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Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy

8
Presidential Management Styles and Models

Every new president faces the task of deciding how to structure and manage high-level foreign-policymaking in his administration. The task is a formidable one since responsibility for different aspects of national security and foreign policy is distributed over a number of departments and agencies. Relevant information, competence, and influence over policy is widely dispersed within the executive branch as well as outside of it. This imposes on the president and his assistants the task of mobilizing available information, expertise, and analytical resources for effective policymaking. In addition, the president and his closest associates have the responsibility for providing policy initiative and coherence throughout the executive branch.

To discharge these tasks effectively requires internal coordination within the government. Those parts of the executive branch that have some responsibility for and/or contribution to make to a particular policy problem must be encouraged to interact with each other in appropriate ways. Left to themselves, these various agencies, of course, would interact voluntarily and achieve some measure of "lateral coordination" in formulating policy. But it is essential for the president (and each department or agency head) to ensure lateral coordination by institution of various procedures and mechanisms, such as ad hoc or standing interdepartmental committees, policy conferences, liaison arrangements, a system of clearances for policy or position papers, etc.

However important lateral coordination is, it cannot be counted upon to produce the caliber of policy analysis, the level of consensus, and the procedures for implementation required for an effective and coherent foreign policy.

Moreover, lateral coordination may be weakened and distorted by patterns of organizational behavior and the phenomenon of "bureaucratic politics" that create impediments to and malfunctions of the policymaking process. Accordingly, all presidents have found it necessary to

impose mechanisms for control and coordination of policy analysis and implementation from above—either from the White House itself or from the NSC—or have fixed responsibility for achieving control and coordination with the State Department; or have adopted a combination of these mechanisms.

The traditional practice for seeking improvement in the performance of the foreign-policymaking system was to undertake *structural reorganization* of the agencies and the mechanisms for achieving their coordination and cooperation. Periodically—indeed, at least once in each presidential administration—the foreign-policymaking system was reorganized.[1] But the results of reorganizations have been so disappointing that the "organizational tinkering" approach has fallen into general disrepute. Instead, greater attention is being given to the *design and management of the processes* of policymaking.

Coupled with this shift in focus from organizational structure to process is a new awareness among specialists in organization and public administration that their past efforts to identify a single standardized model of policymaking that would be optimal for all presidents was misguided. Instead, it is now recognized that each president is likely to define his role in foreign-policymaking somewhat differently and to approach it with a different decisionmaking and management style. Hence, too, he will have a different notion as to the kind of policymaking system that he wishes to create around him, feels comfortable with, and can utilize. In brief, the present emphasis is on designing organizational structures to fit the operating styles of their key individuals rather than attempting to persuade each new top executive to accept and adapt to a standardized organizational model that is considered to be theoretically the best.

As this implies, the first and foremost task that a new president faces is to learn to define his own role in the policymaking system; only then can he structure and manage the roles and relationships within the policymaking system of his secretary of state, the special assistant for national security affairs, the secretary of defense, and other cabinet and agency heads with responsibilities for the formulation and implementation of foreign policy.

The president's basic choice is whether to give his secretary of state the primary role in the foreign-policymaking system or to centralize and manage that system from the White House itself. Still another model is that of a relatively decentralized system that is coordinated from the White House for the president by his special assistant for national security affairs.

A new president may receive advice on these matters from specialists in

organization or in foreign policy, but in the last analysis his choices in these matters will be shaped by preferences of his own that stem from previous experience (if any) in executive roles and the extent to which he regards himself as knowledgeable and competent in foreign policy and national security matters. Finally, as all president-watchers have emphasized, the incumbent's personality will shape the formal structure of the policymaking system that he creates around himself and, even more, it will influence the ways in which he encourages and permits that formal structure to operate in practice. As a result, each president is likely to develop a policymaking system and a management style that contain distinctive and idiosyncratic elements.

Detailed comparison of past presidents from this standpoint suggests that a variety of personality characteristics are important, of which three can be briefly noted.[2] The first of these personality dimensions is *"cognitive style."* As noted in Chapter 3, cognitive psychologists have found it useful to view the human mind as a complex system for information processing. Every individual develops ways of storing, retrieving, evaluating, and using information. At the same time the individual develops a set of beliefs about the environment, about the attributes of other actors, and about various presumed causal relationships that help the person to explain and predict, as best he can (correctly or incorrectly), events of interest to him. Beliefs of this kind structure, order, and simplify the individual's world; they serve as models of "reality." Such mental constructs play an important role in the individual's perception of what is occurring in his environment, in the acquisition and interpretation of new information, and in the formulation and evaluation of responses to new situations.

At the same time, individuals differ in their approaches to processing and evaluating information, and this is generally what is meant by "cognitive style." There is as yet no standardized approach to characterizing the dimensions of cognitive style. For present purposes, the term is used to refer to the way in which an executive such as the president defines his informational needs for purposes of making decisions. "Cognitive style" also refers to his preferred ways of acquiring information from those around him and making use of that information, and to his preferences regarding advisers and ways of using them in making his decisions.

Defined in these terms, as we shall note, an individual's cognitive style plays an important role in his preference for one management model as against others. Cognitive styles do vary among presidents, and it simply will not work to try to impose on a new president a policymaking system or a management model that is uncongenial to his cognitive style.[3]

A second personality dimension that influences a president's choice of a policymaking system is *his sense of efficacy and competence* as it relates to management and decisionmaking tasks. In other words, the types of skills that he possesses and the types of tasks that he feels particularly adept at doing and those that he feels poorly equipped to do will influence the way in which he defines his executive role.

A third personality dimension that will influence the president's selection of a policymaking model is his general *orientation toward political conflict* and, related to this, toward interpersonal conflict over policy among his advisers. Individuals occupying the White House have varied on this personality dimension, too. Thus, we find that some chief executives have viewed politics as a necessary, useful, and perhaps even enjoyable game while other presidents have regarded it as a dirty business that must be discouraged or at least ignored. The personal attitude toward conflict that a president brings into office is likely to determine his orientation to the phenomena of "cabinet politics" and "bureaucratic politics" within his administration as well as to the larger, often interlinked game of politics surrounding the executive branch. Individuals with a pronounced distaste for "dirty politics" and for being exposed to face-to-face disagreements among advisers are likely to favor policymaking systems that attempt to curb these phenomena or at least shield them from direct exposure. They also are likely to prefer staff and advisory sytems in which teamwork or formal analytical procedures are emphasized in lieu of partisan advocacy and debate.

Cognitive style, sense of efficacy, and orientation toward conflict (and of course, as noted earlier, the nature of any prior experience in executive roles and the level of personal competence and interest in foreign policy and national security affairs)—all these combine to determine how a new president will structure the policymaking system around him and how he will define his own role and that of others in it.

Three management models have been identified that characterize at least in general terms the approaches displayed by different presidents in recent times.[4] These are the "formalistic," "competitive," and "collegial" models. The formalistic model is characterized by an orderly policymaking structure, one that provides well-defined procedures, hierarchical lines of communication, and a structured staff system. While the formalistic model seeks to benefit from the diverse views and judgments of participants in policymaking, it also discourages open conflict and bargaining among them.

The competitive model, in contrast, places a premium on encouraging a more open and uninhibited expression of diverse opinions, analysis, and advice. To this end the competitive model not only tolerates but may

actually encourage organizational ambiguity, overlapping jurisdictions, and multiple channels of communication to and from the president.

The collegial model, in turn, attempts to achieve the essential advantages of each of the other two while avoiding their pitfalls. To this end, the president attempts to create a team of staff members and advisers who will work together to identify, analyze, and solve policy problems in ways that will incorporate and synthesize as much as possible divergent points of view. The collegial model attempts to benefit from diversity and competition within the policymaking system, but it also attempts to avoid narrow parochialism by encouraging cabinet officers and advisers to identify at least partly with the presidential perspective. And by encouraging collegial participation in group problem-solving efforts, this approach attempts to avoid the worst excesses of infighting, bargaining, and compromise associated with the competitive model.

Truman, Eisenhower, and Nixon employed one or another variant of the formalistic approach. Franklin D. Roosevelt employed the competitive model, and John F. Kennedy the collegial one. As for Lyndon B. Johnson, he began by trying to emulate Franklin Roosevelt's style and gradually moved toward a formalistic approach but one that exhibited idiosyncratic features.

Let us begin with Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose unusual policymaking system is the prototype for the competitive management model. A dominant feature of FDR's personality was his strong sense of political efficacy. He felt entirely at home in the presidency, acting in the belief that there was close to a perfect fit between his competence and skills and some of the most demanding role requirements of the office. Then, too, FDR viewed politics and the games that go with it as a useful and enjoyable game and not, as others before him (for example, Taft and Hoover) as an unsavory, distasteful business to be discouraged or avoided. FDR not only felt comfortable in the presence of conflict and disagreement around him; he saw that, properly managed, it could serve his informational and political needs. Instead of trying, as his predecessor had, to take the politics out of the policymaking process, Roosevelt deliberately exacerbated the competitive and conflicting aspects of cabinet politics and bureaucratic politics. He sought to increase both structural and functional ambiguities within the executive branch in order to better preside over it. For Roosevelt, exposure to conflict among advisers and cabinet heads did not stir up anxiety or depression; nor did he perceive it as threatening in a personal or political sense. Not only did he live comfortably with the political conflict and, at times, near-chaos around him, he manipulated the structure of relationships among subordinates in order to control and profit from their competi-

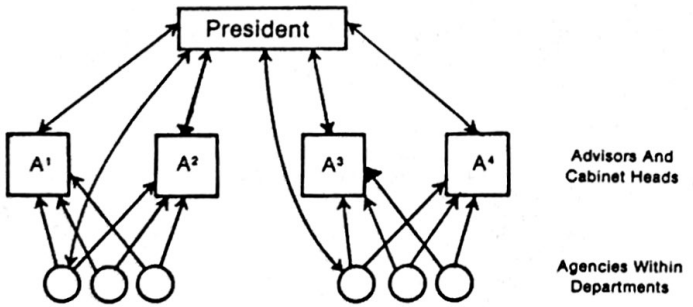
tion. What is noteworthy is that Roosevelt did not attempt to create a formal, centralized model of the policymaking process (as advocated, for example, in later Hoover Commission proposals for reorganization of governmental agencies); rather, he deliberately created "fuzzy lines of responsibility, no clear chains of command, overlapping jurisdictions" in order to promote "'stimulating' inter-departmental conflict which could and did eventually land in his own lap."[5]

At the risk of simplification, it is possible to delineate some features of the distinctive communication network or patterns associated with FDR's competitive model[6] (see Figure 2).

Characteristic features of the competitive model (FDR): (1) the president deliberately encourages competition and conflict among advisers and cabinet heads by giving them overlapping assignments and ambiguous, conflicting jurisdictions in given policy areas; (2) relatively little communication or collaboration among advisers; (3) the president reaches down on occasion to communicate directly with subordinates of cabinet heads to get independent advice and information; (4) relevant information on important policy problems is forced up through the network to the president himself; competing advisers are forced to bring important policy problems to the president for resolution and decision; but (5) the president avoids risk of becoming overloaded or involved by operating this system selectively; on occassions (not depicted on the chart), he encourages and insists that subordinate officials settle things themselves and refuses to become identified with their policies or pet projects.

Harry Truman adopted a different strategy for coping with the com-

Figure 2. The Competitive Model (FDR)



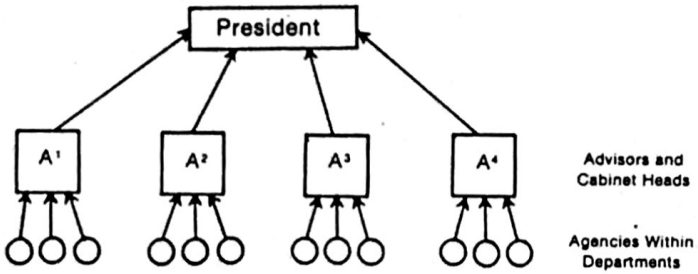
plex morass that governmental structure had become as a result of Roosevelt's style and administrative practices and the wartime expansion of agencies. Initially, Truman tried to tidy up the mess by clarifying and dividing up the jurisdictions. He also established the NSC in 1947 as a vehicle for providing orderly, balanced participation in foreign-policymaking deliberations. Truman tried to weaken the game of bureaucratic politics by strengthening each department head's control over his particular domain and by delegating presidential responsibility to him. New in the office, Truman took special pride in his ability to delegate responsibility and to back up those he trusted. He learned through experience, however, that to delegate too much or to delegate responsibility without providing clear guidance was to jeopardize the performance of his own responsibilities.

When faced with larger policy issues that required the participation of heads of several departments, Truman attempted to deal with them by playing the role of chairman of the board, hearing sundry expert opinions on each aspect of the problem, then making a synthesis of them and announcing the decision. Truman not only accepted the responsibility of making difficult decisions, he liked doing so for it enabled him to satisfy himself—and, he hoped, others—that he had the personal qualities needed in the presidency. His sense of efficacy expressed itself in a willingness to make difficult decisions without experiencing undue stress. A modest man in many ways, Truman adjusted to the awesome responsibilities of the presidency suddenly thrust upon him by respecting the office and determining to become a good role player. By honoring the office and doing credit to it, he would do credit to himself. Included in this role conception was Truman's desire to put aside personal and political considerations as much as possible in the search for quality decisions that were in the national interest. He was willing to accept the political costs both to himself and to his party entailed in making controversial decisions, such as his policy of disengaging the United States from the Chinese Nationalists in 1949, his refusal to escalate the Korean War after the Chinese Communist intervention, his firing of General MacArthur, and his refusal to dismiss his loyal secretary of state, Dean Acheson, when he came under continuing attack.

Truman's variant of the formalistic model may be depicted, again in simplified terms, as in Figure 3.

Characteristic features of the formalistic model (Truman): (1) specialized information and advice flows to the president from each of his cabinet heads and advisers; (2) the president tends to define the role of each cabinet head as a functional expert on some aspect of national security or foreign policy; each official briefs the president authoritative-

Figure 3. The Formalistic Model (Truman)



ly on that aspect of a policy problem for which he has jurisdiction; (3) each adviser receives information and advice from his subordinate units; (4) the president does not encourage his advisers to communicate with each other or to engage in joint efforts at policy analysis and problem solving; (5) the president sticks to channels and seldom reaches down to bypass a cabinet head to get independent information/advice from one of his subordinates; and (6) the president takes responsibility for intellectual synthesis of specialized inputs on a policy problem received from his advisers.

Dwight D. Eisenhower avoided personal involvement as much as possible in the bureaucratic politics aspects of policymaking within the executive branch and in less savory aspects of politics generally. At the same time, however, Eisenhower recognized that conflict and politics are inevitable and adapted to them by defining his own role as that of someone who could stand "above politics," moderate conflict, and promote unity. In doing so, Eisenhower expressed his special sense of efficacy that led him (and others) to believe that he could make a distinctive and unique contribution by seeming to remain "above politics" and by emphasizing the shared values and virtues that should guide governmental affairs. This did not prevent Eisenhower, however, from engaging in political maneuvers of his own when he perceived that his interests required it.[7]

Eisenhower did not attempt (as Nixon was to later) to depoliticize and rationalize the formal policymaking process completely. Rather, Eisenhower's variant of the formalistic model encompassed advocacy and disagreement at lower levels of the policymaking system, even though he wanted subordinates eventually to achieve agreement, if possible, on recommendations for his consideration. Moreover, formal meetings of the large NSC were often preceded by less formal "warm-up"

sessions with a smaller group of advisers that provided opportunities for genuine policy debate. The conventional depiction of Eisenhower's NSC system as an unimaginative, bureaucratic body laden with the preparation and presentation of cautiously formulated positions, therefore, is not justified.[8]

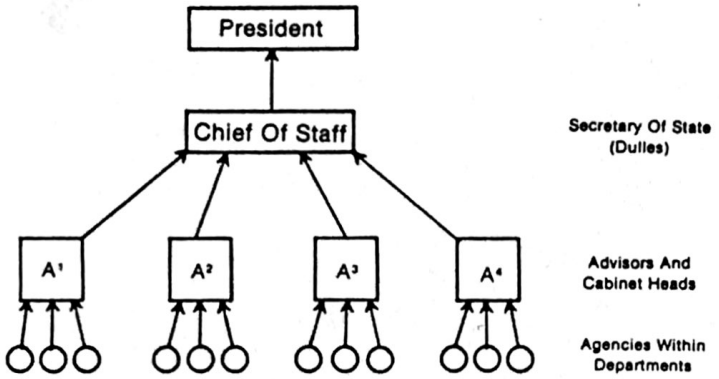
What these observations about Eisenhower's policy system reveal is that a formalistic management model need not be highly bureaucratized. Examples of the formalistic management model, which always seem bureaucratized on the surface, need to be examined much more closely in order to determine how they actually function. As is well known, policymaking in complex organizations usually proceeds on *two* tracks: the formal, visible, official track and the informal, less visible track. Even the most formalistic of policymaking systems is accompanied by some kind of informal track that is utilized by the participants—including sometimes the president himself—in an attempt to "work with" or "work around" the formal procedures.

In particular, a president's use of surrogates as "chiefs of staff" in a formalistic management model needs close examination to determine to what extent he actually restricts his own involvement in policymaking and remains unaware or disinterested in the important preliminaries of information processing. Thus, in Eisenhower's case, recent archival research reveals that two of his "chiefs of staff"—Governor Sherman Adams and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles—were by no means as powerful as has been thought. "Adams was not the all powerful domestic policy gate-guard he is said to have been. He did not keep important information from Eisenhower's attention, nor did he make important decisions solo. . . . In the case of Dulles . . . not even the most obsequious Lyndon Johnson courtier could have been more assiduous about testing the waters. . . . Dulles was in touch with the president daily, and was consistently responsive to Eisenhower's directives."[9]

With these important caveats in mind, we can proceed to examine how the visible structure of his formalistic model differed from Truman's. This can be seen by comparing the chart for Truman's system with that presented here of Eisenhower's (see Figure 4).

Characteristic features of the formalistic model (Eisenhower): similar to Truman's variant of the formalistic model with two important exceptions: (1) a "chief of staff" position is created to be utilized, when the president wishes, as a buffer between himself and cabinet heads and to arrange for preparation of formal recommendations to the president (Sherman Adams performed this role for Eisenhower on domestic policy matters; in practice, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles came to assume a similar, though informal, role for Eisenhower in foreign policy,

Figure 4. The Formalistic Model (Eisenhower)



though not in defense matters); and (2) again, unlike Truman's version of the formalistic model, in this one the president attempts to protect himself from being overloaded by urging advisers/cabinet heads to analyze problems and resolve policy differences wherever possible at lower levels.

Richard Nixon, too, strongly favored a formalistic model. As a number of observers have noted, several of Nixon's well-defined personality characteristics shaped his management style and approach to decisionmaking. During his earlier years, Nixon had developed a cognitive style that enabled him to cope with deeply rooted personal insecurities by adopting an extremely conscientious approach to decisionmaking. As described so well in his book, *Six Crises*, the whole business of acquiring information, weighing alternatives, and deciding among them was experienced by him as extremely stressful, requiring great self-control, hard work, and reliance upon himself. Dealing with difficult situations posed the necessity but also offered an opportunity for Nixon to prove himself over and over again. He experienced his greatest sense of self and of his efficacy when he had to confront and master difficult situations in which a great deal was at stake.[10]

Nixon's pronounced sense of aloneness and privacy, his thin-skinned sensitivity and vulnerability were not conducive to developing the kind of interpersonal relationships associated with a collegial model of management. Rather, as Richard T. Johnson notes, "Nixon, the private man with a preference for working alone, wanted machinery to staff out the options but provide plenty of time for reflection. . . . " Similarly, "with

his penchant for order," Nixon inevitably "favored men who offered order," who acceded to his demand for loyalty and shared his sense of banding together to help him cope with a hostile environment.[11]

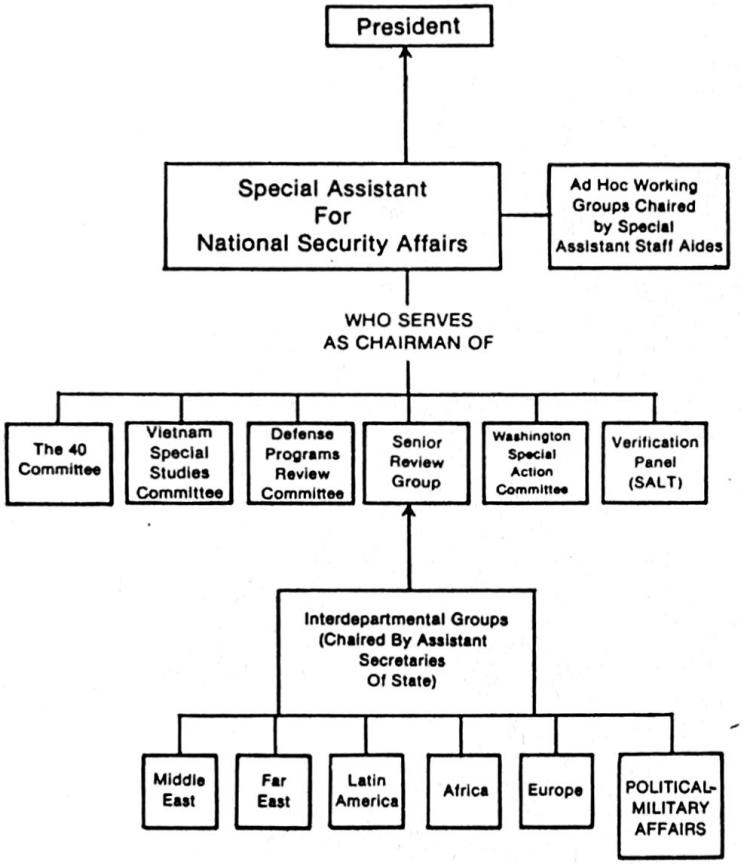
Nixon's preference for a highly formalistic system was reinforced by other personality characteristics. He was an extreme "conflict avoider"; somewhat paradoxically, although quite at home with political conflict in the broader public arena, Nixon had a pronounced distaste for being exposed to it face-to-face. Early in his administration, Nixon tried a version of multiple advocacy in which leading advisers would debate issues in his presence. But he quickly abandoned the experiment and turned to structuring his staff to avoid overt manifestations of disagreement and to avoid being personally drawn into the squabbles of his staff.[12] Hence, Nixon's need for a few staff aides immediately around him who were to serve as buffers and enable him to distance himself from the wear and tear of policymaking.

It is interesting that Eisenhower's "chief of staff" concept was carried much farther in Nixon's variant of the formalistic model. The foreign-policymaking system that Kissinger, the special assistant for national security affairs, developed during the first year of Nixon's administration is generally regarded as by far the most centralized and highly structured model yet employed by any president.[13] Nixon was determined even more than Eisenhower had been to abolish bureaucratic and cabinet politics as completely as possible; but, more so than Eisenhower, Nixon also wanted to enhance and protect his personal control over high policy. To this end, a novel system of six special committees was set up operating out of the NSC, each of which was chaired by Kissinger. These included the Vietnam Special Studies Group, the Washington Special Actions Group (to deal with international crises), the Defense Programs Review Committee, the Verification Panel (to deal with strategic arms talks), the 40 Committee (to deal with covert actions), and the Senior Review Group (which dealt with all other types of policy issues).

Reporting to the Senior Review Group were six lower-level interdepartmental groups that were set up on a regional basis (Middle East, Far East, Latin America, Africa, Europe, and Political-Military Affairs), each of which was headed by an assistant secretary of state. In addition, Kissinger could set up ad hoc working groups composed of specialists from various agencies and run by his own top staff aides.

Thus, not only did Kissinger's committee structure reach down into the departments and agencies, absorbing key personnel into various committees controlled by Kissinger or his staff aides, but other committees created on an interdepartmental basis, though chaired by assistant secretaries of state, were given their assignments by Kissinger and

Figure 5. The Formalistic Model (Nixon)



reported to the Senior Review Group chaired by Kissinger. As a result, a novel, unconventional policymaking structure was created and superimposed upon the departments and largely superseded the traditional hierarchical policymaking system. Striking differences with Eisenhower's formalistic model can be noted (see Figure 5).

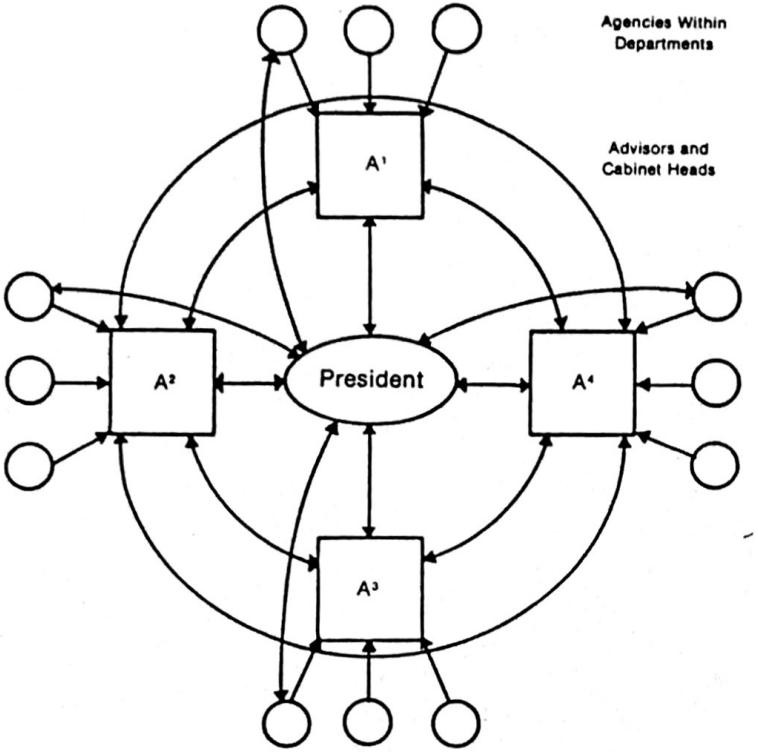
A further description and evaluation of the workings of Nixon's variant of the formalistic model is provided in Chapter 10.

John F. Kennedy felt much more at ease with the conflictual aspects of politics and policymaking than his predecessor; his sense of efficacy included confidence in his ability to manage and shape the interpersonal relations of those around him in a constructive fashion, and his cognitive style led him to participate much more actively and directly in the policymaking process than Eisenhower had or Nixon would later on. These personality characteristics contributed to forging a collegial style of policymaking based on teamwork and shared responsibility among talented advisers. Kennedy recognized the value of diversity and give-and-take among advisers, and he encouraged it. But Kennedy stopped well short of the extreme measures for stimulating competition that Roosevelt had employed. Rather than risk introducing disorder and strife into the policymaking system, Kennedy used other strategies for keeping himself informed, properly advised, and "on top." He did not find personally congenial the highly formal procedures, the large meetings, and the relatively aloof presidential role characteristic of Eisenhower's system. Particularly after the Bay of Pigs fiasco, Kennedy employed a variety of devices for counteracting the narrowness of perspective of leading members of individual departments and agencies and for protecting himself from the risks of bureaucratic politics. Noteworthy is Kennedy's effort to restructure the roles and broaden the perspectives of top department and agency officials and to introduce a new set of norms to guide their participation in policymaking.

The kind of teamwork and group approach to problem solving that Kennedy strove to create—and achieved with notable success in the Cuban missile crisis at least—is often referred to as the "collegial" model to distinguish it both from the more competitive and more formal system of his predecessors. The sharp contrasts between Kennedy's collegial system and the competitive and formalistic models emerge by comparing Figure 6 with Figures 2-5.

Characteristic features of the collegial model (JFK): (1) president is at the center of a wheel with spokes connecting to individual advisers/cabinet heads; (2) advisers form a "collegial team" and engage in group problem-solving; (3) information flows into the collegial team from various points lower in the bureaucracy; (4) advisers do not perform as individual filters to the president; rather, the group of advisers functions as

Figure 6. The Collegial Model (JFK)



a "debate team" that considers information and policy options from the multiple, conflicting perspectives of the group members in an effort to obtain cross-fertilization and creative problem solving; (5) advisers are encouraged to act as generalists, concerned with all aspects of the policy problem, rather than as experts or functional specialists on only part of the policy problem; (6) discussion procedures are kept informal enough to encourage frank expression of views and judgments and to avoid impediments to information processing generated by status and power differences among members; and (7) the president occasionally gives overlapping assignments and occasionally reaches down to communicate directly with subordinates of cabinet heads in order to get more information and independent advice (for a more detailed discussion of the collegial approach see Chapter 12).

As for Jimmy Carter, his management style is perhaps aptly characterized as embracing elements of both the collegial and bureaucratic models. As one observer has reported, Carter's national security policymaking system "is an amalgamation selectively drawn from the experiences of his predecessors."[14] As in Kennedy's case, Carter has strongly rejected thus far—even in the face of increasing criticism—a "chief of staff" system for organizing his work and contacts with others. Instead, Carter clearly prefers a communications structure in which he is at the center of the wheel with opportunity for direct contact with a number of officials and advisers. Further, again like Kennedy, Carter prefers to be actively involved in the policymaking process and at earlier stages before the system has produced options or a single recommended policy for his consideration.

At the same time, Carter differs from Kennedy in preferring a formally structured NSC system and has retained elements of the "formal options" system developed by Kissinger for Nixon. Carter restored the prestige of the NSC staff following the brief eclipse that occurred during the Ford years when Kissinger was secretary of state, and he relies on its studies for help in making decisions.[15] Carter's preference for underpinning the collegial features of his management model with formalistic structure and procedures is not surprising given his training and experience as an engineer. Carter brought with him to the White House a cognitive style and sense of personal efficacy that gave him confidence in the possibility of mastering difficult problems and of finding comprehensive "solutions" for them.[16] In his somewhat technocratic approach to policymaking, experts and orderly study procedures play an essential role, and so the features of the collegial model that he values had necessarily to be blended somehow with features of a formalistic model.

In this mixed system, policymaking is not as highly centralized as in the Nixon administration. Carter not only allows relatively liberal access to the Oval Office, he also has a more decentralized advisory sytem than did Nixon. This reflects not only his personality and management style, but also the lessons that he and others drew from the experience of his predecessors in that office. Carter's main concern was to set up his foreign-policy machinery in a way that would avoid the extreme centralization of power that Kissinger, as special assistant for national security affairs, had acquired during Nixon's first term and that led him to replace for all practical purposes the secretary of state. In Carter's administration, the special assistant (Brzezinski) is not as powerful as Kissinger was. Carter wanted his secretary of state, Cyrus Vance, to be his

leading foreign-policy adviser and the State Department to provide the major backup in policy preparation. In line with this concept, the number of committees in the NSC staff was reduced over what they had been in Nixon's administration and, moreover, Brzezinski does not chair all of the NSC committees as Kissinger had. Instead of allowing the special assistant to become the dominant actor in the sytem and a virtual "chief of staff," Carter relies on collegiality among his principal national security advisers—the secretary of state, the secretary of defense, the special assistant, the vice-president—to achieve the necessary interaction and coordination. Accordingly, the NSC organization under Carter is more modest than Nixon's both in centrality, structure, and operations.[17]

Although Carter has succeeded in avoiding a highly centralized, "closed" system of foreign-policymaking, it must also be said that he has been much less successful in avoiding the potential difficulties of the mixed formalistic-collegial model that he preferred. A number of weaknesses have become evident in the Carter system that have seriously affected its performance. The collegial model requires close contact and continuing interaction between the president, his secretary of state, and the special assistant. This they have achieved, but their respective roles remain highly fluid and have not been well defined. There is, for example, no clear arrrangement for policy specialization and division of labor among these three principals. (In contrast, the secretary of defense's role appears to be well enough understood by all concerned so that his participation on policymaking appears to be relatively free of serious ambiguities or conflicts with others.) In the absence of role definition and specialization, all three—the president, his secretary of state, and the special assistant—can and do interest themselves in any important policy problem. A shared interest in all major policy problems is to be expected in a collegial system, but some understandings must also be developed to regulate initiative, consultation, the articulation of disagreements, and the formulation of collective judgment. Carter evidently counted on the fact that the three men knew and respected each other prior to his election to the presidency to make his collegial approach work. And, to be sure, on the surface it has genuinely seemed to be the case that the three men get along well. More than cordiality, however, is needed for effective policymaking in a collegial system.

Collegiality entails certain risks, and its preservation may exact a price. Some evidence indicates that the preservation of cordiality was accompanied, at least in the first part of Carter's administration, with a perhaps partly unconscious tendency to subordinate disagreements over policy

among the three men that should have been articulated, confronted, and dealt with in a timely fashion. One of the problems was Carter himself. He had a habit of suddenly taking the initiative or intervening in an important foreign-policy matter, as in the case of his human rights initiative, leaving Vance and Brzezinski with the embarrassing and difficult task of making the best of it or of trying to modify the policy.

Another weakness of Carter's system quickly developed and proved difficult to cope with. Foreign policy became badly fragmented in the first year of Carter's administration. It was characterized by (1) overactivism—the floating of many specific policy initiatives within a relatively short period of time; (2) a tendency to initiate attractive, desirable policies without sufficient attention to their feasibility; (3) poor conceptualization of overall foreign policy, and, related to this, a failure to recognize that individual policies conflicted with each other; (4) a poor sense of strategy and tactics; (5) a badly designed and managed policymaking system.[18]

These flaws cannot be attributed merely or even primarily to Carter's inexperience in foreign policy. After all, his administration included various high-level officials who were experts on foreign policy. Part of the explanation has to do with important aspects of his personality, which are attractive in and of themselves. Carter is a man of high moral principles, as exemplified by his sincere commitment to human rights. He wanted to imbue American foreign policy with renewed moral purpose; he is an activist in this respect, and therefore took genuine pleasure that his administration could launch so many worthwhile policy initiatives so quickly. He could see no harm in pushing ahead simultaneously with so many good initiatives.

What was needed to safeguard against an overloading of the foreign-policy agenda and the fragmentation of foreign policy was a strong policy planning and coordinating mechanism, one that would alert Carter to this problem and assist him in dealing with difficult trade-offs among conflicting policy initiatives by establishing priorities, and generally to better integrate the various strands of overall foreign policy. Such a policy planning and coordinating mechanism, however, was lacking. The need to develop it somehow fell between the two stools of Carter's mixed collegial-formalistic model. Thus, neither the formalistic nor the collegial components of Carter's system provided the necessary planning-coordinating mechanism and procedures. When criticism of Carter's foreign policy mounted, persons apparently close to Vance and Brzezinski let it be known, however discretely, that it wasn't always easy to curb Carter's tendency to take over important matters or to have an

adequate opportunity to advise Carter beforehand. Whether determined efforts to do so were made by his principal advisers is not clear from the available record.

Another problem was that Vance and Brzezinski did have important disagreements over policy, particularly on matters having to do with assessment of Soviet intentions and the best strategy and tactics for dealing with the Soviet Union. The effort to preserve collegiality in the first eighteen months of the administration may have led both men to paper over their disagreements and to avoid the difficult but necessary task of coming to grips with these fundamental policy questions. But these matters could not be avoided indefinitely, and after jockeying and competing with each other to influence Carter's position on these issues, first one way and then the other, the controversy between Vance and Brzezinski spilled out into the open—with Brzezinski aggressively speaking out to undermine the positions taken by the secretary of state. Among other things, Brzezinski wanted the administration to exploit the Sino-Soviet conflict, "play the China card," in order to exert pressure on the Soviets. Vance opposed this effectively for some time. But Brzezinski continued his efforts and was successful in obtaining the president's approval for his trip to China. The special assistant's outspoken disagreements with the secretary of state became so damaging that Vance finally went to the president in the summer of 1978 and prevailed upon him to restrain Brzezinski from airing his disagreements publicly.

The roots of the problem lie deeper. It has to do with the question whether an expert on foreign policy, someone who wants to influence foreign policy, should be put into the position of special assistant for national security affairs. The most important responsibility of the special assistant ever since the NSC was created in 1947 has been to serve as the custodian-manager of the top-level policymaking process—i.e., to organize in an orderly, systematic way the flow of studies, papers—in other words, an administrator of the procedures that are needed to ensure that the president and his top foreign-policy advisers get high-quality information and analysis for a broad enough range of policy options before decisions are made, and then to communicate these policy decisions down the line and monitor their implementation. Until Kennedy became president, the person who served as special assistant for national security affairs was not an adviser on policy; rather, he was supposed to confine himself exclusively to being a neutral, efficient, sophisticated manager of the process and the flow of work. Since then, the special assistant, while retaining the role of custodian-manager of the process, has gradually acquired important new roles—that of a

major policy adviser himself, that of public spokesman for and defender of the administration's foreign policy, and that of an operator actively engaged in the conduct of diplomacy.

This development came to a head with Kissinger, who as Nixon's special assistant, acquired and tried to perform *all* of these roles. The result was not only that he was overloaded, but also that he experienced serious conflict among these various roles. The most important role conflict was that Kissinger's roles as the major policy adviser and operator undermined his incentive to serve as the *neutral* custodian-manager of the process. Instead, being only human and quite self-confident regarding his own judgment in foreign policy, Kissinger succumbed to the temptation of using his control of the many NSC committees and over the policymaking process in order to enhance his influence with Nixon at the expense of others in the system who may have had different views. It was predictable that Brzezinski would experience similar temptations.[19]

There have been other weaknesses in the management of Carter's foreign-policy system. Under Brzezinski as special assistant, and given the character of his staff, the NSC has not functioned effectively to help coordinate the various strands of foreign policy and to help Carter with his difficult task of managing the various contradictions and trade-offs between different foreign-policy objectives. Neither Brzezinski himself nor his deputy, David Aaron, have earned a reputation in their positions for being good administrators or for defining their roles as high-level staff rather than as activists in making policy. In fact, both appear to be much more interested in influencing policy rather than in managing the policymaking process in a neutral, efficient manner. Moreover, many of the people Brzezinski brought into the NSC staff to work with him are also eager to influence policy as best they can from the vantage point of the White House.

As a result, the fragmentation of foreign policy at the conceptual level, to which many critics have called attention, was reinforced by the failure to develop an effective central coordinating mechanism for the organization and management of the policymaking process. More recently, in 1978 and 1979, Carter has turned increasingly to the creation of special task forces for each major policy issue in order to centralize authority in the White House and to improve coordination of agency and department officials on behalf of presidential policy. Following the successful use of ad hoc task forces to direct efforts to secure ratification of the Panama Canal Treaty and to deal with other major issues, in late 1978 Carter established an executive committee headed by Vice President Mondale to be responsible for dealing with the president's agenda and priorities. This

committee endorsed a plan for forming task forces for all major presidential issues for 1979. Task forces have been established on a dozen issues of high priority, including domestic as well as foreign-policy issues.[20]

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Each of these three management models tends to have certain advantages and to incur certain risks. These are discussed in some detail by Richard T. Johnson with respect to each of the six presidents he studied (see Table 1).[21]

In addition, Richard Johnson makes a number of useful suggestions for reducing the shortcomings and risks of each of these three management models:

> For example, a President who adopts the formalistic approach might choose [as Eisenhower did on occasion] to establish more fluid machinery or reach further down the information channels when facing a decision of particular importance to his Administration. [Similarly] a Chief Executive who adopts the competitive style might commission [as FDR did on occasion] formal study groups to ensure careful staff work on complex policy questions. . . . A President who chooses the collegial approach might utilize [as Kennedy did on occasion] a more formalistic structure for routine matters in order to concentrate his energies on the more sensitive policy areas.[22]

In concluding this discussion of the different management styles generally favored by different presidents, we should remind ourselves once again that our depiction of the communication structures associated with each of them necessarily oversimplifies the more complex reality and working of each system.[23] To some extent, elements of two or even all three models may be present in different mixes, with different emphases, in the policymaking system of each president.

Over the years, as the foreign-policy activities in which the U.S. government is engaged have multiplied, the organizational arrangements for dealing with them within the executive branch have proliferated. To some extent, the sheer magnitude and complexity of the foreign-policy enterprise forces every modern president to rely at least to some extent on formalistic procedures. It would be difficult in the modern era for even so gifted a politician and leader as Franklin Roosevelt to rely heavily on a competitive model. Of particular importance, therefore, are studies of variants of formalistic models that, in addition, attempt to make use of elements of the competitive and/or collegial models as well.

Finally, although each of these three management models has certain

Table 1. Three Management Models

Benefits	*Costs*
Formalistic Approach	
Orderly decision process enforces more thorough analysis.	The hierarchy which screens information may also distort it. Tendency of the screening process to wash out or distort political pressures and public sentiments.
Conserves the decisionmaker's time and attention for the big decision.	Tendency to respond slowly or inappropriately in crisis.
Emphasizes the optimal.	
Competitive Approach	
Places the decisionmaker in the mainstream of the information network.	Places large demands on decisionmaker's time and attention.
Tends to generate solutions that are politically feasible and bureaucratically doable.	Exposes decisionmaker to partial or biased information. Decision process may overly sacrifice optimality for doability.
Generates creative ideas, partially as a result of the "stimulus" of competition, but also because this unstructured kind of information network is more open to ideas from the outside.	Tendency to aggravate staff competition with the risk that aides may pursue their own interests at the expense of the decisionmaker.
	Wear and tear on aides fosters attrition and high turnover.
Collegial Approach	
Seeks to achieve both optimality and doability.	Places substantial demands on the decisionmaker's time and attention.
Involves the decisionmaker in the information network but somewhat eases the demands upon him by stressing teamwork over competition.	Requires unusual interpersonal skill in dealing with subordinates, mediating differences, and maintaining teamwork among colleagues.
	Risk that "teamwork" will degenerate into a closed system of mutual support.

Source: Richard T. Johnson, *Managing the White House* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974). Reproduced with minor changes and additions in *The Stanford Business School Alumni Bulletin,* Fall 1973.

advantages and disadvantages, the effort to improve their performance by introducing modification of one kind or another encounters serious limits. The search for improvement in policymaking systems must go beyond general management models of this kind to more discriminating ways of improving information processing. Accordingly, in the next three chapters we discuss procedural tools—the "devil's advocate," the "formal options" system, and "multiple advocacy"—that are often recommended to widen the range of information, options, and judgment available to the president before he makes his decisions.

Notes

1. For a history and critical analysis of these efforts at reorganization, see I. M. Destler, *Presidents, Bureaucrats, and Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), chapter 2. Nonetheless, as Destler and other students of the problem recognize, organization design and structural parameters do affect foreign policy performance. For a sophisticated discussion, see Graham Allison and Peter Szanton, *Remaking Foreign Policy: The Organizational Connection* (New York: Basic Books, 1976); see particularly Chapter 1, "The Argument: Organization Matters." For a more general discussion applying not merely to foreign policy but the presidency as whole, see Stephen Hess, *Organizing the Presidency* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1976).

2. The following paragraphs draw upon A. L. George, "Adaptation to Stress in Political Decision-making," in George V. Coelho, David A. Hamburg, and John E. Adams, eds., *Coping and Adaptation* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

3. This general point is emphasized repeatedly also by Graham Allison in his study for the Commission on the Organization of the Government for the Conduct of Foreign Policy. For example: "The critical variable affecting which mechanisms [of centralized management] are used is the president: his personal preferences and style. . . . It follows, therefore, that efforts to legislate structure for high-level centralized management cannot succeed." Graham T. Allison, ed., *Adequacy of Current Organization: Defense and Arms Control,* vol. 4, Appendices, Commission on the Organization of the Government for the Conduct of Foreign Policy, June 1975 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), p. 35; see also pp. 10, 58.

4. These three management styles are described and evaluated in Richard T. Johnson, *Managing the White House* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974). See particularly chapters 1 and 8. A useful discussion of the evolution of the modern presidency and of the styles of different presidents is provided by Stephen Hess, *Organizing the Presidency* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1976).

5. Richard Fenno, *The President's Cabinet* (New York: Vintage Books, Knopf, 1959), pp. 44-46. See also Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Roosevelt,* vol. 2, *The Coming of the New Deal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), chapters 32-34; and Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power* (New York: Wiley, 1960), chapter 7.

6. The following figures (with the exception of the one describing Nixon's variant of the formalistic model) are taken directly, with minor adaptations, from John Q. Johnson, "Communication Structures Among Presidential Advisors" (seminar paper, Stanford University, September 1975). The seminal work on communication networks is that of Alex Bavelas, "Communication Patterns in Task-oriented Groups," *Journal of Acoustic Society of America* 22 (1950):725-30. A summary of early work of this kind appears in Murray Glanzer and Robert Glaser, "Techniques for the Study of Group Structure and Behavior," *Psychological Bulletin* 58 (1961):2-27.

7. Recently available archival materials at the Eisenhower Library evidently require a substantial revision of the conventional image of Eisenhower as an apolitical military man, one who was generally uninformed about and not very attentive to his executive responsibilities, one who was prone to overdelegate his responsibilities, and one who was naive about the art of governing. What emerges, rather, is a different executive style that Fred Greenstein refers to as Eisenhower's "invisible hand" mode of leadership in which he sought actively to secure his goals by indirection (Fred I. Greenstein, "Presidential Activism Eisenhower Style: A Reassessment Based on Archival Evidence," [paper delivered to the 1979 Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, January 1979]).

8. Ibid., p. 9. See also Douglas Kinnard, *President Eisenhower and Strategy Management: A Study in Defense Politics* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1977); and Murray Kempton, "The Underestimation of Dwight D. Eisenhower," *Esquire* (September 1967).

9. Greenstein, "Presidential Activism," p. 10.

10. See, for example, James David Barber, *The Presidential Character* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972) and Johnson, *Managing the White House,* pp. 199-229.

11. Johnson, *Managing the White House,* pp. 210-11.

12. Ibid.

13. For a particularly detailed account of the structure, evolution, and performance of Nixon's NSC, *see* Chester Crocker, "The Nixon-Kissinger National Security Council System, 1969-1972: A Study in Foreign Policy Management," vol. 6, Appendices, Commission on the Organization of the Government for the Conduct of Foreign Policy, June 1975 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976), pp. 79-99.

14. Don Bonafede, "Brzezinski—Stepping Out of His Backstage Role," *National Journal* (15 October 1977):1598. See also Elizabeth Drew, "A Reporter at Large: Brzezinski," *The New Yorker,* May 1978; and Marilyn Berger, "Vance and Brzezinski: Peaceful Coexistence or Guerrilla War?" *New York Times Magazine,* 13 February 1977.

15. Bonafede, "Brzezinski."