton, William E. *Bureaucratic Politics: Executive Reorganization during the Truman*

Administration. University of Missouri Press, 1979.

Peterson, Paul E., eds., *The President, The Congress, and the Making of Foreign Policy.* University of Oklahoma Press, 1994.

Polenberg, Richard. *Reorganizing Roosevelt's Government, 1936-1949: The Controversy over Executive Reorganization.* Harvard University Press, 1966.

Polsby, Nelson W. and Aaron Wildavsky. *Presidential Elections: Strategies of American Electoral Politics, Fifth Edition.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980.

Porter, Bruce D. *War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern Politics.* The Free Press, Macmillan, Inc., 1994.

Prentice, David L. "Choosing 'the Long Road': Henry Kissinger, Melvin Laird, Vietnamization, And the War over Nixon's Vietnam Strategy." *Diplomatic History* 40:3 (2016): 445-474.

Preston, Andrew. "Monsters Everywhere: A Genealogy of National Security." *Diplomatic History* 38:3 (2014): 477-500.

Preston, Andrew. *The War Council: McGeorge Bundy, the NSC, and Vietnam.* Harvard University Press, 2010.

Price, Raymond. *With Nixon.* Viking Press, 1977.

Rabe, Stephen G. "Eisenhower Revisionism: A Decade of Scholarship." *Diplomatic History* 17:1 (Winter 1993): 97-115.

Ransom, Harry Howe. *Central Intelligence and National Security.* Harvard University Press, 1958.

Rearden, Steven L. *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Volume I: The Formative Years, 1947-1950.* Historical Office: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1984.

Redford, Emmette S. and Marlan Blissett. *Organizing the Executive Branch: The Johnson Presidency.* The University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Redford, Emmette S. and Richard T. McCulley. *White House Operations: The Johnson Presidency.* University of Texas Press, 1986.

Reich, Cary. *The Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller: Worlds to Conquer, 1908-1958.* New York: Doubleday, 1996.

Reichard, Gary W. *Politics as Usual: The Age of Truman and Eisenhower.* Arlington: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1988.

Relyea, Harold C. "The Executive Office of the Vice President: Constitutional and Legal Considerations." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 40:2 (June, 2010).

Reveley III, W. Taylor. *War Powers of the President and Congress: Who Holds the Arrows And Olive Branch?* University Press of Virginia, 1981.

Rockman, Bert A. "America's Departments of State: Irregular and Regular Syndromes of Policy Making." *The American Political Science Review* 75:4 (Dec., 1981): 911-927.

Rodman, Peter W. *Presidential Command: Power, Leadership, and the Making of Foreign Policy from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush.* Vintage, 2010.

Roper, Jon. "Richard Nixon's Political Hinterland: The Shadows of JFK and Charles de Gaulle." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 28:2 (Spring 1998).

Rothkopf, David J. *Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and The Architects of American Power.* PublicAffairs, 2005.

Rostow, W.W. *The Diffusion of Power: An Essay in Recent History.* The Macmillan Company, 1972.

Rudalevige, Andrew. *The New Imperial Presidency: Renewing Presidential Power after Watergate.* The University of Michigan Press, 2005.

Rung, Margaret C. "Richard Nixon, State and Party: Democracy and Bureaucracy in the Postwar Era." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29:2 (June 1999): 421-437.

Saldin, Robert P. *War, the American State, and Politics since 1898.* Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Sale, Sara L. *The Shaping of Containment: Harry S. Truman, the National Security Council, and The Cold War.* Brandywine Press, 1998.

Sander, Alfred D. "Truman and the National Security Council: 1945-1947." *The Journal of American History* 59:2 (Sept., 1972): 369-388.

Sargent, Daniel J. *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Schlesinger, Jr., Arthur M. *The Imperial Presidency.* Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004.

Schlesinger Jr., Arthur. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House Years.* Houghton Mifflin Company, The Riverside Press, 1965.

Schmitz, David F. *Richard Nixon and the Vietnam War: The End of the American Century.* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014.

Schoen, Douglas E. *The Nixon Effect: How Richard Nixon's Presidency Fundamentally Changed American Politics.* New York: Encounter Books, 2016.

Schroeder, Richard E. *The Foundation of the CIA: Harry Truman, the Missouri Gang, and the Origins of the Cold War.* Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2017.

Schuessler, John M. *Deceit on the Road to War: Presidents, Politics, and American Democracy.* Cornell University Press, 2015.

Schulzinger, Robert D. *Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

Schwartz, Barry and Lori Holyfield. "Nixon Postmortem." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 560 (Nov., 1998): 96-110.

Shawcross, William. *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia.* Simon & Schuster, 1979.

Sherry, Michael S. *Preparing for the Next War: American Plans for Postwar Defense, 1941-45.* Yale University Press, 1977.

Sieg, Kent G. "The 1968 Presidential Election and Peace in Vietnam." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26:4 (Fall, 1996): 1062-1080.

Small, Melvin. *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves.* Rutgers University Press, 1988.

Small, Melvin. "The Election of 1968." *Diplomatic History* 28:4 (Sept., 2004): 513-528.

Smith, Bradley F. *The Shadow Warriors: O.S.S. and the Origins of the C.I.A.* New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1983.

Souers, Sidney W. "II. Policy Formulation for National Security." *The American Political Science Review* 43:3 (June 1949): 534-543.

Sparrow, James T. *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government.* Oxford University Press, 2013.

Stanley, David T. *Changing Administrations: The 1961and 1964 Transitions in Six Departments.* The Brookings Institution: 1965.

Stanley, Timothy W. *American Defense and National Security.* Washington, D.C.,: Public Affairs Press, 1956.

Stevenson, Charles A. *Congress at War: The Politics of Conflict since 1789.* National Defense University Press, 2007.

Stevenson, Charles A. *Warriors and Politicians: US Civil-Military Relations under Stress.* New York: Routledge, 2006.

Stoler, Mark A. *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and US Strategy in World War II.* The University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Stone, Gary. *Elites for Peace: The Senate and the Vietnam War, 1964-1968.* Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2007.

Stuart, Douglas T. *Creating the National Security State: A History of the Law that Transformed America.* Princeton University Press, 2008.

Summers, Anthony. *The Arrogance of Power: The Secret World of Richard Nixon.* Viking Penguin, 2000.

Suri, Jeremi. *The Impossible Presidency: The Rise and Fall of America's Highest Office.* Basic Books, 2017.

Suri, Jeremi. *Henry Kissinger and the American Century.* The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.

United States Senate. Committee on Government Operations. Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery. Organizing for National Security. United States Government Printing Office, 1960.

United States Senate. Committee on Government Operations. Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery, Volume II: Studies and Background Materials. United States Government Printing Office, 1961

Van Atta, Dale. *With Honor: Melvin Laird in War, Peace and Politics.* The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008.

Waddell, Brian. *Toward the National Security State: Civil-Military Relations during World War II.* Praeger Security International, 2008.

Waddell, Brian. *The War against the New Deal: World War II and American Democracy.* Northern Illinois University Press, 2001.

Wainstock, Dennis. *Election Year 1968: The Turning Point.* New York: Enigma Books, 2012.

Weiner, Tim. *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA.* Doubleday, 2007.

Wells, Tom. *The War Within: America's Battle over Vietnam.* Open Road Distribution, 2016.

Werking, Richard Hume. *The Master Architects: Building the United States Foreign Service,*

1890-1913. The University Press of Kentucky, 1977.

West, William F. "Presidential Leadership and Administrative Coordination: Examining the Theory of a Unified Executive." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36:3 (Sept., 2006): 433-456.

Wills, Garry. *Bomb Power: The Modern Presidency and the National Security State.* The Penguin Press, 2010.

Whalen, Richard J. *Catch the Falling Flag: A Republican's Challenge to His Party.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1972.

Wood, Robert C. *Whatever Possessed the President? Academic Experts and Presidential Policy, 1960-1988.* The University of Massachusetts Press, 1993.

Woods, Randall Bennett. *Vietnam and the American Political Tradition: The Politics of Dissent.* Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Yergin, Daniel. *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State.* Houghton Mifflin, 1977.

Yoo, John. *Crisis and Command: The History of Executive Power from George Washington to George W. Bush.* Kaplan Publishing, 2009.

Zahniser, Marvin R. and W. Michael Weis. "A Diplomatic Pearl Harbor? Richard Nixon's Goodwill Mission to Latin America in 1958." *Diplomatic History* 13:2 (Spring 1989), 163-190.

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

Zelizer, Julian E. *Arsenal of Democracy: The Politics of National Security—From World War II To the War on Terrorism.* New York: Basic Books, 2010.

Zelizer, Julian E. "Congress and the Politics of Troop Withdrawal." *Diplomatic History* 34:3 (June 2010): 529-541.