

INCIDENTAL PAPER

**Seminar on Intelligence, Command,
and Control**

**Bureaucratic Problems in
Formulating National Strategy
Carnes Lord**

Guest Presentations, Spring 1991

C. Kenneth Allard; David Y. McManis; John H. Cushman;
Carnes Lord; Charles L. Stiles; John M. Ruddy;
Joseph S. Toma; Duane P. Andrews; Eugene B. Lotochinski;
Paul R. Schwartz

February 1993

Program on Information Resources Policy



Center for Information Policy Research



Harvard University

The Program on Information Resources Policy is jointly sponsored by
Harvard University and the Center for Information Policy Research.

Chairman
Anthony G. Oettinger

Managing Director
John C. B. LeGates

Copyright © 1993 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Not to be
reproduced in any form without written consent from the Program on
Information Resources Policy, Harvard University, Maxwell Dworkin 125,
33 Oxford Street, Cambridge MA 02138. (617) 495-4114

E-mail: pirp@deas.harvard.edu URL: <http://www.pirp.harvard.edu>
ISBN 1-879716-03-8 I-93-1

Bureaucratic Problems in Formulating National Strategy

Garnes Lord

Dr. Lord is currently a Distinguished Fellow at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C. He is a political scientist and author, specializing in nuclear strategy, arms control, and international communications. He has taught political science at Dartmouth College, Yale University, and the University of Virginia. From 1975 to 1977, he was a Foreign Affairs Officer in the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA). During 1981-84, he served on the senior staff of the National Security Council, working in the areas of arms control, international communications and information, public diplomacy, and policy planning. He subsequently served as a consultant to both the Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Policy and the Assistant Director of ACDA for Verification and Intelligence. From 1985 to 1989, he was Director of International Studies at the National Institute for Public Policy. From 1989 to 1991, he served as assistant to the Vice President for National Security Affairs.

Oettinger: You have, perhaps, read his book, *The Presidency and National Security*. He has been not only a student of these matters, but a participant on the staff of the National Security Council, now in the office of the Vice President, and my charge to him was to talk about intelligence, command, and control, and so on from the various vantage points that he has occupied.

Lord: Thanks, Tony. Happy to be here. What I'll try to do is, not so much summarize the book as try to focus my argument in the book, identifying what I think are some fixes to the problems we have in the bureaucracy in running national security in Washington. I do it in a way that's based on the argument of my book, but, for those of you who are familiar with it, goes beyond it in certain ways and adds a couple of new points; but, in any case, I think it will help to give you a sense of what my thinking is as to where we could be going and what's wrong with where we are right now.

Let me begin by making this basic point. In our personality-obsessed culture we tend not to pay enough attention to institutional and structural problems in any bureaucracy, particularly the U.S. Government. I think, in the national security area,

there has been a remarkable persistence over the years of a set of bureaucratic problems, or in a larger sense, management problems in the Executive Branch that can be traced to some fundamental underlying factors that really derive from the American political system, the Constitution, and American political culture, in some deep sense.

I talk about these things in my book to some degree; I won't really go into it except to make the fundamental point that encapsulates my critique of the national security bureaucracy and the President's management of it. That is, that we as Americans, and particularly our political elite, tend to be allergic to the notion of strategy. That by itself would cause problems in devising coherent national security policies, but it's compounded by the fact that, certainly on the national security side and, of course, to some degree in domestic policy as well, you have a number of agencies that are institutions in our society that, in many cases, go back to the beginning of the Republic, and have deeply rooted traditions and ways of doing things. This is particularly true on the national security side, where the State Department, the Defense Department, and the intelligence community are the three broad institutions that have a distinctive institutional culture, and produce

people who are skilled at doing certain things and looking at the world in certain ways. While useful for performing their functions, those agencies aren't necessarily well adapted to devising and carrying out a coherent national strategy. It's the combination, I would argue, of the inability, or lack of practice, that we have as Americans, as a culture, in thinking strategically, with these very strongly entrenched institutional cultures in Washington, that leads to the problem of presidential management of national security.

Now, it's not that simple, and there are a number of extraneous factors that one would have to take into account in any full analysis of all this. Just to mention a couple: Congress — the relationship between the Executive Branch and Congress causes a big problem for strategizing, obviously; and the media — the role of instant commentary in our society, the pressures that policy makers and decision makers in Washington are under to react immediately to events, to conduct the business of government really as a kind of day-to-day or tactical rather than long-term activity. The problem that we have with Congress has clearly grown much more severe over, let's say, the last 20 years or so. Certainly — if you look at the history of the United States in the 20th century — Congress has had a lot to do with shaping basic national security policies, and facilitating or obstructing the devising of national strategies.

For the purposes of this discussion, though, I'll just leave that aside and we can focus on the Executive Branch, where I really think the nub of the problem is. I would argue that in too many discussions of these issues, the problem that we have on the executive side is really underestimated. I believe that Congress is a manageable problem if the Executive Branch has its own strategic act in order. I would argue that we don't and haven't for some time, if ever, since the end of World War II.

Oettinger: Stop me if it's the wrong time to bring this up, and you may get to it a little bit later. You're talking about lack of strategy and biases against institutions and so on. One observation that I've made recurrently for 30 years is that the White House has amnesia every 4 years. It isn't a matter of strategizing; it's a matter of having a totally empty head on January 21, and, therefore, being constrained to reinvent. It's like having furniture in the head perhaps through half of the term. If any corporate organization or academic organization were run that way, we would cry bloody murder. It

struck me that, is this irrelevant, is it fundamental, somewhere in between? Is it still true?

Lord: It's absolutely true. In fact this is one of the problems I suggest a fix to. No, I certainly think the cycle of American politics has a lot to do with the difficulty of having a strategy that goes more than four years or eight years, and creates certain dynamics in the bureaucracy that make it very difficult to plan. I think that's certainly true.

The other point you make about lack of institutional memory in Washington that has to do with broader issues of information management. We simply don't have it, certainly at the national level, but I think even in the agencies, and this has to do with a lot of technical issues relating to the handling and disposing of documents. My sense is that this too has gotten worse in recent years. It also has to do with personnel management. Turnovers in the various agencies and short tours of duty by career bureaucrats have been a major determining factor. I think there are some things that can be done about that, but it's a large problem.

Student: Sir, you mentioned just before you got started that the legislative side of the house is sort of manageable. It made me think right off of the latest two appointments to the House Intelligence Committee. I see all the old problems that happened once before just below the surface right now because of the latest two members. I guess part of your strategy is going to have to be in knowing how to deal with that in an open and aboveboard and honest way, because that's scary.

Lord: I agree. I think the Executive Branch can manage those kinds of problems in Congress. Of course, it's partly the fact that Congress is divided against itself. You don't have a committee that deals with strategy, or national strategy, or national policy, or anything like that. You've got these various fiefdoms and baronies that often work at cross-purposes. In a way, this is helpful to the Executive Branch because it prevents any single congressman from challenging the White House.

Student: My follow-on question is: in March of 1990, the White House published an interesting piece of paper, 35 pages long, called the *National Security Strategy of the United States*; and the last page invited the Congress and the rest of the public to engage in discussion. Academics at this marvelous institution continue to write articles as late as this year saying that we have no national security strategy. I find that rather interesting.

Lord: Is that document a strategy? Well, yes and no. Basically, no. It's a statement of certain fundamental policies or ways of doing business in the Executive Branch, or ways of looking at U.S. policy challenges. I would say a strategy or plan has a certain timeline and fairly concrete outcomes, and a fairly well articulated set of milestones along the way. The document is not that. On the other hand, it's not simply an empty rhetorical statement of motherhood and apple pie. I think there are some useful things in it and I think this year's document does actually help clarify things — more than the last two. I think it does a better job, it's a more serious piece of work.

Student: Have you had a feedback from either the Congress or from anybody other than Sam Huntington?

Lord: Not to my knowledge. It was not publicized particularly well. I'm not sure what the reason for that was exactly.

Student: It was Congress who asked for it.

Lord: That's right, it was originally requested by Congress.

Student: I'm trying to either make the point or elucidate the point that even when we put into place the form which requires a strategy be developed, and a strategy be argued by the folks who are supposed to do it, they go back to sleep. That just strikes me as odd.

Lord: Well, I guess I would argue the Congress institutionally doesn't really have a great deal of interest in having a strategy because it threatens too many parochial interests on the Hill. That's perhaps too cynical but . . .

Student: Nonetheless true.

Oettinger: I just got an invitation to participate in a workshop at the White House, the second White House conference on libraries and information resources, which is mandated by legislation and run by an organization called The National Commission on Libraries Information. It held the last White House conference in 1979, had some 3,000 participants who produced some 85 recommendations, which were transmitted by the President of the United States to the Congress. That was about as clearcut and worthless a statement of policy, strategy, et cetera. The problem, or the situation that carries this President is fundamental.

Student: I understand that. I was just trying to throw in that maybe it's unsolvable, that you can't go much further than give a guy a document and say, "Okay, mark it up if you don't like it," or give 365 ladies and gentlemen, whatever the count is, 5,000 if you count the staff, a document and say: "You go and mark it up," but they haven't done anything. That's amazing. That just strikes me as interesting.

McLaughlin: Well, maybe interesting but hardly significant; come on. I don't think I've given the remark before and I'll say it once, unless someone wants to pursue it, I highly recommend getting your hands on the tapes of "Yes, Minister," and "Yes, Prime Minister." This is a far better series of instructions on public administration than anything taught at this institution, including the continuing theme of balance between the elected politicians and your undersecretaries. Each show is on one of these balances we've talked so much about — about openness versus secrecy. What's a strategy for? A strategy can be for rallying your troops; that can be useful. Of course, it's not useful to give it to the enemy if that's your intention, and to the degree that half of the Congress might be your enemy, why the hell would you promulgate a national strategy?

Oettinger: Especially when mandated by legislation to do so.

Lord: Let me try to formulate the problem this way. Again, part but not all of the reason we need strategy and don't have it is that we have these competing institutional structures that go off in their own directions. We have the military, we have the State Department, and we have the Intelligence community — with NASA and other agencies on the fringes.

Now, in Congress, instead of having an institution that would correct those biases that get injected in the system through having these massive agencies, you replicate the problem by having committees that deal with each of these agencies. So, of course, there is no incentive in Congress to try to fix the problem, because you have barons and whatnot who work their particular area, which is geared to serving a particular agency, fundamentally.

In my book, I invent a term which is kind of useful, it's not supposed to have any metaphysical status, but it's "faultline," and I think it's a good way to look at the problems in the bureaucracy. I argue there are a number of fault lines in the Executive Branch that correspond to policy areas which

overlap the areas of responsibility of different agencies. If you go through the list and analyze where we've had problems in our policies, you'll see that it occurs at the faultline between agency responsibilities. The critical faultline is what I call the "political-military faultline." There are a lot of aspects to that — command and control is certainly one of them. A lot of the problems that we've had, particularly, for example, in national-level command and control over the years, have stemmed from this fact that there is an institutional lack of support in the military for presidential command and control requirements. It's as simple as that. You can extend that to a lot of other areas like low-intensity conflict, that would be a prime case where you have something close to 50 percent military and 50 percent nonmilitary responsibility, if you're going to do it right. Part of the problem we've had over many years going back to Vietnam and beyond, in getting low-intensity conflict right, is precisely that you have bureaucratic paralysis in which it's hard to give any single agency the lead, and if you do, you immediately run into trouble. Yet, it's proven very difficult to try to fix that problem from the White House. I would argue that we could probably do more than we've done; but, the fact remains that we have made some progress over the years. It remains a neuralgic point, if you will, in our whole national security policy.

Oettinger: Before you move on. On presidential command and control, and so on. The military view would be quite to the contrary. Even Harry Truman could reach General MacArthur in Korea and give him orders that took a certain amount of tug-of-war. By Lyndon Johnson's time, tactical command and control capabilities in fact were so well-established that the President micro-managed things and got in the way of the commanders. Over the last 20 years, the Presidential nuclear, strategic, etc., has been firmed up and so on, and their view would be, perhaps as ambassadors, that their roles have been eroded over the years because the President, or his staff everywhere. Can you give us a sense of where you stand. Why these sharply different perceptions?

Lord: I certainly wouldn't argue that the President or the White House has been without fault in this particular debate, not at all, but I was thinking primarily of nuclear-related command and control. I think the same probably applies more generally. This is essentially what Bruce Blair argues in his book on nuclear command and control, for example.

If you look back historically over the development of C³ systems in the Pentagon for nuclear purposes, particularly linking the President to the nuclear forces, it's simply never been a very high priority. If you follow these things today, you'll see the first victim of budget cutting in the last couple of years has been precisely C³, in spite of the fact that, on paper at least, the administration remains committed to C³ modernization as a very high priority. You have a stand-down of Looking Glass, you have a stand-down of Tacamo*, just as an example. The initiative to do this came from the military side and not from the White House. I would argue that that's a kind of natural and unsurprising state of affairs simply because the military as an institution is geared to satisfying its own institutional requirements. The President's C³ requirements are often not seen as the military's responsibility. Well, it's not as simple as that. Having said that, I think things are a lot better in this area than they used to be. They used to be horrendous. I think also from the side of the President himself and White House-level management of these nuclear issues that we're in a lot better shape, that there's more of an institutionalization from the President's side of what the President needs to do in an effective responsible way, to plug into the military's own decision-making system. So, there are operational requirements. It's a process of mutual adjustment that has to occur. The President has to understand what the operational constraints are and be prepared to respect them. By the same token the military has to have some sympathy for the President's unique requirements as a decision maker, and that hasn't always been done, in my view.

Student: Two things. It appears that from a military perspective, about 70 percent of the overhead assets are dedicated to the President. All of which comes, not out of the President's budget, but out of the military's. It also appears to us that something has a brickbat priority, which in fact Milstar does, then the White House ought to fight a little bit harder to keep the Congress from ripping it into shreds and converting it into something that does not support the office of the President, or us, very well, just as an example.

Lord: Well, Milstar certainly did have strong national-level support and was seen as a national system. Unfortunately, you really ran into budget cutting and congressional realities on it.

*Navy Communications Relay Aircraft.

Student: But the budget that goes across to the Congress goes through the White House before it gets there.

Lord: This is a somewhat complicated story which I'm not totally familiar with, but I guess my impression is that the civilian Pentagon leadership was not as supportive of Milstar as might have been the case. On the other hand, I think a serious fight was put up on it, but there are so many priorities the Secretary of Defense has to at some point say, "This is more important than that." It's a general problem that C³ has both in the Pentagon and the White House; after all, C³ doesn't shoot and kill people, and so when it's a choice between that and a B-2, or some other weapon system, it tends to come up short.

Student: Until lately almost all the C³ budgetary expenditures were dedicated to helping the office of the President. That was certainly the impression from my service in the Air Force. It's nice to have a balancing outlook.

Lord: Let me just add one thing on the fault lines question, to try to give you a better idea of what I mean by that. Space policy — NASA versus DOD — is a crucial faultline. Public diplomacy, State versus USIA versus the White House; also, the bureaucratic interface between public affairs offices in the different agencies and policy offices. A lot of competing bureaucratic interests make public diplomacy a very difficult problem. Emergency preparedness is another example, where you have DOD versus the White House, and also DOD versus the domestic agencies. The basic point is that it is very difficult to deal with these fault lines and the problems they cause for policy without very strong White House or national-level engagement on those issues. This leads to the main theme of my book: that the National Security Advisor and his staff need to be institutionally strengthened and play a stronger role and a more extensive and pervasive role in the national security policy process.

Now, instead of continuing with this sort of theoretical discussion, perhaps the best thing for me at this point would be to just turn to the current situation and discuss the current administration and how I see it responding or not responding to my complaints. I'll try to give you a sense of how I see the organization and management of national security having evolved in the last couple of years. Then maybe we can come back to some of these more theoretical issues.

Oettinger: Could I perhaps interject, at this point, some concerns we had in this seminar some years ago in early Reagan days. Richard Beal* and others articulated a similar problem. Beal's concern was providing Reagan with the picture of what's going on in the world and, therefore, developing White House information systems, which would be tailored to the President and his uses. Several things happened. We began to breed a staff which competed with the staffs of other agencies, and essentially injected just "one more player in one more layer." This process was not helped when the mechanisms that were devised to aid and abet this turned out to be the mechanisms which Ollie North used for some of the Iran-Contra operations, which then soured the whole thing, and set back the notion of greater Presidential involvement in things. How does one address this without being another bureaucracy?

Lord: How could I have forgotten Ollie North.

Student: Well, one of the things you did say in your book was that Eisenhower was the last guy who did it right. The way he took and organized it and set the board up making it actually responsible for strategy planning, and because all of a sudden, it looked like it fell apart during the Kennedy years, because with "everything has to be done now" kind of thing, strategy was mixed up with operations.

Lord: To the extent that there is a single model that I would hold up it would be the Eisenhower presidency — to the extent that one could reconstruct it without all the declassified NSC material. It's hard to get a complete picture of it; there were some criticisms made in the Kennedy years by the Jackson Committee that led to the Kennedy revolution against the Eisenhower system, which perhaps had some merit. I would certainly argue that Eisenhower, with his military training, tried to replicate something like a military staff system in the White House, in a way that has never really been tried since then. The way the NSC is involved makes it something rather different now. I think there's merit in trying to think through how you might reconstruct more of a military-style staff in the White House. The theme of my book is the distinction between strategy and operations — that there is an operational level of planning and policy making between strategy and day-to-day tactical conduct of business.

*Richard S. Beal, "Decision Making, Crisis Management, Information and Technology" in *Seminar on Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence, Guest Presentations, Spring 1984*. Program on Information Resources Policy, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, February 1985.

That's the missing piece of the puzzle, and my argument is that instead of looking at the NSC-State Department relationship or NSC-DOD relationship as a zero sum game — either NSC does it all or State does it all — I think there's a middle ground where the NSC can play a role in providing strategic direction to certain operational activities. This gets back to the Ollie North problem I'll talk about in a minute. Basically, it seems to me that what is needed is an adjustment in the relationship of the NSC, or the White House, to the agencies, so that the primary function of the NSC becomes not simply coordinating, which is too passive really to capture what I'm talking about, but an active formation of strategy. It would not deprive the agencies of an important planning or strategy-making function, but that would be carried out one level below, and it would be something on the analogy of military strategy and operational art. The kind of planning that you would get then in the agencies — the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, JCS, OSD, and so forth — would be operational planning.

Student: There's a tension though that develops, because even with the idea of an NSC that removes itself so it can focus more on these things, its role is understood as being strategic, with State or Defense having a strategy formulation role within that constraint. That would be an easy thing to develop were it not for the fact that you're also saying that you want a larger NSC, whose role is to establish these fault lines, and the NSC is still going to be the group of people who reacts to a lot of day-to-day things that are considered crises by the President. So, these are two big wishes that seem relatively incompatible.

Lord: I don't think so. There's a tension between them, but this gets to the problem with Iran-Contra. Look at Desert Storm. You have a military operation, and I'm sure there are political issues at the margins that cause you problems, but to hand over the responsibility for planning and conducting that military operation to the Pentagon or to the JCS, or whoever, is not particularly problematic. In fact, there's very little NSC staff involvement in military planning, and you don't really need it, assuming you have a competent Pentagon. You don't need a deep immersion in every planning exercise of every agency. Where you need the focus is one of those areas that falls between the cracks. Yet, at the same time, NSC has to be the custodian of an overarching policy or strategy framework which has some

authority in the system. Something like this national security strategy document has no standing in a sense — it's words, but it doesn't have any operational meaning. What you need is, I would argue, a series of policy documents signed by the President that have clear strategy or operational bottom lines that really guide what the agencies do. You can derive that from something like this document but it's not the same thing.

Let me move onto the question of an operational role for the NSC, which is where Reagan and the NSC got into trouble. I think Iran-Contra was a red herring, in a sense. In trying to understand the real problems with national level decision making, I think it was an anomaly in the Reagan era, the exception not the rule. The Iran-Contra episode arose out of White House frustration with the lack of responsiveness or the unreliability of certain Executive Branch agencies. Congress was obviously also a factor in this, but I believe that to some degree it was a reflection of a lack of faith in certain agencies of the Executive Branch to be able to carry out loyally and discreetly a certain policy that was political and controversial.

Oettinger: But the agencies claim that the White House is a worse leaker than the Congress or any agency.

Lord: It's hard to get a handle on leaks, and the issue of leaking is very important, it really drives policy or decision making. People don't understand the extent to which things are done in order to prevent leaks. What struck me at the time, being in the White House, is that there really is a tension between having a leak-free policy and having a well-staffed policy: having a formal policy process that goes through all the staff hoops, and then the requirement to see that that policy activity doesn't appear in the *Washington Post* the next day. It's not clear you can do both of those things, and this is, to my mind, a fundamental problem that we have.

When you look back to the 1950s, for example, there were no leaks from the Eisenhower White House, or the government in general, but it was a different era. People had higher personal standards of conduct than they do now. That's an important factor. I don't think one should idealize those years either. There were fundamental underlying institutional imperatives being pursued then, as there are now, and I think the Eisenhower White House or NSC was not as strong, in the sense that I'm arguing, as should be the case.

But, let me just make a point about the NSC operational role, because I think this has really been misunderstood. I believe, in spite of my basic thesis that the NSC function is strategy, national strategy, that there are important operational functions that have to do with direct support for the President's operational involvement in government.

One of those activities is crisis management. You can define this in different ways. It's just the sort of routine staff and information support that any President needs, such as getting current intelligence and digesting the press. It's not all done by the NSC, but that ought to be, in my mind, what the NSC takes responsibility for. Other activities — this gets to some of the unique strengths of the current President — include support for the President's role as chief diplomat and also support for his role as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, which, of course, gets into the C³ problem in a big way. The President's diplomatic functions have not always been very well understood. This gets into issues like Summit preparations, which I believe should always be run out of the White House and often aren't, but also just routine things like preparing talking points for Presidential meetings, phone calls, and the like. I think you can argue that these operational needs or functions really serve the basic strategic needs of the Presidency. I think all you have to do is to look at the really critical role that President Bush played in the diplomacy surrounding the Gulf war to see what I mean.

This President has really gone much farther than, to my knowledge, anyone else in developing personal relationships with foreign leaders. He cultivates these in a fairly systematic way, particularly over the telephone, but also in person, which really makes a strategic difference in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. That's a fairly new thing, particularly the telephone diplomacy, which really is an innovation of the Bush presidency that's worth analysis. Somebody could write a nice internal study on this or maybe, since a lot of this gets into the press, it would be a good project for somebody to go through the press accounts and try to analyze the President's use of the telephone. It's an interesting subject.

Oettinger: No doubt about that. But first of all, it's part of an era; there was a period when the State Department and the White House both would have nothing to do with the telephone. But how much of this has to do not just with the personality of George Bush but with his career? I mean he's the first President in memory who essentially was a professional

President in the same sense as one thinks of ambassadors who are politicians. Does it say anything about the education of Presidents rather than the institution of the Presidency?

Lord: Well, I'm sure it does. It says something about the experience of a President who has been in the bureaucracy and has run agencies, which is important.

McLaughlin: Just for background, there is a history about the Presidential use of the telephone. Someone did a fairly extensive study of Roosevelt's use of it, including his regular conversations with Churchill.

Oettinger: Getting back to the tension with the bureaucracy and the military staff . . . I'm trying to determine whether this is something that is peculiar to the Presidency or is it an organizational problem for any size organization? We had an interesting argument over the last couple of weeks, epitomized by General Cushman* talking about how he would have run things in the Gulf, which involved the Commander in Chief rearranging the functional units in a manner that made things elegant and had the right functions. Then last week General Gray was here taking a very contrary view, not unexpected again from the head of a service, now head of a department, saying that's not the way you do things. You take the components because they exist to do whatever the hell it is they're supposed to be doing well, and your problem is not to go and muck around with them but to orchestrate them. So certainly the military are not immune within their orbit to the problems that you describe as problems of the Presidency.

Lord: No, they're similar. One important point is that there really is no single pattern that fits all cases. In fact, I think this is one of the deficiencies in most of the literature on the NSC and the Presidential management of the national security bureaucracy, that the degree of necessary White House involvement varies with the particular issue or problem. I would argue there are some problems that are so deeply rooted in the nature of the bureaucracy that they can only be overcome by an extremely intrusive reshuffling or retooling of the organizational entities that you are dealing with.

One good example of that is drugs. Now, here's an area where the administration actually has a strategy. It's the National Drug Control Strategy,

*See presentation by General John Cushman in this volume.

and it's a good strategy. If there's any model that I would point to in this administration for a genuine national strategy, that's it. But what's the problem with it? These damn agencies that the drug czar has to deal with cannot get their act together and implement the strategy. That's a strong statement, but that is the fundamental problem.

Drugs is a problem that cuts across umpteen agencies, including agencies that are not used to working with the national security bureaucracy. You have the problem of integrating intelligence with Customs, where you're dealing with people who don't know what a classified document is. These are fundamental problems and I think drugs are a good example of where you need not only a strong NSC involvement, but actually where you can argue the need for an organization like the one we've developed over the last couple of years. You need a drug czar with a dedicated staff who tries not only to develop a strategy but to develop operational plans to implement, which requires cracking heads in the bureaucracy in fairly major ways. Now if there's anything that we've done wrong, it's to not go far enough with that second function of the drug czar. It raises an interesting question of whether there aren't other areas that would profit from a czar. I think this is another interesting research project — the nature of the bureaucratic czar in our system, whether that can really work.

A friend of mine wrote a terrific article a couple of years ago, comparing the Soviet and the Ottoman bureaucracies. There are similarities that he points out between the Soviet bureaucracy and the old Ottoman Turks. If you have a problem, you create a sort of special czar — you throw him at the problem and give him tremendous authority to go knock heads, create a task force, and go out and fix the problem. If this means going down to the lowest echelon, that's what you do. This is kind of a model of bureaucratic behavior; it's subject to great abuse, but at the same time has some merit. Obviously we're not working the same way in our own system. But, there have been some good examples, I think, of successful czars. I think the best is probably Bob Komer,* when he was essentially the low-intensity conflict, or Vietnam, czar, working directly for LBJ. He set up a revolutionary bureaucratic instrument which was in many ways extremely successful. It was a joint civil-military program which had a civilian head and a military deputy and then had military and civilian people sprinkled throughout

*Ambassador Robert W. Komer.

various levels, in different jobs. It was a unique kind of organization. It's the kind of thing you could only set up if you have somebody with extraordinary authority operating out of the White House to cut across these bureaucratic lines and beat down the entrenched interests. Komer, of course, was an extremely aggressive guy who was able to do that.

Oettinger: It's a good point to bring up again next week folks because asking Chuck Stiles,* who was, if not the czar, the deputy czar for that Sinai peace movement about 15 years ago, about special conditions and so on that enabled that to get done in such short order, as opposed to what Carnes describes as the drug enforcement situation. If somebody is still looking for a paper topic, there's a good one .

Lord: I think the drug czar experiences are very instructive and worth studying in this connection. It seems to me that we could perhaps have gone further than we did. Of course, the President made a decision early on not to give William Bennett Cabinet status; it's not clear that he needed it, but it may have helped, I don't know. The subsequent mandate was to go out and break heads, and do whatever needed to be done. I'm not sure that mandate was clearly given.

McLaughlin: I guess it's a problem when you don't have your own institutional base. It's like all those proposals over the years, people coming along saying, "Well, Director of Central Intelligence really ought to be just that," or "Director of the Intelligence Community should also be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency." Of course, anyone who's ever been near that job says, "I won't have any institutional base. I won't have any power whatsoever; each one of the agencies would run over me since I won't have my own agency clout." I think that may be part of Bennett's problem — you can get a handful of staff, but how many resources do you actually control?

Lord: That's right. That's a problem the NSC has too — it's not a very big staff. Yet, it does have the President, to the extent that you can engage the President and get him to back aggressive bureaucratic action from the top. It can be effective, but it really does need the President to weigh in and try and keep the Cabinet in line. It's tough.

Oettinger: I'm interested in getting closer to your current experience. Does the Vice President adequately serve as a substitute for the President in

*See presentation by Charles L. Stiles in this volume.

situations such as space research? Is vice presidential attention effective where it has been applied?

Lord: I think the answer is a qualified yes, particularly in areas that are somewhat out of the mainstream and don't tend to get a lot of really sustained attention in the White House or by the President, like space. The Vice President can play a role when dealing with issues that are peripheral to the bureaucratic players in national security. It becomes much harder in a central area of a very important agency. Obviously you have DOD involved in the space business, and space is important for DOD, but in the grand scheme of things, it's not that important. I think the Space Council is a good thing; it helps address one of these faultlines that I talked about, which is space policy. Let me put it this way: I think what the Vice President uniquely brings to this role is that only he, below the President, can plausibly bridge the gap between the national security and the domestic agencies. It's really the key point. He's in a good position to arbitrate civil versus national security versus commercial space issues because these issues involve agencies other than the ones that are normally in the national security system.

In the last administration, the role of the Space Council was filled by a senior interagency group on space in the National Security Council system. What that means is the national security dimension of space tends to get priority even though that's not necessarily where you need to be paying attention. Things are just kind of skewed to the DOD or intelligence community side of the equation, whereas when you have something like the Space Council, it's really more of a neutral forum to adjudicate these issues. I think it's worked well, although perhaps you could argue it's gone a bit the other way and not really tried to pull in the DOD space issues. It's really concentrated more on the civil and commercial side.

Oettinger: Thereby not engaging the elephant on the other side of the river.

Lord: But I think you can defend that. It's a question of priorities. NASA's got some big problems and the Space Council has been trying to address those problems. But there are some areas, particularly space launch policy, which cut across all the civil, commercial, and military space issues which the Council has addressed, and I think it can play a very useful role.

Student: How effective has the Deputies Committee been in dealing with these faultlines that you're

discussing? It received a lot of press, and I know it involved coordination.

Lord: I think it has to some degree. Certainly in recent months its main incarnation has been as the crisis manager. I mean everybody has been preoccupied with running the Gulf war and there hasn't been a lot of high level attention for other things.

Let me back up and try and take you through an analysis of how I see the current administration, and the President's management style in national security.

Again, I come back to the point that personalities really tend to obscure the underlying realities, and when the press covers national security policy-making, they tend to focus on the personalities of the President or the Secretary of State, and any clashes or personal factors that get involved in these things. Obviously, that is important at some level, and certainly personalities and personal life histories and experiences are important for a President, in particular, in approaching his job, and presidents really do have very different management styles and approaches. But I stress that the underlying institutional realities don't change that much. I think there is a key structural feature, I don't know what else to call it, in the current administration that has not really been adequately called attention to, but I think helps to explain a lot of what you're seeing.

There's a pretty well-known book by a scholar of public administration, Hugh Heclo, on the White House. It's called *A Government of Strangers*, which is a very good title. It points to a real problem in the management of the Executive Branch, that is, the political appointees come into their jobs from all over the country, don't know one another, and never really learn to work together until they leave, if by then. But in the Bush Administration, you have a government of friends as opposed to a government of strangers in at least the national security area. This is really very important. In other words, Dick Cheney, Colin Powell, James Baker, Brent Scowcroft, and the President. They all go back a long way, some of them go very far back. Cheney and Baker are friends, Scowcroft worked for Cheney in the mid 1970s in the White House. These personal relationships are long-standing and this is clearly a group of men who know, and like, and trust one another, and who work together in a remarkably collegial way. That's by no means always the case in those key jobs. If you go back over the years, just think of Al Haig and some other people who have been in one or another of those

jobs and, just by their personalities, caused problems.

Student: Rogers and Kissinger?

Lord: Rogers/Kissinger is a good example. There are a number of things that tend to flow from that. Somebody mentioned consensus a second ago; well, that is very much the style of this administration. I think it flows from that basic relationship. You have a style of decision making very much rooted in consensus among those top big five. As a corollary of that, you also get a much less formal system of decision making. There are a lot of things that are decided in a private conversation with a handshake, with a nod, which sometimes causes problems. It's kind of a trade-off. There's an old tradition here in the White House, going back to the famous institution of Tuesday lunches during the Johnson Administration, which was really a kind of truncated National Security Council because the NSC never really met in the Johnson Administration. So you had these weekly lunches for the President, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense, and they would decide things and nobody knew what they decided because there was very little staff work and no paper trail.

Oettinger: Let me just interject something and make sure the class grasps it. The National Security Council itself is a statutorily mandated structure, where the law prescribes who shall be a member. What Carnes has just described is two administrations, appointees chosen by the President; and so the notion that the two will be different follows from that difference in style.

Lord: It makes a real difference. I think you can see that in the Gulf war particularly there's been almost a complete eclipse of the NSC as a formal policy-making body. I think it has only met once, right at the beginning; decisions are basically arrived at in the Oval Office in conclaves of some combination of the principals.

Student: During this crisis, there were inconsistencies, the classic one was Baker's statement, and a couple of others . . . whether it was because of the informal arrangement word didn't get out, or because of the informal arrangement wasn't clearly understood. So you had serious inconsistencies which the press immediately launched on.

Lord: It's true there have been some problems like that, although, remarkably few, considering all the decisions that had to be made, and the pace of events.

Student: I think there were enough of them that it almost proved the thesis of your book because you may never again have this confluence of people who have been friends like that, and even when you have that dynamic going in a situation, the same old things continue at the State Department, the same kinds of pathological tendencies that you talk about in the book. I think we saw a lot of those, some of them at a major level like that, some of them at a smaller level, but that they can exist, in spite of this collegial atmosphere, proves the point of your book.

Lord: One issue is, the relationship of the President to the agencies. Another issue is how those agency heads run their own agencies, and let me address that in a second. I mean, has Baker really changed the State Department or not? It's an interesting question actually.

What you have, as a function of this consensus style of management at the top, is a very centralized decision-making process, at least on the fundamental issues, at the very top. Certainly during the Gulf war you've seen that in a very pronounced way, but it's also true of other major issues. You've had very centralized decision making but very decentralized execution, and this has something to do with the fact that you have relationships of trust there, so that the President is happy to have Jim Baker just go out and go to the State Department and do it, and not worry too much about the details of that. Now, as somebody said, we have had problems, but, nonetheless, that's been the basic model. You know the classic dichotomy in the NSC literature — it's an NSC-centered system or a State Department-centered system. That doesn't quite work that way. You have a kind of blend, where you have strong strategic direction coming from the White House; yet, at the level of operational activity, you don't have a lot in the White House other than some stuff that directly supports the President. There's been a high level of Presidential involvement in the Gulf crisis, as anybody can see, at the level of using the President as a kind of strategic resource to effect certain changes in policy or in the behavior of our allies. But the President, in general, has been content to let the operational stuff devolve out to the agencies. So, you get, in kind of a funny way, a combination of a real Cabinet system with a very centralized Presidential system. Again, this is a very preliminary sort of framework of analysis, but I suspect it would hold up over the longer term, and this will be seen to be what is distinctive to the Bush approach. I think it's fairly close to what I suggest as a model in my book.

Oettinger: You've described a situation which is almost equated to current Marine Corps doctrine, which is rather heretical compared to prior Marine Corps doctrine. So, it's the right way to go about things — a corps of people who understand one another, you can read one another's mind. Technique is something which everybody has rehearsed, and then tactics are what this group of folks who understand one another sort of devise as they go along to meet the changing situation.

Student: But since we won't ever have this again, probably, that's an aberration. What you want to do is strengthen the NSC and there's a gap there right now because there's no oversight of effective implementation of the policy, and that's the other function that you think the NSC should accomplish as well as the strategic look.

Lord: I do argue that implementation needs to be overseen at least by the NSC to a greater degree than it's usually been done in the past. I guess, that would really be my bottom line, even though this arrangement has functioned in this administration, and I do think it's on balance been pretty successful, certainly in terms of the war it's been amazingly successful.

Student: That's a bit far. I don't mean in terms of the war, but I mean in terms of the structure of the NSC.

Lord: In terms of the basic structure of the President's relationship to the other principals, you could say it's accidental in some sense, although the President obviously picked these guys; he wants it to work this way, so in that sense it's not accidental. It's his management style. I would argue that, in terms of the institutional makeup, nothing fundamentally has changed.

Oettinger: Let me get into this discussion a little bit because my own view would differ from Carnes. I'm not so sure it's the institution and the structure per se as having something which carries out the function, when the function is absent. I told you guys to do yea, and somehow I'm going to check up on you six months from now to make sure that it's been carried out. One of my reasons for harping on the structural, the difference between that functional necessity and the structure, is that if you want to look at personalities nothing happens, but if you get too much on structure then you have this problem with the National Security Council being a statutorily mandated thing, and the President feeling uncomfortable with that. So, he'd have to find

alternative ways of discharging the function. Let me give you an example to play with.

Over the years, Presidents (this goes back to Eisenhower) have had the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB) which, unlike the National Security Council, is not a statutory body, but exists by virtue of an executive order. In fact, it was abolished by Carter, then was reconstituted by Reagan, but then the details again intrude on the personalities. Before Carter, in matters related to intelligence and other aspects of national security, that board was strong in the sense that the President let it follow up later on with what it had recommended. So it became a management tool, somewhat like the function of NSC. It disappeared altogether under Carter, and under Reagan it was diffused. It looks like under this administration it may regain some of its power, in both providing advice and following up to see whether the order has been carried out. So, the subtleties of how this gets done get very hairy because the structure is there, but it's mandated by law, so if there's the possibility of Congressional intrusion, the President doesn't always want to avail himself of the structure. Is this consistent with your view?

Lord: Yes.

McLaughlin: Let me wade in for a second again. You really do need institutions, and there's a good book called *Ourselves Alone!* by Padraic Colum about the founding of Sinn Fein. Arthur Griffith who founded Sinn Fein did it on the basis that the Irish independence movements had always been based on the search for an avatar, one heroic figure who would lead the Irish to independence; and then, what happened, that individual crumbled, the whole movement crumbled. Griffith focused on a political party instead. We can talk about all the institutional means that you need because if we rely solely on individuals, somebody gets blown away and you have no system. On the other hand, I find it fascinating — what you've heard today is similar to what you heard from Dave McManis* about the current operations of the Pentagon and the top civilians there and how well it has functioned. I think there is no substitute for that collegiality, and that you don't have to depend so much upon bureaucratic mechanisms that the thing becomes encased in molasses. If you don't have trust, the number of forms that have to be filled out, the clearances checked off, signatures gathered, and backwatching done, everything

*See presentation by David Y. McManis in this volume.

eventually grinds to a halt. I think we're very fortunate at this point that there is so much continuity in an administration going to war.

Student: The more I read in your book, the more I say to myself there needs to be someone who's playing the role of a Schlesinger, who's sitting there talking to all these people and walking them through all the various crises to find out what role the institution plays, and what role the nature of the relationship with the other individuals plays in arriving at that decision to be able draw some sort of cookbook solution to leave for posterity — how this system ought to work.

Student: To follow up on that for just a second — you talk about trust, but we won't know if we have trust. No one would argue against having it, so it seems to me the point of your book was what should be the structure? Because you said he bypassed the structure; but, his structure, as he's proposing, doesn't exist now. So right now I would say we have a weak NSC, I mean in the sense of what's actually there, how it's construed in terms of its staff, and how it functions vis-à-vis cracking whip. In other words, it has been structurally weak but personality-dependent, i.e., on the personality of the person who physically occupies the National Security Advisor slot. So it's always the President's prerogative — if he wants to, we're having a war, so we're going to have a little more informal system, but if you had this structure that you're advocating more in place, Bush could still have run this war exactly the same way again.

Lord: It worked very well; it's not clear it could work any other way given the problems that we have both with leaks and general bureaucratic sluggishness. Maybe that's the only way that it could have worked, I don't know, someone could make an argument to that effect.

Let me make this point. What's wrong with consensus? The danger is that you will be in the lemming-like rush toward what's perceived to be the direction that everybody else is going, and fail to really give adequate weight to options and alternatives, because you don't have somebody coming in with an institutional base making an argument that's not congenial because of his own institutional interest. If you don't structure the process to permit that, those views can get squeezed out. So, that's the down side of consensus.

Oettinger: It would seem to me if you have a President, or Chair, whoever the central figure is,

who surrounds him or herself with "yes" people, no amount of institutionalizing will guarantee the personality of a Cabinet full of "yessers." Or you can have a Cabinet full of dissenters who create chaos. That's why polarized arguments over institutions versus personalities get you nowhere, because if there's one thing that's clear, it is that both elements always have a significant role.

Student: It appears to me that between personality and organization there's a thing called process, and on the one hand somebody figures out what they're going to do and why, and then someone else works up a supporting plan. Someone reviews the supporting plan and then someone reviews the execution of that, and that has occurred and not occurred with varying organizations. I thought that process was fairly straightforward, at least when I worked in business it was; it is in the military.

Lord: I think for people who have had both business and military experience it's sometimes hard to realize the extent to which things you would just take for granted, in terms of ordinary management, are not done at the national level. Why? There are all different answers to that.

Oettinger: Wait; because there are some peculiarities about what he calls the national level having to do with national being a government and not a private enterprise. There are also some things in common. Namely, that what happens in business and in the military at middle management levels is not what happens in business and the military at top-management levels. And, while amnesia of the kind that I've described may not be the norm in business or the military the informality and the lack of strategic whatever, etc., is very common at the top echelons of business, and probably also in the military. Don't confuse middle levels of business and military with top levels. It's looking a whole lot more like the White House.

Student: What I'm looking at is process. There is a difference, at least in my limited military experience. I simply asked the question, once the guidance is given, does anybody ask for a supporting player? Business didn't ask for a supporting player, military always does. Does anybody in government ask for a supporting player?

Lord: Sometimes. It depends, but still I would say there's no institutionalized, generally accepted way of doing business that would reflect some practice like that; no, not really.

Student: Would you say it changed your proposals a little bit?

Lord: Well, in some ways. Let me just move on briefly to something else; you mentioned the State Department. I do think it's interesting to look at the agencies too and how they relate to the White House and the President's own management style because, particularly in the State Department, you've got a similar management approach to the White House and something that's really kind of revolutionary in terms of the way State has functioned over the years. That is a real shift away from the regional bureaus and the assistant secretary level as the basic locus of bureaucratic power, to the undersecretary level, and people who are more clearly political. So you have much more of a top-down management in the State Department than almost ever has been the case, and that's interesting. I guess my impression is it's not going to be lasting. I'm not that close to it, but I don't think there's been any real structural change that would support what I suggest in my book, but I do think State is functioning a lot more like what my model would be, in other words having undersecretaries who really do have a kind of integrating strategic role in the department, and that's always been a problem. You've had a policy planning staff which supposedly has a mandate to do strategic planning — but bureaucratically they're just out in left field; they always have been pretty much since the early days of NSC 68.

Oettinger: That's true of the strategic planning staff in every corporate entity that I'm familiar with; and every time there's a recession, it was proven again in the last couple of years, they're the first to go.

Lord: My counterexample is the military; to people who say you can't do strategic planning, the answer is the military does do it. You could argue with the quality of it, but there is an understanding and an institutionalized procedure for doing planning in the U.S. military.

Oettinger: I think there's a significant difference because the military, unlike any other institution that we have discussed, has nothing to do but plan most of the time. That's very critical because whether you're talking about the White House, or you're talking about corporation x, y, and z, they are daily fighting their battles; they're daily doing whatever the hell they're supposed to do. Fortunately, the military, most of the time, does not do what they're supposed to do. It is a very peculiar thing where you

essentially have to absorb the energy in studying, in planning. What are the surrogates? Preparing for war. So, preparation is a critical function, in fact what else would you want them to do?

Student: But it's those institutions that don't perceive the guidance that they probably need to conduct the missions they have to do unless they develop that guidance themselves in some cases, and maybe in many cases an attempted self-justification. Even if it's doing nothing more than justifying its own position, it's got to feed that down the organization to give some meaning to what the organization is doing. I'm not disagreeing with your point, I'm just saying there's a reason for it.

Lord: I think there's more of a culture of planning in the military. Only in the Pentagon do you see things called master plans; I've never, in other agencies, seen something called a master plan.

Student: Granted there are war plans for your contingency operations and so forth. Someone very much wiser than I am, told me quite some time ago everything revolves around the budget in the Pentagon, and it does.

Student: I think utility companies often have pretty long-range plans.

McLaughlin: Most of which would become meaningless as the technology changes.

Student: There are people who are doing contingency planning to move their data from point A to point B. It's being used because people plan when planning is important. If it's not important, if you don't get any payoff whatsoever for planning, it's a waste of time.

Oettinger: I'm not saying that corporations don't have architectural plans, that they throw buildings together or that they do not plan migration of their data from system A to system B. I am talking about the kind of thing I thought I heard here, which is a strategic plan, which one finds honored in the breach more than anything else in most corporate entities, as distinct from the military.

Student: I would be pleased to see a 1-year plan in the U.S. Government. There are things that can be done by government, there are some who are trying it; it may not work out very well.

McLaughlin: Before we pursue that, I did want to get back to your view of the State Department. I've argued for about 20 years that we would make a great leap forward if we made FSOs (Foreign

Service Officers) wear uniforms, so that we would reassert civilian control over the State Department, and I think that, if I hear you correctly, we've been trying to reassert civilian control.

Lord: Absolutely. That's a good way to put it. It really points up the problem. The State Department is one of the few entities in the U.S. Government where management and labor are the same, just in terms of the adjudication of labor disputes. It's an incredible system and yet it persists; secretaries come and go, but the institution remains; it's an amazing place.

Student: Baker really has got his five people, similar to the way Bush has; and everybody else in the department has to scramble to call or find out from one of those five people what is going on. Even though Jim Baker has fundamentally changed the way the secretary operates, I think the State Department is still there with all its links between the Congress, the media, and those other areas, because he has so few people that are controlling it. All they can hit are the very highest visibility issues so they actually have a freer rein, in terms of some things that are going on. Now this is a different view.

Lord: I think there's a lot to that.

Student: And after Jim Baker leaves this will just be that much more entrenched.

Oettinger: With the few minutes remaining do you want to make some of the points we've kept you from?

Lord: One of the problems with this sort of intense, high-level consensus-style centralized decision making is that things that aren't on the front burner tend to get lost. You don't have the institutional

mechanisms just doing their thing. So everything really does depend, to a large extent, on the personal engagement of the President.

Student: We don't have your beefed-up NSC watching what the State Department is doing either.

Oettinger: His beefed-up NSC does not exist and if it existed it would look like another department and the then existing President would have to invent an ad hoc way of circumventing his own National Security Council.

McLaughlin: The other part is, having worked with the main Cabinet members over the years, I think you have to realize the great amount of political capital that you have to invest in any kind of institutional, administrative or organizational reform. Most of these people are going to be in Washington two years or four years and they would rather try to make an impression upon a substantive issue or a couple of substantive issues. It may well be, when they walk out the door, the people will go back to doing things the old way, but, in the meantime, their feeling is that if they got a piece of legislation passed, or something like this, it's far more important than trying to reorganize 50,000 GS-12s.

Student: You see that on the middle management level, too, when you walk, in uniform, into an office populated by civilians who say, "I do one thing here and that's survive, because the damn place is going to go on after I walk out the door." The civilians let you know that the day you walk in.

Oettinger: The debate goes on. Meanwhile, thank you for sharing your thoughts with us.

Lord: Thank you very much.



INCSEMINARS1991



ISBN-1-879716-03-8