STRENGTHENING MULTIPLE ADVOCACY IN THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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Adam R. Olszowka, B.A.

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Adam R. Olszowka, B.A.

Thesis Advisor: Alexander T.J. Lennon, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT:
How can multiple advocacy be strengthened in the National Security Council, (NSC)? To answer this question, I first explain what multiple advocacy is and how the NSC functions. Next I describe the role of the NSC in US national security policymaking, and I explain the benefits of multiple advocacy in the NSC. I identify three key factors for evaluating multiple advocacy and then using those factors (broadly conceived as individuals, relationships, and process) I use a comparative case study model to analyze the NSC under National Security Advisors Henry Kissinger (1968-1975) and Condoleezza Rice (2001-2005). Drawing conclusions from the case studies, I offer four suggestions on ways to strengthen multiple advocacy which include the adoption of an honest broker role by the NSA, the institutionalization of two additional forms of advocacy including devil’s and resourcing, and the establishment of an annual NSC review process. I conclude that the key goal is creating a culture of multiple advocacy in the NSC, which is shaped by the honest broker role of the NSA in combination with the personalities and relationships of the president and principals. Understanding the conditions in which multiple advocacy was created in the NSC and under which conditions it was effective should help guide future presidents and advisors to better coordinate and execute US national security policy.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

“The absence of alternatives clears the mind marvelously.”
-Henry Kissinger

It is unlikely that Henry Kissinger has ever faced a lack of mental alternatives. His keen intellect and reputation as a master statesman reveal a man who was endlessly calculating alternatives. However, as National Security Advisor, (NSA), Secretary of State, or even as Nixon’s consigliore, ultimately he needed to convince the President to follow his advice. Thus it is not hard to imagine why Kissinger would extol the benefits of an “absence of alternatives.” Choosing amongst alternatives, or decision making, is an increasingly important topic in security studies and foreign affairs. Decision making in complex organizations like the US government can involve dozens if not hundreds of individuals all competing to influence a decision; advocating for their ideas, departments and policies. In matters of national security it is vital to hear a range of perspectives and draw upon all resources of the government as individual and departmental advocates have specific areas of expertise, and ultimately they are responsible for executing the decisions the president makes. Multiple advocacy, this iterative process of aggregation, coordination and decision making, is the raison d’être of the National Security Council, (NSC). While multiple advocacy’s value to the NSC process may seem self-evident, it has neither fared as well as it could nor been embraced as it should. In this paper I will try to answer how multiple advocacy can be strengthened in the NSC.

To understand and ultimately strengthen multiple advocacy in the NSC, I will first explain what multiple advocacy is and what the NSC does. I will also provide a brief overview of the current literature on multiple advocacy and the NSC; explain my methodological approach; and then show how this paper contributes to the existing literature. Building upon the largely separate literatures on multiple advocacy and the NSC, I identify how 1) the typology of
the NSA, 2) the relationship of the president and the principals and 3) the process impact each other and multiple advocacy. I will then analyze multiple advocacy in the NSC through two case studies: the tenures of National Security Advisors Henry Kissinger (1968-1975) and Condoleezza Rice (2001-2005). Finally, using the case studies, I am able to show how and why multiple advocacy functioned as it did and how it can be strengthened.

While the performance of multiple advocacy in the NSC has been erratic, the relative ease in which the NSC can be redesigned means that it is possible to try (and when need recalibrate) different policies for strengthening multiple advocacy. Such attempts can transform multiple advocacy from an iterative process into an evolutionary one. In the conclusion and policy prescription section, based on my analysis of the case studies, I offer four suggestions on ways to strengthen multiple advocacy in the NSC which include having an NSA as honest broker, institutionalizing two additional forms of advocacy including devil’s and resourcing advocacy, and conducting an annual NSC review. My analysis and recommendations revolve around three interrelated components: individuals, relationships and process that collectively impact the culture of multiple advocacy. Improving an organization requires more than just changing processes or issuing new manuals; ultimately it requires choosing the right individuals based on their qualifications and based on how those individuals will work in the NSC process. Choosing the right individuals and managing those relationships will be unique in each NSC, but I point out some warning signs from the tenures of Kissinger and Rice.

**Significance of the Project**

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1 For example, the position of the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, commonly known as the National Security Advisor is not Senate confirmable, [National Security Act of 1947, P.L. 80-235, 61 Stat 496] (c), the NSC has a broad statutory mandate, the NSA’s sole constituency is the president and the president can redesign and re-staff the NSC as they please.
I accept the value and centrality of multiple advocacy in an interagency process like the NSC. And despite the uniqueness of the NSC, it operates in the same institutional and ideological universe as the rest of the American government. My analysis is not about applying a foreign or artificial theory to the NSC, but rather reframing multiple advocacy as inherent in the NSC policymaking process. One need not look any further than the 51st Federalist Paper to see why multiple advocacy should be viewed as central to national security policymaking:

This policy of supplying, by opposite and rival interests, the defect of better motives, might be traced through the whole system of human affairs, private as well as public. We see it particularly displayed in all the subordinate distributions of power, where the constant aim is to divide and arrange the several offices in such a manner as that each may be a check on the other that the private interest of every individual may be a sentinel over the public rights.\(^2\)

Much as America’s founders devised a system of checks and balances in our tripartite and republican government, multiple advocacy should guide our national security policymaking in the NSC. Multiple advocacy is about combining different views and institutional powers, not dividing them, but the mechanism and philosophy are similar. However, multiple advocacy is neither a silver bullet nor to be taken for granted as self-sustaining or inevitable.

This paper is not meant to be a comprehensive study of multiple advocacy nor of the NSC; by definition that would require a study of all the theoretical literature on decision making and all the NSCs. That is too general. However, the two case studies I have chosen prove illustrative because they highlight important areas of consistency and contrast of multiple advocacy in the NSC. This paper is also not meant to be an analysis of the merits of specific policies produced by the NSC. That is too specific. It is useful to analyze the NSC not solely on the merits of the policies produced, but rather the individuals, relationships and processes that produced them. While ultimately the ends matter, the means, the constituent parts of NSC

\(^2\) Hamilton, Alexander, or James Madison. Federalist No. 51: "The Structure of the Government Must Furnish the Proper Checks and Balances Between the Different Departments." New York Packet, (February 8, 1788).
policymaking are my focus. A good policy cannot just be cloned and reissued as the international context is too dynamic. However, by understanding how an NSC produced good policy, future policymakers are better positioned to design systems that will meet their specific needs and regularly produce good or at least carefully vetted policy. Perhaps just as importantly, future presidents and advisors can avoid processes that have regularly produced bad or ill-considered policy in the past. David Rothkopf summarized it best in his study of the NSC:

The reason for the success of the first Bush presidency’s foreign policy team had a lot to do with the failures and struggles of the NSC through their professional careers. The Kissinger-Nixon obsession with secrecy, the Kissingerian ubermensch-centric policy processes, the Vance-Brzezinski and Schultz-Weinberger battles, the perils of operationalism that led to Iran-Contra, the paranoia of Nixon, the micromanagement of Carter, and the disconnectedness of Reagan all were the signposts indicating what paths not to take.\(^3\)

However, the “signposts” erected and followed through the multiple tenures of Bush’s experienced NSC team might not be recognized or even useful to future NSCs. How can these “signposts” be institutionalized and updated so that they continue to point the way? In my concluding section, I provide concrete policy recommendations that will do just that.

The NSC, with its erratic (and under examined) evolution, may have served the US well enough during the Cold War, but as the US lacked an overall strategy in the 1990s and has struggled to define one since 9/11, much of the blame must lie with the institution responsible for national security policymaking: the NSC. Moreover, what I see as an unstoppable trend, the need for greater coordination amongst US agencies will demand a better coordinated response from the White House, more effectively and efficiently drawing upon all the resources of the government. To do this will require the NSC to learn from its past. This requires more thorough analysis of where, why and when the NSC has functioned well, the role multiple advocacy

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played in this process and how to institutionalize this understanding so the NSC will evolve, and multiple advocacy will be adopted as the best means to both articulate and achieve US national security ends.

CHAPTER II: MULTIPLE ADVOCACY AND THE NSC

Jeffrey Pfeffer, professor of organizational behavior defined multiple advocacy as “instead of utilizing centralized management practices to discourage or neutralize internal disagreement over policy, an executive can use a multiple advocacy model to harness diversity of views and interests in the interest of rational policy making.”4 In reaction to what some saw as the dangers of group dynamics leading to both overconfidence and a lack of due diligence in decision making, a phenomenon known as groupthink,5 scholars and policy makers have increasingly looked at the advisory systems that support and influence decision making, particularly presidential decision making. Classic examples of poor decisions partially attributed to groupthink include the Bay of Pigs expedition of 1961 and America’s escalation of the war in Vietnam. Drawing on these examples, political science professor and noted behavioral scientist Alexander George was an early articulator and advocate of multiple advocacy in national security policymaking.6 To George, multiple advocacy could utilize the full resources of the government and provide an antidote to groupthink. George argued for a “loose decision structure in which the executive moderates a diversity of views.”7 Ideally, multiple advocacy allows a vetting process of ideas and ensures no worthy idea fails to receive a fair hearing because of bureaucratic politics or personnel conflicts. Quite logically, as articulated by George

5 "A mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members’ strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action." (Irving Janis, Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign Policy Decisions and Fiascos, 1982), 9.
6 See Alexander George’s “The Case for Multiple Advocacy in Foreign Policy Making” (1972).
7 Mintz and DeRouen, “Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making”, 48.
and Stern, "ceteris paribus, groups that are more diverse will be able to draw on a wider base of knowledge and experience in formulating and coping with policy problems." Building on this definition, Harvard business and government professor Roger Porter describes multiple advocacy as "a managed process relying on an honest broker to ensure that interested parties are represented and that the debate is structured and balanced."9

Scholars have rightfully identified some of the preconditions and limits of multiple advocacy. For multiple advocacy to function effectively, scholars have put forth three conditions; “(1) intellectual (information, competence, technical support) and bureaucratic (bargaining skills, status, power) resources are evenly distributed, (2) the executive actively monitors the multiple-advocacy process; and (3) there is adequate time for debate and bargaining.”10 In addition, there are potential drawbacks to multiple advocacy, which include a loss of speed, a loss of secrecy, a degraded ability to accurately assess risk, a phenomenon known as risky shift,11 and the possibility the group produces a policy of the lowest common denominator, or settling on the policy option that is equally innocuous to all parties and therefore faces the least opposition. Potential drawbacks of multiple advocacy must be identified if they are to be addressed when designing and running the NSC.

The NSC was created in 1947 to replace the ad hoc national security policymaking of the US government going back to WWI.12 It was recognized that the government needed to establish “organizational mechanisms to analyze the international environment, identify

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8 George and Stern, “Harnessing Conflict in Foreign Policy”, 485.
10 Mintz and DeRouen, 48.
11 Risky Shift- A type of group polarization, risky shift is defined as the difference between the mean level of risk taken by certain individuals facing a certain decision and the level of risk reflected in a decision made on the same question by a group composed of those same individuals. In a 1986 paper, D. J. Rothwell hypothesized that risky shift is attributable to individuals' exposure in a group setting to facts more psychologically alarming and opinions more extreme than those they would encounter or formulate on their own.
12 The NSC was restructured in 1949 by (P.L. 81-216).
priorities, and recommend appropriate policy options." The NSC was created as part of the National Security Act of 1947 to facilitate executive policy coordination, creation and implementation. Moreover, “Congress believed that if formal interagency consultative structures were established, intelligence and policy would be better coordinated, and experienced voices would be present to advise the president on important decisions.”

The NSC includes of course the President, as well as the Vice President, Secretaries of State and Defense, National Security Advisor and other cabinet and executive officials. This group of individuals plays an increasingly powerful role and it is important to understand how their views, interests and expertise are brought to bear on creating and executing policy in an interagency forum. NSC participants, particularly cabinet members, are essentially advocates, for not only what they see as the best policy, but for their own ideas, departments, and yes, careers. Collectively the NSC staff present an array of options for the president, embodying the very idea of multiple advocacy. As issues requiring the president’s attention and/or related to national security multiply and become more complicated, requiring more and more coordination amongst agencies, the importance of the NSA and NSC will continue to grow. Individuals in the NSC as well as the bureaucratic politics that they generate play a role in the policymaking process, both positive and negative. As I will demonstrate in the case studies, individuals can

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15 http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/nsc/ (For a more comprehensive list see Appendix I.)
16 For more information on the changing role of the NSA and NSC see the Brookings National Security Council Project. (Two graphs from the Brooking Project are reproduced in Appendix II.)
17 Bureaucratic Politics: the theory that public policy decisions can be made based on the motivation of officials in government bureaucracy to promote their own agency’s interests rather than on the net benefit of any specific policy. For more information on bureaucratic politics see Essence of Decision by Graham Allison and Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy by Clapp, Halperin, Kanter.
overwhelm or undermine multiple advocacy. How can the NSC respond to such challenges while still reflecting the interests and incorporating the expertise of a vast bureaucracy?

CHAPTER III: MULTIPLE ADVOCACY IN THE NSC

The answers thus far in the literature are not particularly encouraging nor have they sufficiently accounted for the culture of multiple advocacy in the NSC. However, NSC experts including I.M. Destler, Ivo H. Daalder and David Rothkopf have produced sweeping and insightful studies of the NSC. While these and other works do not satisfactorily address the role of multiple advocacy in the NSC, they do get at the issue tangentially through the lens of honest brokerage. It is important to understand this issue of honest brokerage as I find from my case studies, the NSA typology is the lynchpin of the multiple advocacy system.

In the subcategory of literature looking at honest brokerage, the best work being done is by professor John P. Burke, expert on the American presidency. Burke provides a framework of analysis centering on a normative NSA as an honest broker. Burke outlines the variables that have been the focus of study for decision making in national security policy: “the organization and structure of decision making process, the impact of presidential personality, management and leadership style, the development and effects of a White House-centered institutional presidency, the presence of bureaucratic politics and group dynamics, and the consequence of rational actors operating within institutionally defined parameters.” He wisely employs analytical tools borrowed from the richer field of the study of decision making. Burke also

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21 Burke, III.
identifies the lack of attention on “how the particular roles of the participants in presidential
decision-making process are defined and operate.” More importantly for other researchers
trying to compare different councils and advisors, Burke tries to get at how one can account for
the rapidly changing internal and external variables that impact decision making in the NSC. Burke looks specifically at how the honest broker role facilitates multiple advocacy and
presidential decision making, building on the typology of NSA advisors broken down by
“policy-making responsibility,” “implementation responsibility” and “levels of activism” and
categorized as administrator, coordinator, counselor or agent accordingly.

In my analysis of multiple advocacy, I build on this literature by placing the role of the NSA as
honest broker in a larger context of the individuals, relationships and process.

A few scholars have done work on the role of multiple advocacy in the NSC. I.M. Destler
challenges the multiple advocacy argument Alexander George put forward in his 1972 paper
“The Case for Multiple Advocacy in Making Foreign Policy.” Destler wisely raises the issue of

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22 Burke, 1.
23 Burke, 3.
how much process alone can create multiple advocacy in the NSC. Looking at Nixon and Kissinger, Deslter uses as evidence how Nixon’s formal procedures and structured system was only influential “to the extent they are built around officials who have influence independent of the system, otherwise they degenerate into ‘paper mills.’” Destler also questions whether an honest broker (in the form of the NSA) has enough leverage to manage the multiple advocacy system effectively and whether the net effect of such a system is limited by the impact of presidential decision making. Scholars and practitioners have long studied this issue of the connection between executive decision and bureaucratic implementation. No less a figure than US Diplomat and Soviet expert George Kennan remarked on the challenges of executing decisions; “what the foreign affairs segment of the government needs is not primarily a National Security Council paper but intimate day-by-day, hour-by-hour direction…Its needs…to be ridden herd on.” In my analysis of the NSC culture, I will analyze what if any impact these limitations had at an aggregate level in the NSC under Kissinger and Rice.

The NSC, whether at its most rigid under Eisenhower, its most informal under Kennedy or most disorganized under Reagan is ultimately an institution comprised of a small number of individuals whose personalities, relationships and decisions have a huge impact on policy. Can an institution that thrives on largely undocumented debate and exists at the nexus of the national security and interagency process be parsed and analyzed? How can something as fluid and iterative as multiple advocacy be measured systematically? The existing literature on

26 Destler, 786.
multiple advocacy in the NSC, or lack thereof, might lead one to believe that such a topic is too murky for either rigorous academic analysis or to draw general theories. Specifically because politically it is damaging for advocates to continue to advocate a policy or a contrarian position after a policy has been chosen by the president. While such dissenting opinions often leak to the press, public feuds between officials or departments are widely recognized as damaging to an administration, undermining of the mission and unwelcomed by the White House. This makes it hard for anyone other than the president to understand the “whole picture” or account for the entire multiple advocacy process.

As the literature on the NSC evolves, the role of multiple advocacy should become a core issue in the discipline. However, when studying the NSC, it is important to recognize that multiple advocacy is not a constant, rather it ebbs and flows based on circumstances. While each decision facing the NSC is different, decisions are often related and to understand the decision making process requires an aggregate assessment. So while I analyze multiple advocacy through three key factors, I study multiple advocacy at an aggregate, NSC systems level as it is more revealing than looking at individual decisions tied to specific policies. David Brooks, public intellectual and New York Times columnist wrote an interesting column on different kinds of organizational systems, and he identified one that is useful when analyzing the NSC: emergent systems. Brooks wrote:

We often try to understand problems by taking apart and studying their constituent parts. But emergent problems can’t be understood this way. Emergent systems are ones in which many different elements interact. The pattern of interaction then produces a new element that is greater than the sum of the parts, which then exercises a top-down influence on the constituent elements. Culture is an emergent system. A group of people establishes a pattern of interaction. And once that culture exists, it influences how the individuals in it behave….Emergent systems are bottom-up and top-down simultaneously. They have to be studied differently, as wholes and as nested networks of relationships.  

Any one decision can be made through an *ad hoc* multiple advocacy process, but because of the competing interests, complexities of coordination, and number of decisions, it is more useful to look at an aggregate level, or the NSC’s culture, to understand how an administration regularly makes decisions.\(^{32}\)

Of the many factors influencing the role of multiple advocacy in the NSC, there are three key ones: 1) the typology of the NSA 2) the relationship of the president and the principals 3) the process. Not only are these factors interrelated, but they are interdependent and dynamic. This is especially true of the NSA typology, as it impacts the entire NSC culture. In the next section I will provide a brief description of these three factors.

**National Security Advisor Typology**  From the four-fold classification of advisor roles: administrator, coordinator (honest broker), counselor, and agent\(^{33}\) there is a growing consensus that the honest broker model is best suited for running a modern, efficient NSC. I accept this argument and think that the NSA should adopt the role of coordinator/honest broker as his or her primary role, as one purpose of the NSC is to coordinate an interagency process that allows for multiple advocacy. An NSA serving as a coordinator/honest broker, avoiding the primary role of agent, can prevent multiple role disorder by retaining some measure of distance and impartiality. Furthermore, the mutual dependence of the NSA and the principals and their departments should encourage comity, compromise and dialogue. Brent Scowcroft, NSA to George H.W. Bush, served as the model honest broker. In Scowcroft’s words, the principals need to “have faith that they’re being fairly represented in your discussions with the president. And that you are telling

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\(^{32}\) The idea of a “national security culture” has its own body of evolving literature that is beyond the scope of this paper. For more information on this topic see *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* which looks at aggregate or macro levels the interaction of national security components that affect the culture of national security.

\(^{33}\) Political scientists Cecil V. Crabb and Kevin V. Mulcahy devised this useful four-fold classification of advisor roles in *American National Security: A Presidential Perspective*.  

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them the things they need to know that the president tells you.” Scowcroft’s honest broker approach is best captured by an overriding ethos: “foreign policy creation and management is a collaborative art form.” In the case studies I will analyze how Kissinger and Rice’s role compared to Scowcroft’s, how they fit into the NSA typology and how each role served the NSA and the NSC. While each advisor has shifting responsibilities and may have shifted roles, the primary role adoption and identification are crucial, especially from the perspective of other participants in the interagency process.

President and the Principals—While the NSA is the mechanism for creating and sustaining multiple advocacy in the NSC, ultimately the president and the principals choose or reject multiple advocacy. Beyond appointing the NSA, the president is the only check on an errant NSA, and he is best able to influence two other factors: the principals and the process. However, there is no training course for the presidency and no manual for running the NSC. Each president brings with them a different style of leadership, a different method for decision-making and a different set of skills and experiences. While presidents need to (and should) create an NSC that they think will best serve them (and in turn the country), presidents should study previous NSCs, adopt the components that worked well and adapt to the requirements that worked well but may from the outset seem restrictive. As I described previously, the NSC is a product of its staff and cabinet members. But unlike the simple gears of a clock, the cabinet members have their own fiefdoms, constituencies and responsibilities. Moreover, most of them are well aware of the other elements in the NSC, and often they have long histories, memories and relationships. It is useful to think of the principals as ingredients in a cocktail, each ingredient reacting with the others, with the ability to overwhelm the drink, or worse, spoil it.

34 Brzezinski and Scowcroft, 270.
35 Rothkopf, 265.
Thus it is in the interests of the president and NSA to choose NSC members who are qualified in their own right, but complementary and in proportion.

**Process**—The NSC process is as erratic and varied as the NSC participants, ranging from intimate, Tuesday lunches under L.B.J. to freewheeling discussions under Clinton. There is the structure and process on paper, and then there is how the president, NSA and principals actually use or abuse that structure and process. The first responsibility of an incoming NSA is to issue a memorandum establishing a new NSC. These are usually similar in they define the NSC’s structure and revoke all NSC memos from the previous administration. The process is arguably the least important of the three factors in creating multiple advocacy. A broken process can help explain why multiple advocacy was weak, but a well designed process alone will not create multiple advocacy, however it can strengthen a culture of multiple advocacy. Once again, the NSC of George H.W. Bush and Scowcroft is instructive. In his memoir, Bush explains his plan on being personally involved in foreign policy issues, his desire to have strong people to whom he could delegate, and most importantly, because of the personality conflicts and turf disputes he had seen in previous administrations, he was “determined to make our decision-making structure and procedure…so well defined that we would minimize the chances of such problems.”

An NSC process that allows participation of key players and agencies; an open forum for communication and dispute resolution; accountability; protected lines of communication to the president; clearly defined areas of responsibility and authority; and tiered levels of discussion and debate are all required but not sufficient for multiple advocacy. Having

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36 For more information on LBJ’s decision making system, see Henry F’ Graff’s *The Tuesday Cabinet: Deliberation and Decision on Peace and War Under Lyndon B. Johnson*. For descriptions of NSC conversations with President Clinton see *All to Human: A Political Education* by George Stephanopoulos (pg 140).

37 For a list of declassified National Security Council documents by administration, visit [http://www.brookings.edu/projects/archive/nsc/directives.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/projects/archive/nsc/directives.aspx)

explained multiple advocacy, in the next section I will analyze how the NSC operated under Henry Kissinger and Condoleezza Rice.

CHAPTER IV: CASE STUDIES

THE NSC UNDER HENRY KISSINGER (1968-1975)

Henry Kissinger, who served as National Security Advisor from December 2, 1968- November 3, 1975, and concurrently as Secretary of State starting on September 21, 1973, is not normally associated with multiple advocacy, or at least not positively. The popular perception of the period is of Nixon and Kissinger, together or alone, designing and executing realist foreign policy like two chess masters. Both Nixon and Kissinger are credited for significant foreign policy achievements including ending America’s involvement in Vietnam, ushering in a period of détente with the Soviet Union, and opening relations with China. So how did multiple advocacy fare in this dynamic period? In the next section I explain how each of the three factors impacted multiple advocacy in the Kissinger NSC, starting with the most important and influential factor, the typology of the national security advisor.

National Security Advisor Typology- Political scientists Cecil Crabb and Kevin Mulcahy classify Kissinger as an agent, which they define as combining “the duties of coordinator (director the planning process) with those of a counselor (serving as a personal presidential advisor.)”39 This role puts the NSA in a position to dominate the national security process while serving as a public face of the administration. In Kissinger’s case this meant sidelining Secretary of State Rogers. This was a calculated move as both Nixon and Kissinger had distrust of, if not outright contempt for the State Department.40 Kissinger, despite his outsized role, did not

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39 Crabb, 142.
40 Nixon’s colorful and offensive language captures both his contempt for the State Department and represents his larger attitude towards multiple advocacy. Nixon reportedly told his staff that it was the White House that would be
abandon multiple advocacy, but rather he restructured it, institutionalized in a rigorous memo writing process with Kissinger instead of Nixon being the terminal point of the multiple advocacy process. Ultimately, Kissinger then represented the collective interests to Nixon alone. At the heart of this process was the National Security Council Review Group, chaired by Kissinger, which was designed to examine all policy proposals prior to their submission and to ensure all realistic alternatives were presented.  

Much has been written on how the Nixon-Kissinger relationship was the axis on which the administration turned. So while there was a great deal of planning, thinking and discussion amongst key NSC members, Kissinger was not trusted to advocate for them in private if their position contradicted his. Because Kissinger clearly had an agenda, he was not trusted to serve as an honest broker, which fundamentally altered the horizontal and vertical reach of the multiple advocacy process. As if that was not enough, Kissinger also limited access to the President by cabinet members and NSC staff, further shutting off avenues of multiple advocacy. Kissinger also tried to play the role of devil’s advocate, but a less involved person in the role could have been useful during policy planning, especially in cases like Vietnam. Kissinger served as a “palace guard” which allowed him freedom of action both from above and below. So much so that he personally initiated and managed the shift in US-Soviet policy of détente. However, neither Kissinger nor Nixon could operate totally independently. They still required the handling foreign policy and not, “the striped-pants faggots in Foggy Bottom.” *(Why State Can’t Lead* by Duncan L. Clarke, Foreign Policy, No. 66 (Spring, 1987)), 130.

41 Destler, 57.
42 For more information see *Nixon and Kissinger Partners in Power* by Robert Dallek.
44 Prados, 283.
46 For more information on Kissinger’s work on the détente policy, see Coral Bell’s *The Diplomacy of Détente, The Kissinger Era.*
cooperation of others and this process was perceived as adversarial or obstructionist. Kissinger once said, “Making foreign policy is easy; what is difficult is its coordination and implementation...the outsider believes a Presidential order is consistently followed out. Nonsense. I have to spend considerable time seeing that it is carried out and in the spirit the President intended.”47 This statement captures Kissinger’s lack of trust, hands on style, and soup-to-nuts approach. So it is not surprising why Kissinger is regarded as the best example of an NSA, and typology, bent on dominating the entire NSC process, which significantly limits the role of multiple advocacy.

The design of Nixon’s NSC system was delegated by Kissinger to Morton Halperin who articulated a system that was designed to present the President with “real foreign policy options (not consensus recommendations) and center responsibility for shaping the NSC agenda in the National Security Advisor.”48 This would seem to support a multiple advocacy system with Kissinger as an honest broker lynchpin. But like most written policy, it captures the initial intentions not the reality. Nixon’s actual role tells a more honest story of how multiple advocacy fared in the Nixon administration and more importantly why. The most influential factor limiting multiple advocacy in the Nixon NSC is without question the role played by Kissinger. Kissinger chose, and was chosen, to be a filter between multiple advocacy and the President, a filter strengthened by the fact Kissinger was counselor, agent, advisor and administrator. Kissinger’s adoption of agent and multiple roles, both within the NSA typology as well as his dual appointment as Secretary of State49 was unprecedented.

However, the system, Nixon and Kissinger’s system, still worked. This is important as it

47 Quoted in John P. Leacacos, "Kissinger’s Apparat," and I. M. Destler, "Can One Man Do?" both in Foreign Policy. No. 5 (Winter, 1971-72), pp. 5 and 2.
48 Destler, 60.
49 Kissinger served concurrently as NSA and Secretary of State from September 21, 1973 to November 3, 1975.
raises questions on the limits of multiple advocacy. It reveals likely shortcuts that subsequent administrations may follow if multiple advocacy is not strengthened to fix real or perceived weak points that can be exploited by ambitious principals. It must be acknowledged that multiple advocacy is not the only way to make good foreign policy. Nixon and Kissinger’s foreign policy successes are a credit to their intelligence, prodigious bureaucratic skills, knowledge of foreign policy and sheer energy. Kissinger knew how to draw out the best of a talented team, a team that would influence the NSC for decades.\(^{50}\) Unfortunately, the precedent that Kissinger set was not of multiple advocacy, but of a White House centered power locus with one, not multiple advocates driving the policy making process, and in some cases, that one advocate was also responsible for policy execution. Unfortunately for Kissinger’s legacy, a compromised multiple advocacy process, Kissinger himself was not included to run the fractured system. Those who have tried have not succeeded as well as he did. Kissinger serves a warning of the unsurprising opposition to multiple advocacy by those in power. In the end, Kissinger remains essential to understanding the challenges of multiple advocacy in the NSC.

**President and the Principals**- It was Nixon who elevated the NSA into its “current role” and weakened the role of the cabinet. Nixon referred to Kissinger as his “Advisor for National Security Affairs” designating him as a coequal policy maker with cabinet members and confirmed the NSA’s role as presidential advisor. This was actually the first use of the term, a symbolic change that not only reflected Nixon’s views on Kissinger’s role, but was a watershed in the evolving role of the NSA.\(^{51}\) Nixon, like Kissinger, had a clear vision of how he wanted to make policy. He wanted a White House centered system opposed to an agency centered one and

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\(^{50}\) David Rothkopf leads his readers through a game of *Two Degrees of Henry Kissinger*, linking Kissinger to all the national security advisors who followed him. The game reveals that every single NSA since Kissinger is within two degrees of Kissinger. (Rothkopf, 19)

as a result the NSC gained control over the policymaking process. Nixon as well as Kissinger drove the national security policymaking process through the NSC.\textsuperscript{52} However, despite this accrual of power and resources, Nixon’s approach was hardly inspirational, “the new method saw the bureaucracy as an adversary to be foiled and outplayed, not an ally in the administration of national security.”\textsuperscript{53}

There is an interesting niche of presidential psychoanalysis, especially on Nixon. One critique of Nixon’s presidency, and an inherently poisonous element in a multiple advocacy culture, was Nixon’s “insatiable desire for credit” and “incredible suspicion of all who surrounded him.”\textsuperscript{54} Egotism and suspicion, and its manifestation in Nixon’s structuring of the NSC became a huge liability for the President during Watergate. Humility and trust, while basic and perhaps lacking in Washington, appear to have a role in multiple advocacy too. Isolated and politically toxic, in the later years of his administration Watergate took time away from his normally close involvement in the NSC which resulted in a break down of the process, leaving Kissinger essentially in charge. Moreover, during this time Kissinger provided political support to the President and even more power accrued to, by that time, the NSA and Secretary of State.\textsuperscript{55} Having principals more actively involved in the NSC would have strengthened the process, sustained a balance of power and provided more continuity after Nixon. Nixon failed to meet his larger obligation to the system, and Kissinger in this instance was not inclined to tell him.

The role of the principals in Kissinger’s NSC is notable only in its absence. Whereas in the George W. Bush presidency, strong, willful principals were a major factor in overwhelming multiple advocacy in Rice’s NSC, the lack of strong principals undermined multiple advocacy in

\textsuperscript{52} Prados, 267.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid, 266.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid, 338.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid, 341.
Kissinger’s. Scholar John Prados perfectly articulated the limited role of the principals, “NSC principals were being put on notice that their advice was for the record only, incidentally to be taken into account in making decisions, but by no means a central element in the process. What emerged was the NSC as theater, an exquisitely choreographed dance between the President and principals, the object of which was to elicit certain statements from participants or to avoid others.”56 No other cabinet member had a strong enough relationship with Nixon to serve as a counterweight to Kissinger. For all the Shakespearian drama of the Nixon/Kissinger years, beyond the two leads, there were only small parts and small actors.

Foreign policy decisions must be evaluated in the context of their actual implementation, as bureaucratic opposition can scuttle a decision outright or thwart its execution. But as mentioned previously, this was less of an issue for Nixon and Kissinger as they largely bypassed the bureaucracy in their diplomacy with China. In fact, Kissinger’s direct role in the bilateral diplomacy marks the “operationalization” of the NSA and the further marginalization of the principals and their departments.57 This structure allowed Nixon to make decisions, have Kissinger execute them, and then Nixon could use Kissinger as a shield from the wrath of the bureaucracy, that is Nixon’s own bureaucracy. However as any employee in a large organization knows, working independently allows leaders to cut through the “bureaucratic thicket of precedence and caution”58 that can stop initiatives. In Nixon and Kissinger’s case it proved useful given the perceived need for speed and secrecy especially because both Nixon and Kissinger wanted to minimize the role of the State Department. Beyond the political differences with State, Nixon felt that “if the State Department has had a new idea in the last 25 years, it is

56 Prados, 266.
57 Rothkopf, 135.
Kissinger on the other hand seemed to think he could run foreign policy by himself. Or as he was fond of saying, “I opened up China with five people.” Such language, while amusing, and possibly true, undermined the role of the other principals and is antithetical to a collaborative, interagency process.

**Process**- Nixon instructed Kissinger to structure an NSC system similar to the one he experienced as Vice President under Eisenhower: an open process of debate, organized and formal. However, Nixon quickly found this system uncomfortable. While it presented him options, he was confronted in person with strong willed advisers advocating for policies he did not want. This further reflects the marginalization of unwanted viewpoints and the impossibility of a devil’s advocate given the existing NSC culture. Nixon’s overreaction to confrontation is attributable to Nixon’s peculiar psychology, but more generally, any president can feel cornered if faced with pressure from cabinet members on complex issues that fall into their, not the president’s area of expertise. The result in Nixon’s case? NSC meetings during Nixon’s presidency declined as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th># of NSC Meetings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>1972</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The decline in meetings, the very forum in which multiple advocacy functions, or at least functions openly, is both a cause and symptom of the decline in multiple advocacy in Nixon’s NSC. Nixon’s foreign policy achievements are often overshadowed by his impeachment, his

60 MacMillan, 59.
61 Destler, 69.
obsession with secrecy, his mistrust of those around him, his use of backchannels in foreign policy and his exclusion of parts of the bureaucracy and cabinet members from key decisions. But even when there was discussion, “No one in the bureaucracy, NSC principals included, got to see the cover memorandum Kissinger slapped on top of agency papers, or hear the advice he gave Nixon when the two sat down in private.”

Trusting the NSA to maintain a balanced appraisal of options is the value added of an honest broker to the process, but it is near impossible to do that with an overt agenda, and without strong relationships with cabinet members, as well as humility and distance from policy implementation.

Kissinger solidified control in the NSC by personally chairing six of the seven interdepartmental committee groups. Moreover, he increased the NSC staff and regional and functional desks, in essence creating a mini State Department displacing State as the “locus of foreign policy making.” However, this reorganization was not merely about power or paranoia. Both Nixon and Kissinger recognized how previous NSCs failed to think systematically about policy. Nixon and Kissinger’s “new bureaucratic methodology based on probing questions followed by searching and systematic analysis of every major US policy was designed to provide Washington officialdom with a ‘new intellectual grid.’ To the catchword of the Kennedy Administration – vigor – Kissinger added rigor.” Grand strategists that they were, this deliberate approach was meant to produce logical options that transcended day-to-day crises. They sought to make policy free from historical overhang and develop long-term grand strategy.

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63 Asaf Siniver, Nixon, Kissinger and US Foreign Policy Making: The Machinery of Crisis, 41.
64 Prados, 267.
66 Hult, 137.
67 Crabb, 135.
68 Inderfurth, 89.
However, what process there was became corrupted over time. Walter Isaacson, in his biography of Kissinger, quotes Kissinger as describing the process thusly, “Nixon increasingly moved sensitive negotiations into the White House where he could supervise them directly, get the credit personally, and avoid the bureaucratic disputes or inertia he found so distasteful.”

But to this quote by Kissinger, Isaacson added, “That sentence is true. But it would be just as true - in fact as time went on, more true - if Kissinger’s name was switched with Nixon.”

Kissinger in his defense, argued that “I had strong views and did not reject opportunities to have them prevail.”

This dynamic represents not just the failure of honest brokerage, but the breakdown of the multiple advocacy process, or at least the restructuring of it to as few advocates as possible, and the curtailing of cabinet members direct line of advocacy to Nixon. Multiple advocacy, even one controlled by Kissinger, functioned relatively well in the first two years and then declined steadily and dramatically towards the end.

A gradual decrease of multiple advocacy in the NSC process can be found in other administrations as well. This pattern means that we must be concerned with not only strengthening multiple advocacy, but ensuring its continuation through the entire length of an administration.

I included Kissinger’s NSC as a case study because it forces us to look at how, when and why multiple advocacy was not chosen and how it was adapted to serve Nixon and ultimately Kissinger’s purposes. Did Kissinger employ a systematic alternative to multiple advocacy? Could he be advisor, counselor, agent, broker, devil’s and resource advocate? Is his success repeatable? Only Nixon could go to China, but could only Kissinger be Kissinger? Ultimately, I find that Kissinger’s abilities and a unique moment in the international system allowed

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70 Ibid, 206.
71 Ibid, 206.
72 Rothkopf, 114.
Kissinger’s version of multiple advocacy to function, but that system is not only not repeatable, it is ultimately inferior. Richard Holbrooke credits Kissinger for creating the modern NSA role, citing that he was the first one who went operational.\textsuperscript{73} While not necessary bemoaning the activist role of the NSA post-Kissinger, Holbrooke sounded wary of it. (Perhaps because he himself was never appointed.) Rothkopf recounts how after Tony Lake became NSA and began to take an activist role despite Lake’s previous statements on the proper, limited NSA role, Holbrooke told Lake, “I think there’s some kind of vapors in the paint here that Kissinger left and it infects almost every occupant there.”\textsuperscript{74} Ultimately, the inclusion of this case study is meant to illustrate A) the importance of the role of the NSA B) the process of multiple advocacy is not the same as a culture of multiple advocacy, highlighting the connection between the three factors and C) the limitations of multiple advocacy, specifically in cases requiring speed and/or secrecy, which I will address in more detail in my conclusion.

**THE NSC UNDER CONDOLEEZZA RICE (2001-2005)**

George W. Bush and Condoleezza Rice’s NSC is included as a test case. The importance of national security decisions made during her tenure as NSA, the lasting impact of those decisions, and the debate still raging about the legacy of the Bush administration all make for an interesting case study. The problems and weaknesses of the NSC under Rice make for a telling comparison with Kissinger’s NSC. Looking at the Rice case alone, an explanation is needed for the gulf between original expectations and actual performance. The failures that led to 9/11 as well as the problems in Iraq and Afghanistan get at complex individual, relationship and process failures that involve key officials, the intelligence community, neoconservative ideology and international events. The failures of this recent NSC raise questions on whether former NSA

\textsuperscript{73} Rothkopf, 137.  
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid, 137.
Brent Scowcroft’s legacy of honest brokerage and multiple advocacy is lost, or simply was not well executed under Rice. It is crucial to understand why her NSC struggled in the planning and execution of the wars and reconstruction in Afghanistan and Iraq.

**National Security Advisor Typology**- Condoleezza Rice may have not had the experience of Kissinger or Scowcroft, but she was in their intellectual league. Rice was Scowcroft’s protégé. She served on the NSC as a Soviet expert. She had an eminently qualified cabinet to work with. She enjoyed a close relationship with the President. This NSC was hers to lose. George W. Bush even viewed Rice as the ideal choice for NSA. In Bush’s words, she was “both a good manager and an honest broker of ideas.” However, Rice’s role as honest broker was eclipsed or at times incompatible with her role as counselor, advisor and tutor. Having first met in 1998, Rice served as Bush’s tutor especially during the early years of Bush’s presidential campaign. Bush had little foreign policy experience and they discussed foreign policy regularly from 1998-2001. In a telling anecdote from his memoir, *Decision Points*, Bush recounts how while on a hike at his ranch in 1999, Rice was explaining the disintegration in the Balkans which left Bush “huffing and puffing.” One cannot help but wonder whether he meant physically, mentally or both. But Bush was comfortable with Rice. He said that Rice had the ability to explain foreign policy in a way that he understood. After being appointed NSA, and to her credit, Rice ran the NSC process quite capably to start. As laid out in the first *National Security Presidential Directive*, issued on February 13, 2001, the NSC would be in the “Scowcroft model” and the NSA would chair meetings of the principals. According to the Secretary of the

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75 For more information on the life and achievements of Condoleezza Rice, see Rice’s autobiography *Condoleezza Rice: A Memoir of my Extraordinary, Ordinary Family and Me* and the biography by Elisabeth Bumiller, *Condoleezza Rice an American Story*.  
76 Burke, 238.  
78 George W. Bush, 342.  
Treasury Paul O’Neil, Condi “didn’t drive to consensus. Rather she drives toward clarity. Then he [Bush] decides what the consensus is.”

However, conflicting narratives have emerged on the role and style of both Bush and Rice in the decision making process. This is not surprising and as more documents emerge scholars will be able to get a clearer picture. John P. Burke, authority on presidential decision making, critiques Rice by making the distinction that Rice may have been able to serve as a honest broker, but not a neutral one. Rice could be trusted to honestly communicate to the President what was being advocated, but both her own opinions and her counselor role meant she was not a neutral broker. However, Rice had the political acumen to keep her advocacy private and appear impartial through much of the process. She is known for having said on more than one occasion that she is “determined to leave this town without anyone outside Bush’s tight inner circle ever figuring out where she stands on major issues.”

In hindsight, Rice emerged with her reputation in better shape than Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz or Tenet, and perhaps this is explained by her discretion both publically and in the interagency process. However, 9/11 and the build up and execution to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq raise questions about Rice’s running of the NSC. Increasingly Rice’s role was not limited to that of an honest broker, nor did she have the power to serve as a broker between feuding principals, and her counselor role began to undermine her honest brokerage. In Bob Woodward’s exhaustive recounting of the decision making of the Bush administration, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage calls Rice’s NSC “dysfunctional.” Evidence of this can be seen in the changes instituted by Rice’s replacement, Steven Hadley. Having

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81 Burke, 245.
82 Burke, 245.
observed the failure to execute under Rice, Hadley developed a “stoplight” process to monitor implementation. Hadley confessed to David Ignatius of the Washington Post, “We need to be systematic and rigorous in improving implementation and execution within the government.”

This fits in with other depictions, such as a 2002 article “Quiet Power of Condi Rice” which quoted a Bush official who said “Rice is a ‘yes man,’ who thinks ‘her job is just to figure out what the president is trying to say and then to say it more articulately.’” Like Kissinger she suffered from multiple role disorder, where her conflicting duties to the President and NSC rendered her unable to create a culture of multiple advocacy.

**President and the Principals**- Originally there was optimism about the team Bush had assembled: the A-team which included Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Colin Powell, George Tenet, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Douglas Feith, Scooter Libby; collectively possessing decades of experience in the NSC, military, White House, Congress and other executive agencies. There was a sense that the adults were back in charge of foreign and defense policy after the Clinton years. However, this turned out to be a chimera. As individuals, the key NSC principals had some of the most impressive résumés in Washington, but multiple advocacy, which was espoused by Bush as their *modus operandi*, struggled. While the failure of multiple advocacy seems to be papered over or misunderstood in the views (and now memoirs) of the principals, even Bush acknowledged that by 2004 there was a serious problem. Bush grew concerned about “growing discord within the national security team.”

Bush wrote he was irritated by headlines like “A White House Divided: The Bush Administration’s Civil War” and so at NSC meetings he announced “the squabbling and leaks were damaging our credibility and

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85 Evan Thomas, “The Quiet Power of Condi Rice.”
87 George W. Bush, 194.
giving ammunition to our critics.”

The relationship of the President and the principals is particularly complex. The popular myth of Bush as a clueless puppet to Cheney or to the neoconservatives has largely been replaced by a narrative of Bush as a CEO style decider, whose advisors were influential, but with the President making the final decisions. One of the complicating factors for the principals, especially Rice, was that Bush was driven by his instincts. Whereas Kissinger dealt with realistic and pragmatic Nixon, after 9/11 Bush showed a streak of moralism, and it was his instincts that guided his decisions and ultimately defined his presidency. Bush referred to himself as a “gut” player rather than an intellectual. Just as importantly, and just like Nixon, from the beginning Bush could be dismissive of polls and public opinion. In the 2000 presidential debate, Bush said “We have too much polling and focus groups going on in Washington today. We need decisions made on sound principles.” But public opinion can serve as a useful gauge of, if not the wisdom, at least the support for a policy. In Rice’s NSC, the team seemed too ready to dismiss criticism, or conflate constructive, thoughtful or expert criticism with uninformed or shortsighted public opinion. Treasury Secretary O’Neil described Bush as being in an “echo chamber” and the most isolated President since the late stages of Nixon. These dynamics have an important, if informal role in creating or undermining a culture of multiple advocacy. The President’s trust in his gut and dismissal of public opinion compromised the usefulness if not need for “outside” opinion. It was the responsibility, and in the self-interest of the NSA as well as the principals to constantly reinforce the need for a multitude of opinions, including the public’s. For presidents who are sensitive to public and/or

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88 George W. Bush, 195.
91 Burke, 242.
elite opinion, it provides a tool to influence the president or broker disputes by interjecting another angle.\textsuperscript{92} However, this leverage was undermined by Bush’s dismissal of public criticism.

In this case, the public and members of both parties raised valid concerns about the projected costs, especially in regards to the Iraq war. The Bush administration, lacking a sufficiently vocal, internal resource advocate, could have benefited from the public’s just concerns about the price tag of an open ended “war on terror”.

Another unique and ultimately damaging characteristic of the President and some of the principals was a lack of healthy skepticism or doubt. Multiple advocacy is based on the premise that any choice has multiple alternatives, each with their pros and cons, and different individuals based on their perspective and experience should advocate for different options. Every decision therefore involves tradeoffs, and major policy decisions will include many smaller decisions, which means there is the opportunity for compromise at many levels, or decision points. No policy decision is perfect, there are always constraints whether logistical, temporal, political or financial. Rice and Bush should have empowered if not tasked individuals within the NSC to serve as a devil’s advocate in order to better flesh out the consequences of these life or death decisions.

President Bush has been pressed on the issue of doubt for years. His self-proclaimed lack of doubt was sometimes seen as a liability undermining his ability to accurately assess situations. In \textit{Bush at War} Bob Woodward asked Bush directly whether he had any doubts about the war. Bush replied, “I have not doubted…There is no doubt in my mind we’re doing the right thing. Not one doubt.”\textsuperscript{93} The issue is not whether Bush had \textit{any} doubts \textit{ever}, but whether he conflated a lack of doubt about the course of action with a lack of due diligence in making the many

\begin{footnotes}
\item[92] Benjamin Page and Marshall Bouton, \textit{The Foreign Policy Disconnect} (University of Chicago, 2006), 23.
\item[93] Woodward, \textit{Bush at War}, 256.
\end{footnotes}
smaller decisions that were not incompatible with his larger decision. Woodward recounts Rice’s more prudent thinking; “doubt could be a hand-maiden of sound policy.”94 However when Rice informed Bush that there was some “hand-wringing” amongst the principals, Woodward characterized Bush’s response as “The president jerked forward. Hand-wringing? He hated, absolutely hated the very idea, especially in tough times.”95 This representation is consistent with Bush’s thoughts as expressed in his memoir, in which Bush wrote how “in times of uncertainty, any indication of doubt from the president ripples throughout the system.”96 Interestingly enough in the same book, when talking about his personal faith, he wrote, “If you haven’t doubted, you probably haven’t thought very hard about what you believe.”97 One wonders why Bush’s personal articulation of the importance of doubt did not translate into a more rigorous discussion of issues with his principals.

What is clear is that Bush’s certainty weakened multiple advocacy in the NSC by limiting individuals ability to give their honest opinions or express their doubts. As the person tasked with choosing amongst the multiple advocates, it was ultimately Bush’s responsibility to assess and reassess every proposal. In the opening chapter of his memoir, Bush even frames his book, tellingly called, Decision Points, as a story of “the decisions I got right, those I got wrong, and what I would do differently if given the chance.”98 But President Bush’s main forum for making choices, the NSC, was limited by a top-down dismissal of certain options, and a negative reaction to those expressing doubt. Multiple advocacy, with the constant need to articulate, advocate and defend positions in the decision making process should, while painful and perhaps unwelcome, remind the decision maker of the consequences of choices. Bush insists his

92 Woodward, Bush at War, 256.
93 Ibid, 257.
94 George W. Bush, 401.
95 Ibid, 90.
96 Ibid, 25.
decisions were the products of rational calculations with unfiltered input, but the results of his decisions and conflicting interpretations and recollections of officials raise questions about the integrity of the process.

Some critics have looked at Bush’s religious faith as the wellspring of his absolute certainty. If that was indeed a factor, one could make the argument that this too weakened the process; multiple advocacy would be seriously undermined if one of the advocates is believed to be God Almighty. In a 2002 Newsweek article, author Michael Hirsch quotes a senior administration official who said that Bush, “really believes he was placed here to do this as part of a divine plan.”\(^9^9\) While religion has guided presidents since the US was founded, it becomes problematic when that faith directly impacts the president’s decisions. Multiple advocacy will often involve differences of opinion and quite often decisions must be made at the margins. Six principals might be confident in what they are advocating, but once a policy is chosen, it is unrealistic to expect the five advocates whose policies were not chosen to be equally “confident” (privately not publically) about a policy that was not theirs. Thus a certain amount of disagreement is expected and a sign that multiple advocacy is alive and well. However, according to Woodward, Bush said “I don’t need people around me who are not steady…And if there’s kind of a hand-wringing attitude going on when times are tough, I don’t like it.”\(^1^0^0\)

Bush’s desire for confidence, even bordering on religious conviction, is one possible explanation for Cheney’s behavior, remembering that in 1991 it was Cheney who articulated the perspicacity of the George H.W. Bush administration’s actions in the first Gulf War. When asked in a interview in 1991 why they left Saddam in power Cheney responded by saying, “I do not think the United Sates wants to have US military forces accept casualties and accept the

\(^1^0^0\) Woodward, 258.
responsibility of trying to govern. I think it makes no sense at all.”

In George H.W. Bush and Scowcroft’s memoirs, they describe then Secretary of Defense Cheney as having “no ego to get in the way of the business at hand” and that his “approach encouraged cooperation from everyone.” As someone who was previously known for both competence and prudence, while contrary to popular perceptions, it would appear that in addition to the events of 9/11, Bush’s influence, or the influence of the culture within the NSC, appealed to Cheney’s lesser angels.

Perhaps more than any modern Vice President, Cheney was a key player in most of the major decisions and had a role in most of the conflicts. His influence was extraordinary. Cheney not only had extensive networks from his long career, but his aggressive style, expansive views on executive authority, close relationship with Bush, and seemingly unlimited resources made him a powerful force. Zbigniew Brzezinski, NSA under President Carter, was highly critical of the size of Cheney’s foreign policy staff, which was almost 30 people. Brzezinski was not surprised that chaos resulted from having a competing staff advocating policy, preparing papers and becoming involved in the NSC process. Cheney’s staff operated on a dual track, a form of multiple advocacy, which created problems in the NSC.

As President, Bush’s role in decision making was paramount, but the role of the advisors and their relationship with the President and each other was equally consequential. James Mann, in his history of the rise and fall of neoconservatives, describes the balance of power of the principals within the NSC. Mann argues that because Bush’s experience was so limited, he had an unprecedented reliance on his advisers whose ideas, knowledge and advice were crucial to

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101 Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier, America Between the Wars: From 11/9 to 9/11, (New York: PublicAffairs, 2008), 15.
103 Barton Gellman and Jo Becker, “A Different Understanding with the President,” Washington Post, (June 24, 2007).
Bush’s decision making. This elevated the role of a small group, which Mann calls “Vulcans.”\textsuperscript{105} However, from Bush’s view, not only was he getting the best advice, but he viewed his team as balanced, in his words, “General Powell’s a strong figure, and Dick Cheney’s no shrinking violet, but neither is Don Rumsfeld, nor Condi Rice…I view the four as being able to complement one another.”\textsuperscript{106} This proved not only to be a miscalculation, but shows that Bush was unaware, or at least underestimated the conflict within the NSC. Rice was not able to broker the conflicts that emerged especially between DoD and State. Rather Rice was often in the trenches, and because of the experience, personalities and networks of Rumsfeld and Cheney, Rice (and Powell too) were outgunned and eventually out maneuvered. However, as argued by Mann, the ideological homogeneity of the administration meant that while there was often agreement about ends, the disputes were usually about means, disputes endemic in Washington.

Both then and now, it is widely acknowledged that the personalities and relationships of the major protagonists were unusually confrontational and this impacted the process. Most notable were the battles between Secretary Powell and Secretary Rumsfeld that quickly became process and policy battles between the Department of State and the Department of Defense. James Mann accurately captures the process dysfunction:

The choices of Wolfowitz as deputy secretary of defense and Armitage as deputy secretary of state further contributed to the acrimony between Defense and State. These appointments meant that Rumsfeld and Powell were seconded by powerful deputies who thought much as they did. If Wolfowitz had been named deputy secretary of state or Armitage deputy secretary of defense, some of the Bush’s administration tensions might have been fought out inside each department, as personality disputes between a secretary and his deputy. Instead, there was relative harmony at the top within State and Defense and endless bickering between the two huge agencies.\textsuperscript{107}

Rumsfeld had a particularly corrosive impact on the NSC and on Rice’s honest brokerage. In

\textsuperscript{106} Mann, 331.
\textsuperscript{107} Mann, 337.
repeated memos Rumsfeld showed a mix of contempt and hostility towards the NSC and the multiple advocacy process; first, because he thought it interfered with his mission to reform the Pentagon, and then later because he thought it interfered with DoD’s execution of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In a particularly petulant memo to Rice from 2002, Rumsfeld wrote, “You and the NSC staff need to understand that you are not in the chain of command. Since you cannot seem to accept that fact, my only choices are to go the President and ask him to tell you to stop or to tell anyone in DoD not to respond to you or the NSC staff.” Beyond the divide between DoD and the NSC, the splits between Defense and State, or between Powell on the one hand and Cheney and Rumsfeld on the other, were allowed to spin out of control. “At interagency meetings set up by the national-security staff to iron out policy differences, the Defense Department sometimes doesn't even bother to show up.” Relationships were adversarial, disagreement was punished and the individual or department was marginalized. “Armitage concluded that the penalty for disagreement in the Bush White House was an implied or explicitly stated accusation that you were not on the team.” What was missing was a protected minority opinion, a devil’s advocate to help strengthen the decision making process by either influencing the President to reconsider or more likely refine his decision by making him address hypothetical problems. But instead of a culture of multiple advocacy with honest discussion of options, weighing of risks, and cost benefit analysis, Bush seemingly got what he wanted from the principals: uniformity and confidence.

Process- Given the seismic events facing America and the Shakespearian drama that

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108 For more information see Donald Rumsfeld’s biography, Known and Unknown and Lisa DePaulo’s “Off The Record with Don Rumsfeld” in GQ, (October 2007), where she quotes Rumsfeld as saying, “I've been changing things for decades. I went into companies and changed them. And I—I'm comfortable with that, I accept that, that there's gonna be opposition to things. I was asked to come into the department, by the president, to transform it. I could have gone in and not done that. And everyone would have been smiling.”
109 Donald Rumsfeld, Memo to Condoleezza Rice dated 12/2/2002, (Reproduced in Appendix III)
seemed to dominate the NSC, what was the NSC process like? While the process was restructured by Kissinger to serve his interests, the process was ultimately undermined in Rice’s NSC. As mentioned previously, at times Rumsfeld basically opted out of the NSC, challenging its authority and questioning Rice’s running of it. In addition, Rumsfeld and Cheney used stovepipes, informal and formal networks to move information and decisions horizontally through the bureaucracy, often parallel or outside the NSC process. Cheney’s relationship with Bush gave him the kind of closed-door access that Kissinger had with Nixon. Such shadow decision making and information networks undermine the NSA and poison the culture.

In Rice’s NSC, what emerged was groupthink, which multiple advocacy is designed to prevent. This groupthink was a product of shared worldview, a reaction to 9/11 and the decision making style of the President and key principals. This groupthink stifled dissent and helped push the NSC into a negative feedback loop where the administration sought individuals and information to support their decisions and then used that support to further justify adopting or sticking with policy decisions. Because of this unique set of circumstances, Rice was not able to balance the honest broker role with that of counselor. Both roles were undermined by more experienced individuals operating within (and outside of) the NSC, individuals she was not able to manage, thus failing to serve as a power broker. Rice’s hierarchical, corporate style in which she delegated policy development to others, might not have been a problem if DoD and the intelligence community had been better able to design and execute policies in the wake of 9/11. In this delegated style, problems arise when there are failures, the kind widely acknowledged leading up to 9/11 and experienced during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Problems were exacerbated and went unnoticed by the leniency granted to the Bush administration in the wake

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of 9/11, a product of the “rally around the flag” effect.

James Pfiffner, professor of public policy, argues that it was Bush’s political will and personal skills that allowed him to overcome obstacles to gain support for Iraq, support already inflated by the post 9/11 environment. Obstacles included the reservations of Colin Powell, public rebukes from the likes of Brent Scowcroft and James Baker, resistance from a large portion of the Army Officer Corps, US allies, influential members of the media, and members of Congress.\footnote{114 James P. Pfiffner, \textit{Presidential Decision Making: Rationality, Advisory Systems, and Personality}, \textit{Presidential Studies Quarterly}, Vol. 35, No. 2 (June 2005), 223.} While a weak process was in place that brought some of these dissenting voices to the President, the lack of a culture of multiple advocacy and the failure to utilize and institutionalize a devil’s advocate meant advocates did not get a fair hearing in the interagency forum. This characterization fits with my assessment that multiple advocacy is an entire culture of which the process is just a part.

The culture of multiple advocacy is determined by the role of the NSA and ultimately by the attitudes and relationship of the president and the principals. In Bush’s own words, “2004 marked the end of my tolerance for the squabbling within the national security team. What started as creative tension had turned destructive...I concluded that the animosity was so deeply embedded that the only solution was to change the entire national security team after the 2004 election.”\footnote{115 George W. Bush, 197.} This move changed the variables, but did not change the underlying formula. The period from 9/11 to 2004 saw perhaps the nadir of multiple advocacy in the NSC.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

\textbf{The Limits of Multiple Advocacy}

As I mentioned in my review of the multiple advocacy literature, there are limits of decision making through multiple advocacy. Two such limits are apparent from the case studies:
decisions requiring speed or secrecy. In the case of Kissinger, the need for speed and secrecy in dealings with China and the Soviet Union justified a truncated multiple advocacy process. Even an efficient multiple advocacy system takes time and by definition it requires some dissemination of information. In a crisis, an administration with an established culture of multiple advocacy can/should deviate from the process. The trust accrued through multiple advocacy should limit bureaucratic or personal backlash and eventually allow the initial policy decisions made outside the process to be reintegrated into the NSC for refinement and implementation once the need for speed or secrecy have passed. But while Nixon and Kissinger’s expertise and the uniqueness of those situations validated their decisions, crisis decision making turned out to be more problematic for the Rice NSC. A combination of dismissing public opinion with the inflated support of the “rally around the flag” effect meant that Bush was empowered, as are all presidents during wartime, with inflated authority and latitude. Unchecked or concentrated power undermines multiple advocacy. Such power during crises and wartime removes some of the political and resource constraints that would normally be voiced in a multiple advocacy system. And in crisis situations with emotions running high, multiple advocacy is needed more than ever.\textsuperscript{116}

\textbf{Creating and Sustaining a Culture of Multiple Advocacy}

\textbf{An Honest, Power Broker:} The NSA should choose and adhere to an honest broker role. Kissinger’s adoption of multiple roles, including Secretary of State, undermined multiple advocacy. The NSA can fortify his or her honest broker credentials by maintaining a low public profile, limiting their public or interagency advocacy of policies, and by limiting their role in policy implementation. Beyond establishing an “honest broker norm” the recognition of

\textsuperscript{116} For an example of how the post-911 crisis context overwhelmed multiple advocacy in Congress, specifically the Authorization for Use Of Military Force, (AUMF), see “When Congress Checks Out” by Norman Ornstein and Thomas Mann, \textit{Foreign Affairs}, (November/December 2006).
multiple role disorder could at least dissuade future presidents and advisors from Kissinger-like excess and the unhealthy consolidation of influence. Bush and Rice both envisioned a role for the NSA that was an honest broker, however that role was compromised by Rice’s role as tutor, counselor and advisor. Moreover, as NSA Rice was not able to serve as a power broker, which is implicit in the role of an honest broker.

Choosing the Right Individuals: A logical question from these case studies is why doesn’t the president just choose individuals who believe in multiple advocacy? In this case, Graham Allison’s *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* is informative. As outlined by Allison, bureaucratic politics, the idea that where you stand is where you sit, will impact how a person functions in an organization. Multiple advocacy counters this inevitable development by having advocates embrace these tendencies and then compete in an open, arbitrated forum. While many members come to the NSC with long careers, and the president or NSA might have a sense of their policies and working styles, as shown by my example of the “two Gulf War Cheneys,” people change and respond differently based on the culture and environment; there is no litmus test for supporting multiple advocacy. A president must choose cabinet members based on their qualification for the job. However, increasingly part of the job is how they operate in the NSC, and thus, a candidate’s history, reputation and attitude working with others should matter, but they are hard elements to judge.

A Structured, Well Defined Process: Establishing multiple advocacy as a core component of the NSC will influence future presidents and national security advisors and how they envision the interagency process, choose their staff, fund departments, utilize resources and ultimately make decisions. I hope more thorough analysis on the NSC and NSA emerges that systematically communicates best practices from past NSAs and helps the NSC develop
institutional memory, instead of starting from scratch or relying on self-flattering memoirs. Scholars and analysts can help institutionalize the knowledge of the NSC by analyzing it and translating the decision making processes into conceptual frameworks, accessible to policymakers, who can then refine the NSC from within. This will allow future presidents and NSAs to make deliberate choices regarding the design and operation of the NSC, leaving behind the overly reactionary design/execution of some of the previous councils. While a process alone cannot create a culture of multiple advocacy, it can strengthen it. Rice’s NSC shows a lack of clarity on the role of the Vice President and the role of DoD in the NSC process. Clearer lines of authority and communication are needed.

**Devil’s Advocacy:** More than anything else, a devil’s advocate may have helped the Bush administration in planning and executing the “war on terror” and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. There were no shortage of dissenters and critics, during and after, within and outside the administration. However, devil’s advocacy should be framed as an institutional responsibility rotated amongst NSC principals or staff, sort of like the minority opinion in a Supreme Court decision, so that one person is not tainted nor any one department marginalized. Colin Powell’s role as a devil’s advocate seems to be accurate, but is disputed, not the least of all by Colin Powell. Tasking a respected party elder (someone who has executive experience and is not focused on their next job) with the role of devil’s advocate could limit the degree to which feuds are played out across departments or in the press. Such an advocate might have tempered the Bush administration and balanced against the outsized role of the neocons. Most importantly such an advocate could have contributed to better policy decisions by forcing the NSC to address and prepare for unexpected outcomes, or in the words of Donald Rumsfeld, made “unknown unknowns” into “known unknowns” or even “known knowns.”
**Resource Advocacy:** Evident from Rice’s NSC was a lack of prudence. While the immediate consequences were policy failures, the long-term consequences are beyond the scope of any one administration, but absolutely relevant when devising recommendations for improving multiple advocacy in the NSC. The strong fiscal position along with the US’s unipolar moment immediately prior to 2001 help explain why the Bush administration was insufficiently concerned and inaccurate in both projecting the total costs and in their cost/benefit analysis of the post-9/11 response. Having the Office of Management and Budget, (OMB) participate in NSC principals and deputies meetings to provide a resource component to short, medium and long-term policy options should become standard operating procedure.

**Sustaining a Culture of Multiple Advocacy:** Basic elements such as humility, bipartisanship, a healthy skepticism about the dangers of ideology or at least ideological conformity, and a clearly defined process with clearly defined roles can all help in creating a culture of multiple advocacy in the NSC. But just as important as the creation is the sustenance of multiple advocacy. From the case studies, there is a lack of self-awareness in the decision making process. Memoirs and interviews confirm this discrepancy between how decision makers viewed the process and how objective analysis evaluates the role of multiple advocacy in an administration. Thus I would recommend an annual review of the NSC by the NSC for the NSC. This provides structure for self-evaluation and allows a mechanism for process or personnel changes. And last but not least, such a frank, internal evaluation can help create institutional memory, which will help the NSC evolve. If the benefits of multiple advocacy are, as I have argued, self-evident, such a report should provide the necessary insight to the president, NSA and principals on how to immediately strengthen multiple advocacy. Such an important task should not be left to analysts and historians.
I hope to have contributed to the evolving understanding of the NSC through my analysis of multiple advocacy. The demands on the US national security system will require ever more nuanced, responsive and integrated NSC processes. I have tried to show that strengthening multiple advocacy is the best way to meet these needs, needs which will become more pressing. I am not alone in making this argument. Richard Best, in his assessment of the NSC’s organization notes how “the increasing difficulties in separating national security issues from some law enforcement and international economic concerns has led some observers to urge that the lines separating various international staffs at the White House be erased and that a more comprehensive policymaking entity be created.”\textsuperscript{117}

While the typology of the NSA, the relationship of the president and the principals and the process are a useful if not comprehensive way to evaluate the NSC, Rothkopf in his magnum opus on the NSC acknowledges that the NSC is ultimately a “story of people.”\textsuperscript{118} It is the individuals that determine how well the NSC functions. The NSC is arguably the most powerful and fluid foreign policy player. It will continue to evolve in response to the mistakes of previous administrations and alongside larger trends including the institutionalization and bureaucratization of the NSC, the increasing complexity of foreign policy and the blending of foreign and domestic policy.\textsuperscript{119} Multiple advocacy as a culture should be established as a baseline and then deviated from in particular circumstances requiring secrecy or speed. However, while the NSA typology, the relationships of president and principals, the process and timeframe are all essential to the culture of multiple advocacy in the NSC, they are but signposts in the shifting national security landscape.

\textsuperscript{118} Rothkopf, 16.
\textsuperscript{119} Daalder and Destler, 186.
APPENDIX I

Section 101 of Title I, Coordination for National Security

(a) ... The function of the Council shall be to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to the national security so as to enable the military services and the other departments and agencies of the Government to cooperate more effectively in matters involving the national security.

(b) In addition to performing such other functions as the President may direct, for the purpose of more effectively coordinating the policies and functions of the departments and agencies of the Government relating to the national security, it shall, subject to the direction of the President, be the duty of the Council

1. to assess and appraise the objectives, commitments, and risks of the United States in relation to our actual and potential military power, in the interest of national security, for the purpose of making recommendations to the President in connection there with; and

2. consider policies on matters of common interest to the departments and agencies of the Government concerned with the national security, and to make recommendations to the President in connection therewith.

(d) The Council shall, from time to time, make such recommendations, and such other reports to the President as it deems appropriate or as the President may require.

The National Security Council

“The National Security Council (NSC) is the President's principal forum for considering national security and foreign policy matters with his senior national security advisors and cabinet officials. Since its inception under President Truman, the Council's function has been to advise and assist the President on national security and foreign policies. The Council also serves as the President's principal arm for coordinating these policies among various government agencies.

The NSC is chaired by the President, Its regular attendees (both statutory and non-statutory) are the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Defense, and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the statutory military advisor to the Council, and the Director of National Intelligence is the intelligence advisor. The Chief of Staff to the President, Counsel to the President, and the Assistant to the President for Economic Policy are invited to attend any NSC meeting. The Attorney General and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget are invited to attend meetings pertaining to their responsibilities. The heads of other executive departments and agencies, as well as other senior officials, are invited to attend meetings of the NSC when appropriate.

The National Security Council was established by the National Security Act of 1947 (PL 235 - 61 Stat. 496; U.S.C. 402), amended by the National Security Act Amendments of 1949 (63 Stat. 579; 50 U.S.C. 401 et seq.). Later in 1949, as part of the Reorganization Plan, the Council was placed in the Executive Office of the President.”

120 -http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/nsc/
APPENDIX II

The Brookings National Security project undertook a quantitative approach to studying the NSC and below are two graphs illustrating the changing role of the NSA and NSC. This first graph shows the public appearances of the NSA and Secretary of State. While hardly definitive, the graph reveals both the variance amongst NSCs but the growing prominence of the NSA in public.

The graph below shows the increase in the NSC staff size. Here the trend is even clearer:


122 Ibid
TO:   Honorable Condoleezza Rice
FROM: Donald Rumsfeld
DATE: December 2, 2002
SUBJECT: Chain of Command

Because I have failed to get you and the NSC staff to stop giving tasks and
guidance to combatant commanders and the joint staff, I have drafted the attached
memorandum. I had hoped it would not be necessary for me to do it this way, but
since your last memo stated that we should work it out from our end, I am forced
to do so.

You are making a mistake. You and the NSC staff need to understand that you are
not in the chain of command. Since you cannot seem to accept that fact, my only
choices are to go to the President and ask him to tell you to stop or to tell anyone
in DoD not to respond to you or the NSC staff. I have decided to take the latter
course. It it fails, I’ll have to go to the President. One way or the other, it will
stop, while I am Secretary of Defense.

Thanks.

DHR/azn
120202.02

Attach: Memo dated 11/30/02 Re: Chain of Command

Online Archive, The Rumsfeld Papers at Rumsfeld.com
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