

The US National Security Decision-making Process: An Overview

US National Security Policy
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Outline

- Constitutional Responsibilities
- Congressional Powers
- National Security Council (NSC)
- The Interagency Process (IA) & the Role of Interagency Task Forces (IATFs)
- National Security Policy

Questions We're Asking

- Concern 1: Discuss the constitutional roots of American strategic thinking and how they affect U.S. national security decision-making.
- Concern 2: Examine the roles of the Congress and the Executive Branch in the creation and execution of strategy and policy.

Constitutional Responsibilities

- A shared responsibility under U.S. Constitution
 - Both Congress and the president have responsibilities for national security and foreign relations.
 - “National defense and foreign relations” of the U.S. is a broad and vague concept
 - Perspectives are separate, competing, and come from differing institutional viewpoints.
 - Both act as adversaries and allies in establishing national security strategy and policy
 - The president’s authority is at its maximum when he acts pursuant to an expressed or implied authorization from Congress

Constitutional Responsibilities

- No hard and fast rules about roles
- Some Constitutional principles:
 - “Ambition must be made to counteract ambition”
 - “In republican government, the legislative authority necessarily predominates”
 - A representative assembly is less a threat to the rights of citizens and to the other branches than is the unitary office of the president

Constitutional Responsibilities

- As we've seen, Presidential authority has grown:
 - Serves as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces;
 - Negotiates treaties, which must be ratified by the Senate;
 - Nominates U.S. ambassadors and other public officials requiring Senate confirmation;
 - Commissions all the officers of the U.S. and receives foreign ambassadors and other Prime Ministers, Public Ministers;

Constitutional Responsibilities

- Congressional authority
 - Power to lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defense
 - To raise and support armies, to provide for and maintain a navy
 - To regulate commerce with foreign nations
 - Impeach and try the president and U.S. officers
 - Exclusive power to declare war

Congressional Powers

- Limits the size and weapons of military forces through public laws
 - Places organizational and procedural controls over their operations
- Places legal restrictions of the use of the military and has tried other techniques to determine the conduct and activities of the armed forces
- Enacts statutory restrictions and imposes other controls on intelligence agencies

Concern 2

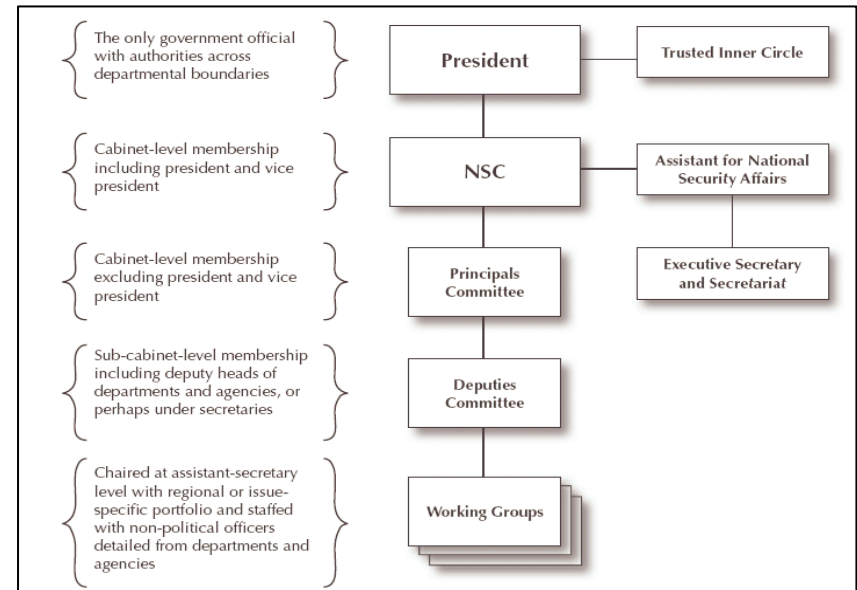
- Describe the purpose of the NSC in U.S. national security decision-making.
- Relate the basic fundamentals of how the interagency process works with how national security policy is created and articulated through that process.

Purpose of the NSC

- Advise President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, & military policies relating to national security
 - Process to coordinate executive departments & agencies in policy development & implementation
 - Works in conjunction with the National Economic Council (NEC)

Role of the National Security Council (NSC)

The NSC was established in 1947 to advise presidents on the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies into a unifying national security policy.



National Security Council System Organization

“When the [NSC] process works well, it produces clear policy statements that guide the actions of the executive branch.”

Role of the NSC, cont'd

The NSC system uses a collaborative Inter-Agency (IA) process to inform and engage the departments and agencies that wield the instruments of power, including Department of State and Department of Defense.

By properly employing the NSC, the next president can extend his reach, magnify his vision, and amplify his energy in furthering national security.

The National Security Council (NSC)

- **Original purpose, more detailed:**
 - To advise and assist the President on national security and foreign policies.
 - The Council is also the President's principal arm for coordinating these policies among various government agencies.
- **Specifically, the NSC has the duties of:**
 - Acting as the President's personal staff
 - Leading agency for crisis response management and contingency planning
 - Overseeing the interagency process
 - Supervising the implementation of policy

The NSC, cont'd

- Statutory members
 - The President
 - Vice President
 - Secretary of State
 - Secretary of Defense
- Statutory advisors
 - Chairman of the Joint Chiefs
 - Director of the Central Intelligence Agency
 - Additional members such as the National Security Advisor, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Attorney General

Also, we have the NSC staff (Executive Secretariat) in a support role

NSC Meetings

- Meet at President's direction
 - Regular attendees: Pres, VP, SecState, SecTreas, SecDef, NSA
 - Statutory advisors: DCI, CJCS
 - Others: COS to the Pres, Asst to the Pres for Econ Policy
 - Pertaining to their responsibilities: Atty General & Director, OMB

The Interagency (IA) Process

- Key element here of how policy actually gets going & gets done
- The “Principals” Committee
- The “Deputies” Committee

IA Process, cont'd

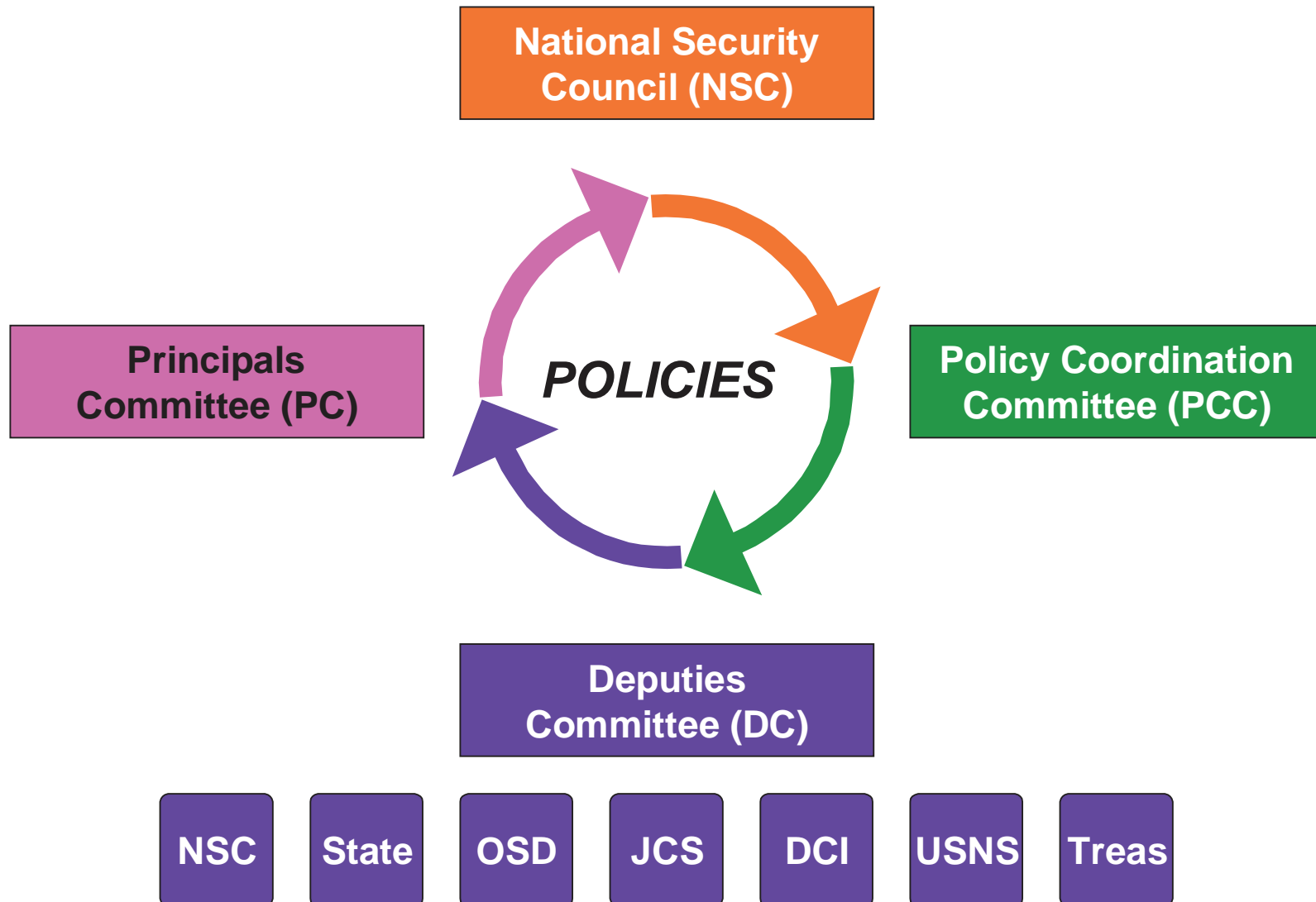
- The “Principals” Committee:
 - Senior forum of Cabinet level representatives who address national security issues
- The “Deputies” Committee:
 - Assistant Secretary level officials
 - monitor the work of the interagency policy formulation and articulation process,
 - Manage crises
 - Push unresolved issues to the Principals for resolution

IA Process, cont'd

- NSC Policy Coordination Committees (NSC/PCCs or NSC-PCCs):
 - Chairman of specific NSC/PCC determines membership.
 - NSC/PCCs & subordinate working groups that do a majority of the work
 - Coordinating, de-conflicting, analyzing, and reporting.

How the Interagency Process Works

(According to NSPD-1)



IA Process, cont'd

- Interagency stakeholders
 - Related by functional interdependence;
 - Different resources, personnel, and expertise that must be integrated in order for policy to be effective
 - The “Iron rule:” No national security or international affairs issue can be resolved by one agency alone

National Security Policy-Making

- National security policy developed in the interagency process is articulated through:
 - National Security Strategy (NSS); &
 - Presidential Directives (PDs); &
 - Presidential Decision Directives (PDDs); &
 - National Security Decision Directives (NSDDs)
 - Still others (see the next slide)

National Security Policy-Making

- Presidential directives:
 - Bush: National Security Presidential Directives (NSPDs)
 - Clinton: Presidential Decision Directives (PDDs)
 - Bush 79: National Security Directives (NSDs)
 - Reagan: National Security Decision Memoranda (NSDMs)

National Security Decision Making

- Summary Thus Far:
 - Constitutional Responsibilities
 - Congressional Powers
 - National Security Council (NSC)
 - The Interagency Process (IA)
 - National Security Policy-Making
- Key Weakness, Challenge:
 - The lack of statutory authority to task other governmental agencies BUT the necessity of needing other agencies to accomplish policies.
 - How do deal with this?

Part II

Background for Reform of the NSC:
Challenges & Points to Remember

Background: Challenges & Points to Remember

- National Security Decision-Making
 - Sources of decision-making power
 - Original purpose of the NSC
 - Articulation of National Security Policy
 - Challenges for actually getting agencies “on-board” & willing to complete or enact policies.

“Achieving unity of effort requires orchestration of all instruments of national power at all levels of government.”

What to do in the First Year

The first year of a president's administration provides the greatest, and perhaps only, opportunity to set the administration's national security agenda – How so?



U.S. Presidential Seal

“The NSC mechanism is the president’s most direct mechanism for control and change. To not engage is to virtually guarantee policy failure in implementation.”

Backgrounder: Challenges, cont'd

There are several actions the president can take to reduce the risk of delays, coordination, & missteps:

1. Determine your approach to national security management as you are considering cabinet nominees.
2. Center policy formulation in the NSC, at least initially.
3. Direct the State Department to establish explicit bodies for oversight of policy implementation and for coordination of day-to-day operations.
4. Continue with the organization established by George H. W. Bush and adopted by successive post-Cold War presidents.

Background: Challenges, cont'd

5. Issue a Presidential Directive (PD) on Inauguration Day announcing the organization of your NSC (NSPD-1).
6. Defer reduction of the NSC staff until your administration's second year.
7. Resist temptation to effect a clean sweep of NSC staff and to overload the NSC staff with partisans.
8. Initiate a series of policy reviews to set the agenda and to begin building the interagency teams that will support you during crisis management.

Backgrounder: Challenges, cont'd

9. Use the NSC Inter-Agency (IA) process to thoroughly engage the expertise resident in the executive branch and direct its energies.
10. Seek advice beyond the NSC, and use the NSC's process to extend your reach, magnify your vision, and amplify your energy.

The current Administration faces a major challenge in updating & organizing Nat'l Security for changes in conflict & challenges for the 21st century:

11. Thus, a new Administration, needs to foster a public debate on national security strategy.

Background: Challenges, cont'd

12. “Balance” the instruments of national power (“hard” & “soft” powers).
13. Align the instruments of national power within the departments and agencies to facilitate their orchestration and to produce unity of effort.
14. Preserve congressional confidence in the NSC.



Congress with a view to the White House

“The chief executive initiates change; Congress institutionalizes change. For policies to survive, Congress must take ownership.”

Why Are These Changes Needed? Recent Trends from Previous NSC Systems

A recent assessment of the NSC organization & its DM processes since its inception 60 years ago concluded:

1. Cold War administrations experimented with new NSC organizations with little positive effect. Post-Cold War administrations achieved organizational stability.
2. The long-term trend in NSC staff size is toward growth as policy work shifts out of the departments & into the NSC.

“Administrations that did not continuously monitor the departments and agencies for compliance with policy often saw their well-crafted policies fail in implementation.”

Recent Trends, cont'd

3. Formulating policy & overseeing its implementation are necessary, sufficient functions for the NSC system.
4. Presidents have used the NSC less for advice and more for engaging the expertise of the departments and agencies in a collaborative interagency process.
5. Policies formulated in the administration's first year have the greatest chance of success in implementation.

“Secretaries of state, presidents, and presidents’ assistants for national security affairs have all vied for the role of chief enunciator of foreign policy. Without a clear assignment of roles and missions, destructive competitions develop.”

Recent Trends, cont'd

6. Presidents manage national security either centrally from the White House or distributed through cabinet government.
7. Destructive competitions have developed for the lead role in foreign policy formulation and presentation.
8. Cold War administrations were relatively stable in Nat'l Security strategy under Containment. Post-Cold War strategies have fluctuated dramatically with no consensus or stability in sight.
8. Cold War administrations were relatively stable in Nat'l Security strategy under Containment. Post-Cold War strategies have fluctuated dramatically with no consensus or stability in sight.
9. Post-Cold War state-building operations have exposed flaws & were designed for an era of great power conflict. Today, the applicable instruments of national power are more diverse and out of balance, and their orchestration increasingly problematic.