



JULY 2013

# THE ASCENDANCY OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

ROBERT S. MCNAMARA  
1961-1963



COLD WAR FOREIGN POLICY SERIES

SPECIAL STUDY 4

Historical Office  
Office of the Secretary of Defense

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Secretary of Defense**

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*Cover Photo:* Secretary Robert S. McNamara, Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, and President John F. Kennedy at the White House, January 1963

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**SPECIAL STUDY 4**

**Series Editors**

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Office of the Secretary of Defense  
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## Foreword

This is the fourth special study in a series by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Historical Office that emphasizes the Secretary's role in the U.S. foreign policy making process and how the position evolved between 1947 and the end of the Cold War. The study presented here concentrates on the pivotal, even revolutionary, role of President John F. Kennedy's Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara. More influential at some times than at others, the Secretary of Defense has consistently been a key figure among the President's senior advisors. The role and impact of the Secretary of Defense are not as well understood and less frequently studied than those of the Secretary of State. As this study illustrates, McNamara played a greater role in foreign affairs than any previous Secretary of Defense.

This series of special studies by the Historical Office is part of an ongoing effort to highlight various aspects of the Secretary's mission and achievements. The series on the role of the Secretary of Defense in U.S. foreign policy making during the Cold War began as a book manuscript by Dr. Steven Rearden, author of *The Formative Years, 1947–1950*, in our Secretaries of Defense Historical Series. I wish to thank Kathleen Jones in OSD Graphics for her efforts and continued support.

We anticipate that future study series will cover a variety of defense topics. We invite you to peruse our other publications at <http://history.defense.gov/>.

Erin R. Mahan  
Chief Historian  
Office of the Secretary of Defense

## Executive Summary

Robert S. McNamara became the eighth Secretary of Defense in January 1961. Reputedly able to master any subject he set his mind to and decidedly dedicated to the rule of logic and rationality, McNamara was nonetheless a relative amateur in government. His practical exposure to the subject was minimal, and he held conventional and unremarkable views regarding national security. Yet to some observers, he became the archetype of President John F. Kennedy's so-called New Frontier. He projected an image of vigor, pragmatism, and energy from the day he took office. As former Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford remarked in his memoirs, "It is no exaggeration to say that the history of the Department of Defense will always be divided into pre-McNamara and post-McNamara eras."

McNamara played a greater role in foreign affairs than any previous Secretary of Defense. He accepted the conventional wisdom that defense policy derived from foreign policy and that the Defense Department should serve and assist the State Department. But in day-to-day practice he generally followed his own lead, moving the Defense Department more into the forefront of the policy process than ever before.

McNamara's success in imposing his views and influence derived from the close and cordial relationship that he and the President enjoyed. More than being simply business associates, they socialized together and consulted regularly on all manner of issues, not just defense or national security. According to Robert F. Kennedy, the President thought more highly of McNamara than of any other

cabinet member. For Kennedy's purposes, McNamara proved the ideal Defense Secretary—loyal, tough-minded, energetic, dependable, and successful.

A further reason for McNamara's influence was that he presided over the Pentagon at a time of weak leadership at the State Department and of diminished stature for the National Security Council (NSC). The system that Kennedy put in place stripped away some of the layers of bureaucracy that had effectively insulated the Oval Office in Dwight D. Eisenhower's day, giving McNamara access to the President on virtually any problem he deemed important.

Furthermore, the nature of the problems that predominated during Kennedy's presidency made it almost impossible for McNamara to avoid having a major role in foreign affairs. The policymaking environment in which McNamara operated differed markedly from what any previous Secretary of Defense had known. Kennedy wanted to relax Cold War tensions, but he was also committed to providing high-caliber security and thwarting Communist expansion. Achieving the latter objectives turned out to involve more reliance on military options than Kennedy anticipated, increasing his need for McNamara's assistance. As a rule, it was McNamara's policy to comply as quickly and as thoroughly as possible with whatever the President wanted, even when he may have personally disagreed.

Personal rapport also played an important part in State-Defense coordination throughout McNamara's tenure. Early in the administration, Secretary of State Dean Rusk and McNamara agreed to try to meet privately at least once a week to iron out problems. In recognition of Rusk's senior cabinet rank and the principle of civil authority, McNamara acknowledged that he considered the military to be the "servant of foreign policy." But in reality, the mild-mannered Rusk usually ended up going along with whatever McNamara wanted. The emergence of McNamara as the more influential of the two Secretaries by the end of Kennedy's first

year was also a result of the predominance of political issues with strong military overtones during this period, combined with Rusk's conscious effort to avoid intruding in military matters.

Kennedy had intended the State Department to be his principal source of advice on foreign affairs, but he eventually concluded that Rusk was either unable or unwilling to provide effective leadership of American foreign policy. Ultimately, in Kennedy's eyes, it was Rusk's reserved and cautious manner that proved his undoing. McNamara, in contrast, exuded an aggressive, forceful "can-do" manner that appealed to Kennedy.

Another reason McNamara came to cast such a long shadow over foreign affairs was that he had behind him perhaps the strongest staff of any member of Kennedy's cabinet. McNamara had insisted on installing his own team at Defense, a privilege not granted other senior cabinet members. He selected a cadre of civilian specialists and professionals, among them a bright young group dubbed the "Whiz Kids," who clustered mostly in the newly created Office of Systems Analysis. McNamara also inherited the so-called little State Department within Defense—the International Security Analysis (ISA) directorate, a responsive, experienced, and efficient foreign affairs bureaucracy.

The ISA team's forays into the policy process were not without consequence for others in the Defense Department, notably the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Along with seeing their power and influence at the White House diminish, the chiefs discovered that McNamara had no qualms about reassigning some of their traditional politico-military functions to ISA, Systems Analysis, or elsewhere if he thought that doing so would expedite the work and improve the product.

In addition to advisory and policymaking functions, McNamara was often busy with diplomatic matters and travel abroad. Previous Secretaries of Defense had also performed these duties but rarely became as deeply involved in them as McNamara did.

Prevailing upon U.S. allies to accept the new strategy of flexible response proved a more formidable task than McNamara had imagined.

McNamara served during a succession of crises faced by the new Kennedy administration. Following the Bay of Pigs debacle in 1961, McNamara resolved not to serve the President so poorly again. Thereafter, once he discerned what the President wanted to do in a given situation, McNamara did his best to implement those wishes.

Of all the crises that occurred in the administration's first year, the Berlin contingency in the summer of 1961 did the most to cement the Pentagon's increasing role in the shaping of foreign policy while concurrently displacing Laos and Cuba as the administration's central foreign policy focus. By the following year, McNamara had clearly emerged as the most valued official in the administration. His firm commitment to civilian control of the military and his willingness to run interference for the White House in dealing with the military establishment proved particularly helpful. These characteristics were exhibited during the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962. McNamara's behavior showed a clear reluctance to be at odds with the President's position.

By far the largest and most consequential of McNamara's ventures into foreign affairs and diplomacy was his role in formulating policy toward Vietnam. What began in 1961 as a small-scale counterinsurgency exercise inherited from the previous administration steadily escalated into a regional conflict with a commitment of over half a million U.S. forces by the middle of the decade. During this period, McNamara began developing the statistical tools he would later use extensively to manage the conduct of the war. He approached the war as he generally approached other problems—he sought to measure its progress quantifiably. For the most part, McNamara relied on numbers.

Throughout his tenure as Secretary of Defense, McNamara persisted in dealing with the Vietnam War more as a managerial problem than as a foreign policy concern. He believed that the United States would find a formula to prevail in the right combination of initiatives and proper monitoring techniques, honestly applied. No doubt such an attitude reflected his overall approach to running the Pentagon.

By 1963, certain trends were beginning to emerge. Not only was Defense operating on par with State in politico-military affairs, it also was undertaking policy initiatives that extended its influence well beyond defense-related issues. The waging of a major war during the five years of Lyndon Johnson's presidency would blur the lines between foreign and defense policy more than ever. And McNamara would bear the brunt of responsibility as a leading proponent and chief architect of that war.



Throughout the Dwight Eisenhower years (1953–1961), the Secretary of Defense kept a low profile in foreign policy matters in deference to the President’s military and foreign affairs credentials. While this pattern started to change toward the end of the administration during Thomas S. Gates’s tenure, it was not until the Kennedy administration that the department achieved its prominent role in the making of U.S. foreign policy.

Surrounding himself in 1961 with what some considered the ablest collection of talent since Harry Truman’s second term, John F. Kennedy made some highly unexpected staffing choices. One decision in particular that surprised many was to look to the American business-industrial community for his Secretary of Defense after his preferred nominee, Robert A. Lovett, Secretary of Defense in the Truman administration, declined the position. At that point Kennedy turned, partly at Lovett’s recommendation, to 44-year-old auto executive Robert S. McNamara, who had been appointed president of the Ford Motor Company a month earlier.<sup>1</sup>

For some, the McNamara selection conjured up the image of another industry mogul like “Engine Charlie” Wilson (General Motors) or Neil H. McElroy (Procter & Gamble) running the Pentagon. Despite a reputed ability to master any subject he set his mind to and a dedication to the rule of logic and rationality, McNamara was still a relative amateur in government. His sole exposure to national security affairs had been as a lieutenant colonel serving as an Army Air Forces statistical control officer in World War II. As for his knowledge of foreign policy, little could be documented other than his attendance at an occasional university lecture on the subject in his home town of Ann Arbor, Michigan. His practical exposure to the field was minimal; he seemed to have strictly conventional and unremarkable views, endorsing containment as the most sensible and effective Western response to Communism.<sup>2</sup>

Given McNamara's background and lack of experience, there was every reason to believe (as some clearly did at the outset of his tenure) that he would end up playing a secondary role in foreign affairs, much as Wilson and McElroy had done. One frequently mentioned scenario held that, with McNamara preoccupied as business manager of the Pentagon, Kennedy, like Eisenhower, would personally direct high-level foreign and defense policy. As President, Kennedy intended to take a prominent part in national security affairs, but he also wanted dynamic, able people working for him—and if there was something McNamara was known for, it was taking charge and producing quantifiable results. Indeed, to some observers he became the archetype of President Kennedy's so-called New Frontier, more so perhaps than even the President himself. He projected an image of vigor, pragmatism, and impatience from the day he took office.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that McNamara would go on to serve longer than any of his predecessors also contributed significantly to the large and lasting imprint he left on the Department of Defense. According to Clark Clifford, who had helped draft the original National Security Act, McNamara “moved the military establishment toward what we had intended it to be during the battle for military reform in the late forties. It is no exaggeration to say that the history of the Department of Defense will always be divided into pre-McNamara and post-McNamara eras.”<sup>4</sup> The reforms he implemented, using new techniques such as systems analysis and program budgeting, were often controversial, but there is little doubt that they gave the Secretary a stronger and firmer hand in both running the Pentagon and influencing foreign policy.

### **Restructuring the National Security Council**

The policymaking environment in which McNamara operated differed markedly from that which any previous Secretaries of Defense had known. Before he even took office, Kennedy was determined that his presidency should project a more vigorous,

forceful, and decisive image than that of the last years of the previous administration. Rejecting Eisenhower's use of a tight chain of command for policymaking purposes, Kennedy embraced new procedures to help him obtain fresh ideas and creative results. He began by overhauling the policymaking organization he would be expected to deal with the most—the National Security Council.

Encouragement to do so came from a variety of quarters. Those in the Pentagon familiar with the NSC system, especially career officials in ISA, generally believed it was inefficient and that changes were necessary, if only to clear away some of the “dead wood” that had accumulated during Eisenhower's presidency.<sup>5</sup> The guidance for many reformers, including Kennedy, came from a series of hearings conducted by Senator Henry M. Jackson's subcommittee on national policy machinery along with a final report issued shortly after the 1960 election. The subcommittee criticized what it characterized as the “over-institutionalization of the NSC system” that had occurred under Eisenhower. Reflecting his Army background and experience, the system had been organized for a thorough vetting of all ideas and an orderly flow of paper. According to the Jackson subcommittee, however, such unwieldy bodies as the Planning Board and the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) had been ineffective in facilitating the flow of information, thereby diminishing the President's ability to assess alternative courses of action and make timely decisions. Although the subcommittee cautioned that organizational reforms by themselves were unlikely to produce miracles (“getting our best people into key foreign-policy and defense posts” was, it allowed, probably more important), it left no doubt that it considered the existing NSC setup woefully deficient and defective.<sup>6</sup>

Kennedy's restructuring of the NSC, overseen by his Special Assistant for National Security Affairs McGeorge Bundy, amounted to the most extensive overhaul of the NSC system since its creation in 1947. Within weeks of taking office, Bundy dissolved the OCB; replaced the year-numbered series papers, including the annual

reviews of basic national security policy, with a new series of shorter, issue-specific directives known as national security action memoranda (NSAM); and reduced the NSC staff from 71 to 48. At the President's direction, council meetings, though still frequent, became less regular and more informal: fewer people attended, and the agenda listed specialized problems.<sup>7</sup> Less of the general clearinghouse than it had been under Truman and Eisenhower, the NSC now became only one of several means by which the administration might address foreign and defense policy concerns. "I can't afford to confine myself to one set of advisers," Kennedy insisted. "If I did that, I would be on *their* leading strings."<sup>8</sup>

For McNamara, the new system had two major advantages. First, it stripped away some of the layers of bureaucracy that had effectively insulated the Oval Office in Eisenhower's day, granting McNamara access to the President on virtually any problem he deemed important. In addition, it expedited decisionmaking in what often amounted to one-on-one deliberations between the Secretary and the President. Roswell Gilpatric, who served as McNamara's deputy from 1961 to 1964, recalled that "the net result was that all of us in relatively high positions, and particularly in the international security area, felt we knew the president, what he was thinking, and what he wanted."<sup>9</sup>

For the military services, however, downgrading the NSC spelled a diminution of status and loss of access to White House high-level authority except on an ad hoc basis. The biggest losers were the Joint Chiefs, whose advice became increasingly suspect in Kennedy's eyes following the Bay of Pigs fiasco in the spring of 1961. After Bundy abolished the OCB, the Chiefs closed down the existing liaison office that they had maintained in the White House since the early 1950s; thereafter, they conducted any business with the NSC through a small JCS liaison office located next door in the Old Executive Office Building.<sup>10</sup> The Chiefs could only watch their influence ebb further after the Bay of Pigs failure. Reflecting his uncertainty about JCS advice, the President appointed former

Army Chief of Staff General Maxwell D. Taylor as his White House-based military advisor. Taylor's job was to double-check the military advice coming from "across the river."<sup>11</sup>

While these new arrangements streamlined the policy process and allowed the President to respond faster and to a wider range of views, they also increased his workload and forced him at times to make hasty decisions or resort to ad hoc responses to what might otherwise have been seen as short-term problems. In certain instances—such as the Skybolt missile controversy with the British in 1962 and the events leading up to the overthrow and assassination of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963—the absence of a systematic review process was clearly a serious liability.<sup>12</sup> As Harvard professor Richard E. Neustadt later acknowledged, the reforms the new administration brought in—reforms Neustadt helped design—liberated Kennedy from the constraints of the Eisenhower system but yielded mixed results. "We aimed at Eisenhower and hit Kennedy," Neustadt said. "We did away with the old and didn't put anything in its place."<sup>13</sup>

Probably the most notable difference between the old system and the new was the dearth of institutionalized mechanisms for policy coordination. Instead, ad hoc interagency committees or "task forces" (Kennedy preferred the latter designation because it sounded more action-oriented) met as required to address specific problems. Kennedy originally intended that the State Department's regional bureau chiefs chair most of these groups, but as time went on it became more convenient for Bundy, members of the NSC staff, or even Defense officials to perform that job. The two best known of these interagency working groups were the Berlin Task Force (one of the few that functioned as a standing committee), created in the summer of 1961 to coordinate policy and defense plans for a threatened showdown with the Soviets over Berlin, and the NSC Executive Committee (ExComm), a cabinet-level body, formed hurriedly in October 1962 to advise the President during the Cuban missile crisis. Smaller and less conspicuous

interdepartmental groups (some 50 in all) dealt with policy toward Laos, Vietnam, the Congo, Iran, South Korea, Cuba, and various other politico-military problems.<sup>14</sup>

The personal relationships that developed among senior Kennedy administration officials and their staffs provided the most common means of coordination. Many who joined the administration already knew one another from having worked together in Democratic party politics, at think tanks like RAND, or at academic institutions, from which Kennedy drew freely to staff his administration. A few, like McGeorge Bundy in the White House, and his brother, William P. Bundy, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International and Security Affairs in the Pentagon, had familial ties. For “outsiders” like McNamara, it took longer to build up contacts and establish a network, but he was more than equal to the task. According to Roswell Gilpatric:

*The reason the Cuban missile crisis was handled better . . . than the Bay of Pigs, was first of all, those of us who had responsibilities in dealing with those two situations had gotten to know each other. We had been in office nearly two years. We had been through our shakedown cruises and we came to trust and have confidence and understanding in each other.*<sup>15</sup>

Between Kennedy and McNamara, the chemistry was practically ideal. More than just “business associates,” they socialized together and consulted regularly on all manner of issues, not just defense or national security. Though a registered Republican, McNamara had preferred Kennedy over the Republican candidate, Richard M. Nixon, in the 1960 election, mainly because of Kennedy’s idealism and positions on domestic issues. “I don’t think,” he would later remark, “I have admired any man that I have associated with more.” According to younger brother Robert F. Kennedy, the President thought more highly of McNamara than of any other cabinet member.<sup>16</sup>

McNamara also had exceptionally good rapport with McGeorge Bundy. The two became and remained friends and collaborators for life. A former Harvard government professor, Bundy was discreet, effective, and by all accounts unbiased in bringing divergent viewpoints to the President’s attention. He was also, in style, personality, and mode of operation, someone who rarely generated friction but who instead contributed greatly to fostering consensus among the President’s advisors.<sup>17</sup> Though his title was Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, he was increasingly referred to as the President’s “national security advisor.” As such, he became an active participant in the policy process at Kennedy’s request. Bundy freely offered his own policy views, making sure that he did so in the presence of other senior advisors or in ways of which they were fully aware.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, he handled sensitive duties, much as General Andrew Goodpaster had done for Eisenhower, that occasionally included liaison responsibilities in one of Kennedy’s favorite areas—covert intelligence operations. But most of the time Bundy’s tasks were generally fixed. As one senior aide characterized it, Bundy and his staff were the President’s “eyes and ears” whose job was “to keep tabs on things.”<sup>19</sup>

One of Bundy’s most lasting contributions was the creation of the Situation Room, a communications control center that moved the nuts and bolts of crisis management directly into the White House. After the Bay of Pigs, Kennedy wanted faster and more secure communications with the departments and agencies during crises. The job of making the necessary arrangements fell to Bundy. Housed in the former Map Room that had served as Franklin D. Roosevelt’s command post in World War II, the Situation Room functioned as both a conference center and a communications clearinghouse from which the President and selected members of the White House staff could monitor cable traffic to and from the Departments of State and Defense and, to a lesser extent, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Finished early in 1962, it saw extensive use during the Cuban missile crisis later that year and

became, over time, the President's independent link to intelligence sources and back-channel communications.<sup>20</sup>

Exactly how McNamara felt about the existence of the White House Situation Room is unclear. There is no doubt that it offered the President and his immediate circle of White House aides and advisors a means of gaining ready access to DoD communications. Early difficulties with the installation of equipment and the sorting out of channels for monitoring suggest some measure of uneasiness in the Pentagon over the new unit's existence. But as a rule, it was McNamara's policy to comply as quickly and as thoroughly as possible with whatever the President wanted—not to temporize or make excuses—even when he may have personally disagreed. Such was the basis of McNamara's relationship with Kennedy, and in most cases it ended up working to McNamara's advantage.

### State-Defense Coordination

Personal rapport also played an important part in State-Defense coordination throughout McNamara's tenure. Like most of his predecessors, McNamara quickly recognized the interaction of foreign and defense policy, viewing them as inseparable entities. Seeking to build on the favorable relations he inherited from his predecessor Thomas S. Gates, who had worked smoothly with Secretary of State Christian A. Herter, McNamara found in Secretary of State Dean Rusk an eminently responsive and cooperative colleague who likewise believed that State and Defense should pull in harness. Though their collaboration did not always prove as productive as either might have liked, it was certainly one of the most cordial between a Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense during the postwar period.

As early as February 1961, Rusk and McNamara agreed to try to meet privately at least once a week to iron out problems. In recognition of Rusk's senior cabinet rank and the principle of civil authority, McNamara acknowledged that he considered the military to be the "servant of foreign policy."<sup>21</sup> But in reality, the mild-

mannered Rusk usually ended up going along with McNamara. When someone once suggested that the Secretary of Defense was poaching on State's territory, Rusk reportedly "just smiled and shrugged."<sup>22</sup> Subordinates, being uncertain whether Rusk would support them, quickly learned, as one put it, that there was little point in trying "to carry military issues to the top."<sup>23</sup>

The emergence of McNamara as the more influential of the two Secretaries by the end of Kennedy's first year is perhaps best explained by the predominance of political issues with strong military overtones during this period, combined with Rusk's conscious effort to avoid intruding in military matters. Rusk had served in the State Department during the Truman administration and knew first-hand, from witnessing the feud between Dean Acheson and Louis Johnson, how harmful such quarrels could be.<sup>24</sup> As Secretary of State, he resolved to work in partnership with McNamara, whatever their differences, and to steer clear of offering military advice. "It is not the policy of the State Department," he assured McNamara, "to issue military appraisals without seeking the views of the Defense Department."<sup>25</sup>

Kennedy had intended the State Department to be his principal source of advice on foreign affairs. His reason for downgrading the NSC in the first place was to turn more responsibility for policy coordination and execution over to State. But he effectively sabotaged his own plans by making State a catchall for appointees holding the many points of view that were then competing for primacy within the Democratic Party. State became a virtual battlefield for two groups in particular: self-styled pragmatists, led by former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, an occasional troubleshooter for the White House, who thought the United States should go easy on making concessions to the Soviet Union; and the idealists (derided as "soft-liners" by Acheson and his friends), such as Under Secretary Chester Bowles, Assistant Secretary G. Mennen Williams, and Adlai Stevenson, the Ambassador to the United Nations, who hoped to ameliorate East-West tensions through negotiations.<sup>26</sup>

Kennedy eventually concluded that Rusk was either unable or unwilling to provide effective leadership of American foreign policy. Ultimately, in Kennedy's eyes, it seems to have been Rusk's reticence that proved his undoing. As Roger Hilsman, head of State's intelligence bureau, characterized the Secretary of State's temperament, "Rusk was a superb counselor, but he could not bring himself to be an advocate."<sup>27</sup> Rarely did Rusk speak up at meetings (like Acheson, he preferred to confer with the President in private), and most of the time he suffered in silence while others "with no responsibility were making academic comments."<sup>28</sup> Rusk was in fact a man of strong convictions, but his reserved and cautious manner won him few friends in the White House. McNamara, in contrast, exuded an aggressive, forceful "can-do" manner that appealed to Kennedy. Though fond of Rusk personally, McNamara was amazed in retrospect at how small a role he remembered the Secretary of State having played and how little leadership in foreign affairs Rusk had shown in the seven years they worked together.<sup>29</sup> The more doubts the President had about Rusk, the more he seemed to count on McNamara. Little wonder, then, that at the time of his assassination in November 1963, Kennedy had reportedly decided to replace Rusk after the next year's election, with McNamara tentatively slated to move from the Pentagon to State.<sup>30</sup>

McNamara (and Rusk, too, for that matter) concurred with Kennedy that the basic national security papers of the 1950s had grown too diffuse and general to serve a useful purpose any longer. Although the State Department launched an effort, spearheaded initially by chairman of the policy planning council George McGhee, to come up with a fresh policy blueprint, it was a low-priority, intermittent project. By 1963, a policy planning draft report, tentatively acceptable to State but lacking agreement on several key defense points, was awaiting action in the Pentagon. But by then, having settled on other arrangements, McNamara saw no reason to continue, and the project died.<sup>31</sup>

McNamara preferred to supply his own foreign policy guidance, including it with each annual budget presentation: in classified form, to accompany his Draft Presidential Memoranda to the President; and in unclassified form, to accompany his "posture statements" to Congress. Not since Forrestal's first annual report in 1948 had a Secretary of Defense attempted to cover so much ground or to do so with as much candor and authority. Going beyond a purely military rationale, the posture statements and draft memoranda offered justification for new and ongoing defense programs based on how they contributed to furthering U.S. foreign policy objectives. "It was essential," McNamara recalled, "to begin with a discussion of foreign policy because that had to be the foundation of security policy."<sup>32</sup> Though the State Department routinely submitted advice and comments, its views often arrived too late in the process to be reflected in the final documents forwarded to Congress and the President.<sup>33</sup>

Gradually, as the Defense role in foreign policy grew, frustrations mounted among Rusk's senior aides and advisors. According to Hilsman, a lack of leadership lay at the root of the problem:

*I can't blame McNamara for pushing his department's view as vigorously as possible. But I certainly can blame Rusk for not pushing his view, or our view. And always over and over again, it ends up with [Assistant Secretary of State W. Averell] Harriman and Hilsman arguing against McNamara and the [Joint Chiefs of Staff] and [Director of Central Intelligence John] McCone. And that's not quite an equal contest.<sup>34</sup>*

Despite the criticism, McNamara saw no alternative. What may have seemed to others a usurpation of State's functions by Defense, McNamara viewed as simply a matter of necessity. One such episode concerned the so-called Broomfield amendment, legislation that required the President to certify that economic aid to certain Third World countries, Indonesia among them, was not being diverted to military purposes. At the President's request, McNamara

conducted a thorough audit of the Indonesian aid program and came up with both a detailed accounting and a recommendation that in the future, the Secretary of Defense be placed in charge of monitoring the program. Despite mutterings from the White House and State Department at what seemed a large-scale transfer of responsibility for essentially political matters to the Secretary of Defense, McNamara's recommendation prevailed.<sup>35</sup>

More often than not, however, Rusk and McNamara operated on common ground. Described by Rusk as “a staunch believer in arms control,” McNamara accepted without question Kennedy's decision in the spring of 1961 to create the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, a separate organization overseen by the Secretary of State, to coordinate the development of policy and negotiations. As they had in the past when dealing with such matters, the Joint Chiefs expressed reservations. They remained skeptical of arms control in general and feared that a separate agency would not pay sufficient attention to military concerns. The Chiefs thought that arms control policy should be made in the NSC, where it had been in the past and where they and the Secretary of Defense could be assured of having their perspectives considered. But as the President's proposal gathered momentum in Congress, the JCS gave up pursuing their objections.<sup>36</sup> Thereafter, as Rusk described it, “I never had to arm-wrestle the Joint Chiefs on this score. McNamara took care of all disputes with the chiefs inside the Pentagon. And the chiefs always participated in our discussions.”<sup>37</sup>

### McNamara's Staff Support System

One reason why McNamara came to cast such a long shadow over foreign affairs was that he had behind him perhaps the strongest staff of any member of Kennedy's cabinet. McNamara had insisted on being able to install his own team at Defense, a privilege not granted other senior cabinet members. Aided by a strong deputy, the exceptionally able Roswell L. Gilpatric—a Wall Street lawyer who had been Under Secretary of the Air Force in the Truman

administration—he also selected a cadre of civilian specialists and professionals, among them a bright young group dubbed the “Whiz Kids,” who clustered mostly in the newly created Office of Systems Analysis. Initially under the OSD Comptroller, Systems Analysis became a separate office at the Assistant Secretary level in 1965, with Alain Enthoven in charge.<sup>38</sup> Much of the debate then and later over McNamara's management style stemmed from charges that he placed too much responsibility in the Whiz Kids' hands and that he allowed them—indeed, encouraged them—to interfere in military planning, using them in ways that undermined the authority of State. Insofar as the latter charge went, McNamara had a ready reply. Those who criticized him or his department, he argued, “failed to recognize that the top political appointees in Defense were more able, more active, and ran a tighter organization than did those in State.”<sup>39</sup>

It also was McNamara's luck to inherit, in ISA—the so-called little State Department within Defense—a responsive, experienced, and efficient foreign affairs bureaucracy. This he further bolstered with a new directive, issued in May 1961, reaffirming ISA's existing policy powers and granting new authority to delve into studies of long-term security needs and the politico-military and foreign economic implications of force structures, weapon systems, and other military capabilities.<sup>40</sup> ISA gained its importance and influence as part of McNamara's Pentagon from the expanded range and complexity of politico-military problems in which McNamara took a personal interest and the energetic boost the office received under Paul H. Nitze, Assistant Secretary for ISA from 1961 to 1963. Though at 54, Nitze was too old to be classified as one of the Whiz Kids, he was every bit as active, systematic, and aggressive as his younger colleagues. A decade earlier, while serving as director of State's policy planning staff, Nitze had overseen the drafting of NSC 68, a seminal paper proposing a Cold War rearmament program, for the Truman administration. Now in the Pentagon, he found himself performing similar chores for McNamara. A personal friend of Kennedy's, Nitze as a rule preferred to concentrate on high-level

(NSC and White House) policy matters and NATO affairs. He left “all the rest,” including military assistance and regional security outside Europe, to his principal deputy, William Bundy, McGeorge Bundy’s older brother and Dean Acheson’s son-in-law. But there was never any doubt about who was in charge. As one senior aide recalled, “Mr. Nitze’s profound strategic thought dominated ISA, even in small specifics.”<sup>41</sup>

The ISA that Nitze took over in 1961, with a full-time staff of just over 300, was the second largest OSD staff group; only the Office of the Director of Defense Research and Engineering was larger.<sup>42</sup> While uniformed officers made up less than half the professional staff, they tended to occupy many of the choicest senior positions in ISA’s various offices and directorates. Staff assignments continued to be organized along functional lines, with policy planning (including NSC affairs), military assistance, bilateral security treaties, and regional politico-military affairs relating especially to foreign military alliances (NATO, Southeast Asia Treaty Organization [SEATO], Central Treaty Organization, and the Australia–New Zealand–United States Pact) forming the core of ISA’s responsibilities. Under a reorganization completed in 1962, Nitze abolished the Office of Special International Affairs, a catch-all dating from 1956 that had dealt with arms control and disarmament, international conferences, and international organizations, and he reassigned its functions. Arms control, an increasingly important topic in its own right, became the full-time concern of a Deputy Assistant Secretary, with a separate directorate for staff support.<sup>43</sup>

Nitze once described ISA’s overall role in the policy process as “an umbilical cord” between the Defense Department and State, NSC, and other agencies concerned with national security.<sup>44</sup> In fact, ISA was more than that under Nitze; it exercised authority and influence that seemed to place it on a par with the State Department. Many regarded it as more responsive and reliable, a reputation it kept more or less intact, Vietnam notwithstanding, under Nitze’s two

immediate successors—William Bundy and John T. McNaughton. Adam Yarmolinsky, who served as a special assistant in McNamara’s office, relates the story of how ISA reacted to a White House official needing help:

*When he called for briefing papers on short notice from State for a presidential overseas trip, his first deadline passed without any response. He then turned to the office of International Security Affairs at Defense, which responded with a complete, concise, and thoroughly indexed briefing book. State finally crashed through with several cardboard cartons of unsorted cables on the countries listed in the president’s itinerary.<sup>45</sup>*

This and similar episodes helped assure ISA of a permanent and respected place at the table in most high-level policy discussions. As chairman of the military working group of the Berlin Task Force, and as a member of the ExComm during the Cuban missile crisis, Nitze was continuously “at the center of decision” (to use the description in his memoirs) in the two most celebrated and dangerous foreign policy confrontations of Kennedy’s presidency.<sup>46</sup>

The absence of intervening layers of authority between Nitze and McNamara helped gain Nitze direct access to McNamara practically whenever he wanted or needed it; he could generally count on the Secretary to back him up. Nitze had no real counterpart at State. Jeffrey Kitchen, who headed State’s recently created Office of Politico-Military Affairs, did not enjoy a rank equal to Nitze’s in DoD. And Kitchen rarely saw Rusk; his ties to the top ran instead through U. Alexis Johnson, the Deputy Under Secretary of State.<sup>47</sup> Though staffed with able people who often worked closely with Nitze and his aides, Kitchen’s organization lacked access to the avenues of influence and authority that would have made it in any true sense a rival or competitor with ISA.

ISA’s bold forays into the policy process were not without consequence for others in the Defense Department, notably the



Joint Chiefs. Along with seeing their power and influence at the White House diminish, the chiefs discovered that McNamara had no qualms about reassigning some of their traditional politico-military functions to ISA, Systems Analysis, or elsewhere if he thought that doing so would expedite the work and improve the product. Military planning papers that once would have originated with the Joint Chiefs now often came out of ISA. In one notable instance, ISA, not JCS, drafted the so-called poodle blanket paper (NSAM 109) in the fall of 1961, outlining the preferred sequence of graduated politico-military responses to Soviet provocations over Berlin. Approved by the President, the poodle blanket paper became the framework both for the subsequent Allied planning on Berlin and for the administration's initiative in NATO culminating in adoption of the flexible response concept.<sup>48</sup>

Although the poodle blanket paper may have been a celebrated example, it was not atypical of ISA's increased presence across the entire range of expanding politico-military planning. While military alliances and assistance remained the most constant matters, new problems arose demanding ISA's attention in advising the Secretary on ways of slowing the arms race, reducing the gold flow to improve the balance of payments, and assisting less developed countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America to become more stable, democratic, and anticommunist. Although by no means McNamara's sole source of advice on these matters, ISA was clearly the dominant Pentagon organization dealing with politico-military affairs.<sup>49</sup>

While helping raise ISA to new levels of prominence and professionalism, Nitze gradually became less popular and influential with both McNamara and Kennedy. When apprised that McNamara was floating plans late in 1961 to send up to six U.S. combat divisions to South Vietnam, Nitze scoffed at what he implied was the Secretary's naiveté, telling a friendly journalist that trying to keep a commitment of ground troops there from becoming open-ended would be about as easy as staying "a little bit

pregnant."<sup>50</sup> A "dove" on Vietnam, he was a "hawk" on practically everything else. According to Robert Kennedy, the President regarded Nitze as an "effective fellow" but came to have reservations about the soundness of his advice, in particular because of "some of the answers he gave" during the Cuban missile crisis when he had urged airstrikes and other direct military action.<sup>51</sup> Nitze hoped for the Deputy Secretary of Defense job when Gilpatric stepped down as planned in January 1964. Instead, Kennedy, in one of his last significant personnel decisions involving DoD, tapped Secretary of the Army Cyrus R. Vance to replace Gilpatric and nominated Nitze to be Secretary of the Navy, a job he accepted reluctantly and stayed in until 1967, when he was finally named Deputy Secretary of Defense.<sup>52</sup>

### McNamara and Diplomacy

In addition to having advisory and policymaking functions, McNamara was often busy with diplomatic matters and as a fact-finder on missions abroad. Previous Secretaries of Defense had also performed these duties but rarely became as deeply involved in them as McNamara did. His close ties with Kennedy carried weight. When he represented the United States abroad, it was usually with the highest authority behind him, indicating that any commitments or offers he made had the President's implicit if not explicit endorsement. Whether foreign officials liked him or not (and many did consider him difficult), they often found that they had to go through McNamara to deal with Washington. By no means did McNamara represent U.S. diplomacy abroad during Kennedy's presidency, but in certain crucial areas—NATO and Southeast Asia especially—his participation often overshadowed that of any of the President's other advisors.<sup>53</sup>

Much of McNamara's involvement in diplomacy simply went with the job, the result of prior consultative and institutional arrangements. NATO and other alliances required regular meetings of defense ministers. At the same time, President Kennedy himself,

showing a casual disregard for regular, established channels, often called on McNamara and the Defense Department to head up committees and task forces that traditionally had been led by the State Department. If it seemed more practical to Kennedy that Defense instead of State should fashion a particular policy, it usually followed that he expected Defense to explain and implement that policy as well. The ensuing reversal of roles, in which the Secretary of Defense, not the Secretary of State, often served as a leading administration spokesman on American foreign policy, may have seemed remarkable to some, but it was fully in keeping with Kennedy's results-oriented approach to administration.

One of the most memorable illustrations of McNamara's role as policy spokesman was his address to the North Atlantic Council meeting in Athens, Greece, in May 1962. That speech enunciated what became known as "flexible response," the strategic concept that eventually brought about changes that drove NATO planning and procurement for the next generation. The change, in consideration from the day Kennedy took office, received a partial airing in McNamara's remarks at the NATO ministerial meeting in Paris in December 1961.<sup>54</sup> It was the May speech in Athens to a "restricted session" of the North Atlantic Council, however, that laid out the new strategy in its fullest detail. A public version, delivered by McNamara at the University of Michigan graduation in Ann Arbor, Michigan, followed a month later. On both occasions, he endeavored to demonstrate that, in essence, the development by other countries such as France and West Germany of independent nuclear forces would do little to alter the strategic balance; that U.S. nuclear weapons continued to provide adequate and effective protection; and that the prudent course for NATO would be to devote more attention and resources to strengthening conventional force options.<sup>55</sup>

This momentous departure from past policy, with implications both at home and abroad, required as credible as possible a spokesman to present and defend it. As a rule, Truman and Eisenhower had relied

on their Secretaries of State to explain not only foreign policy in general, but also its strategic underpinnings, as John Foster Dulles had done in his 1954 speech to the Council on Foreign Relations setting forth the massive retaliation concept. Although Kennedy might have used Rusk for this task, he relied instead on McNamara, probably because he knew McNamara to be more familiar with the conceptual details. McNamara had been in the forefront of the administration's redesign of the Defense budget to give greater weight to conventional forces and had spearheaded the revision of the Single Integrated Operational Plan—overcoming stiff JCS resistance in the process—to incorporate more flexible targeting options. At the December 1961 NATO ministerial meeting, Rusk and McNamara had shared the podium, their remarks carefully coordinated in advance to avoid contradicting one another. At Athens, even though Rusk also addressed the meeting, it was clear from prior arrangements between the White House and the Pentagon that Kennedy wanted McNamara's speech to be the center of attention, as indeed it was.<sup>56</sup>

Although McNamara never expected the job of converting the Allies to flexible response to be easy, it proved a more formidable task than he ever imagined. Nearly five years elapsed between the Athens speech and the adoption by NATO of a new directive embodying flexible response principles in December 1967. The Europeans balked at the expenditures that flexible response would impose on them.<sup>57</sup>

The Allied deliberations over flexible response also revealed that McNamara rarely enjoyed good rapport with his NATO counterparts. While respected for his intellect and capacity to absorb facts, he earned a reputation of being exceedingly arrogant and overly analytical. Those familiar with his easygoing predecessor, Thomas Gates, found the contrast especially striking.<sup>58</sup> According to journalist Henry Trewhitt, it was not uncommon for McNamara to operate "with a very heavy hand," as in his dealings with the West Germans over the U.S. balance of payments problem in

1961. With no prior experience in international politics, he was apt to focus on immediate, tangible outcomes and overlook longer term, more subtle consequences.<sup>59</sup>

Probably the best example of McNamara's less-than-subtle approach to diplomacy was his handling of the Skybolt missile affair with the United Kingdom. The experimental Skybolt was an air-to-ground ballistic missile being developed by the U.S. Air Force for standoff attacks against targets well inside the Soviet Union. Under a 1960 agreement it would, if successful, be made available for purchase by the British, who viewed it as a means of extending the operational usefulness of the Royal Air Force's (RAF's) aging fleet of Vulcan bombers. Technical difficulties with Skybolt's guidance system, however, along with McNamara's decision in April 1961 to curtail the U.S. bomber program, starting with cancellation of the B-70, raised serious questions about the missile's future. Although the Air Force continued to explore ways of adapting Skybolt to its B-52s, thereby keeping the missile alive, cost-performance comparisons done in Enthoven's Systems Analysis organization gradually whittled away at its prospects.<sup>60</sup>

In approaching a decision on Skybolt's future, McNamara faced more than cost and technical problems. Quite apart from whatever it might contribute militarily, Skybolt held immense symbolic and political value in British eyes. To Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, it was the latest in a long line of test cases for the U.S.-U.K. "special relationship." Should the deal fall through, it was the kind of issue that, if not handled carefully, might bring about Macmillan's political downfall. McNamara recognized that U.S. nuclear support for Britain was crucial for a variety of reasons. But he found it utterly incomprehensible that the British would be so foolish as to put their trust in Skybolt, a weapon he dismissed summarily as nothing but "a pile of junk."<sup>61</sup>

Skybolt's demise, though practically inevitable once McNamara started looking closely at the missile's technical flaws, proved to

be a slower and more complicated process than it probably needed to be.<sup>62</sup> What amazed and angered so many on the British side was McNamara's apparent insensitivity and lack of diplomatic tact throughout the episode. Despite several months of informal warnings that Skybolt was being dropped from the budget, McNamara delayed officially notifying the British until he visited London early in December 1962. Worse, he brought with him nothing to offer as compensation, raising suspicions among the British that, as part of the policy announced at Athens and Ann Arbor, the United States meant to scuttle the RAF's independent nuclear deterrent and coerce Britain (as some in the State Department were suggesting) into joining a multilateral nuclear force tied to NATO.<sup>63</sup> Nor was cooperation helped by what one of Macmillan's biographers has described as "mutual antipathy" between McNamara and Minister of Defence Peter Thorneycroft.<sup>64</sup> Rumors fed by leaks from Whitehall promptly surfaced of a deepening rift in Anglo-American relations, the most serious breach since the Suez debacle six years earlier.

While British expressions of consternation were doubtless sincere, they were also a remarkably deft and effective negotiating ploy that set the stage for the summit meeting later in December at Nassau between Kennedy and Macmillan. With Skybolt dead and the British in an uproar, alleging they had been misled, Kennedy sought to repair the damage to Anglo-American relations by offering the British technical help in acquiring a far superior fleet of Polaris submarines, which would assure Britain's status as a major nuclear power for more than a generation.<sup>65</sup> Polaris-for-Skybolt, with targeting of the missile submarines coordinated through NATO, was roughly the outcome McNamara had envisioned all along.<sup>66</sup> To reach the point at which he could confidently scrap a weapon he deemed worthless, the United States had had to avert a potential rupture with its oldest and closest ally, risk bringing down Macmillan's government, and work to overcome lingering suspicions and hard feelings all around.

## A Succession of Crises

### *Bay of Pigs*

President Kennedy's brief but eventful administration was notable for crises, the first—the Bay of Pigs debacle—occurring within three months of the inauguration. Notwithstanding McNamara's involvement in the decision, if only tangentially, to mount an amphibious invasion of Cuba by CIA-supported exiles, the President increasingly relied on his Defense Secretary's counsel. Chagrined at his failure to ask hard questions about the invasion plan, McNamara, like Rusk and national security advisor Bundy, resolved not to serve the President so poorly again. If there is a common thread to McNamara's role during the two and a half years after the administration's first great misstep, it is that after discerning what the President wanted to do and achieve in a given situation, McNamara did his best to implement those wishes.

The ill-fated invasion, perhaps the greatest international political blunder by a President since the advent of the Cold War, led to much soul-searching within the administration. McNamara tried to ease the onus of failure on the President by publicly taking as much of the blame as possible; privately, he blamed himself for not examining the plan carefully. While the Joint Chiefs had offered inconsistent or equivocal advice about the invasion plans, McNamara and his staff had adopted an almost hands-off approach. When the chiefs submitted their recommendations, McNamara had accepted them at face value without asking any hard questions. To the degree that any questions were posed, they came from lower ranking White House civilian advisors whose reservations were easily overridden. Later, the Secretary of Defense would describe his role as that of “passive bystander.”<sup>67</sup> On the contentious issues of air cover for the invasion and whether to launch a second strike against Cuban airbases after D-day, neither McNamara nor the Chiefs played a role in those decisions. They were the President's alone.

Although McNamara's public and private stance was that Kennedy's chief foreign policy advisors had failed him, he nonetheless “nursed a grievance” against the Joint Chiefs, whom he believed had let the President down by not articulating their reservations clearly. Along with the CIA, the Chiefs lost status within the administration, as evinced by the recall to active duty of General Maxwell D. Taylor. In what was perceived as dissatisfaction with the chiefs' performance, Taylor became the President's military advisor in July, tasked with providing direct advice and assistance, although ostensibly not in competition with the JCS. This curious arrangement lasted only until such time as General Lyman L. Lemnitzer could be eased out of the JCS and Taylor appointed Chairman in his stead.

### *Laos*

A major factor that may have contributed to McNamara's lack of close attention to the Bay of Pigs invasion plans was the perception that Laos, not Cuba, was the administration's first genuine foreign policy crisis. President Eisenhower, during a meeting with Kennedy the day before the inauguration, had underscored the significance of this small, impoverished, and landlocked country, telling Kennedy that it was “key to the entire area of Southeast Asia.” Vietnam, by contrast, was hardly mentioned during the meeting, which McNamara attended.<sup>68</sup>

The incoming administration quickly achieved consensus over the need to shore up the pro-Western Royal Laotian government but could not agree on the means to do so. Both Britain and France proved loath to invoke any obligation under SEATO. Even unilateral U.S. military assistance could not guarantee an acceptable outcome, as DoD considered aid to Laos to be wasteful and ineffective.

After some temporizing, McNamara recommended that President Kennedy address the deteriorating situation on 23 March 1961 in one of his first nationally televised news conferences. With three

large maps of Laos as a backdrop, the President illustrated the rapid expansion since December of areas under control of the Pathet Lao. Drawing attention to Laos, of course, carried with it some risk, for Kennedy was more or less bluffing. According to national security advisor McGeorge Bundy, no serious thought was given to U.S. military intervention. The hope was that the presidential warning would help pave the way for a ceasefire followed by an international conference, which the British government proposed that same day.

The closest Washington came to direct military intervention was in late April, when it appeared the Communist powers were stalling on implementation of the agreed-upon ceasefire until such time as the takeover of Laos was complete. Tasked by the NSC to come up with a plausible course of action, McNamara and Gilpatric advocated deploying U.S. forces, after giving 48 hours' notice, to protect vital centers in Laos until the ceasefire was achieved, despite noting that the country was "one of the least favorable places in the world for direct U.S. military intervention."<sup>69</sup> But the Joint Chiefs undermined this recommendation by seeming to temporize, while offering the same kind of hesitant or conflicting advice that had characterized their recent counsel on Cuba. Overruling the consensus expressed by McNamara, Lemnitzer, and roving ambassador W. Averell Harriman, Kennedy opted for restraint. Fortunately, the Pathet Lao suddenly accepted the invitation to stop fighting on 3 May, relieving the administration from further agonizing.<sup>70</sup>

As negotiations in Geneva to establish a neutralist government dragged on, the administration had to contend with a new crisis that diverted attention from Southeast Asia: the building of a wall in divided Berlin. The Joint Chiefs, exercised and frustrated over the administration's devotion to a diplomatic resolution in Laos, made their views known to McNamara in September, restating the domino theory rather forcefully: the United States "must take immediate and positive action to prevent a complete communist takeover of Laos and the ultimate loss of all Southeast Asia to

include Indonesia." By this time, however, McNamara recognized the President's strong preference for a diplomatic approach, and along with Gilpatric, he expressed sobering skepticism over contingency plans for direct intervention, effectively deflecting the chiefs' appeal for action.<sup>71</sup>

Although not readily apparent at the time, the crisis over Laos had in fact peaked. In June 1962, the three contending factions—royalist, Communist, and neutralist—reached an agreement for a coalition government that allowed Laos to remain intact, although incapable of controlling its borders. In the war that would soon engulf Vietnam, Laos would be utilized as the major supply route for North Vietnamese men and materiel moving south; the United States would employ Lao tribesmen to harass the Communist forces. Nonetheless, and despite its weak, nearly nonexistent government, Laos could claim (if barely) that it was still an independent entity. It ceased being a bone of contention in the Cold War as the conflict in Vietnam took center stage in Southeast Asia.<sup>72</sup>

### *Berlin*

Of all the crises that occurred in the administration's first year, the Berlin contingency in the summer of 1961 did the most to cement the Pentagon's increasing role in the shaping of foreign policy while concurrently displacing Laos and Cuba as the administration's central foreign policy focus. While Defense was nominally a junior partner to the State Department, the military considerations in the Berlin crisis deepened the influence of McNamara and DoD. In other words, Defense "emerged from the Berlin crisis at center stage in the formation and management of national security policy."<sup>73</sup>

Although the divided city had long been a Cold War flashpoint, the immediate crisis stemmed from an ultimatum by Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev in November 1958. He proclaimed that the Soviet Union would cede its rights and functions in East Berlin to the East German government and called on the Western occupying

powers to do the same. United by the notion that changes in the status of Berlin could be not imposed unilaterally, the Western Allies were otherwise divided in their policies should Moscow force the issue. They seemed as worried about alleged U.S. impulsiveness as by any unilateral actions from the East. When the Kennedy administration took office, it seemed that the long-simmering crisis was bound to come to a climax, although Washington had no intention of taking any hasty action.

McNamara found dependence on nuclear weapons the most disturbing element of U.S. contingency plans. Because Soviet forces vastly outnumbered NATO conventional forces, Eisenhower administration policy had anticipated that any Soviet military action would quickly and inevitably escalate to nuclear warfare. McNamara and the rest of Kennedy's national security advisors found this doctrine, subscribed to by the JCS and NATO Supreme Allied Commander General Lauris K. Norstad, far too rigid and dangerous.

At the same time, and in parallel with the Laos situation, McNamara also had to fend off hard-line suggestions from senior statesmen of the Cold War brought in by the administration to enhance the credibility of its decisions. For Laos, it was Averell Harriman; for Berlin, it was Dean Acheson. The former Secretary of State advocated a buildup of conventional forces to give Washington more flexibility in response to a Soviet provocation. Yet from McNamara's point of view, Acheson's recommendations, if followed to the letter, promised to escalate the crisis, possibly to the brink of war. The Defense Secretary favored a conventional buildup in accordance with the so-called flexible response doctrine, but not at the pace and scale suggested by Acheson, who favored a presidential proclamation of a national emergency. Once again, McNamara was reflecting the President's preference: to proceed deliberately and cautiously so as to reduce rather than increase the odds of a direct confrontation over Berlin.<sup>74</sup>

The building of the wall in Berlin, which caught Washington by surprise in August 1961, heralded the end of the crisis initiated by Khrushchev, and it would be three more years before a moderate Soviet–East German treaty was signed. Nonetheless, the administration could rightly claim that it had achieved its major objective of holding the line in Berlin against unilateral Soviet actions that weakened Allied rights. McNamara played a major role in this success by formulating a policy that, if not particularly consistent, managed to keep all the stakeholders reasonably satisfied until the crisis ebbed.

### *Cuban Missile Crisis*

By the fall of 1962, McNamara had emerged as possibly the most valued official in the administration. It was not only his brainpower and unflagging work ethic that greatly impressed President Kennedy and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, the second-most important person in the government. It was also McNamara's firm commitment to civilian control of the military and his willingness to run interference for the White House in dealing with the military establishment. These characteristics would be exhibited in abundance during the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962.

Like nearly everyone who participated in deliberations of the ExComm, McNamara staked out positions that were somewhat erratic and inconsistent from day to day. At one juncture, he argued that the Soviet emplacement of missiles in Cuba did not actually alter the strategic balance of power and that their existence 90 miles from U.S. shores was primarily a domestic political problem. More frequently, McNamara took stances that could be described as belligerent. While he backed behind-the-scenes negotiations with the Soviet Union, he nonetheless contended that if these failed to result promptly in the removal of offensive weapons, the United States should be prepared to mount an all-out attack on Cuba—even at the risk of thermonuclear war between the superpowers.<sup>75</sup>

Overall, McNamara's behavior was congruent with his actions during other crises—that is, he exhibited a clear reluctance to be at odds with the President's position, to the point of doing an about-face once Kennedy's preferred course of action emerged. Still, there were nuances to his position. The Defense Secretary endorsed the blockade, the President's preferred course, even as other influential advisors such as Robert Kennedy and General Maxwell Taylor expressed great skepticism about its efficacy in pressuring the Soviets to dismantle missile sites that were nearly operational. But McNamara also advocated measures to enforce the blockade that might have provoked direct conflict—such as using antisubmarine weapons to force Soviet subs to the surface for inspection. On the other side of the ledger, he was also an early advocate of withdrawing U.S. Jupiter missiles from Italy and Turkey if doing so increased the chances of a peaceful settlement—again, a position viewed favorably by the President. Nearly every other advisor was steadfastly against making the Jupiters part of any deal, but McNamara was keenly aware of the shortcomings of these missiles (though later he reversed himself and spoke against such a trade). Finally, when a U-2 was shot down over Cuba in the midst of the crisis, McNamara advocated taking action against one or more of the Soviet surface-to-air missile sites in retaliation.

McNamara's recommendations must be seen as relatively restrained, given the department he was heading; the Joint Chiefs were far more willing to adopt measures that could initiate hostilities. The missile crisis represented McNamara's greatest bow in the direction of military leaders' demands for action. Still, while he bent in that direction, he did not break.

### *Early Involvement in Vietnam*

By far, the most extensive and consequential of McNamara's ventures into foreign affairs and diplomacy was his role in formulating policy toward Vietnam. What began in 1961 as a small-scale counterinsurgency exercise, an inheritance from the previous

administration involving a few hundred U.S. military advisors, steadily escalated into a regional conflict with a commitment of over half a million U.S. forces by the middle of the decade.

Vietnam initially was only one of several Third World trouble spots that drew the Kennedy administration's attention. It came to the President's notice shortly after the inauguration, when Brigadier General Edward Lansdale, the Pentagon's resident expert on guerrilla warfare, warned of an impending Communist takeover.<sup>76</sup> Duly alarmed, Kennedy resolved to meet the threat to Vietnam head on, directing McNamara to “examine means for placing more emphasis [there] on the development of counter-guerrilla forces” and to explore turning the tables on the enemy by introducing South Vietnamese guerrillas into North Vietnam.<sup>77</sup> With other matters competing for his time, McNamara gave the task to his deputy, Roswell Gilpatric, who in April 1961 created an ad hoc interagency task force with Lansdale as chairman. Although Lansdale had ambitions of staying on to head the overall effort, opposition from the Department of State to having someone from Defense in charge led in May to the creation of a new interdepartmental body—Task Force Vietnam—chaired by Sterling J. Cottrell, a career Foreign Service officer.<sup>78</sup>

Despite the existence of what amounted to a standing committee to monitor policy, State-Defense coordination on Vietnam remained haphazard and intermittent. According to William Bundy, Nitze's deputy in ISA and McNamara's principal action officer on Vietnam from 1961 to 1964, a division of labor emerged early on. State dealt with the political side and Defense with the operational and military side—with very few general meetings or discussions between the two unless a major crisis erupted. Bundy found that State, as a rule, doubted whether the military was sufficiently sensitive to political considerations, while at the same time the Joint Chiefs strongly resented civilian authorities, either in Washington or Saigon, second-guessing proposed military operations. As a means of trying to assure compliance all around, policymaking on Vietnam settled

into the hands of the President and a small group of advisors that included McNamara, Rusk, General Taylor, McGeorge Bundy, and a few others.<sup>79</sup>

Once McNamara became aware that Kennedy had a personal interest in Vietnam, the Defense Secretary decided that he should take a closer look.<sup>80</sup> By the autumn of 1961, according to the JCS official history, McNamara had taken “personal command” of the U.S. military effort in Vietnam: “In matters large and small he made decisions that, in other times, would have been taken by CINCPAC [Commander-in-Chief, Pacific], the Service Chiefs, or the Joint Chiefs of Staff.”<sup>81</sup> With the U.S. role embracing a wide range of politico-military advisory and support functions as well as covert operations, it was difficult for any one agency or individual to establish and maintain overall control of policy. This remained more or less true throughout Kennedy’s presidency, as the administration endeavored to steer a middle course that would preserve South Vietnam’s independence and territorial integrity while avoiding the direct use of U.S. military power. On balance, the tilt was increasingly toward the latter, giving McNamara and the Defense Department growing leverage in the making and execution of policy.

An early watershed that helped confirm a strong Defense voice in Vietnam policy was the Taylor-Rostow mission to Vietnam in October-November 1961.<sup>82</sup> In his written report, General Taylor recommended expanding U.S. assistance to include up to 8,000 U.S. combat troops assigned to “logistical-type” units.<sup>83</sup> In the ensuing debate, Rusk and the State Department cautioned against additional commitments, especially any involving U.S. troops, while McNamara, Gilpatric, and the JCS essentially warned that what Taylor was suggesting might be too little, too late.<sup>84</sup> But within days, possibly at Kennedy’s urging, McNamara changed his position and joined Rusk in recommending an increase in aid that tacitly rejected, for the time being, the commitment of U.S. troops other than additional military advisors. From this point on,

however, State’s involvement in resolving important policy details became less visible as the counterinsurgency effort (the core of U.S. policy until the escalation of 1964–1965) shifted from social and economic assistance to military action.<sup>85</sup>

During this period, McNamara began developing the tools he would later use extensively to manage the conduct of the war. Empirical analysis based on personal observation was one method; he took his first trip to Vietnam in May 1962 and made routine shuttle visits as the war heated up. Whether these early trips were as useful and enlightening as McNamara claimed at the time is questionable. Most were brief, lasting a few days, with the itinerary carefully scripted in advance. For the most part, McNamara saw what U.S. and Vietnamese authorities on the spot wanted him to see.<sup>86</sup>

Back in Washington, McNamara approached the war as he generally approached other problems—he sought to measure its progress quantifiably. Evidence abounds in the Pentagon Papers that while he routinely canvassed a range of opinion within the Defense Department, he tended to have the most confidence in the advice and recommendations that could be checked through statistical reckoning. Knowing McNamara’s preferences, subordinates tended to tailor programs and recommendations accordingly, stressing systems analysis techniques over less quantifiable means of assessing the war’s progress and possible outcome. A notable exception was William Bundy, head of military assistance planning in ISA, whose advice—usually in favor of stepped-up U.S. involvement—had a distinctively subjective cast. Yet for the most part, McNamara liked and relied on numbers. The use of statistical analysis, whether involving kill ratios, construction rates, frequency of incidents, or other indicators, proved an exceedingly controversial and imperfect way of monitoring the war, as McNamara himself later acknowledged, often because of misleading or erroneous numbers provided by the U.S. command in Saigon and the South Vietnamese government.<sup>87</sup>



All the same, throughout his tenure as Secretary of Defense, McNamara persisted in dealing with the war more as a managerial problem than as a foreign policy concern. With the right combination of initiatives and proper monitoring techniques, honestly applied, he believed that the United States would find a formula to prevail. No doubt such an attitude reflected his overall approach to running the Pentagon. Given the nature of the issues in Vietnam, the interplay of personalities, and the demands of the policy process, his involvement as a principal figure in the war was unavoidable. He came to exercise as commanding an influence as he did both because he wanted to and because he had little choice.

### **Assessing McNamara's Impact**

As the evolution of the Kennedy administration's Vietnam policy suggests, McNamara played a role in foreign affairs greater than that of any previous Secretary of Defense. For the record, he accepted the conventional wisdom that defense policy derived from foreign policy and that the Defense Department should serve and assist the State Department. But in day-to-day practice he generally followed his own lead, moving the Defense Department more into the forefront of the policy process than ever before. Whether, as some critics have argued, this was responsible for the further "militarization" of American foreign policy is questionable. Within the Pentagon, McNamara exercised a degree of civilian control that the military had never known and routinely used civilians in ISA and Systems Analysis to perform tasks previously reserved for the services or JCS.

The first and most important reason for McNamara's success in imposing his views and influence was that he and Kennedy enjoyed a closer and more cordial relationship than that between any previous President and his Secretary of Defense. What started in effect as an official business relationship quickly blossomed into a personal friendship. The closer they became, the more Kennedy

relied on McNamara's advice and judgment, not only on defense and security matters but also in other areas of national policy. For Kennedy's purposes, McNamara proved the ideal Secretary of Defense—loyal, tough-minded, energetic, dependable, and successful. He was everything that Kennedy wanted.

A further reason for McNamara's influence was that he presided over the Pentagon at a time of weak leadership at the State Department and diminished stature for the National Security Council. Kennedy wanted to be in closer touch with what was going on "down the line;" he thought he could achieve this by dismantling the NSC and turning what remained of it into a presidential staff under his Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, McGeorge Bundy. In the process, the President sacrificed orderliness of procedure and a proven mechanism for interagency coordination. He gained greater flexibility in dealing with problems and more ready access to the resources of the executive branch bureaucracy, including the Defense Department.

The weakness of the State Department was not anticipated. In fact, Kennedy wanted to bolster State and restore the ranking position and prestige it had enjoyed under George Marshall and Dean Acheson. Because of Secretary of State Rusk's muted departmental leadership, however, and his reluctance to show initiative in politico-military matters, Kennedy found himself turning increasingly to McNamara. Although Kennedy liked Rusk and respected his opinions, he considered him lacking in imagination and drive. At the same time, Rusk and McNamara worked well together, largely because there was no sense of rivalry between the two. All available evidence suggests they had a solid, generally productive relationship, but one in which McNamara was usually dominant through the force of his self-assured personality and his close relationship to the President.

The nature of the problems that prevailed during Kennedy's presidency made it practically impossible for McNamara to avoid

having a major role in foreign affairs. Kennedy wanted to relax Cold War tensions, but he was also committed to providing high-caliber security and thwarting Communist expansion. Achieving the latter objectives turned out to involve more reliance on military options than Kennedy anticipated, increasing his need for McNamara's assistance. Disdainful of the professional military to begin with, Kennedy felt the JCS had led him astray early in his presidency, during the Bay of Pigs episode; thereafter he gravitated toward sources of advice he judged more reliable—Maxwell Taylor, and, of course, McNamara, who shared the President's doubts about the military.

Although by the time of Kennedy's death it was unclear whether McNamara's involvement in foreign affairs was a permanent feature, certain trends were beginning to emerge. Not only was Defense operating on par with State in politico-military affairs, it also was undertaking policy initiatives that extended its influence well beyond defense-related issues. The waging of a major war during the five years of Lyndon Johnson's presidency would blur the lines between the foreign and defense policy more than ever. And McNamara would bear the brunt of responsibility as a leading proponent and chief architect of the war.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 129–131.

<sup>2</sup> The most recent biography of McNamara is Deborah Shapley, *Promise and Power: The Life and Times of Robert McNamara* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1993). See also Henry L. Trehitt, *McNamara* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971); Douglas Kinnard, *The Secretary of Defense* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980), 72–112; and Carl W. Borklund, *Men of the Pentagon: From Forrestal to McNamara* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), 206–236.

<sup>3</sup> Lawrence S. Kaplan, Ronald D. Landa, and Edward J. Drea, *The McNamara Ascendancy, 1961–1965* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense Historical Office, 2006), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Clark Clifford with Richard Holbrooke, *Counsel to the President: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1991), 460.

<sup>5</sup> See memo, A.P. Toner, ISA, for Robert H.B. Wade, director, Office of NSC Affairs, ISA, "NSC—Comments and Suggestions," 23 Jan 61; memo, Col Edward A. Bailey, acting special assistant for NSC Affairs, for Wade, "Operation of NSC Structure," 23 Jan 61; and memo, Wade for Nitze, "NSC," 25 Jan 61; all in OASD(ISA) records, 330-68A4024, Organization—NSC folder, box 7.

<sup>6</sup> Henry M. Jackson, ed., *The National Security Council: Jackson Subcommittee Papers on Policy-Making at the Presidential Level* (New York: Praeger, 1965), 3–71.

<sup>7</sup> Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 284; John Prados, *Keepers of the Keys: A History of the National Security Council from Truman to Bush* (New York: William Morrow, 1991), 102; Stanley L. Falk, "The National Security Council Under Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy," *Political Science Quarterly* 79 (September 1964): 428–433.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 123. Emphasis in original.

<sup>9</sup> Roswell L. Gilpatric, oral history interview by Maurice Matloff, 14 Nov 83, 12, OSD Oral History Collection.

<sup>10</sup> *Chronology of JCS Organization, 1945–1984* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs of Staff, December 1984), 178.

<sup>11</sup> Maxwell D. Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 196–197.

<sup>12</sup> William P. Bundy, “The National Security Process,” *International Security* 7 (Winter 1982/83): 100.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Stanley L. Falk and Theodore W. Bauer, *The National Security Structure* (Washington, DC: Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 1972), 47.

<sup>14</sup> Keith C. Clark and Laurence J. Legere, eds., *The President and the Management of National Security: A Report* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 77; U.S. Department of State, “Evolution of the Position of National Security Adviser, 1947–1980,” research project no. 1225, Office of the Historian, Department of State (April 1980), 4–5; and John C. Ausland and Col. Hugh F. Richardson, “Crisis Management: Berlin, Cyprus, Laos,” *Foreign Affairs* 44 (January 1966): 291–303.

<sup>15</sup> Gilpatric interview, 28.

<sup>16</sup> Edwin O. Guthman and Jeffrey Shulman, eds., *Robert Kennedy in His Own Words: The Unpublished Recollections of the Kennedy Years* (New York: Bantam Press, 1988), 46. For O’Donnell’s criticism, see David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1972), 247.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph G. Bock, *The White House Staff and the National Security Assistant—Friendship and Friction at the Water’s Edge* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987), 43–53.

<sup>18</sup> Bundy, “National Security Process,” 100.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Komer, quoted in I.M. Destler, “National Security Management: What Presidents Have Wrought,” *Political Science Quarterly* 95 (Winter 1980/81): 579.

<sup>20</sup> Clark and Legere, *The President and the Management of National Security*, 73–74; Bromley Smith, *Organizational History of the National Security Council during the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations* (Washington, DC: National Security Council, 1987), 37–38; Prados, *Keepers of the Keys*, 104–105; Department of State, “Evolution of National Security Adviser,” 4.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Thomas J. Schoenbaum, *Waging Peace and War: Dean Rusk in the Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson Years* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 329.

<sup>22</sup> Trehitt, *McNamara*, 168.

<sup>23</sup> See Robert H. Johnson, “The National Security Council: The Relevance of Its Past to Its Future,” *Orbis* 13 (Fall 1969): 718.

<sup>24</sup> John P. Burke and Fred I. Greenstein, *How Presidents Test Reality: Decisions on Vietnam, 1954 and 1965* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1989), 138–139. For the impact of the Acheson-Johnson feud on Rusk’s thinking, see Dean Rusk with Richard Rusk and Daniel S. Papp, *As I Saw It* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), 207, 521.

<sup>25</sup> Memo, Rusk to McNamara, 8 Nov 63, Mike Gravel, ed., *The Pentagon Papers: The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam*, 4 vol. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971–1972), II, 189. Also see Dean Rusk, oral history interview by Roger Trask and Maurice Matloff, 17 Jul 86, Athens, Georgia, 7–9, OSD Oral History Collection.

<sup>26</sup> Douglas Brinkley, *Dean Acheson: The Cold War Years, 1953–71* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 136–143; Barry Rubin, *Secrets of State: The State Department and the Struggle Over U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 98–122.

<sup>27</sup> Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 42.

<sup>28</sup> Rusk quoted in Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 285. Rusk also later said: “Arthur Schlesinger wrote in his *A Thousand Days* that in those meetings I used to sit like an old Buddha without saying anything. He was quite accurate in that, because when people like Arthur Schlesinger were in the room I kept my mouth shut. My arrangement would be that I would meet with the president either before or after such a meeting, often with Bob McNamara, just the three of us; and we’d talk over what had come up or what was coming up before any final decision was made.” Dean Rusk, “Reflections on Foreign Policy,” in Kenneth W. Thompson, ed., *The Kennedy Presidency* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 193.

<sup>29</sup> Robert McNamara, comments at meeting in OSD Historical Office, 29 Apr 94.

<sup>30</sup> Shapley, *Promise and Power*, 270.

<sup>31</sup> Walt W. Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power: An Essay in Recent History* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 174–175; Paul H. Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost: At the Center of Decision* (New York: Grove Press, 1989), 250–252.

<sup>32</sup> Robert McNamara, oral history interview by Alfred Goldberg and Maurice Matloff, 3 Apr 86, OSD Oral History Collection, 9.

<sup>33</sup> Clark and Legere, *The President and the Management of National Security*, 132.

<sup>34</sup> Roger Hilsman oral history interview, John F. Kennedy Library, cited in Rubin, *Secrets of State*, 118–119.

<sup>35</sup> Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, 407.

<sup>36</sup> Lemnitzer testimony, 14 Aug 61, in U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Hearings: Disarmament Agency*, 87:1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office [GPO], 1961), 70–78, and 28 Aug 61, in U.S. House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Hearings: To Establish a United States Arms Control Agency*, 87:1 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1961), 78–90.

<sup>37</sup> Rusk, *As I Saw It*, 251.

<sup>38</sup> Memo, Vance for Secys Military Depts et al., 17 Sep 65, sub: ASD(SA), OSD Historian's files; DoD Directive 5141.1, 17 Sep 65, sub: ASD(SA); Clark and Legere, *The President and the Management of National Security*, 176, 191.

<sup>39</sup> Robert McNamara, interview by Walt W. Rostow, 8 Jan 75, 11–12, Lyndon Baines Johnson Oral History Collection, LBJ Library.

<sup>40</sup> DoD Directive 5132.2, 20 May 1961, sub: ASD(ISA), ISA 1961–68 folder, OSD Historian's files.

<sup>41</sup> Letter, Rear Admiral John Lee, 18 May 84.

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1962* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1963), 386.

<sup>43</sup> Organization Chart, Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs), February 1963, OSD Historical files; Bigley, “The Office of International Security Affairs,” 66.

<sup>44</sup> Outline of remarks by Nitze to Foreign Service Institute, 8 February 1962, “ISA and Its Role in the Formulation and Execution of National Security Policy,” OSD Historian's files, ISA 1961–68 folder.

<sup>45</sup> Adam Yarmolinsky, *The Military Establishment* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1971), 34.

<sup>46</sup> Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost*, 196–208, 214–238.

<sup>47</sup> U. Alexis Johnson with Jef Olivarius McAllister, *The Right Hand of Power* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 318.

<sup>48</sup> NSAM 109, “U.S. Policy on Military Actions in a Berlin Conflict,” 20 Oct 61, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1961–63*, vol. 14 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1993), 521–523. Also see Jane E. Stromseth, *The Origins of Flexible Response: NATO's Debate over Strategy in the 1960s* (New York: St. Martin's, 1988).

<sup>49</sup> See Paul H. Nitze, “Office of the Secretary of Defense: International Security Affairs,” *Armed Forces Management* 10 (November 1963): 73, 76.

<sup>50</sup> Stewart Alsop, *The Center: People and Power in Political Washington* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 162–163.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in David Callahan, *Dangerous Capabilities: Paul Nitze and the Cold War* (New York: Edward Burlingame, 1990), 271.

<sup>52</sup> “McNamara Deputy Preparing to Quit,” *The New York Times*, 4 October 1963, 15.

<sup>53</sup> Charles A. Stevenson, *SECDEF: The Nearly Impossible Job of Secretary of Defense* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 2006), 26–29.

<sup>54</sup> See “Remarks by Sec. McNamara, NATO Ministerial Meeting, 14 December 1961,” 334 NATO Ministerial Meeting, OASD(ISA) central files, 330-64A2382, box 47.

<sup>55</sup> “Remarks by Sec. McNamara, NATO Ministerial Meeting, 5 May 1962,” 334 NATO Ministerial Meeting, OASD(ISA) central files, 330-65A3501, box 55; “Address at the Commencement Exercises of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan,” 16 June 1962, *McNamara Public Statements*, III, 1489–1496.

<sup>56</sup> See cable, McGeorge Bundy to McNamara, 1 May 1962, 334 NATO Ministerial Meeting, OASD(ISA) central files, 330-65A3501, box 55.

<sup>57</sup> Stromseth, *Origins of Flexible Response*, 175–194.

<sup>58</sup> See Harold Watkinson, *Turning Points: A Record of Our Times* (Norwich, Great Britain: Michael Russell Publishing, 1986), 149f.

<sup>59</sup> Trehitt, *McNamara*, 186–188.

<sup>60</sup> Alain C. Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much is Enough? Shaping the Defense Program, 1961–1969* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 243–262.

<sup>61</sup> McNamara interview, 3 Apr 86, 25–26.

<sup>62</sup> The best and most detailed account is Richard E. Neustadt, “Skybolt and Nassau: American Policy-Making and Anglo-American Relations,” report to President Kennedy, 15 November 1963. A condensed version appears in Richard E. Neustadt, *Alliance Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 30–55. For the British side, see Ian Clark, *Nuclear Diplomacy and the Special Relationship, 1957–62* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 338–373.

<sup>63</sup> Harold Macmillan, *At the End of the Day, 1961–1963* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 343–344, 357.

<sup>64</sup> Alistair Horne, *Harold Macmillan*, vol. II, 1957–1986 (New York: Viking, 1989), 434.

<sup>65</sup> See Peter Nailor, *The Nassau Connection: The Organization and Management of the British Polaris Project* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1988).

<sup>66</sup> Neustadt, “Skybolt and Nassau,” 62.

<sup>67</sup> Cited in Kaplan et al., *McNamara Ascendancy*, 180.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>69</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, 242.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>75</sup> Sheldon M. Stern, *The Cuban Missile Crisis in American Memory: Myth versus Reality* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 54–67.

<sup>76</sup> Memo, Lansdale to SecDef and DepSecDef, 17 January 1961, sub: Vietnam, in *United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967*, book 11, 3.

<sup>77</sup> NSAM 2, 3 Feb 61, sub: Development of Counter-Guerrilla Forces, *ibid.*, 17; memo, McNamara for CJCS, 10 Mar 61, sub: Use of S. Vietnamese Guerrillas in N. Vietnam, Vietnam 370.64 (Sensitive) folder, 330-71A6489, box 3.

<sup>78</sup> Memo, McNamara for Gilpatric, 20 Apr 61, *Pentagon Papers*, II, 31; *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1960–1968* (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1 July 1970), part I, chapter 2, 10–11.

<sup>79</sup> Memo, Bundy for McNamara, 12 Feb 62, subject: State-Defense Relationships re Vietnam, Vietnam 1962 (Sensitive) folder, 330-71A6489, box 3; William P. Bundy, “Kennedy and Vietnam,” in Kenneth W. Thompson, ed., *The Kennedy Presidency* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 243.

<sup>80</sup> Robert S. McNamara with Brian VanDeMark, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Times Books, 1995), 41.

<sup>81</sup> *JCS and Vietnam, 1960–1968*, part I, chapter 3, 12.

<sup>82</sup> At the time Walt Rostow was deputy special assistant to the President for national security affairs.

<sup>83</sup> Taylor to Kennedy, 1 Nov 61, *U.S.-Vietnam Relations*, book 11, 337–342.

<sup>84</sup> *Pentagon Papers*, II, 105–109.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 110–116.

<sup>86</sup> Halberstam, *Best and the Brightest*, 248–249.

<sup>87</sup> *Pentagon Papers*, II, 128–159; McNamara, *In Retrospect*, 34, 47–48. Also see Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1988), which deals at length with the corrupt and inept reporting coming out of Saigon.

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