

APPLYING A “WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH”

CHAPTER 8. CORDS AND THE VIETNAM EXPERIENCE: AN INTERAGENCY ORGANIZATION FOR COUNTERINSURGENCY AND PACIFICATION

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Introduction

The United States has faced many pacification and counter-insurgency challenges in the past, and on the whole it has dealt with them successfully. From Indian Wars on the frontier to a many decades struggle with the *insurrectos and Moros* in the Philippines to support for embattled governments in Greece, the Philippines, and El Salvador in the twentieth century. Despite these relative successes, however, the greatest counterinsurgency challenge faced by the United States Army in the twentieth century was undoubtedly in South Vietnam in the 1960s and 70s. Nowhere were the Army’s resolve, training, doctrine, and personnel tested so thoroughly as during our longest war, the War in Vietnam. While the U.S. Army shouldered much of the burden for providing many of the personnel and most of the funding for that counterinsurgency war, it is also clear that many key elements of the U.S. government were joined together in that fight as part of an interagency headquarters known as CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary—later Rural—Development Support) that existed from 1967 to early 1973. CORDS was the chief means that the U.S. used to organize, resource, and lead the fight to prop up the government of

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South Vietnam and make it responsive to the needs of its own people while simultaneously fighting against the insurgent Viet Cong and their North Vietnamese masters.¹⁰⁴⁵

Understanding the CORDS experience in Vietnam is critical to understanding the promise and challenges of forging an interagency unified effort, especially under the pressure of overseas military operations. No “Goldwater-Nichols for the Interagency” will be possible unless one can explain clearly how interagency elements of power can be fused together in one centrally directed effort, focused on a specific mission. Without a concrete example of how it was accomplished, the struggle to create a mechanism for wide-spread interagency organization will founder upon theory and conjecture. CORDS, though, was just such an accomplishment of interagency success. It was created specifically in response to the most extensive counter-insurgency and nation-building challenge the U.S. national security community faced in the twentieth century. Its mission was to focus the U.S. government’s efforts on a fight we felt that we had to help the South Vietnamese win—pacification of their own country and defeat of an insurgency directed and supplied by a rival government. Under several dynamic leaders who created and managed the organization and obtained for it the necessary bureaucratic and financial support, it accomplished nearly all that it was expected to achieve. It was created after two other alternative organizations failed to accomplish their objectives in Vietnam and despite large sections of the federal government, especially the State Department, opposing it before succumbing to the direct decision of the president. CORDS was thus an *ad-hoc* experiment in placing nearly all the interagency assets (civilian and military) involved in the pacification struggle under one civilian manager and then placing that civilian within the military hierarchy as a deputy commander of military assistance command Vietnam (MACV), the military headquarters in Saigon. This bold, indeed unprecedented, move provided the pacification support effort nearly unfettered access to military resources, personnel, energy, organizational skill, and logistics. By centralizing planning and

1045 Probably the best one volume analysis of the pacification struggle and CORDS in Vietnam is Richard Hunt, *Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam’s Hearts and Minds* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995).

management in one headquarters, then replicating that management structure at each level of the government of South Vietnam (military region, province, and district), CORDS built and operated a truly effective interagency headquarters. It blended civilian and military agencies and personnel, focused them on one mission under one manager and effectively smoothed the flow of U.S. pacification support to all levels of the government of South Vietnam and to its armed forces fighting the pacification battle. It is one model for how the power of the U.S. government can be harnessed, under the right set of circumstances, to accomplish our national goals and has valuable lessons for counterinsurgency, state-building, and governmental capacity building challenges faced by the United States today.

The Background

The government of South Vietnam had been struggling with its insurgency since it was created by the Geneva peace accords in July 1954. President Ngo Dinh Diem and then, after his murder in 1963, a bewildering succession of generals, each developed a number of pacification schemes to “win the hearts and minds” of its own people but with little success. The arrival of major American combat units in the summer and fall of 1965 seemed to push the pacification struggle into the background, and yet it was this struggle that ultimately would determine whether or not the government of South Vietnam would be able to gain the trust and support of its own people. The government of Vietnam attained a measure of political stability with the Nguyen Cao Ky and later the Nguyen Van Thieu governments, and began to put more of its efforts into this “other war” while the U.S. forces sought to erect a shield of conventional forces to protect it. Behind this shield, the government began again to establish a wide range of programs for governmental administration, economic development, regional security, refugee control, anti-Viet Cong infrastructure, national police, and other pacification or counterinsurgency activities.

The U.S. Organizational Challenge

In 1965, the U.S. pacification assistance mission in South Vietnam was run by the United States Mission offices in Saigon, which attempted to coordinate the ever-expanding U.S. programs dealing with the stabilization needs of South Vietnam. The State Department, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the U.S. Information Service (USIS) all had pieces of this mission. While these essentially development programs were underway, the military advisory effort, run by MACV, was focused primarily on training the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) to fulfill their role as protectors of the people. However, military assets were outside the direct purview of the embassy, and although the commander of MACV met regularly with the U.S. ambassador, the results of all efforts to coordinate the military and civilian pacification programs were mixed. Even within the embassy, attempts to coordinate all the programs run by different agencies of the U.S. government with different lines of authority, different budgets, and different approaches to problems made the integration of efforts difficult. As the programs grew in size and complexity in the mid 1960s, the embassy began to reach its organizational limits in terms of manpower and expertise to run a host of expanding, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting programs. It was the classic Washington interagency struggle reproduced in miniature and transferred to Saigon. It was to solve this basic problem of organization and administration—how to concentrate the efforts of the U.S. government on the problem of providing focused management support to the South Vietnamese efforts at pacification—that the office of Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) was created in May 1967.

The United States effort to support the South Vietnamese government in bringing peace and stability to its people for the early years, from 1954 to 1964, can only be called *ad hoc* in nature. The U.S. involvement in South Vietnam included establishing and sustaining a wide variety of aid programs to distribute seed, tools, fertilizers, animals, and the knowledge of farming techniques to improve the standard of life of this basically agricultural country. In addition, the U.S. worked with a number of national and international programs

to provide vaccinations, medical supplies, doctors, and health programs to poor villagers. The United States was also instrumental in establishing basic training programs in government and administration aimed at lasting reforms, including fighting corruption and support for land redistribution initiatives. Many of these programs were run through the U.S. Embassy by the newly established (in 1961) U.S. Agency for International Development.¹⁰⁴⁶ USAID also operated outside of Saigon; there were USAID advisors in all of the 234 districts and 44 provinces of Vietnam. The size of the USAID economic aid budget was estimated at around \$222 million per year from 1955–1960 and it was by far the primary agency in South Vietnam for political and economic development prior to the U.S. buildup in 1965.¹⁰⁴⁷

With some CIA, USIS, and military support, USAID advisors also worked with the government of South Vietnam on a variety of other programs in an attempt to bring economic development, security, and government reform to the countryside to lay the basis for sustained economic growth while developing the capacity of the South Vietnamese government. Only in this way, it was believed, could we assist the South Vietnamese in undercutting the political programs of the Viet Cong and pacify the countryside. Since the Viet Cong guerrillas and their North Vietnamese supporters could be counted on to resist such efforts, the real crux of the problem, however, was how to bring security to the countryside so that economic development and the growth of governmental capacity could be sustained over time.¹⁰⁴⁸

By late 1964 and into 1965, it was clear that these development, governance, and pacification programs were not doing well. Despite pressure from Washington for more dramatic actions and measurable

1046 Before the establishment of USAID, the program was run by the United States Operations Mission (USOM) as part of the U.S. international aid program that had gained its start with the U.S. Overseas Mission and the Marshall Plan following World War II.

1047 Gordon M. Wells, “No More Vietnams: CORDS as a Model for Counterinsurgency Campaign Design,” School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1991, 21.

1048 Dale Andrade, “Evolution of Pacification in Vietnam”, Information Paper, U.S. Army Center of Military History, 12 February 2004.

success, it was clear that the relative handful of civilians on the staff of the U.S. Embassy did not have the capacity to manage the growing U.S. pacification assistance efforts. Neither Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge nor his successor Maxwell Taylor was able to develop a workable arrangement that could manage all the programs according to one script, with a centralized money flow, and policy direction to achieve measurable results.¹⁰⁴⁹ Coordination, but not direct management, was the preferred approach of the State Department to supervising the U.S. pacification effort. And, as one recent observer has written, “coordination in government is often an excuse to avoid assigning responsibility and accountability for the accomplishment for a particular objective.”¹⁰⁵⁰ Ambassador Taylor, who had a letter from the president giving him “full responsibility for the effort of the United States Government in South Vietnam,” used that authority to create a “Mission Council” to meet weekly with senior representatives of the various programs but it was still just a form of coordination.¹⁰⁵¹ Each major agency of the government retained the right to appeal any decisions of the council back to their parent agency in Washington. There was no central plan, no central budget, and no central direction to force the pieces to work together or reallocate resources without the express approval of Washington.¹⁰⁵²

It took the full power of the office of the president to cut this “Gordian Knot.” The issue of organizing for pacification came to the fore during the Warrenton, Virginia, conference from January 8–11, 1966 and the Honolulu conference between President Lyndon Johnson, South Vietnamese President Thieu, and Vice-President Ky

1049 Thomas W. Scoville, *Reorganizing for Pacification Support*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1982) 7. General William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday And Company, 1976) 69.

1050 Nadia Schadlow, “Root’s Rules: Lessons from America’s Colonial Office”, *The American Interest*, Vol II, No. 3, Jan/Feb 2007, 100.

1051 Letter, President Johnson to Taylor, 2 July 1964, Message JGS 7217 to CINCPAC (Commander in Chief Pacific) and COMUSMACV (Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam) quoted in Scoville, 8. The Mission Council was thus only a forum for the exchange of information and for building a consensus, not a management vehicle.

1052 Scoville, 9–11; Graham A. Cosmas, *MACV: The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation, 1962-1967*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2006, 139–147.

the following month.¹⁰⁵³ Impatient with the lack of consensus on ways to improve the management of the U.S. support to pacification, President Johnson decided to focus on the issue personally during the latter conference.

Pacification was at the heart of the discussions at the Honolulu conference and Johnson was quite clear that he was not happy with how things were going. As Johnson later wrote, “I wanted to see progress, not just reports.” Thus, he “ordered a reorganization of our Mission in Saigon to reflect this new emphasis on nonmilitary programs.”¹⁰⁵⁴ He directed that Lodge’s deputy, Ambassador William Porter, take direct, full-time charge of the effort in Vietnam. He also established in the White House the office of a special assistant for pacification. To this post he appointed Robert W. Komer from his National Security Council staff, and gave him the charter of coordinating the Washington end of the interagency challenge. By creating both a Washington and a Saigon interagency coordination entity, Johnson hoped to force the issue and generate the necessary levels of cooperation that would lead to progress in the pacification fight. However, Porter apparently continued to believe that his role in pacification was merely to coordinate programs in the embassy, and not to direct the programs in the entire country as a hands-on, take-charge, manager. Even more critical was the failure to merge any of the military programs with the civilian programs, or even to establish the mechanism to enhance any unified planning or execution effort.¹⁰⁵⁵ The State Department “adamantly contended that the other war ought to remain in civilian hands.”¹⁰⁵⁶ Things appeared to be at an impasse.

In October 1966, President Johnson sent a fact-finding mission to South Vietnam and, still unsatisfied with the embassy’s approach to managing pacification, decided that while Porter would remain

1053 Scoville, 18–19.

1054 Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency 1963-1969*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971) 243–245; Scoville, 22–25.

1055 Ambassador Lodge was not pleased that his deputy would be even more fully enmeshed in the day-to-day management of the U.S. pacification effort. Lodge had an embassy to run and those non-pacification duties formerly done by Porter would, he feared, fall to his lot. See Scoville, 25.

1056 Hunt, *Pacification*, 76–77.

in charge of pacification, a new office would be established in the embassy entitled the Office of Civil Operations (OCO). This office would have the explicit mandate of making dramatic improvements across the board within 90 to 120 days or else it would be folded under MACV. Although ostensibly giving the embassy another chance at managing the issue, OCO was to be little more than a half-way house to the single manager operation that Komer, McNamara, and the president, really believed was the right solution.

The new Office of Civil Operations was placed under Deputy Ambassador Porter but was managed on a daily basis by L. Wade Latham, the deputy director of USAID. The OCO was an important initiative that tried, in the short time given it, to pull the administrative threads together on the entire range of civilian programs working on economic and governmental development in the pacification business at each administrative level. Brought under this office were all the personnel supporting USAID projects, the Revolutionary Development (later Rural Development) program of expanding government presence in the countryside (many advisors to this program were CIA personnel under cover as USAID employees), refugee support, the *Chieu Hoi* amnesty program, and public safety (police and justice). For the first time all U.S. civilians in Saigon and the provinces, with the exception of some sensitive CIA intelligence collection activities, reported through a single chain of command to a single manager in the embassy.¹⁰⁵⁷ Yet OCO had four significant problems: it still excluded from its purview the hundreds of military advisors in the provinces heavily engaged in pacification; it had limited numbers of civilians trying to manage programs that demanded ever increasing amounts of resources—money, transportation, advisors, equipment—and no ready access to the only such source for such assets, the military; it was so focused on civilian elements of the pacification struggle that the critical element in that struggle—local and regional security—was not part of their charter nor did they have sufficient personal connections to the element of the South Vietnamese government that was responsible for this security, the South Vietnamese Army; and finally it was only given a few months

1057 Of the entities wrapped under OCO, AID was by far the largest, providing some 54 percent of the budget and 78 percent of the personnel. Ibid. 82.

to prove itself successful. Each one of the four problems alone might have been sufficient to doom the initiative and the existence of all four virtually ensured its failure.

It was important that OCO make a quick impact on pacification, but from the start it had significant problems finding the right personnel just to fill the office. The OCO structure required over 175 new civilians to staff the headquarters in Saigon and the positions of the senior province representatives and regional directors. And, unlike military personnel who could be, and often were, directed into positions regardless of personal preference, these positions had to be filled using the time-consuming civilian recruitment process. Especially critical were the regional directorships, but the slow nature of the hiring process meant that it was not until February 1967 that all four of these senior management positions were filled. By the end of that month, and over halfway through its projected lifespan, almost one-third of the civilian positions in OCO were still vacant.¹⁰⁵⁸

The challenges of filling civilian positions within OCO, the short time-frame allotted to that office to prove itself, and the continuing lack of authority over the military advisors and thus over the critical security aspect of pacification, combined to doom the OCO initiative. Within the 90-120 days given it, the OCO was unable even to start to generate integrated civil-military pacification plans, establish necessary links with MACV and the RVNAF personnel and programs, create goals and milestones for measuring success, or make visible progress.¹⁰⁵⁹

Under direction from the president, the embassy and all of its interagency pieces finally acceded in the forcible movement of its programs into one headquarters under a civilian head, but within MACV. The pacification effort would thus benefit from being under a single manager and the program would retain a civilian flavor while its civilian manager would have full access to the skilled and

1058 Hunt, *Pacification*, 83–85.

1059 Westmoreland was later to call the creation of OCO “a sop to the prideful creatures in the bureaucratic jungles of Washington and Saigon.” General William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1976, 212.

dedicated military personnel and their resources in an expanding and by comparison heavily funded headquarters. The manager would have what was needed to plan and direct all the complex civilian and military operations, especially security advisory operations, inherent in the “other war.” As Westmoreland later stated:

The very logic of the military’s handling pacification . . . would eventually sell itself. The military had the necessary managerial experience and through senior officers and advisers had a rapport with the South Vietnamese military leadership and a mutual confidence born of a common military outlook that was hardly to be duplicated by American civilian officials.¹⁰⁶⁰

The resulting Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) organization finally brought almost all the elements of U.S. support to the Vietnamese pacification effort under one central head and placed it firmly under military control while retaining civilians in numerous positions of authority. (Only the Marine Corps pacification effort in the I Corps area was kept separate at their insistence.) To run this effort, President Johnson appointed Robert Komer, his special assistant on pacification, to the personal rank of ambassador and assigned him to MACV as deputy commander of military assistance command Vietnam for CORDS.¹⁰⁶¹ Westmoreland and Komer, despite some initial friction, very quickly recognized each other’s genuine commitment to getting the job done, and Westmoreland increasingly grew to trust Komer as the single component commander in charge of military and civilian support to pacification. Later when Komer’s deputy, William Colby, became chief of CORDS, he established a similarly strong and professional relationship with Westmoreland’s successor, General Creighton Abrams.

With the benefit of hindsight, one could view the two years of organizational effort that finally resulted in CORDS as a waste

¹⁰⁶⁰ Ibid. 210.

¹⁰⁶¹ He was never made a full deputy commander of MACV to avoid any confusion in the military chain of command should Westmoreland or his new deputy commander, General Creighton Abrams, be absent from the headquarters at the same time. Hunt, *Pacification*, 87–88. See also Cosmas, 360–363.

of time. This is tempting, but given the uniqueness of the final solution—a mixed civilian-military agency under a civilian head inside a military headquarters—the apparent obviousness of the arrangement was not as clear then as it might seem today. In many other countries with insurgencies and where the U.S. had substantial military aid efforts in the 50s and 60s, the “Country Team” approach of various U.S. agencies and the military coordinating their efforts under the direction of the ambassador seemed to work. The ambassador, the personal representative of the president, had the responsibility for the success or failure of the U.S. aid effort in his or her country. Such a responsibility denotes more than just a parochial interest in protecting “turf.” To dedicated members of the State Department, unifying such a complex, mostly civilian, effort under the ambassador made a great deal of sense. And, given the culture of the State Department that emphasized collegiality and cooperation but shied away from a military-like focus on planning and strong management or command and control systems, any attempt to place civilian agencies under military control would naturally be resisted.

Two main factors, however, overrode the attempt by the various ambassadors in South Vietnam, backed by the State Department, to maintain their loose coordination arrangement for pacification support. The first factor was the obvious growth in size of the American effort from 1960 to 1966 to counter the increased infiltration by the North Vietnamese.¹⁰⁶² The U.S. effort to aid Vietnam grew at least tenfold in just a few years and the military component grew correspondingly. The flood of American soldiers, advisers, dollars, and programs simply grew too large for the small staffs in the embassy to manage. Management of these complex programs needed greater efforts to maximize personnel efficiency, develop dynamic leaders at multiple levels, generate elaborate budget projections, prepare multi-year plans, establish a series of on-the-ground inspectors and supervisors, and manage a host of other manpower and leadership-intensive tasks. With so much money being invested in a series of complex programs that would determine the degree of success or failure of the U.S. and South Vietnamese pacification effort, all efforts at coordination rapidly

1062 See Cosmas, 187–219 and 232–259.

became overwhelmed. And as conventional forces and operations continued to expand in size and scope, it became apparent that a more centralized management approach was needed. It was logical that only an organization closely affiliated or a part of the military structure would have the manpower, organizational skills, planning experience, and access to resources to deal with a management challenge of this magnitude.

Second, the well-intentioned but slow effort to coordinate the actions of a host of governmental bureaucracies, all of which maintained direct links back to the interagency morass of Washington, was dysfunctional—so dysfunctional that even President Johnson realized it and determined to involve himself personally in the process. Even more than McNamara and Komer, President Johnson wanted action and progress and he wanted it quickly. Critical in the final decision was the fact that the President wanted, in his own colorful words, “coonskins on the wall” to show that we were winning the war in Vietnam and to demonstrate his personal involvement in the push to move pacification support into the hands of the military.¹⁰⁶³ As is often remarked, there is only one real decision maker in the national security process, the president, and when he is determined to have his way, few agencies of government can stand up to him for long. CORDS was a “shotgun marriage” of a host of civilian entities with the military, creating a truly interagency headquarters, and President Johnson held the shotgun.

CORDS

Now that CORDS was finally established, the real challenge was making the organization work. CORDS was an attempt to pull together a multitude of civilian and military pacification threads, get them to plan together towards a set of agreed upon common goals, monitor the progress of each separate program, move resources as needed to achieve results, and measure those results against some as yet to be discovered standard so that an objective observer could see progress. All of these goals were to be accomplished while at

1063 The Pentagon Papers: The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam, Vol. 2, 552, as quoted in Hunt, *Pacification*, 71.

the same time developing new mechanisms to fix, or at least work around, a barely functioning, corrupt, poorly led, and rudimentary South Vietnamese administration that had meager legitimacy in the eyes of its U.S. sponsors, let alone its own people. This last challenge was to be the most frustrating problem of all, yet without a South Vietnamese government and bureaucracy capable of running its own country and protecting its own people, CORDS would be building an elaborate castle on the sand.

The first problem Komer faced in making his new organization a success was the question of how to fuse military and civilian personnel into one coherent whole. Then it was important that he energize that new organization, focus it on delivering results in a hurry (he knew just how impatient President Johnson was to see results) and then set the ground work for effective planning that would force the U.S. and Vietnamese military and civilian structures to work together.

Finally, it was critical that the unity of effort at the Saigon headquarters level be duplicated down the chain of command to the regions and provinces so that the “single manager” concept would run the pacification struggle from the national down to the provincial, village, and even hamlet levels where success was essential.

A Military and Civilian Hybrid Headquarters

The challenge of successfully mixing military and civilian personnel from different agencies with different cultures and missions was critical to the long term success of CORDS. Komer wrote to Westmoreland on May 23, 1967, shortly after assuming his duties, on this task of integrating the essentially civilian OCO into the military culture of MACV. He knew that this blending was important but was also aware of the obvious concerns of the new ambassador, Ellsworth Bunker, and the other embassy elements that it be done properly so as not to appear that the entire process was being militarized. Komer believed that it was necessary to develop “a more thorough intertwining of existing civil and military organizations than some initially envisaged.” Military personnel were to be put in charge of civilians, but civilians were also to be placed in charge of military personnel to create a truly mixed, interagency team based on skills and abilities and not on previous agency loyalty. “I believe,” he wrote, “that to show all concerned we intend to have a genuine civil-military

team, the senior officer in each case—military or civilian—should write the efficiency reports of those next below him.”¹⁰⁶⁴ This move was an essential step in making integration work. It would get the attention of military and civilian officials alike, since careers generally rose or fell based on efficiency reports, and it would clarify, once and for all, the chain of command.

Certainly the State Department was concerned about placing its personnel under a military chain of command. It was concerned that the assignment of its pacification personnel to a new organization within MACV would lead to a “militarization” of its mission. Komer was so sensitive to the issue that he began to use the argument to his civilian counterparts that he was “civilianizing the military” rather than the reverse.¹⁰⁶⁵

As proof of his commitment to a mixed headquarters, it was important for Ambassador Komer to choose his senior directors carefully to ensure that civilians received their share of the positions and thus dispel the fear that the critical slots would go mostly to military personnel. While there were a number of important vacancies that would take time to fill, one of the first assignment listings of personnel transferred into CORDS included a list of twelve senior civilians moved from OCO to occupy a number of the top slots in CORDS: Operations, Management Support, Plans and Programs, *Chieu Hoi*, Refugees, Refugee Development Cadre, and New Life Development programs. Public Safety and Psychological Operations (PSYOP) were to be filled by military personnel, as would the Offices of Deputy Director, Special Assistant, Research and Analysis, and Reports and Evaluations. In addition, when a senior civilian was assigned to a key headquarters position, almost invariably he had a military assistant reporting to him and the reverse was true when a military officer was in the principal slot. All in all, it was a laudable

1064 Memorandum from Robert W. Komer to General Westmoreland, Subject: Integration of OCO/RDS Activities Within MACV, 23 May 1967, 2–3.

1065 Confidential Memo to Ambassador Komer from R. Montague and M. Deford, copy forwarded to R. Holbrooke “who strongly concurs”, Subject: The Changeover, dated May 6, 1967. CORDS Files, U.S. Army Center of Military History (Hereafter referred to as CMH), File 79, Organization Folder May 1967.

attempt to start out the new organization with a careful balance between military and civilian management.¹⁰⁶⁶

Quick “Coonskins on the Wall”

To showcase some quick successes, Komer set up eight action programs under the general rubric of “Project Takeoff,” a “management tool designed to bring maximum Pacification assets to bear on the most important problems.”¹⁰⁶⁷ These eight programs were:

- Improve Pacification Planning
- Accelerate the *Chien Hoi* Program
- Mount an attack on the Viet Cong (VC) Infrastructure
- Expand and Improve ARVN Support to Pacification
- Expand and Supplement the RD Team Effort
- Increase the Capability to Handle Refugees
- Revamp the Police Forces
- Press Land Reform

In each of these areas, Komer wanted to focus on measurable progress that would have an immediate effect on the security situation on the ground and send a signal to the people of South Vietnam (as well as the VC) that their government, backed by the United States, was serious about improving their lives.¹⁰⁶⁸ Each initiative was quantifiable in some way so that resources could both be justified back in Washington and moved or reallocated should programs not deliver. Komer expected dramatic results within six months, especially in the attack on the Viet Cong infrastructure, and his hard-charging and often abrasive management style (not for nothing was he known as “Blowtorch Bob”) began to push Project Takeoff from day one.

1066 CORDS Files, CMH, File 77, Folder 16.

1067 MACV Command History 1968, I: 519.

1068 CORDS Files in CMH, File Cabinet 67, Folder 94. Project Takeoff. Memo from Komer to MACV, Subject: Project Takeoff, dated 19 July 1967.

Joint and Combined Planning

Added to the frustrations of orchestrating the U.S. civilian and military support was the huge challenge of assuring that the Vietnamese and U.S. pacification staffs worked together to establish truly coordinated and unified military, developmental, and diplomatic national plans for pacification. From the first, CORDS emphasized working closely with the South Vietnamese to generate more detailed and comprehensive plans for pacification coordination that would ensure U.S. and Vietnamese military and civilian resources worked together. CORDS established a joint planning group consisting of CORDS, USAID, and PSYOP planners from the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) to ensure that U.S. goals and assets were aligned with Vietnamese programs. In time, the Vietnamese pacification planning apparatus would grow in size and ability as it slowly gained a handle on all aspects of its mission.¹⁰⁶⁹

The “Single Manager” at the Region, Province, and District

To duplicate the success at organizing his headquarters at Saigon, and ensure that mission directives, planning, and resources were used throughout the country, Komer moved quickly to establish regional CORDS headquarters at each corps tactical zone headquarters with a smaller organization reflecting the national-level CORDS headquarters at MACV. Each of the 44 provinces, as well, created a headquarters similar in structure to that of CORDS, to manage the various pacification programs in conjunction with the Vietnamese province chiefs, normally a South Vietnamese Army or Marine colonel. The province senior advisor’s staff was, like its regional and Saigon counterpart, composed of both military and civilian personnel in one interagency headquarters. Finally, even down at the district level the district senior advisor had the authority and assets to assert the necessary control over U.S. military and civilian support to the Vietnamese pacification effort in his area. It was a top-to-bottom plan to gain full visibility and control over the “other war.”

¹⁰⁶⁹ Hunt, 101.

CORDS Elements

CORDS itself consisted of a typical headquarters staff element with an operations office and an executive secretariat. Within the headquarters were four main staff elements to plan for operations and monitor their effectiveness. Centralized planning and centralized accountability for results were to be two essential hallmarks of CORDS. The four main staff elements were a Research and Analysis Division (RAD) to collect and analyze progress reports from the field (especially the monthly Hamlet Evaluation System), a Reports and Evaluation Division (RED) to collect independent field evaluations on the critical revolutionary development (RD) cadre program, a Plans and Programs Division (PPD) responsible for working with the Government of Vietnam to develop unified and coherent military and civilian pacification plans, and a Management Support Division responsible for managing contracts and providing general administrative support.¹⁰⁷⁰

In addition to creating a central headquarters co-located with MACV, CORDS had to merge all the legacy development and governance programs and initiatives into its organization. The most significant of these programs became new divisions of CORDS: New Life Development (developmental aid to villages), *Chieu Hoi* (encouraging Viet Cong to defect), Revolutionary Development Cadre (good governance programs at the local level), Refugee Support (managing the movement, housing, and relocation of refugees), PSYOP (providing tactical PSYOP for the *Chieu Hoi* and local government programs), and Public Safety (building up the National Police and National Police Field Forces to attach the Viet Cong infrastructure). Taken together, this mix of programs included all of the key elements of U.S. government support to the developmental and local security programs undertaken by the South Vietnamese. It was nation-building on a grand scale.

With the establishment of CORDS in May 1967, the U.S. finally had in place a structure that placed almost all of its pacification support assets under one headquarters, one manager, within MACV. However,

1070 Change 4 to MACV Organization and Functions Manual, paras 27c, d, e, and f. May 1967. CORDS Files, CMH, File Cabinet 79, Organization Folder May 1967.

the struggle to make CORDS a fully functioning and effective headquarters was just beginning. First, it was necessary to establish plans and goals that would make the pieces actually work together toward common aims, all the while fighting off the inevitable attempts by various parts of the new organization to revert to their “usual” chain of command. USAID and CIA, in particular, retained contacts with their parent headquarters back in Washington and enjoyed the flexibility of being able to play off one headquarters against another, often effectively undercutting CORDS’ authority. This conflict was never a battle that was completely won, but Ambassador Komer and later Ambassador Colby were always on the lookout for these tendencies. Finally it was critical that the South Vietnamese government in Saigon and in the provinces cooperate and build up their own parallel pacification structure. It was, after all, South Vietnam’s war to lose. Although the United States was the “senior partner” in the pacification initiative due to its size and resources, Komer pushed hard from behind while adopting a “follow and assist” mode so that Vietnam would increasingly run its own programs.

Ambassador Komer quickly began laying plans for a larger headquarters using primarily military personnel and the additional funds that came to him from MACV, and to begin a program to hire additional civilians, including U.S. civilians, third country citizens, and local nationals. Moving rapidly to expand his control over provincial pacification personnel, Komer nearly doubled the size of CORDS (from 4,980 to 8,327 personnel) within the first six months of its existence.¹⁰⁷¹ Much of the growth was in military ranks when 2,000 soldiers were detached from advisory duties with the conventional South Vietnamese Army and moved into advisory positions in support of the Regional Forces/Popular Forces militia units. At least in terms of personnel allocations, it was apparent to all observers that pacification suddenly had a much higher priority for MACV.

Organizing the headquarters, planning staffs, and programs for pacification were just the opening salvos in Ambassador Komer’s

1071 National Archives and Records Administration (Hereafter referred to as NARA), Records Group (RG) 472, CORDS Historical Working Group, Box 3, Personnel Strength, CORDS. Only some 600 of these personnel were located in Saigon; the remainder was in the regional and provincial elements.

attempt to focus all of the elements of national power on solving the U.S. support to pacification issue. Over the next five and a half years, despite the major disruptions to the program due to the enemy’s Tet Offensive in early 1968 and the Easter Offensive of the North Vietnamese in the spring of 1972, CORDS under Komer, and then William Colby, moved aggressively to bring more and more resources, discipline, quality control, measurement effectiveness, and focus to the fight. The hope was that this effort would give the South Vietnamese government a breathing space to put its house in order and gain the willing trust of its own people.

CORDS in Action

CORDS revamped the National Police System, establishing regional and provincial police intelligence centers and improving communications networks, training, and effectiveness against the shadowy Viet Cong infrastructure.¹⁰⁷² CORDS created a special program to assist in this struggle: the *Phung Hoang* or the Phoenix program focusing on sending secret teams into the countryside to capture or kill Viet Cong leaders.¹⁰⁷³ From 1968 to the middle of 1972, *Phung Hoang*/Phoenix teams reported over 80,000 VCI members “neutralized,” captured, killed, or rallied to the side of the government.¹⁰⁷⁴

The *Chieu Hoi* enemy deserter program was emphasized with over 200,000 VC “rallying” to government by the end of 1972.¹⁰⁷⁵ As part of

1072 Memo to AC of S CORDS from Chief, Public Safety Division, Subject: Action Program FY – 1968, dated 13 June 1967 in CORDS Files in CMH, File Cabinet 67, Folder 95. By the end of 1967, police end-strength grew to almost 73,371 from a starting point of 66,000. Memorandum to Deputy COMUSMACV for Cords from AC of S CORDS, L. Wade Latham, dated 10 Jan 1968, Subject: Project Takeoff Year End Wrap Up 1967.

1073 William Colby, later Deputy Director and then Director of CORDS, was the time the CIA’s Far Eastern Division Chief and oversaw the CTTs. He remained intimately involved with the CTT, PRU, and later Phoenix Program as well as the U.S. support to the Revolutionary Development Cadre. See Andrade, 43.

1074 Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes*, 287.

1075 CORDS Historical Files, CMH, File 77 Folder 10.

this successful program, Armed Propaganda Teams were established to go into otherwise denied areas and troll for potential defectors.¹⁰⁷⁶

The RVNAF became much more focused on supporting the pacification fight nationwide.¹⁰⁷⁷ Previously targeting only the conventional fight, they were increasingly trained to function as forces that could “hold” territory after it was cleared of enemy forces by the more hard-hitting and mobile U.S. units.

The Revolutionary Development (later called the Rural Development) program, the entity primarily responsible for building a sense of civic responsibility and governmental capacity in the hamlets and villages of Vietnam, was expanded to 971 teams of 59 members each for a total of 57,000 personnel.¹⁰⁷⁸ These “shock troops” of the government were in many villages the only face of a caring government trying to deliver goods, services, and good government to its own people.

And in perhaps the most effective of its initiatives, CORDS over a five-year period focused U.S. and Vietnamese assets on improving the training and armament of the Regional Forces (RF) and Popular Forces (PF). These local militia-like organizations were vital to securing hamlets and villages and serving as the “fire brigades” and first responders to small-scale attacks by the VC and NVA in their districts.¹⁰⁷⁹ CORDS asked MACV for an additional 2,331 advisors for these “neglected paramilitary forces” and created 353 Mobile Advisory Teams (MAT).¹⁰⁸⁰ In addition, CORDS staff officers, aware of the logistical challenges facing the South Vietnamese military,

1076 NARA, RG 472, Box 12, Pacification Studies Group Evaluation of Armed Propaganda Teams, 7 April 1969.

1077 As Komer himself later wrote about CORDS, “One key achievement was its initial stress on generating sustained local security in the countryside as the *indispensable* [emphasis added] prerequisite to effective pacification.” Robert W. Komer, *Bureaucracy at War: U.S. Performance in the Vietnam Conflict* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1986)119.

1078 Hunt, 37.

1079 CORDS Files in CMH, File Cabinet 71, Folder Regional Forces/Popular Forces 1966. See also an Army War College research paper by Colonel Frederick C. Spann, “The Role of Paramilitary Forces in Counterinsurgency Operations”, 8 April 1966.

1080 Komer, *Bureaucracy at War*, 124.

established ten Mobile Advisory Logistics Teams (MALTs) to travel to RF/PF headquarters units to help them account for equipment, draw supplies, and maintain their gear.¹⁰⁸¹ CORDS also moved quickly to equip the militia forces with more modern M-16 rifles to replace their old M-1 and M-2 carbines, providing them 115,000 rifles by the end of 1968 and another 114,000 by the end of the following year.¹⁰⁸² The RF/PF units were slowly built into a usable and useful force for local security.

In short, from 1967 to 1973, CORDS was generally effective in establishing viable military and civilian aid and assistance programs in conjunction with the South Vietnamese, managing those programs efficiently, making measureable progress towards improving the effectiveness of the South Vietnamese security forces in the countryside, and generally accomplishing the goals of pacification it set for itself. With around 8,000 personnel assigned at its peak, CORDS supported and sustained a South Vietnamese pacification effort that conservatively had over 800,000 soldiers and civilians in its ranks exclusive from the conventional South Vietnamese military.¹⁰⁸³ It was by far the largest and most sustained U.S. effort at nation-building of the twentieth century and in many ways, it was the most successful.

CORDS in Retrospect

CORDS was a true innovation: a unified interagency effort to conduct nation-building in a theater of war. It was also an ambitious attempt to manage a huge program of U.S. military, political, developmental, and economic aid to a country under a single-manager concept using modern administrative tools and new ways to measure success. It was a truly sophisticated attempt to build up a country and its internal

1081 Memorandum to Deputy COMUSMACV for Cords from AC of S CORDS, L. Wade Latham, dated 10 Jan 1968, Subject: Project Takeoff Year End Wrap Up 1967. CORDS Files in CMH, File Cabinet 67, Folder 94, Project Takeoff.

1082 MACV Command Histories 1968 and 1969, Vol I, 521, and Vol II, VIII–27.

1083 South Vietnamese pacification numbers include more than 500,000 Regional Forces/Popular Forces militia, approximately 200,000 trained and armed People's Self-Defense Forces, 75,000 National Police, 50,000 Revolutionary Development cadre, and some 20,000 personnel involved in the *Chieu Hoi* program.

security structure while facing a major conventionally trained and equipped foe able to intervene in this process almost at will. As such, CORDS has to be judged overall as a “successful failure” in that it generally accomplished its specified goals during its existence even if it failed in its ultimate task of ensuring the continued survival of the South Vietnamese government: that was a “mission too far.”

CORDS certainly succeeded as well as it could in organizing and harnessing the full power of the U.S. military and civilian pacification initiatives and focusing them on supporting the South Vietnamese pacification initiatives. Compared with the feeble state of the government of Vietnam in 1965 at the start of major U.S. involvement, the government of Vietnam in 1973 at the demise of CORDS was relatively stable. Even if the 1973 Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) figures which showed the government controlled some 90 percent of the countryside cannot be fully trusted, the great majority of hamlets, villages, districts, and provinces were relatively peaceful with only the occasional ambush or guerilla attack.¹⁰⁸⁴ The regional security forces were numerous and active. The members of the National Police, while never fully living up to their promise, were actively tracking down the remnants of the VC shadow government. The economy had stabilized, rice production was up, and with a reasonably stable central government in control (despite deeply flawed elections) one could say that while not completely peaceful, South Vietnam was, in many ways, “pacified.” That dynamic only changed with the re-emergence of the conventional North Vietnamese threat in 1975.

1084 MACV Command History 1973, Table at D-30 showing shifting HES levels through January 1973. The Hamlet Evaluation System was just one of the most regularly used, if flawed, means to measure progress by compiling monthly reports from each hamlet and village in Vietnam. While often misleading, over time it became a generally consistent management tool if not a completely reliable measure of “victory.” While HES figures for South Vietnam in 1975 are lacking, the relative stability in the countryside reported by numerous sources through April 1975 indicates that the Jan 1973 security figure of 90 percent of the hamlets with “A,” “B,” and “C” ratings did not change much. Approximately 76 percent of the hamlets were rated “A” or “B”, indicating almost no enemy activity.

If one can declare, if not victory, then at least a hope of having laid the groundwork for a potential success, then what degree of credit goes to CORDS? CORDS must, in my opinion, be given the credit for successfully putting in place many of the management tools that made U.S. support to pacification as effective as it was. After much initial confusion and diffusion of effort, CORDS put one interagency manager at the top of the chain of command for the pacification effort and placed that manager in the military structure with all of the resources, personnel, staff planners, equipment, and clout that entailed. With aggressive management and dynamic personalities, CORDS generated measurable programs, bold initiatives, gained South Vietnamese cooperation, and set out ambitious milestones. Despite two major conventional attacks in 1968 and 1972, the CORDS structure helped focus U.S. attention and assets on the critical “other war.” The structure paved the way for the United States and South Vietnamese to exploit the period after 1968 when the Tet Offensive brought the VC out into the open. As a result, the VC were systematically destroyed then, and in the years immediately afterwards. Tet and the post-Tet struggle irremediably crippled the VC, and CORDS was one of the factors that helped South Vietnam capitalize on that and virtually eliminate the VC as a major threat.

Why was CORDS different? The real architect of the organization, Ambassador Komer, later tried to answer that question. He settled on three main reasons that resonate today:

First, it was a field expedient tailored to particular needs as perceived at the time. Second it was a unique experiment in a unified civil/military field advisory and support organization, quite different from World War II civil affairs or military government. Soldiers served directly under civilians, and vice versa, at all levels. They even wrote each other's efficiency reports. . . . and CORDS was fully integrated into the theater military structure. . . . The cutting edge was unified civil-military advisory teams in all 250 districts and 44 provinces. . . [Third, CORDS took a] relatively flexible and pragmatic approach to pacification . . . CORDS in effect wrote its field manual as it went along. One key achievement was its initial stress on generating

sustained local security in the countryside as the indispensable prerequisite to effective pacification at that late date.¹⁰⁸⁵

It was perhaps this unified focus on security, and convincing the South Vietnamese, the U.S. civilian development effort, and the U.S. Army that the security fight in the countryside was the *sine qua non* for any of the other pacification programs to succeed, that was CORDS' greatest contribution.

Could CORDS have done better? Certainly, although critics over the years seem at a loss to describe exactly how any major U.S. effort on pacification could have somehow have “won” the South Vietnamese people over to their own government. CORDS, by mission and necessity, always had to deal with the issue of pacification through the medium of the South Vietnamese government, a deeply flawed instrument. The United States provided advice, funds, equipment, guidance, and advisors, but despite having great influence and some leverage over that government, the majority of pacification programs had to be conducted by the South Vietnamese. According to Komer, this was the greatest single problem. “Perhaps the greatest flaw,” he later wrote, “was the failure to come to grips directly with the gross inadequacies of GVN [Government of Vietnam] and RVNAF leadership at all levels.”¹⁰⁸⁶ Without sufficient quantity and quality of Vietnamese leaders at the province, district, village, and hamlet level, no amount of U.S. equipment or advice could alter the basic fact on the ground that the Vietnamese people either did not care about their central government, or they saw it as corrupt, or as a U.S. puppet: they never gave their complete loyalty to it.

Even had such leaders been available, however, and even if they had been given five or ten more years, undisturbed, in the end any pacification effort by CORDS or any other organization was doomed to failure without a complete North Vietnamese withdrawal from South Vietnam as part of any peace treaty. CORDS was perhaps the best organization we could devise to help fight the “other war” in the countryside, but in the end it could not trump twenty North Vietnamese divisions.

1085 Komer, *Bureaucracy at War*, 119.

1086 Komer, *Bureaucracy at War*, 127.

What Can We Learn About Interagency Operations From CORDS?

Interagency is Hard

One discernable lesson from the struggle to establish CORDS in the first place was the intensity of the bureaucratic opposition to forging an interagency headquarters. The State Department under two separate ambassadors—including one retired General—fought the idea that any of its assets for development or pacification should fall under a military chain of command, even one headed by a civilian. Interagency cooperation was a sufficient solution for the ambassadors; an interagency headquarters under a single manager was indeed a “bridge too far” for them. For two and a half years during the American build-up, the interagency effort to support the pacification struggle was factionalized, splintered, and ill-managed. Even after several rather broad hints from the administration that more direct and centralized management was needed, it took the highest level of intervention to change their minds. That CORDS was created at all was due to the direct intervention and personal commitment of President Johnson, who saw that the previous organizations of the pacification effort were not effective. It speaks volumes about making the interagency structure work that it took direct involvement by the nation’s chief executive to force this organizational solution on an unwilling State Department and USAID. Nothing else was sufficient.

Once CORDS was created, it took continual direct involvement by Ambassador Komer and General Westmoreland to make it work, but within months of its creation, CORDS had accomplished what can only be considered significant progress in a unified pacification effort. As Komer later wrote:

It is significant that not until an organization was created to focus specifically on pacification as its primary mission and to integrate all relevant military and civilian agency efforts did a major sustained pacification effort begin to take shape. The bureaucratic price that had to be paid for creating this military elephant and civilian rabbit stew was to put CORDS under the military. *Paradoxically, this resulted in greater U.S. civilian influence over pacification than had ever existed before* [his emphasis]; it also powerfully reinforced pacification’s claim

on U.S. and GVN military resources, which constituted the great bulk of the inputs after 1966.¹⁰⁸⁷

The Single-Manager Concept

The power of the single-manager concept for pacification organization cannot be overestimated. Unity of command and control, a central military concept, was essential to forging CORDS into a truly effective interagency headquarters. Without unity of command, mixed civilian and military staffs assigned to that command (and not just attached), and a rating chain that has military rating civilians and civilians rating military, no interagency organization can function.

Different Institutional Cultures

It seems clear that the institutional cultures of the different agency elements that tried to run the pacification struggle were at odds. The State Department and USAID, in particular, were opposed to the idea of letting “their” programs fall within the purview of the military. The military was equally unwilling to surrender control over their people and their assets to the control of the unfamiliar (and distrusted) State Department. The culture of cooperation of the State Department, however, could not solve what was essentially a problem of command and control over a massive and growing effort to build a nation including large elements of security, intelligence, training, and logistics as well as farm aid, democracy programs, and building projects. The embassy, neither with its Mission Council/Country Team coordination effort nor short-lived Office of Civilian Operations, succeeded in unifying the U.S. pacification support effort to the South Vietnamese and providing the strong management that effort needed. Only the creation of a military-civilian hybrid organization—CORDS—squared the circle and allowed for civilian and military assets to be blended under civilian control but within a military hierarchy. Even after CORDS was established, bringing all the

1087 Komer, *Bureaucracy at War*, 118. This meant that more military resources were poured into pacification as opposed to civilian resources, not in the sense of DOD pouring more money into pacification as opposed to conventional military operations.

different civilian agencies together and merging them into one unified program was a herculean task that needed strong leadership and daily struggles for budget, personnel, and clearer lines of authority. It is a testament to the individuals involved in that effort—Komer, Westmoreland, Colby, Abrams, and later Bunker—and their staffs that this *ad hoc* headquarters succeeded as well as it did.¹⁰⁸⁸ Even though many problems with the CIA were mitigated by the appointment of William Colby as Komer's deputy and later as head of CORDS, and problems with the embassy in Saigon were eased thanks to the smooth working relationship between Ambassador Bunker, Colby, and Abrams, tensions with the State Department back in Washington remained. Those tensions, however, had less and less effect on the ground in Vietnam thanks to CORDS and its focused management.

Planning

Having the manpower, resources, and culture for being able to plan extensively was critical to the success of CORDS and is critical for any future interagency effort. To a great extent, only the military has all three of those assets at its beck and call and CORDS, with all pacification-oriented programs under one headquarters and one manager, had unprecedented access to trained military planners. Using these planners and other resources, CORDS had enough leverage to force all the various agency pieces to draft, staff, publish, and implement, in conjunction with the South Vietnamese, a nationwide pacification plan. That planning process also forced the South Vietnamese, who were the key to any eventual pacification success, to create pacification councils and agencies, coordinate their activities (to the degree that they could), and merge their plans with those of the U.S. military. The United States, in turn, was bound to coordinate more and more of their military actions and training efforts with the South Vietnamese, ensuring some measure of high-level military interest in pacification. The process itself was beneficial, and the plan for each year, even when it was modified due to changing circumstances on the ground, was an important document that focused U.S. and

¹⁰⁸⁸ See in particular a memo to Mr. James Grant, Assistant AID Administrator for Vietnam complaining about lack of support from Washington and about having to “fight for each dollar, sack of cement and body” with AID. CORDS Files in CMH, Komer Papers, Memo of 24 August 1967.

South Vietnamese efforts, and established some measurable products. Planning was no panacea, but CORDS jump-started the effort to focus attention and resources where they were needed and gained greater U.S. and South Vietnamese “buy-in” to the process.

Leadership

CORDS brought to the pacification fight another almost incalculable asset: focused leadership. Leadership not only at the center—Komer and Colby were exceptionally knowledgeable and committed leaders and managers—but at each level of the process. Komer and Colby worked hard to fill leadership positions with the highest quality military or civilian leaders they could find, gave them wide-ranging powers, assigned them various goals and targets (whether or not they were truly the right ones for overall success is another matter—they were at least measurable tools for management) and held them accountable. These leaders, whether in Saigon or working at the military region, province, or district level, answered to one chain of command and worked according to one game plan. Interagency “coordination” and cooperation, no matter how collegial or well-intentioned, was insufficient in managing the “subsidiary corporation called pacification.”¹⁰⁸⁹ Interagency efforts of the future must select top quality leaders, give them the authority they need to direct the actions of military and civilian alike, and then reward them when finished as they return to their parent agencies.

Conclusions

CORDS was formed after two organizations—the Mission Council to coordinate the Country Team and the Office of Civilian Operations—failed to show measurable progress in helping the various South Vietnamese governments win their struggle to pacify their own country and gain some measure of trust of their own people. For over two and a half years, in the face of an accelerating insurgency, the U.S. government failed to turn to what most military observers saw as the obvious solution: a unified organization with centralized management; a strong chain of command; responsibility

1089 See Hunt, 100.

matched with the authority to direct it; measurable standards and the means to measure them; dedicated resources of money, personnel, and equipment (and more available quickly if needed); and a robust planning staff at Saigon, the military regions, provinces, and districts. But for two and a half years, until the direct intervention of the president, the civilian elements of the U.S. pacification struggle led by the State Department and USAID fought that solution as hard as they could. Despite the increasingly obvious necessity of creating larger and more dynamically managed organizations to bring all the elements of U.S. power to bear on the essential problem of nation-building in South Vietnam, the civilian elements of the U.S. government mission to Vietnam continued to believe that coordination and cooperation of small staff elements working apart from the massive military effort in the country could effectively synchronize those elements of power and work in concert with the military. For two and a half years, President Johnson and his advisors allowed them the chance to prove that they could do the job—put “coonskins on the wall”—despite the risks of a deteriorating, or at least not improving, situation. But in the end centralized management and a combination of a military-like chain of command and military resources, replaced the cooperative and small-scale effort of the embassy to orchestrate such massive effort and essentially accomplished its mission.

The United States pacification effort in Vietnam was unified under CORDS for a mere five and a half years (May 1967 to January 1973). During that time, a robust, carefully organized, well managed, and comparatively well resourced U.S. effort to assist the South Vietnamese defeat the insurgency was, on the whole, successful, even if the eventual fall of South Vietnam turned that success into failure. While the basic legitimacy of the South Vietnamese government and its popular support was still problematic, the indigenous Viet Cong insurgency was crippled. CORDS, with its dynamic leadership and constant pushing of the government of Vietnam and its armed forces to press the fight against the increasingly exposed Viet Cong, was critical to this relative success. It limited the interagency bickering (although it never stopped it entirely); created a unified effort for pacification under a single manager; placed that manager's headquarters inside the military structure thereby allowing it to gain access to vast human, financial, and organizational resources; and

established coherent and more measurable programs to focus the fight at the province, district, hamlet, and village level. CORDS, under both Komer and Colby and backed by Westmoreland and Abrams—and eventually by the embassy under Ambassador Bunker—applied the resources available to them against the key nodes of the counterinsurgency struggle: the security assets (police, territorial militia forces, and counter-infrastructure forces), governmental aid programs (Revolutionary Development, land reform, agricultural assistance programs), deserter programs (*Chieu Hoi* and its armed propaganda teams), and other civilian assistance programs (justice, youth, refugees, capacity building, minorities, etc.). As a result, CORDS as an interagency headquarters helped achieve a remarkable, and measurable, degree of progress.

In the end, however, CORDS could not solve a problem that was, for the United States, basically insolvable. The government of South Vietnam had to convince its own people why they needed to support it, even in the face of overwhelming enemy attacks. It all came down to a question of legitimacy of the Thieu regime and the South Vietnamese were unable to solve that problem. It was not enough that the government's forces—which even at the end were poorly led and only marginally effective on the battlefield—were able, with U.S. help, to “pacify” the countryside and gain the people's acquiescence to their control.¹⁰⁹⁰ The people needed to support actively, and fight for, what they perceived as their own government against the North Vietnamese who increasingly dominated the Communist war effort after the decimation of the VC during and immediately after Tet. This level of commitment by the people, perhaps possible only after many more years of “government capacity” building, could not occur in five years, or probably even ten. When the North Vietnamese conventional army swept over the forces of South Vietnam, whatever spark that CORDS, working with and through

1090 See Komer's comment on p. 125 of his *Bureaucracy at War*. He asked: “What did all of this massive effort accomplish?” He rated the U.S. as failing from 1955 to 1965 in helping South Vietnam stand on its own. Even in 1972 he concluded that they were still “dependent” on us. His comment on the Vietnamization effort of 1968–1972 was, “without U.S. advisory support it is highly questionable whether RVNAF would have performed even as well as it did during U.S. disengagement.”

the South Vietnamese government, may have nurtured in the people was extinguished. The CORDS “operation” may have been a success, but the patient died anyway.

CHAPTER 9. AFTER DISASTER: RECOVERING FROM THE 1964 ALASKAN EARTHQUAKE

*Dwight A. Ink*¹⁰⁹¹

Introduction

It was Good Friday. Washington headed home for the weekend. Then, without notice, the most severe earthquake ever recorded in North America struck Alaska. The quake severely impacted much of the state's population, devastating the economy. Engineers surveying the damage concluded the situation was hopeless. Critical facilities could not be rebuilt during the short Alaskan construction season. Most of the affected population would have to be moved to the lower forty-eight states. Despite these dire predictions, an unprecedented response that combined highly effective policy leadership from Washington political leaders and unorthodox management strategies developed by career government professionals entrusted with directing the rebuilding, averted catastrophe.

Though the Alaskan recovery involved far less people than did Hurricane Katrina for example, it has significance for planning effective responses to future catastrophic crises because it was the most complex recovery this nation faced between the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and the aftermath of Katrina in 2005. In 1964, there was no recovery organization or management framework within which to develop a response. Yet saving Alaska would involve almost every significant federal agency, and it required a unique approach to intergovernmental management. The short construction season also presented an unusual degree of urgency, requiring unprecedented engineering and management strategies that met with great success. The unique linkages established with Congress were also of considerable significance. In addition, the simplicity and flexibility of the special recovery operation, combined with great speed, openness, and rigorous monitoring, led to tremendous savings in

1091 Dwight A Ink served in policy roles under seven U.S. presidents, including service as vice president of two government corporations. President Johnson appointed him executive director of the cabinet-level commission to lead the recovery of Alaska after the devastating 1964 earthquake in that state.

dollars and human suffering. The Alaskan earthquake offers lessons in interagency and intergovernmental coordination beyond those found in other disaster recoveries. The successful Alaskan employment of unprecedented approaches to disaster recovery would appear to merit consideration for possible adaptation in certain future catastrophic natural disasters or terrorist attacks.

This case study will describe the difficult challenges posed by the earthquake and President Lyndon Johnson's approach to recovery—an approach which was dramatically different from that used in response to Hurricane's Katrina, Rita, or any other natural disaster. The roles of the cabinet as members of the President's Commission and that of the executive director will be presented. Included will be discussion of the important partnership between the political and career leadership and the abandonment of the typical approach to intergovernmental management in favor of a far more rapid, functioning strategy that involved agencies at three levels of government working as a team. The fundamental impact of the innovative management strategies developed by the career staff will also be examined. The surprising approach used in addressing the perennial Alaskan problem of inflation will also be described. And finally, the positive views of Alaskans toward the recovery will be mentioned.

The Alaskan Disaster and Recovery

Having achieved statehood only five years before the earthquake struck, Alaska's pre-oil economy was very fragile. Tourism stood at a small fraction of what exists today. The state's finances remained so anemic that questions had been raised during the debate on granting statehood as to whether Alaska was yet prepared to take on the fiscal responsibilities required for sustaining a viable state. As a result, prior to the earthquake, President Johnson had considered establishing some type of federal economic commission to help Alaska develop plans and secure financing for much needed economic development. But no action was taken. Arguably, no state in the union stood less prepared to take on the burden of a catastrophic natural disaster.

In Washington, President Johnson was preoccupied with completing a difficult leadership transition following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. In addition, he was busy seeking political support

for his ambitious social agenda, much of which had been envisioned by Kennedy, while also developing his candidacy for the fall presidential election. At the same time, the civil rights battle reached its climax, and long neglected urban neighborhoods had become tinderboxes, ready to explode. Johnson also found himself devoting increasingly more attention to the Vietnam conflict. Nor could he neglect the Cold War, complex nuclear issues, and tensions in Europe. The president had his hands more than full. Then the earth shook.

Without warning, a horrendous earthquake struck Alaska on March 27, 1964. Measuring 9.2 on the Richter scale, and lasting between three and four minutes, it had a devastating impact. The ground rose and sank at least five feet over most of an expanse that exceeded 50,000 square miles where roughly two-thirds of the Alaskan population lived. The quake had a particularly devastating effect on fishing, the base of Alaskan economy. Most fishing boats were destroyed or severely damaged, and the canneries were knocked out. The quake also altered the geography of the coastal landscape. Small boat harbors became either too shallow for most vessels, or too deep for the breakwaters to protect the boats from autumn storms. Exporting anything became impossible. The terminus of the Alaskan railroad vanished into the water, as did parts of neighborhoods and business districts in Anchorage and other towns. Highways buckled, bridges collapsed, and air transportation was seriously disrupted.

The earthquake changed forever the habitat of many native Alaskans who lived along the coast. Shorelines were altered in many places. Several towns found that at high tide they now stood partially under water. The town of Homer was located on a spit of land that became partially submerged. Geologists feared that the spit had become so vulnerable to erosion from future storms that it would eventually disappear altogether. Officials debated whether it made sense to provide public funds to help rebuild at all. The Valdez waterfront also disappeared, raising alarming questions about whether the town's future safety was so precarious that it did not warrant rebuilding. Many communities found water and sewer lines not just broken, but pulverized. Thousands of homes and businesses were destroyed or damaged beyond repair. Few Alaskans had earthquake insurance, largely because it was prohibitively expensive.

Remarkably, given the devastation to transportation networks and critical infrastructure, the initial emergency response by community groups and the federal government to help local governments provide food and water, medical assistance, and shelter to residents throughout the state, moved forward quite well. Prospects for the longer term recovery that would be required to sustain a viable state were an entirely different matter. The future appeared to be very grim.

Crisis Emergency Response

Alaska proved fortunate in having a large military presence at the time of the earthquake. Civilian communications were completely disrupted, but within minutes of the earthquake, the Command Post of the Alaskan Military Command at Anchorage became a command center through which communications were established between Alaska and Washington and between state and city Civil Defense Headquarters in south-central Alaska. Since there was an immediate humanitarian crisis, the military believed it had inherent authority to act, and exhibited great professional initiative in doing so. They did not wait for formal requests for help or written clearances before dispatching assistance.¹⁰⁹²

The Military Affiliate Radio System went into operation on emergency power in less than one hour after the earthquake, and maintained a 24-hour schedule for several weeks. Military signal personnel helped civilian companies restore communication service. Military water trailers supplied water to the greater Anchorage area within three hours of the earthquake. Within 48 hours, the military flew water purification units in from Fort Lewis, Washington. On the day after the earthquake, a large airlift began in which seventeen C-123 transport planes carried relief supplies and equipment to Seward, Valdez, Kodiak, and other more isolated communities. That same morning, Fort Richardson, Alaska opened four field mess halls that

1092 See, Center of Military History files: Truman R. Strobridge, Operation Helping Hand: The United States Army and the Alaska Earthquake, 27 March to 7 May 1964 (Historian, U.S. Army, Alaska); Operation Helping Hand: The Armed Forces React to Earthquake Disaster (Headquarters, Alaskan Command, 1964), Army Medical Service Activities, Annual Rpts, U.S. Army Alaska; HQ, U.S. Army Alaska; Support Command, and Fort Richardson; 64th Field Hospital; and Bassett Army Hospital.

operated around the clock. Elmendorf Air Force Base provided similar emergency food service. Emergency housing for about 5,000 people was arranged the same evening as the earthquake. At the same time, the military responded to local phone and radio requests by assigning troops to assist in security and travel control. The Navy distributed generators, pumps, medicine, sleeping bags, and other items desperately needed in Kodiak.¹⁰⁹³

On the morning of March 28, Governor William A. Egan requested the president declare a major disaster under the authority of P.L. 81-875. Several hours later Johnson acted, designating Alaska a federal disaster area. Under the direction of Edward A. McDermott, the Office of Emergency Planning (OEP, the forerunner of the Federal Emergency Management Agency—FEMA) moved quickly to work with other agencies and local governments to help meet the initial response requirements of food and shelter, as well as provide limited funding for some emergency repairs. The OEP performed its early task of coordinating emergency support as other federal agencies soon joined in these first emergency actions. The Federal Aviation Agency, for example, immediately began assessing the damage, and directing repairs at state and municipal airports. The federally owned Alaskan Railroad also began to undertake repairs. In addition, the Bureau of Public Roads, the Departments of Health, Education, and Welfare, Labor, Agriculture, and Commerce, and the Coast Guard moved quickly to provide emergency help.¹⁰⁹⁴

Despite the crippling impact of the earthquake on Alaskan resources, many local government personnel turned in wonderful emergency performances, and the work of several civic organizations such as the Red Cross and Salvation Army was impressive.¹⁰⁹⁵ Contributing significantly to a surprisingly effective initial response during the first days after the earthquake was the initiative shown by individual

1093 Ibid.

1094 Edward A. McDermott, E. A. “The Alaska Earthquake—A Lesson for NATO,” *NATO Letter* (November 1964): 8–15.

1095 Office of Civil Defense, “The Alaskan earthquake; a preliminary report concerning the great earthquake that struck South-Central Alaska on Good Friday, March 27, 1964, and subsequent civil defense emergency operations,” (Washington, DC: 1964).

Alaskans. They were unusually creative in finding ways to cope with disaster, and not easily discouraged.¹⁰⁹⁶

Good Friday's Wake Revealed Special Problems

Earthquakes present engineering recovery complexities beyond those found in hurricanes or other natural disasters.¹⁰⁹⁷ Property lines shift, and ground elevations change abruptly. Earthquakes cause considerable hidden structural damage not readily identified or evaluated. Behavior of underlying soils in the event of future earthquakes is difficult to ascertain. At times, as was true in Alaska, deep soil tests are required to determine where it is safe to rebuild. For example, in Anchorage, treacherous Bootleggers Cove Clay lay buried well under the surface, and when saturated, it reacted to the motions of an earthquake similar to a layer of grease above which the overburdened ground slid unevenly toward the ocean carrying whole neighborhoods with it. Drilling rigs from the Nevada atomic energy test sites had to be slowly barged up the ocean to Alaska for much of the soil testing before rebuilding decisions could be made in the areas that might be vulnerable to future earthquakes.

Economic issues associated with the earthquake's aftermath also proved overwhelming. In addition to the body blow to the fishing-based economy, inflation worries loomed over reconstruction planning. Inflation had been a perennial problem in Alaska where competition for reconstruction and support services could spark an unrelenting bidding war. Widespread fears persisted that the economic pressures of the recovery operations would send inflation skyrocketing. The loss of projected state and local tax revenue, combined with large emergency expenditures, threatened to leave state and local governments without funds to continue essential services.¹⁰⁹⁸

1096 See, for example, Daniel Yutzy and J. Eugene Haas, "Disaster and Functional Priorities in Anchorage," Committee on the Alaska Earthquake of the National Research Council, ed., *The Great Alaska Earthquake of 1964, "Human Ecology Volume"* (Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences, 1970), 90–95.

1097 For an overview see, David R. Godschalk, et. al, *Natural Hazard Mitigation: Recasting Disaster Policy and Planning* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1999), pp. 3-20.

1098 Office of Emergency Planning, Executive office of the President, *Impact of Earthquake of March 27, 1964 Upon the Economy of Alaska* (Washington, DC:

Rapid reconstruction, while threatening to overheat the local economy, was desperately needed to help keep Alaskans employed. Some in the crippled fishing industry could survive at least temporarily by finding reconstruction jobs, but only if reconstruction moved rapidly enough and left them with enough money to remain in the state during the winter months.

Making this dilemma truly acute was the knowledge that the short Alaskan construction season made prospects for completing the most critical rebuilding during the first year extremely dim. Failure to do so would have meant that about a third of the Alaskan population would likely enter winter without water or sewage facilities, with inadequate shelter, their jobs gone, and rising inflation. In this event, most would have had no choice but to abandon the state, with highly uncertain prospects for their return. Such a migration would have raised serious questions regarding whether Alaska could still function as a state.

Unorthodox Recovery Needed

Within twenty-four hours of the earthquake, it had become clear to everyone that existing machinery at none of the three levels of government could begin to cope with the complexity, magnitude, and urgency of the physical and economic recovery faced by Alaska. All the heroic emergency efforts of the first responders could not hide the painful fact that much of the state was in a shambles and its economy ruined. Strong federal leadership would have to be brought into play very quickly for Alaska to survive as a viable state. Yet no federal machinery existed to address the complex demands of a major recovery. Those in the Executive Office of the President, especially the management staff of the Bureau of the Budget (BOB), recognized that Alaskan recovery would require organization and operating approaches never visualized before.¹⁰⁹⁹

Federal Reconstruction and Development Planning Commission, 1964).

1099 An important part of the Bureau of the Budget located in the Executive Office of the President by President Roosevelt was a government reorganization branch. Typically consisting of eight to ten personnel, it helped Roosevelt organize the war agencies needed for World War II, and helped Paul Hoffman organize the Marshall Plan. This branch served later presidents as their management arm in establishing new departments such as HUD and DOT. It provided Nixon with the leadership in designing and securing congressional

Departing in dramatic fashion from what had been past failures to realize the obvious need for special organizing approaches to address the recovery phase in major disasters, several days after the earthquake Johnson appointed much of his cabinet as the Federal Reconstruction and Development Planning Commission for Alaska.¹¹⁰⁰ This temporary commission was to cooperate with the state in developing plans for both reconstruction and economic development.

Johnson then took the unprecedented step of appointing a powerful senator, Clinton Anderson from New Mexico, as chair of the commission. Anderson was a strong political ally of Johnson, and Anderson's earlier experience as secretary of agriculture gave him a much better grasp of the executive branch than most senators typically possess. In addition, he had experience with relief programs during the 1930s and with the post-World War II international food emergency. Further, Anderson was a member of the Senate's Interior and Insular Affairs Committee where he had conducted hearings on Alaska statehood.

Other initial members of the commission appointed by Johnson were the secretary of defense, the secretary of the interior, the secretary of agriculture, the secretary of commerce, the secretary of labor, the secretary of health, education, and welfare; the administrators of the Federal Aviation, the Housing and Home Finance Agency, and the Small Business Administration; the chairman of the Federal Power Administration; and the director of the Office of Emergency Planning. Although not a formal member of the commission, the director of the Bureau of the Budget participated in the commission

agreement to establish the OMB, Domestic Council, and EPA. It provided expertise in interagency and intergovernmental coordination, including the design of much of Nixon's New Federalism. Nixon lost confidence in the branch because it opposed his circumventing Congress with his ill-advised efforts to establish a two-ayered set of departments during his second term as well as loss of governmental transparency. A greatly weakened branch survived but was finally terminated by President Clinton.

1100 Federal Reconstruction and Development Planning Commission for Alaska, *Response to Disaster: Alaskan Earthquake, March 27, 1964* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1964). On April 2, 1964, President Johnson signed Executive Order 11150 establishing the Federal Reconstruction and Development Planning Commission for Alaska.

meetings and played a very important role with respect to expediting the appropriations process for funding the recovery. Nearly every other agency of government eventually became involved, including the Department of State.

Participation by all the significant agencies in the federal, state, and local governments created a remarkably complicated interagency and intergovernmental mechanism. Without professional management advice from the Bureau of the Budget, strong commission leadership, skilled coordination, and highly innovative engineers and managers, it is difficult to conceive how Alaskan recovery activities could have been effectively coordinated. The response lacked any pre-existing recovery plans, doctrine, or policies to guide their efforts. Instead, Johnson relied on experienced political and career leaders and expected them to act quickly in a decentralized manner without red tape.

Decisive presidential action made a huge difference. By establishing a cabinet commission, Johnson demonstrated his personal commitment to recovery and reconstruction. This quick decision by the president not only galvanized action, it turned out to demonstrate how strong national leadership with a clear policy at the outset can reduce the potential drain on the president's crowded schedule as work proceeds.

Leading the Crowd

Anderson gave remarkably strong policy leadership, but to avoid possible pitfalls of having a busy senator placed in a position of directing executive operations Johnson also appointed an experienced career official to serve as executive director. The assignment went to this author, serving at the time as assistant general manager of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC).¹¹⁰¹ As the number three

1101 Anderson had recommended my appointment based on my role in the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) that had brought me in close contact with him as chair of the Congressional Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. I had also served as the neutral “liaison” between Anderson and Lewis Strauss during the failed effort of Strauss to gain confirmation as President Dwight D. Eisenhower's nominee for secretary of commerce, arguably the bitterest cabinet confirmation battle in our nation's history. Because the AEC had developed a strong reputation of good management, the Bureau of the Budget (BOB) had also recommended my appointment. This background had earned me the trust

operating AEC official, the assistant general manager's role at the time included the expediting and trouble-shooting elements of a typical chief operating officer, combined with responsibility under both Republican and Democratic administrations for liaison with the White House, Congress, and the press. Experience gained from this combination of duties proved to be very useful in the role of executive director who reported to both Senator Anderson and the president.

Mindful of his senatorial role, Anderson was careful not to inject himself into operations, leaving the executive director free to manage day-to-day activities. As for the president, Johnson was too busy with other executive issues to try to manage Alaskan recovery, but he did follow events closely both because of his personal concern and his recognition of the political cost of failure.

As the commission staff exerted every effort to help the departments expedite their work, and make sure the departments received credit for their achievements, they received tremendous support from the department heads. The staff's welcome role as a facilitator of operations helped greatly in the occasional situation where its influence had to be exerted more forcefully to break through a bottleneck or address a jurisdictional question. Backed by the authority of the president as chief executive, the commission had a rare opportunity to expedite both policy and operational decision making, encouraging an impressive level of cooperation among the scores of federal agencies that were involved.

The executive director, serving as a career professional and thus not perceived as aspiring to political office, appointed for only a temporary position (thought to be about six months), and with a very small staff detailed from various participating organizations, could move very quickly without raising significant concerns about impinging on departmental jurisdictional concerns. In addition, Anderson's serving as the public face of the reconstruction permitted the executive director

of both Anderson and the BOB, a factor that was of enormous help in the rebuilding. Even more important was the trust that Johnson placed in his close friend, Anderson. Operating under tremendous pressure, this element of trust often substituted for the more typical formal communications and clearances.

and the commission staff to function with a relatively low profile, concentrating on operations rather than public relations.

An important factor in the success of the executive director position was the role played by one of Johnson’s assistants, Lee White. White offered insights into how Johnson’s White House worked, including a great deal about the president’s personal preferences in how he wished the commission staff to interact with him and the White House staff, such as the type of reporting the president wanted. Lee also helped create the impression that the executive director was close to the president and had ready access to him. Neither was the case, but White was in a position to provide presidential access should it be needed. Indeed, interagency cooperation proved so effective, that there was never a case where the president needed to be involved with operational problems or decisions, but presidential memos and statements during the recovery strengthened the role of the commission and its staff.

It was Anderson, not the executive director, who was the president’s confidante, the person on whom Johnson was relying to save Alaska. It was clear that someone close to the president, in this case Anderson, was needed to make this rather informal government-wide organizational arrangement function as a cohesive team. And it was also essential that someone, in this case the executive director, be fully equipped professionally to lead the operations and develop whatever new management strategies might be required for success.

Frank DiLuzio, Anderson’s assistant, helped ensure that the work of the chairman and the executive director proceeded in tandem. DiLuzio proved very effective at 1) convincing people that the executive director, in fact, had the full confidence of Anderson and the president, and did speak for them, and 2) helping the chairman herd needed legislation through a divided Congress.

The BOB management staff, headed by Harold Seidman, also played an important role. BOB designed the simple, but powerful, federal machinery Johnson quickly set in motion, except for the unprecedented feature of having a senator chair the cabinet committee: that was Johnson’s personal idea. During the months the temporary commission was in existence, the BOB staff was of tremendous help in making sure that the departments understood

the nature of the special unorthodox arrangements established for the recovery, and gave full support to the Commission staff.¹¹⁰² This BOB management staff had in-depth knowledge of the relative management strengths of the career leadership in the various agencies, providing the executive director with invaluable information about who best to designate for interagency and intergovernmental leadership roles. This organizational staff arm of the president no longer exists—today the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) executes many of the BOB’s former responsibilities.

Commission Staff

All staff members were detailed from agencies involved in the recovery except for several from congressional committees. The director, deputy director, two secretaries, and three engineers, were the only ones serving full-time. The other seventeen staff provided various levels of part-time service, largely as liaisons with their home agencies. These members visited Alaska, but spent more of their time in Washington helping the executive director and their own leadership draw upon agency resources to ensure rapid execution.¹¹⁰³

The commission was able to function with only a very small staff because its role was not to perform recovery work, but to mobilize, energize and coordinate agency personnel throughout the federal government.¹¹⁰⁴ The federal agencies were the ones doing the work in cooperation with state and local public and non-governmental groups.

With the exception of the secretaries, the full-time staff members spent most of their time in Alaska, while the larger part-time staff operated more from Washington. Typically, the executive director would fly to Alaska for about ten days, going from community to

1102 Dwight A. Ink, “The President as Manager,” *Public Administration Review*, 36/5 (September–October, 1976): 508–515.

1103 Reconstruction and Development Commission for Alaska, *Response to Disaster*, 1964, 49.

1104 The executive director departed from this role when making operational decisions that involved several agencies, were especially controversial, and had high public visibility, such as whether it was safe to rebuild a community in an existing location. He relied heavily on data from the interagency Scientific and Engineering Field Team, but these decisions were his.

community, and then return to Washington for a week to brief Anderson and White House staff, consult with agency heads and their liaisons, and discuss Alaskan needs with key members of Congress. When the executive director was in Washington, the deputy executive director would be in Alaska to ensure continuity between the efforts going on in the field and the support provided in Washington by federal entities. The staff was the action arm of the president and the commission, as well as an oversight group for monitoring agency reconstruction performance.

The commission staff was fully operational less than two weeks after the disaster. In part, this quick reaction was possible because it was temporary. Equally important, since they were operating out of the White House under the Executive Office of the President, there were less bureaucratic obstacles to overcome. Time was not diverted from the recovery to developing the customary drafting, debating, and clearing of roles and legal authorities for these structures that otherwise would have had to take place before becoming operational. None of these temporary groups possessed legal authority per se, relying instead on commission policies and the authority each member of the group had by virtue of their agency membership.

Indeed the executive director had no specific legal authority. Yet as executive director of a cabinet commission, and because he reported to the president and a powerful senator, the staff members were in a position to make any operational decision that was needed, including the role of the executive director in designating various agencies with lead role responsibilities for reconstruction tasks. With the exception of the problems encountered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in dealing with native recovery issues, the lead agency designations worked well. It is important to note that, perhaps surprisingly, the informality, and lack of special legal authority prescribed for the structure below the level of the commission did not lead to confusion over roles and missions. To the contrary, questions of authority never reached the executive director or the chairman. This was due in large part to the fact that the structure was neither permanent nor endowed with jurisdiction-threatening legislation. Another reason was the fact that the recovery relied upon existing legal authorities, rather than establishing new ones that might have generated jurisdictional disputes. After about six short months, its mission was completed.

Task Forces

The federal commission was not constrained by predetermined organizational structures or procedures, leaving it free to tailor the federal recovery machinery to the unique problems of the Alaskan recovery. For example, Anderson quickly appointed an Alaskan Construction Consultant Committee with members drawn from the Associated General Contractors of America and the International Union of Operating Engineers. Its role was to provide damage estimates with accompanying guides for emergency reconstruction planning. The commission also accepted an April 11 offer from the American Institute of Architects and the Engineers Joint Council to provide consultancy assistance on both reconstruction plans and longer range development programs, to be developed with input from state and local officials, University of Alaska faculty, Alaska architects, engineers, and civic leaders. They submitted their report on June 13.¹¹⁰⁵

The commission established nine federal interagency task forces to undertake special studies and prepare recommendations. Although they reported to the executive director, much of their work dealt with policy issues for commission consideration. There was, for example, a Transportation Task Force, chaired by the undersecretary for transportation in the Commerce Department, with members from the Defense Department, the Federal Maritime Commission, the director of the Alaska Railroad in the Department of Interior, the Federal Aviation Agency, and the Office of Emergency Planning. The other task forces established immediately were Ports and Fishing, Natural Resource Development, Industrial Development, Financial Institutions, Economic Stabilization, Community Facilities, and a Scientific and Engineering task force that included a Scientific and Engineering Field Team temporarily located in Alaska. In varying degrees, all these task forces were concerned with both those policies needed for the immediate reconstruction period and those directed toward longer term Alaskan economic development.

1105 E. B. Eckel, “The Alaska Earthquake March 27, 1964-Lesson Learned and Conclusions,” *U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 546* (1970).

On the Frontlines of Recovery

As a counterpart to the federal commission, on April 3, 1964, Governor Egan issued Executive Order No. 27, establishing the State of Alaska Reconstruction and Development Planning Commission. This state commission had limited resources to draw upon, but it worked very closely with the federal commission in coordinating programs for restoring and developing Alaska.¹¹⁰⁶

The governor appointed a very able person with both government and business experience, Joseph FitzGerald, as coordinator of the state commission. FitzGerald participated in all executive director Alaska meetings, and accompanied every community visit. Egan also sent the attorney general of Alaska, George Hayes, to Washington as his liaison with the federal commission. Hayes's Washington office was next to that of the executive director, and he attended all federal commission staff meetings. Both FitzGerald and Hayes had full access to commission documents with the exception of a few personal notes from Anderson to Johnson. Both of these two key Egan appointments were based on competence, not politics. They both worked well with the federal commission and a myriad of state and local stakeholders that played roles in the reconstruction effort.

Alaska Field Committee

An especially important part of the reconstruction organization was the Alaska Field Committee that reported to the executive director. This was a very active group tasked with helping to coordinate and expedite operations on the ground in Alaska. Chaired by the regional coordinator of the Department of the Interior, it consisted of the senior official of each of the 18 federal agencies having field offices in Alaska. FitzGerald, as the state coordinator, also served as an *ad hoc* member. In order to carry out the work of the committee effectively, lower grade members were quickly given much higher authority by their agencies. Several agencies brought in leadership with greater experience from other field operations.

1106 Dwight Ink and Alan L. Dean, “Modernizing Federal Field Operations,” in Thomas H. Stanton and Benjamin Ginsberg, *Making Government Manageable: Executive Organization and Management in the Twenty First Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 194–195.

Rank counted for little so long as their agencies permitted them to act on non-policy issues without delays caused by having to first check with Washington. As the work progressed, several federal agencies were very surprised at how well their field personnel carried out heavier responsibilities when given the guidance and authority to act.¹¹⁰⁷ After an uneasy shake-down period of several weeks, the work of this committee exceeded all expectations.

Policy to Guide Recovery

Having a decentralized framework in place to undertake recovery would have meant little if broad federal policies to guide these efforts had not been quickly and clearly established. Because the commission served at cabinet level and was led by an unusually strong chair who was very close to the president, policies for the federal recovery were established in a remarkably short time, most of the important ones within the first several weeks of its existence. Anderson demonstrated great skill in leading the commission discussions, being somewhat deferential to the status of the cabinet members, yet relying on his association with the president to move the group forward to surprisingly rapid decisions. He gave strong personal leadership to quick resolution of such issues as inadequate insurance, mortgage relief, low government assistance interest rates, tax relief, and public facilities funding.

Enough early data was flowing in from Alaska to help point the way for significant new policies at the initial meetings of the commission, proving the wisdom in establishing the whole recovery machinery quickly rather than waiting until the emergency phase had been substantially completed. Clearly, the crisis character of the recovery endeavor also helped move things, but new policies have rarely, if ever, been established so rapidly in other disaster recoveries. In fact, the author knows of no recovery, most of which have had lesser urgency, that produced the level of new policies established by the Alaskan commission.

1107 This Alaskan Field Committee was to serve as the model for President Nixon's later nationwide system of federal Regional Councils, an important part of his New Federalism.

The most basic policy decision had to do with the recovery timetable, and was one in which Johnson was personally involved. Some officials urged a two-track approach to the Alaskan crisis. One track would focus on as much recovery during 1964 as was possible, and another concurrent track would develop arrangements for major evacuation to the lower 48, since the proponents of this option assumed rebuilding could not progress sufficiently to provide the basic needs of the affected population by the time winter stormed in, probably in mid-October.

The two-track approach would have required the government to provide temporary housing in the lower 48 for thousands of evacuated families, as well as funds to tide them over until the following year when sufficient facilities could be restored to permit their return. As a better realization of the practical problems involved in this option began to surface, few thought this approach would be practicable.

The “abandonment” option, as it came to be labeled, never received serious consideration in the White House. Johnson was not about “to lose a state.”¹¹⁰⁸ He did not want to hear about the difficulties posed by trying to complete critical construction within a few months of the earthquake. With little regard for the negative odds, a very firm president focused everyone on the option of the single goal of completing enough rebuilding of critical public utilities and homes during the first construction season to avoid evacuation.

At the same time, the commission also recognized that several of the largest projects, such as the relocation of Valdez and the expansion of small boat harbors, would have to be extended over several years. Some projects would provide only temporary construction the first year, with permanent rebuilding to follow later. For example, some wooden bridges were constructed quickly the first summer so that most traffic could be restored, but were scheduled for replacement by permanent bridges later.

One of the most far-reaching policies established at the first meeting of the commission was that of rebuilding Alaska in ways that would

1108 Ross R. Rice, “The 1964 Elections in the West,” *The Western Political Quarterly*, 18/2 (June 1965): 431–438.

enhance the opportunity for future development of the state, rather than following the past policy of merely rebuilding what had existed before a disaster. The way for this course of action had been paved because of recognition at the time statehood was granted that Alaska needed help in planning the type of economic development required for a fiscally sound revenue base.

The decision to focus on the future paid off in important ways over the long term, but it greatly complicated the task of reconstructing sufficient public facilities and shelter during the short construction season—enabling Alaskans to remain in the state when the severe cold weather returned was a priority that had to move ahead regardless of long-range plans. Even the relatively simple added burden of broadening a roadway or changing a road curvature to modern standards added time to tight reconstruction schedules that worried engineers. The “think for the long-term” policy had an even greater impact in instances such as Seward where the proposed doubling of the capacity of the small boat harbor would require legislation that would delay completion, even though there was the necessity of completing limited dredging and repair quickly so that as boats were being repaired some fishing could also resume the first year.¹¹⁰⁹

While reconstruction was a priority, the commission also wanted to facilitate rebuilding in a prudent manner that would mitigate damage from future disasters. There were several particularly critical areas, especially in Anchorage, where the results of soil studies were needed before making rebuilding decisions and designing difficult buttressing projects, circumstances that necessarily delayed construction. With the construction period so limited, waiting for deep soil testing understandably taxed the patience of people.

The most controversial policy decision was that of refusing to provide federal assistance in areas determined to be especially vulnerable to future earthquake damage. The commission was disturbed that the federal government had kept providing families and business with

1109 Howard Kunreuther and Elissandra S Fiore, “The Alaskan earthquake: A Case Study in the Economics of Disaster,” Institute for Defense Analyses (February 1966).

financial help in rebuilding in areas that repeatedly suffered from natural disasters, especially floods.

The federal government could not prohibit the return of people to vulnerable areas, but it was not deemed good policy for the government to continue to encourage this practice through means such as low interest mortgages and loans. Consequently, it became commission policy to redline areas deemed high risk, and to deny federal assistance to anyone returning to those areas. Determining the limits of those high-risk areas turned out to be more difficult and controversial than anticipated. But the process came to be generally accepted because of the professional quality of the data produced by the scientific and engineering task force, as well as the inability of the critics to come up with credible alternatives.¹¹¹⁰

Several of the more complex decisions that had to be based heavily on technical assessments were left to the commission staff within guidelines established by the commission. One example, to be discussed later in greater detail, was the question of whether to provide assistance for the rebuilding of the town of Valdez, unless it relocated. Another critical decision left to the executive director was the question of whether enough soil stabilization was possible to permit rebuilding substantial portions of Anchorage and several other towns adjacent to major earth movement that occurred during the earthquake. This decision rested heavily on the conclusions of the soil studies and whether satisfactory buttressing to stabilize the ground could be designed. The commission concluded that such decisions could be made much more quickly by a professional staff working on the ground than by political leaders in distant Washington. This turned out to be the case.

The Hill Responds

Some policies required congressional action. In the course of the first few weeks of its existence, the commission developed legislative proposals including such provisions as: a near doubling of the federal

1110 W. R. Hansen, et al., “The Alaska Earthquake, March 27, 1964-Field Investigations and Reconstruction Effort,” U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 541.

share of reconstruction costs in Alaska outside the National Forests; modifications of previously authorized Corps of Engineers civil works projects; authorizing the Farmers Home Administration, the Rural Electrification Administration, and the Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA) to adjust the indebtedness of certain borrowers; authorizing the HHFA to provide grants for urban renewal projects; and the purchase by the federal government of State of Alaska bonds or the loan of a similar amount of funds.

After advance consultations with several congressional committees, these and other requests were consolidated in a proposed Alaska Omnibus Act and sent to Congress on May 27.¹¹¹¹ By having a senator chair the commission, President Johnson had paved the way for expedited legislative action that would not likely have been achieved otherwise. Because of Anderson’s leadership, the president’s bill was about the only legislation permitted to advance during the bitter 1964 civil rights debate and a Senate filibuster that lasted 57 days. After several amendments, it was enacted into law on August 8, 1964. Through their membership on the commission, agencies had been closely following the bill’s progress, and were poised to move immediately upon its signing. Less urgent legislation followed, much of it appropriations sought by participating agencies for construction scheduled after the first crucial months.

The small commission staff gained considerable credibility among the Alaskan citizens because of the amount of time they spent on the ground with citizens and risking their lives in extremely hazardous flying to reach communities—flying that involved two crash landings.¹¹¹²

From Recovery Policy to Action

The role of the commission was to lead the recovery, not to replace the role of the first responders that had been providing emergency help. Indeed, it was highly unrealistic to believe that immediate emergency needs could be directed effectively from a

1111 Response to Disaster, 1964, 15.

1112 The five bush pilots exhibited great courage in transporting the staff no matter how foul the weather. Within a few years of the recovery, however, all had been killed in crashes.

small commission staff in Washington. The work of OEP and the other early responders continued while the commission spent its first weeks establishing policies for the recovery and providing time for the executive director to establish task forces and interagency committees that immediately flew to Alaska to gather scientific and economic data. Anderson, accompanied by the executive director, then headed for Alaska to explain the basic approach to federal recovery assistance planned by President Johnson and the Alaskan Commission and to review initial recovery plans and actions.

Upon arrival in Anchorage on April 27, in his eagerly awaited public pronouncement Anderson endeavored to dissuade Alaskans from the fast-growing expectation that the federal government would write “a blank check...to recoup private losses.” Acknowledging that some Alaskans would regard him as a “Scrooge,” he tried to set a tone that reduced the hopes of the earthquake victims to realistic levels of federal assistance. At the same time, he firmly committed the federal government to provide enough help to “speed the recovery of your state with the objective of making Alaska a better place to live and work than it was before the tragedy of last month.”¹¹¹³

Riding the Circuit

From the onset, the commission recognized it had to empower people in the field, not make operational decisions for them. That required constant staff engagement from the beginning. After Anderson’s speech, Egan and the commission’s executive director, together with state and federal staff, flew in a raging blizzard through the Chugach Mountains to visit Egan’s heavily damaged hometown, Valdez. No pilot thought the flight was advisable because of the extremely hazardous weather. But it was one of the communities especially hard-hit by the earthquake, and Egan believed it important to boost the town’s morale with a visit as quickly as possible.

The people of Valdez had witnessed a tidal wave, or tsunami, that towered roughly 200 feet as it engulfed the waterfront, according

1113 University of Alaska Consortium, Special Collections, Senator Clinton Anderson Speech, April 27, 1964, Box 1, Series, tapes, April 1964, Historical Manuscripts Collection, Part 3, Tapes and Records.

to the Coast and Geodetic Survey. A piece of land, about 4,000 by 600 feet in size, had slid into the bay destroying the town's boats and fishing industry. It was nearly midnight before the town council could be assembled to discuss the town's future.¹¹¹⁴ Meeting over the damaged fire station, a number of townspeople also packed into the room, and a reporter turned on a tape recorder. Unfortunately, the room was much too small to hold as many participants as had arrived, a problem corrected in subsequent community meetings.

The council meeting began by addressing the difficult question of how vulnerable Valdez was to possible future disasters. At the center of the debate was the commission policy of not providing federal assistance to rebuild in hazardous areas, a huge disappointment to the Valdez citizens. The executive director assured residents that the federal government would provide help to relocate the town about four miles along the bay to an area with a rock base, should Valdez decide to do so. As dawn neared, the council, with strong support from most townspeople in attendance decided to move. Six more meetings and inspections in other towns occurred over the next week, beginning with Seward.

By the time of the Seward auditorium meeting, several members of the Federal Field Committee and the State Commission had been able to fly into town to participate along with the local Seward officials. Business leaders were important attendees, and the public was also invited to participate. As had been the case in Valdez, when people realized the Commission was serious about quick decisions, and saw that the securing of federal assistance depended on everyone assuming accountability for the work assigned to them, the general quality of most comments and suggestions was impressive. The unusual degree of openness resulted in the public being far better informed of decisions than would have been possible otherwise. Having witnessed the discussion, regardless of whether individual citizens agreed with all the decisions, they at least understood the reasoning behind them. After the Seward meeting, key members of

1114 Immediately after the governor and executive director left the plane in Valdez, it took off in the blizzard but dove into the bay, carrying the crew and the Alaskan Adjutant General to their death, sending a new shock-wave through the battered community.

the Alaskan Field Committee and the State Commission accompanied the commission staff on all community trips. Particularly important was the active participation and cooperation of FitzGerald, the state coordinator, who was in constant touch with Governor Egan.

Tasks, budgets, and leadership responsibilities were firmly established for each project. This decision-making occurred where all stakeholders were consulted. Debate and disagreement proved unavoidable, but decisions on scheduling and expenditures were reached quickly because rather than filtering decisions through multiple layers of government in Juneau and Washington, they were made in these community meetings. Details had to be worked out after these sessions, but the project decisions made during these meetings provided the framework within which funds could be obligated and action started.

Streamlined, Adaptive Process

Both Anderson and the White House placed the saving of Alaska over respecting established procedures and practices. Thanks largely to Anderson, the executive director was given tacit approval to request that any agency modify or dispense with any procedure that threatened the completion schedules of critical public facilities. Urban renewal projects, for example, typically consumed several years just in the planning phase. The commission staff asked the House and Home Finance Agency to forego the formal public hearings required for urban renewal projects since of the discussions among the stakeholders that went into planning the urban renewal projects had been held in open session with public participation pursuant to commission policy. Of more widespread application, the recovery staffs found that the time and effort devoted to federal processes often could be greatly reduced simply through better management without resorting to major changes or suspension of existing written procedures.

Scheduling presented an especially critical streamlining challenge. Working from schedules based on past experience, and concentrating only on how they might be realistically shortened, the orthodox approach was often not sufficient to enable the most critical work to be completed during the short construction season. A number of projects, particularly sewer and water system restoration, had to be designed and completed within a few months if populations

were to remain in the state over the long Alaskan winter. Instead of past practices, the commission staff began by looking at what construction was so critical that it had to be completed by mid-October to avoid an exodus, and it then worked backwards to develop a work plan that included intervening milestones to reach that goal no matter how unrealistic these might seem. Implementing these extremely ambitious objectives required establishing new engineering and management practices.¹¹¹⁵

In almost every case the normal time of construction was slashed by impressive amounts. Managers pressed the envelope in every facet of reconstruction, and the crews responded. The long daylight Alaskan summers helped, permitting double and triple-shift around-the-clock work. Considerable savings were also achieved through streamlined processes of scoping the contract work and awarding the contracts. Extreme versions of incentive fee contracts, together with stiff penalties for poor performance, were used, including those managed by the Corps of Engineers.¹¹¹⁶ For the less complicated types of construction, projects moved forward with a surprising amount of construction while design was still underway. As the summer wore on, the Corps and other groups set new peacetime construction records.¹¹¹⁷

The commission realized that assignments and processes had to be flexible as well as fast. The commission's Economic Stabilization Task Force, for example, soon learned that the Labor and Treasury Departments to whom the executive director had planned to assign responsibility for controlling construction-induced inflation had no means to do so. On the other hand, the Agriculture Experiment

1115 See, Lidia Selkregg and Jane Preuss, *Seismic Hazard Mitigation Planning and Policy Implementation: The Alaska Case* (Washington, DC: National Institution for Standards and Training, 1984)

1116 Surprisingly, in 1964 the Corps of Engineers did not utilize incentive fee contracts. This was one of the few instances in which the executive director instructed an agency to adopt a management approach strongly opposed by the agency. Once adopted, however, the Corps administered the incentive fee contracts very well, especially in view of the fact that the commission staff insisted on unusually high incentives for exceeding goals and high penalties for poor performance.

1117 W.A. Jacobs, *The Alaska District Corps of Engineers, 1947-1974* (Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska: 1976), 97-104.

Station in Alaska had excellent contacts in various communities that could be utilized for a volunteer wage and price control system that the executive director decided to use instead. It turned out to be a low cost approach that was very successful.

When complaints began to mount that the Small Business Administration (SBA) could not handle the surge in low-interest loans needed for hard-hit small businesses to survive, the deputy executive director worked out with the SBA and several Alaskan banks an arrangement in which the banks handled most of the paper processing of these applications and could approve them up to \$20,000 when there was 10 percent participation by the bank, and up to \$250,000 when there was 20 percent bank participation.¹¹¹⁸

Funding

Johnson's approach to mobilizing government-wide resources involved the simplest of financing arrangements. In 1964, departments and agencies contributed a total of only \$90,200 for the operation of the commission (largely for travel costs). Of that total, \$29,500 in unused funds was returned to the agencies. Nearly all the expenditures for reconstruction were made by agencies using their own funds and authorities, and relying on their established budget, accounting, and auditing processes.

Enormous monetary savings for the federal, state, and local governments resulted from the commission's success in expediting the recovery and in heading off inflation. Overhead was cut drastically. Most estimates ranged from 40 to 50 percent in savings, though no credible estimate was ever made.¹¹¹⁹

Oversight

As pressure on agency personnel and the construction contractors to move quickly mounted so did opportunities for waste, poor quality construction, and abuse. The commission's defense against this

1118 Peter J. May, "Formulating Disaster Relief When Needs Are Unknown," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 2/1 (Autumn, 1982): 39-54.

1119 The expenditures extended well beyond the existence of the commission, and the author has no information on the total cost of the recovery.

problem was to rely heavily on insisting that agencies assign their most qualified people to the recovery activities and to bolster existing independent oversight mechanisms among the agencies. Several federal and state managers who were failing to control costs and manage performance were reassigned at once.

Both the federal and state commission staffs tried to make sure that the state and federal agencies had in place the capacity to monitor their work effectively, with respect to both cost and schedules. To be effective, monitoring had to link early detection of problems with quick corrective action. The commission staff had a goal of correcting every administrative delay within twenty-four hours of its detection regardless of the agency involved.¹¹²⁰ In most cases, this goal was achieved because 1) the staff enjoyed the influence gained from its White House location, and 2) they did not have to contend with the customary bureaucratic processes employed in government.

In addition, as the agencies focused on compliance and internal auditing, the executive director asked the Comptroller General to immediately assign several personnel from the General Accounting Office (GAO) to assist in early detection of waste and abuse. The GAO staff had ready access to staff and agency meetings and records.

Outcomes

Some losses resulted from the earthquake, and not every business survived. But the principal goals of the recovery, preventing abandonment by a substantial portion of the Alaskan residents, and the collapse of the state economy, were achieved. Alaska, soon aided by the development of the oil industry, moved forward rapidly with economic development. Except for several small Indian villages, the devastated communities did rebuild, including Valdez, which relocated to a safer location. Both Valdez and Anchorage were declared “All American Cities” several years later.

The recovery was widely regarded as an unusually successful demonstration of how the federal, state, and local governments can work together with business and non-profit groups, and can function

¹¹²⁰ Engineering problems usually took longer to resolve, much longer in the case of the soil stabilization issues.

as community teams in overcoming a catastrophic disaster. Each community had special challenges, and different solutions had to be developed to meet each of them. Yet, the basic management strategies fostered by President Johnson’s commission provided a framework under which local solutions could be implemented at a record pace.

Initially critical of the president for having appointed staff leadership without disaster experience or having visited Alaska, only five months after the earthquake the *Anchorage Daily News* published an editorial in which the paper lauded the “remarkable” performance of the commission staff:

Noting that the staff was “handed a job without guidelines, without precedent”, the editorial concluded that “The staff work performed by the federal Alaska Reconstruction Commission has been a display of government at its very best...In many cases the normal rules followed by federal agencies were sprung completely out of shape to fit the post-earthquake needs of Alaska. Tight time schedules established for construction work became even tighter under the staff’s constant prodding and watchful eye... It was a rare day when a problem was posed without being accompanied by a solution.” It concluded with, “If more government officials functioned with the same type of positive outlook and attention to needs and details, that word ‘bureaucrat’ would fast disappear from popular dictionaries.”¹¹²¹

Governor Egan said the commission “accomplished more than an outstanding job” on behalf of Alaska, and then stated that the “Federal, State and local efforts were coordinated throughout the critical phase of the Rebuild Alaska program, in a way which, I am certain, has never been previously accomplished in the history of American disasters.”¹¹²² A year later, in reference to all the public and private groups that had been involved in the recovery, the *Anchorage Daily News* wrote, “The comeback from disaster was so dramatic there hardly seemed to be a gap between destruction and reconstruction.

1121 “Government at its Best,” *Anchorage Daily News*, August 10, 1964.

1122 Letter to Dwight Ink, dated October 12, 1964. Ink also received a congratulatory letter from President Johnson on October 5, 1964.

The recovery period was almost as dramatic and breathtaking as the earthquake.”¹¹²³

Management Strategies and Variables

Several factors proved to be especially critical to success in Alaska:

Role of the White House

The rapid response of the president in taking unprecedented action in addressing the earthquake underscored the urgency of the recovery and set an example of innovation and decisive action for both political and career leadership throughout the government. This was critical for success.

The recovery also demonstrated how a small but empowered and focused commission operating under the authority of the president can serve as an effective hub for interagency action, particularly when responding to a mission of limited duration that is expected to involve a wide range of interdependent activities and agencies. Under the leadership of this cabinet-level Alaskan commission, the role of the small White House staff was to mobilize, coordinate, and expedite the work of existing departments and agencies of the federal government, rather than undertaking the work itself. The departments were an integral part of this policy organization as well as the doers. They had a greater incentive to respond to demands on their own resources than they would have had they been responding to a peer department. They played a principal role in determining how and where to apply those resources, creating a sense of ownership that increased their incentive for success.

Notably, the existence of the commission did not diminish the need for a permanent federal agency to lead the initial emergency phase of coordinating national support in responding to a major disaster. The Office of Emergency Preparedness performed that role. It operated within the broad Alaskan commission framework as an independent agency and was never integrated structurally or operationally within a larger institution. OEP was free to move quickly and exercise as much

1123 *Anchorage Daily News*, March 27, 1965, 1.

initiative as it wished. There was some initial resentment within OEP concerning this new, overarching organization, but it soon became clear that the commission’s role was to strengthen the ability of OEP to function, quite unlike the DHS-FEMA relationship in Katrina.

Because the Alaskan commission existed for only a few months, and was led by the agency leaders themselves as members (with the personal support of the president), the commission was not threatening to agencies and did not develop as another layer of the federal government. Its internal operations were small and inexpensive, yet capable of mobilizing resources across the federal government. The leadership was not diverted by having the responsibility for administering a large agency or department, so it was able to focus its entire attention on the recovery.

The performance of the Alaskan recovery commission does not suggest that the White House be a permanent location for an operational entity along the lines described in this study. As a permanent feature of the White House, an operational entity would lose its image as a functioning arm of the departments and agencies. Instead, over time a permanent office would probably weaken, rather than reinforce, the capacity of major departments to act. The result would likely be duplication of effort, entanglement of the president and his top assistants in operational controversies, and diversion of the executive office of the White House from focusing on its management and policy leadership roles.

Openness

The commission and staff went to great lengths to plan and execute the Alaskan recovery in an open manner. Virtually all operational decisions were made during Alaskan public meetings with broad participation. The commission’s first meeting in the Seward high school auditorium provided the pattern for similar sessions held in each community thereafter. This highly unusual amount of openness, contrary to conventional wisdom that this degree of participation delays and at times jeopardizes decision-making, turned out to save considerable time over the life of the recovery. It increased public understanding and enhanced accountability. Everyone could see how and why decisions were made, and by whom. This process also reduced potential opposition to decisions, and developed a sense of

public ownership in the recovery plans that increased their incentive to help ensure success. Finally, it increased congressional confidence in the executive branch operations, thereby contributing significantly to the surprising congressional tolerance of the recovery staff modifying or suspending existing procedures that threatened critical construction completions.

Partnership of Political and Career Leaders

The Alaskan experience demonstrated the value of both 1) experienced political leadership, in this case exemplified by both Johnson and Anderson, and 2) reliance upon experienced career men and women assigned to the White House and those utilized in the participating departments to provide operational leadership. Because career officials knew how the government was organized and how to make it work, and experienced political leaders knew how to utilize this career resource effectively, the political and career public servants together proved remarkably adept at managing risks, adapting organizations to unfamiliar roles and processes, and facilitating collaboration. Placing operations in the hands of career personnel also enhanced the congressional confidence in the executive branch’s professional handling of the recovery.

However, the Alaskan reliance on career leadership would not have been so successful had there not been a high level of trust between the political and career leaders, in both the White House and the departments. As David Abshire has reminded us, and as Bryce Harlow taught us in the Eisenhower administration, “Trust is the coin of the Realm.”¹¹²⁴

Unleashing Innovation

One of the most rewarding developments in the recovery was the impressive degree to which the reliance on career men and women, and the freedom they were given at every level to exercise initiative, brought out the innovative characteristics that most public servants have but feel constrained to use.¹¹²⁵ Often the commission’s

1124 David Abshire, *Saving the Reagan Presidency; Trust is the Coin of the Realm* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005).

1125 See, Steven Kelman, *Unleashing Change* (Washington, DC: The Brookings

contribution was not in showing agency people how to invent more effective management practices so much as in freeing them to develop their own creative solutions within the broad management strategies outlined by the commission’s staff. It took a few weeks for many agency participants to fully appreciate the extent to which they were encouraged to innovate, but once this was understood it was embraced with enthusiasm by most. A few mistakes were made, but the net result was overwhelmingly positive. One key to this success was having experienced leaders who could quickly distinguish between ideas that had promise and those that did not.

Effective Congressional Linkage

Alaska benefited greatly from the special relationships between the legislative and executive branches established by the commission and its staff. The Anderson role in expediting legislation has been described. The assignment of professionally qualified congressional staff to the executive director proved to be very useful, though the detailing of poorly qualified staff would have been counter-productive, to say the least. In this case, the individuals were highly experienced engineers who had been earlier detailed to Congress from the executive branch. Their professionalism and knowledge of agency operations gained them immediate respect in the agencies.

The Alaskan arrangements provided an effective White House linkage with the leadership of Congress, while maintaining and utilizing the regular departmental linkages with the various congressional committees involved in authorizing and appropriating funds for various elements of the recovery.¹¹²⁶

Without the special linkages that enabled Congress to keep abreast of events at both policy and operating levels, and without the openness that increased public confidence in the recovery plans, the legislative proposals could not have found their way through the bitter 1964 congressional civil rights debates quickly enough to move forward

Institution Press, 2005).

1126 On several occasions the executive director and the BOB management director reinforced the agency work with their committees, including participation in hearings, but care was taken to reinforce rather than dilute the role of the responsible agencies.

with key elements of the rebuilding so critical the first several months. Congress responded very well to the needs presented by the commission and participating agencies, appropriating even more than requested.

Simplicity

The magnitude and complexity of the Alaskan disaster, combined with the urgency of its rebuilding, required a recovery structure that could adapt quickly to unforeseen circumstances, mobilize resources throughout the government, and move into action rapidly. A more widely accepted approach today seems to be that of establishing plans in advance that attempt to anticipate every possible situation, and to maintain structures and procedures on standby in the hope that they can deal with whatever scenario may come. However, the BOB management staff in 1964 believed that although this concept had utility for the emergency phase, it would likely focus recovery officials too heavily on procedural and jurisdictional issues, rather than the mission. This author is convinced that detailed machinery based on past events would have unduly restricted the initiative and innovation needed to tailor recovery to the different requirements of Alaska, and doomed success.

President Johnson, BOB, and the Alaskan commission followed an opposite approach that relied on simplicity in special recovery structures and processes, believing that this type of approach would encourage innovation and facilitate fast action, especially if existing agency processes could be sufficiently streamlined to avoid establishing new ones. Johnson also wanted the leaders to focus all their efforts on a fast recovery, without having to divert attention to the time-consuming task of administering an agency or department. With one reporting exception, no special commission processes were established for the Alaskan recovery, but many existing agency processes were simplified or suspended as part of the streamlining drive. The exception was a reporting arrangement whereby field reports from agency personnel to their superiors in Washington were copied to the executive director, enabling him to be informed simultaneously with agency leaders. Causing a bit of agency unease at first, it sped internal agency communications to an amazing degree, and ended up creating no objections from the department heads. This

lack of agency concern resulted in part because the executive director was working for them as a member of the president’s commission.

No legal authorities were given to the numerous special coordinating mechanisms that were utilized, most of which existed for only a few months and relied instead on existing authorities of the agencies from which the participating members were detailed. The commission focus was on use of highly qualified personnel, not additional structures and procedures. Following the intense commission activity in the six months after the Alaskan earthquake, the longer range recovery activities were handled very well by the participating agencies with no need to maintain and fund a permanent recovery organization. Thus, the commission was replaced by a much lower key economic planning organization. The BOB management staff had a continuing role to help ensure that the momentum established by the commission continued into the following year.

Innovative Interagency and Intergovernmental Management

Very little useful interagency machinery existed in 1964 that could address community rebuilding on a reasonable timetable.¹¹²⁷ Even less existed in the way of intergovernmental coordinating machinery that could be used for recovery operations. While the existing practice of developing personal relationships to facilitate intergovernmental cooperation was useful, that alone could not have dealt with catastrophic events like the Good Friday earthquake. Recovery required more than friendly discussions among the federal, state, and local agencies; it required integrated action. Missions had to be stated; roles established; scope of responsibilities described; accountability for funding and program actions implemented; and countless other management tasks accounted for in a common forum in which all the stakeholders participated. This included the private sector, non-governmental agencies, and the public. Most of all, this had to result in quick reconstruction. Also important was preserving the principles of federalism that respected the responsibilities and authorities

1127 Urban renewal projects involved years of planning and construction, and most of the Great Society programs were still on the drawing board. The work of the Corps of Engineers provided the most useful experience, but their standard processes were far too slow for the Alaskan recovery.

of each level of government as workable intergovernmental arrangements were instituted.

The ability of the commission to lead complex intergovernmental machinery to action surprised people. Even more remarkable was the speed with which these actions were taken, something thought to be alien to intergovernmental activities. Of critical importance in this respect was the ability to make the bulk of the decision making on the spot in the Alaskan communities, without having to take precious time in referrals back to Juneau and Washington, normally followed by additional discussions about a series of draft project plans. The success of this innovation depended heavily upon the willingness of agency leadership to provide necessary guidance to their field offices and to delegate operating responsibility to those offices.

The fact that most involved officials, including the secretary of defense, were members of the president's commission and felt a personal stake in the successful performance of their respective organizations probably enhanced the effectiveness of the departments. In addition, the commission's location in the White House enabled it to very quickly develop coordinative arrangements on location, using the innovative, untested strategies described above. Attention to developing a strong sense of teamwork while retaining clear accountability and the capacity to act quickly further augmented efforts.

Capacity to Plan and Act Quickly

The Alaskan weather presented a degree of urgency not found in most disaster recoveries. Although this made the recovery an unusually high risk venture, it stimulated a degree of innovation and rapid action that resulted in a level of success very few, if any, thought possible. Every element of the recovery effort was directed toward speed, beginning with the president's quick action in establishing the commission and followed by the new policies adopted during the first month of its existence. This was accompanied by the staff and the whole interagency and intergovernmental recovery machinery established and in operation only weeks after the disaster in sharp contrast to the usual pattern of rapid emergency action but a far more deliberate tempo of recovery plans and actions.

The emphasis on simplicity of organization and process facilitated speed. The success of this approach was possible largely through a policy of relying more heavily on experienced political and career leadership than on the customary degree of dependence on formal structures and detailed procedures. Using existing agencies, and streamlining their funding and operating procedures, rather than establishing special recovery agencies and procedures, was of tremendous importance, both in expediting plans and actions and in generating enthusiastic agency cooperation. This author believes this approach was particularly significant with respect to Department of Defense (DOD), which turned in the most impressive performance of any department with respect to the construction portion of the recovery.

Initially, many of the management strategies introduced by the executive director were viewed by agency personnel with apprehension. They were regarded as high risk, and even career threatening. This was particularly true of the scheduling approach described above. Contract administrators could visualize auditors and investigators swooping down on them in a few months as the shortcuts turned out to be costly, mistake-prone, and vulnerable to abuse. This was an understandable concern. In fact, it was shared to some extent by the executive director who imposed the basic strategies that were often so very different from those usually employed in government construction.

However, 1) the executive director believed the alternative was an unacceptable large-scale abandonment of Alaska before the construction season ended and a collapse of the economy; 2) he placed considerable reliance on the unusual reliance upon highly qualified career managers rather than procedures; and 3) he had always worked closely with GAO and was counting on their close support in alerting the commission staff to indications of possible abuse before they could develop into something significant and early corrective action could be taken. It is to the credit of Anderson and the cabinet that they supported these sharp departures from accepted practices. GAO also deserves credit for giving less than usual priority to adherence to formal procedures so long as the basic objectives behind the original procedures were observed and the program outcomes

were achieved or exceeded. They recognized that typical auditing preoccupation with procedures would have resulted in failure.

Although the emphasis on rapid action was born largely from necessity, both Anderson and the executive director had emphasized speed in their prior work, though not to the degree needed in Alaska.¹¹²⁸ Further, they were working for an impatient President who typically chose to ignore arguments about practical difficulties in reaching his ambitious targets. In addition, they also believed that it would be more difficult to continue the cohesiveness and teamwork of the complex recovery machinery over an extended period. And they recognized that costs in dollars and human suffering would certainly grow in a major way as the recovery period lengthened.

Safeguards Against Abuse

Because the combination of rapid action and streamlining of processes increased vulnerability to abuse, the commission staff placed special emphases on 1) experienced leadership; 2) skilled project monitoring; 3) immediate independent oversight from GAO; 4) project openness to public, press, and Congress that made abuse difficult to conceal; and 5) the capacity to quickly correct problems that were emerging. No significant abuse ever came to the attention of Anderson, the executive director, or the oversight congressional committees.

Interdependence of Strategies

Pursuit of only one or two of these unusual strategies would not have been sufficient for success. In fact, few could have worked by themselves. For example, the freedom given the staff to streamline and even suspend existing procedures would never have been granted had it not been for the open style of operations, the emphasis on professional staff personnel, the special project monitoring and oversight, and the unusual congressional linkages.

¹¹²⁸ In the mid-1950s, Ink served as control officer on the “H-bomb” plant in the AEC Savannah River plant, then the largest and most urgent construction project in the free world. The U.S. and Soviet Union were in a crucial race to see who could develop deliverable H-bombs first, and the fate of Western Europe if not the Cold War was thought to depend on the outcome.

Conclusions

Strategy Integration

The elements of power were integrated very effectively by the president through the temporary cabinet-level commission and its staff. It enabled the recovery leadership to instantly utilize resources needed from any agency in the government. This integration was especially important with respect to the DOD, the workhorse of the recovery construction. It also paid off with respect to the less heavily involved departments such as the Department of State whose involvement was limited, but whose quick response was important when the department was called upon. Integration of the unorthodox management strategies complemented the integration of resources.

Cooperation

The cabinet-level policy body, combined with its staff located in the White House resulted in excellent working relationships among the agencies. The commission encountered no hesitancy among agencies to share information, though they were somewhat limited by the information technology that existed then. The fact that no new legal entities or authorities were established, and knowledge that the special arrangements established by the commission were of only a few months duration, avoided turf threatening concerns that might otherwise have developed. Further, the staff worked hard to help focus credit for project accomplishments on the agencies most responsible for the action.

Strengths

The most significant strategies and variables explaining the strength of the response are listed in the above section of this article. They are very different than those employed in Katrina. Especially valuable strategies that might be helpful in future catastrophic natural disasters or terrorist attacks would seem to be adaptability, freedom to innovate, economy, ability to mobilize the whole government, effective intergovernmental action, effective Congressional linkages, and the capacity for rapid recovery. Integrating the various Alaskan strategies under the aegis of the White House created the potential for a very unusual degree of government wide cohesiveness and concerted action. It provided an effective means of integrating the

resources of both national security and domestic agencies, an action that will often be critical in future catastrophic disasters or attacks.

The strategies developed for interagency and intergovernmental action worked very well at the site of the disaster as well as in Washington. The stakeholders adapted surprisingly well to the conceptual shift from intergovernmental relations to intergovernmental management, which was another way of explaining a shift from intergovernmental discussion to intergovernmental action. The emphasis on integrating agency efforts at the three levels into community recoveries rather than the more traditional approach helped develop a greater intergovernmental team spirit than one usually finds.

Weaknesses

In the view of the author, weaknesses in adapting Alaskan strategies today would include 1) the growing scarcity of career leaders with the diversified high level operational experience that was invaluable in both the commission staff and the participating agencies¹¹²⁹ and 2) absence of a presidential management leadership arm to replace the BOB management staff that was critical to the 1964 Alaskan success. There are those who also believe government has become too complicated to simplify or to employ expedited approaches used in Alaska, a view with which this author vigorously disagrees.¹¹³⁰ Some also believe too large a gulf has evolved between political and career public servants to rebuild the trust needed for the career-political partnership President Johnson relied upon in Alaska. This may be true, but there have always been ups and downs in these relationships,

1129 With the gradual growth in political appointees who typically have little prior operational federal government experience (their role is supposed to be more concerned with policy and resource allocation) fewer such opportunities are available for career SES leaders who are supposed to be trained to provide this resource.

1130 This “government has become too complicated” argument has been used over many decades, and was advanced at the outset of the Alaskan recovery. Government has become more complicated, but we have also developed new management and technological techniques for overcoming new complications. Arguably, one problem is that today we use those advances in managing certain individual governmental operations, but no longer apply them effectively to broad problems that involve a number of departments.

and this author believes it is always possible to find those who can, and will, work together effectively.

The commission structure used for Alaska would be inappropriate for small presidential initiatives, although many of the management strategies used by the commission staff have potential for helping smaller disaster recoveries and other types of presidential initiatives.¹¹³¹ The aggressive leadership of the federal government in Alaska was readily accepted by the state and local jurisdictions because of the overwhelming impact of the disaster and the care with which this federal role was handled. There was never the slightest resentment expressed at this role. However, where state and local resources are greater, or inexperienced federal leaders are used, even though federal leadership will nearly always be essential in a catastrophic disaster or attack, it would be difficult for the federal government to expedite intergovernmental action to the remarkable degree it did in Alaska.

Achievements

The accomplishments of the commission and U.S. and local government could be summarized by the recovery having saved the viability of Alaska as a state. The avoidance of abandonment of a significant portion of the population and an economic collapse were each of inordinate importance in reaching this goal. The savings in human suffering and dollars were enormous, though never measured. Finally, the recovery demonstrated that despite its critics, our government can work very effectively when there is a clear mission, when experienced political and career leaders are utilized, and when government operations are streamlined.

No doubt the haste of the recovery resulted in some projects that could have reduced direct costs with more deliberate planning and execution. However, these costs were miniscule compared to the major savings in overhead and the huge savings realized by compressing into the first few months the critical design and construction work, not to mention the savings in controlling inflation,

1131 The author employed some of these approaches in handling later presidential initiatives, though not to the extreme degree they were used in Alaska.

preventing an economic collapse, and avoiding the costs that would have resulted from the fleeing of residents to the lower 48.

CHAPTER 10. PLANNING FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND TRANSFORMATION OF JAPAN AFTER WWII

*Peter F. Schaefer and P. Clayton Schaefer*¹³²

Introduction

U.S. planning for the occupation of Japan uniquely and successfully integrated the government’s military and civilian assets to create a practical strategy for the reform and reconstruction of a former enemy. The approach to planning between 1941 and 1945 evolved from *ad hoc* responses into a formal interagency organization. Though there was constant tension between military and civilian officials, the immensity of the nation-building task convinced all involved of the need to cooperate. The interagency deliberative process they created was vested with the authority of the president and relevant secretaries, and relied on information transparency and close working relationships at all levels.

As a result, the political leadership came to view the occupation plan as a shared product, not the province of one agency. The policy discussions were heated; however, due to sustained and focused interaction within a common structure, these debates were ultimately constructive. Rather than creating distrust and animosity, the debates resulted in the questioning of assumptions and the revision of strategy which proved vital to the success of the reconstruction effort.

Without careful consideration of the expected conditions in Japan and deliberations about strategies to mitigate the risks of insurgency, unrest, and economic collapse, the occupying forces would have been ill-prepared to manage the post-war environment. Over the long term, the government-wide commitment to Japan’s modernization was a strategic decision of enormous import.

An understanding of the occupation of Japan—and more specifically, the way the U.S. government planned for political and

1132 Peter F. Schaefer and P. Clayton Schaefer are business and management consultants as well as international relations experts.

economic transformation of that country—may help improve future occupation planning efforts. Considerable U.S. government resources were engaged for years in contingency planning, creating detailed occupation plans before the first American soldier landed in Japan. The Roosevelt and Truman administrations were able to create a joint operational plan for civilian and military agencies that included input from all federal entities, as well as experts outside the government.¹¹³³

The interagency strategic and tactical approach emerged from an organization known as the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC), the authoritative policy-making organ charged with postwar reconstruction planning. The tactical goals of the U.S. occupation were to promote a modern, democratic, capitalist Japanese state;¹¹³⁴ to support the rise of a broad middle class able to own property and participate in the national and international economy; to adapt existing Japanese institutional structures to manage the government and implement reforms; to promote continuity and economic stability; and to repress, co-opt, and redirect the elites who had been responsible for the rise of Japan’s militarist expansion. These decisions were not altruistic, but represented a systematic attempt by U.S. planners to create a strategy that would avoid bloody resistance, provide maximum security for U.S. personnel, and ensure continued peace in and with Japan.

Given SWNCC’s apparent success, it is important to point out the key factors that contributed to the effectiveness of interagency planning during this period. Briefly, these features were:

1. Delegation of authority by the president aimed at the creation of actionable policy.
2. Prioritization of interagency work by department heads and the perception of interagency assignments as high status.

1133 For example, one of the seminal thinkers on Japan inside the U.S. government was a Columbia University professor named Hugh Borton. He served as the Japan Office director at State from 1942 to 1948 after which he returned to the academy.

1134 It took the Allies two years before they came to a similar conclusion about Germany’s future, after which the U.S. established the Marshall Plan.

3. Incorporation of all available experts in the policy development process.
4. Institutionalization of the interagency to permit sustained interaction.
5. Ongoing joint review and integration of policies conducted at the political level.
6. Information transparency and a consensus approach, allowing interagency cooperation as equals.
7. Detailed contingency planning, providing a flexible action plan to field personnel.
8. Clear military leadership in implementation, supported by embedded civilian experts at all operational levels.

This study will discuss each of these areas, and provide insight into the process that allowed the U.S. government to arrive at such an uncharacteristically open and collaborative approach to foreign policy formation.

Planning for Occupation¹¹³⁵

This case focuses on how Washington organized to manage the post-war environment, not the conduct of the war itself, though any examination of the planning for occupation requires a brief foray into the planning for the rest of the war.

There was considerable discussion in Washington at the outset of WWII about the creation of a “war cabinet” modeled after the British

1135 Citations for this section are complicated by the nature of the primary source material. Rather than clutter the study with a long list of untitled memos, meeting minutes, and internal government correspondence that we consulted, we have chosen to alert readers to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) record group, collection title, or physical location of the source documents. Sifting through microfilms and file folders of loose paper is often the only way to view these documents, and furthermore, dedicated archivists have built annotated bibliographies and finding aids that do a much better job than we could at making these resources accessible.

system. The British war cabinet included key cabinet officers as well as opposition politicians and outsiders possessing military expertise. Henry Stimson was a supporter of such a move, perhaps motivated in part by being a Republican cabinet officer in Franklin D. Roosevelt's Democratic administration.

However, due to the surprising success of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), which was created in the summer of 1942 to advise and implement policy, Roosevelt came to feel that a war cabinet was unnecessary. The effectiveness of the JCS was partially responsible for delaying the creation of a comprehensive interagency planning body, even though senior military leaders viewed consultation with the State Department as essential.

To work around the president's resistance to the war cabinet idea, Secretary of War Stimson organized an informal group in 1940 composed of Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Secretary of the Navy William F. Knox.¹¹³⁶ These three men—known as the “Committee of Three”—met weekly to try to resolve interagency problems. All three men were also members of the President's War Council which met in the White House. The War Council, like the Committee of Three, lacked executive authority, instead serving an essentially advisory function which identified issues for President Roosevelt's consideration. The committee was also a conduit to disseminate decisions and instructions from the president to the government. However, since it was the center of war-planning activity and was managed by the president and his small staff, it became a bottleneck for information flowing in both directions.

Once the JCS system matured, the War Council was abandoned and the Committee of Three was marginalized. Roosevelt continued to insist on being at the center of all decision making, particularly the invasion and occupation of North Africa and the unfolding assault on the Axis. For example, there was a major debate within the federal government between advocates of an operational plan known as “Bolero,” and one eventually code-named “Torch.” Bolero emphasized a rapid build-up of U.S. forces in England in preparation

1136 Until the post of secretary of defense was created in 1947, the secretary of war was really the secretary of the Army.

for the 1943 invasion of continental Europe, while Torch called for the invasion of North Africa. Stimson, Marshall, and the JCS opposed Torch, which the secretary of war had called “the President’s secret baby.”¹¹³⁷ Despite the resistance, the president insisted that Torch be undertaken.

The constraints on a president’s time make such detailed policy involvement practically impossible, and Roosevelt’s attempts to stay at the center of debates meant that many key questions lacked authoritative policy statements. This put undue strain on field personnel who were forced to make improvised decisions without the benefit of expert help. Ultimately, the inefficiencies of post-operation management would change Roosevelt’s mind about creating a war-planning organization.

During this period, Secretary of State Hull had been given primary responsibility for all post-war planning, and, under Roosevelt’s orders, State began considering the problem of occupation just weeks after Pearl Harbor. The process reached its full scope and depth over the next several years. On December 28, 1941, the Advisory Committee on Post-War Foreign Policy (“Advisory Committee”) was organized. The committee’s first meeting was held on February 12, 1942, and was composed of bureaucrats, scholars, and academics within six subcommittees. It reported to the Committee of Three, was chaired by Hull and managed by his under secretary, Sumner Welles.¹¹³⁸

By the summer of 1942, the six subcommittees which comprised the Advisory Committee were staffed by “thirty graduate students who had just received their Ph.D. degrees or were just about to—historians, political scientists, economists, librarians, cartographers, and so on—who were recruited specifically for this job. The research staff, or, as it was officially known, the Division of Special Research, consisted of 55 people at the end of 1942, which increased to 96 by mid-1943.”¹¹³⁹ However, despite the inter-disciplinary nature of

1137 Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1947) 425.

1138 In this era, there were no “deputy secretaries.” The under secretary was the number two official.

1139 Ignac Romsics, *Wartime American Plans for a New Hungary*, (Columbia University

the staff and the broad reach of the subjects being considered, the Advisory Committee was producing little usable output.

A lack of senior-level agreement and clear lines of authority meant pieces of the post-war plan were being developed in a variety of offices across the government, but there was no strategic architecture that might permit the creation of practical and actionable policies endorsed by the entire government. With a lack of integration, it was inevitable that parochial interests (turf, budget, careers) would present problems.

Secretary of War Stimson writes that:

WWII demonstrated with unprecedented clarity the close interconnection between military and civilian affairs; no where was this connection more evident than in military government. Yet no task undertaken by the Army produced more misunderstanding at high levels of government. Orderly civil administration must be maintained in support of military operations in liberated and occupied territories.¹¹⁴⁰

This interconnection was acknowledged even prior to the war. Seven months *before* Pearl Harbor, the Army established the School of Military Government at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville in order to train “military government officers.” It seems that “New Dealers around the throne” opposed this school because, according to Stimson, they “were anticipating such activities as an opportunity for themselves.”¹¹⁴¹ Ultimately, Secretary of State Cordell Hull agreed with Stimson and the Army staff that “administration in foreign lands must initially be an Army responsibility, while Stimson in turn fully accepted the State Department’s responsibility for the formulation of political policy.”¹¹⁴²

By mid-1944, Under Secretary of State Edward Stettinius and the newly appointed Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal decided to

Press, 1992).

1140 Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1947) 553.

1141 Ibid.

1142 Ibid., 554.

revitalize the weekly Committee of Three meetings. The friendly relationship among these top officials from different agencies greatly contributed to the eventual integration of postwar policymaking at the staff level. The impetus for resumed activity was the shared belief that a lack of executive support was preventing true interdepartmental cooperation, thus making it impossible to thoroughly address postwar problems.

The president remained reluctant to cede his authority over postwar planning, but in response to pressure from cabinet officials and serious difficulties with the Roosevelt-planned occupation of North Africa, in August of 1944 he authorized the formation of a Cabinet Committee for post-war Germany. Although this body included White House staff and Secretaries Hull, Stimson and Henry Morgenthau (Treasury), the effort was still largely dominated by Roosevelt and his personnel.

In late November, Stettinius learned that he would succeed the ailing Cordell Hull as secretary of state and began working to assuage his concerns regarding the inadequacy of postwar planning. On his request, the Committee of Three agreed to create a formal, interagency organization dedicated to postwar operational planning. Due to obvious weaknesses in the existing system, they were able to secure the consent of the president.

Stettinius had been recruited to government service from the corporate world in 1939 after a year as chairman of U.S. Steel and having held a senior position at General Motors. He was a manager concerned with objectives and output, not an academic or a bureaucrat concerned with process. As such, he was deeply troubled by the lack of practical application of the Advisory Committee's work. By the time Hull stepped aside allowing Stettinius to become acting secretary of state, the latter had decided that little useful planning resulted from the State Department-run Advisory Committee. Although the enterprise was political-military, he recognized that the military officers were, at best, “junior partners.” As a result, he pressed the secretaries of War and Navy to recast the Advisory Committee as a *joint* organization invigorated by a true delegation of authority from all three departments.

On December 1, 1944, the day before he was sworn in as secretary, Stettinius wrote a letter to Secretaries Stimson and Forrestal formally

proposing that the Committee of Three create a jointly managed secretariat to plan the occupations and achieve full integration of U.S. foreign policy.¹¹⁴³ The secretariat was headed by Roosevelt favorite, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy. The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC, pronounced “swink”) was formally constituted December 9 and held its first full meeting December 19. By clear intention, SWNCC was structured and run in such a way that the group members worked as equals in creating policy. Although Secretary of State Stettinius was the nominal chairman, a strict consensus was required to make decisions placing the emphasis on identifying cooperative solutions.¹¹⁴⁴

Although Stettinius continued to chair weekly meetings of the Committee of Three, the planning process had shifted to the assistant secretary level and below. Stettinius was concerned that even this level of integration would prove inadequate. He wrote in his diary:

I stated that there had been a bit of confusion on how Navy and War had been informed on political matters and the State Department on military matters; that Stimson, Forrestal, and I had a suggestion and we wished to make joint recommendation to the president. I spoke for all three of us and said that we wanted the authority from him to have complete interchange on all subjects at all times and I was authorized to tell them fully about all secret diplomatic matters and they were instructed to inform me fully on military matters. As we came to the end of the war it was impossible to improvise these military and political matters and we had to have the information. He said you are now authorized to do this.¹¹⁴⁵

1143 Prior to the national defense reorganization of 1947, the War Department ran the Department of the Army and the Army Air Corp. The Department of the Navy oversaw the U.S. Navy and Marines. The Joint Chiefs of Staff existed, but lacked a single chairman until 1947.

1144 Although SWNCC also had the responsibility for planning postwar the programs for other Axis powers, overall those efforts were more about rebuilding existing political economies. Moreover, they were true multinational efforts involving real participation by the other allies. Because of these factors, European examples are less useful if our hope is to make U.S. nation- building more effective.

1145 Cambell, Thomas M. and Herring, George C. ed., *The Diaries of Edward R.*

Because of this commitment to cooperation, SWNCC became a singular exception to the rule of bureaucratic turf wars and a remarkable success in integrating U.S. plans and assets that is arguably unrivaled to this day.

The resulting SWNCC plans for the occupation of Europe and Japan were methodical exercises aimed at anticipating and addressing every issue that might confront U.S. forces tasked with occupying and running former enemy states.¹¹⁴⁶ SWNCC brought together top experts from the U.S. government and academia to collaborate on all aspects of the plan. For instance, one of the key decisions confronted by the team—the status of the Emperor—was studied by an academic turned bureaucrat named Hugh Borton. After the war, when Borton returned to academia, he observed that his 1943 memo recommending the retention of Hirohito was largely unchanged as it passed through the planning process and subsequent implementation by MacArthur.¹¹⁴⁷

At the outset, SWNCC collected data and reports (and the experts responsible for them) that had already tackled postwar problems. This integration effort unearthed work going back to December 28, 1941 when President Roosevelt approved the establishment of the “Advisory Committee on Post-War Foreign Policy,” a primarily State Department-run organization with experts drawn from other agencies and the private sector, as needed.¹¹⁴⁸ In fact, Secretary of War Stimson

Stettinius, Jr. 1943-1946, New Viewpoints, New York, 1975, 321.

1146 SWNCC was not an Allied exercise but was staffed mainly by U.S. citizens who operated under conditions of secrecy. Moreover, the postwar implementation of the SWNCC plan in Japan was also not an Allied effort, as it was in Europe. In Japan, the Allied Far Eastern Commission (FEC) was, in theory, the highest authority over the occupation but MacArthur generally ignored FEC directives when their position differed substantially from that of the U.S. government. This tendency was particularly evident during the drafting of Japan’s constitution. The FEC was composed of the United States, Russia, Australia, Great Britain, New Zealand, and India.

1147 Hugh Borton, Preparation for the Occupation of Japan, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Feb., 1966), 205.

1148 They relied heavily on experts from the Council on Foreign Relations in New York.

notes that “even before Pearl Harbor the War Department began planning in anticipation of this sort of [postwar civil affairs] work.”¹¹⁴⁹

One important source of SWNCC staff was State’s Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East (IDACFE), formed in 1943 under Dr. George H. Blakeslee to focus particularly on postwar Japan. A core group of IDACFE-based Japan experts including; Hugh Borton, Joseph Grew, Robert Fearey, and Eugene Dooman survived bureaucratic shake-ups in the planning structure to see the work to fruition. Many of the analysts’ policies drafted during the early years were debated and subsequently ratified by SWNCC.¹¹⁵⁰

At the beginning of the U.S. occupation of Japan, the central issues of occupation policy—the status of Emperor Hirohito, the decision to help the Japanese create a modern capitalist economy under a sovereign, responsive democracy, the role of the warlords, or *Daimyo*—had been decided apriori. Considerations of law, currency, farming, fishing, mining, and industry had also been largely addressed. This was possible because SWNCC empowered subcommittees to tackle issues independently, consulting outside experts as necessary. As reports approached completion, they were presented at the secretariat, debated, revised, and approved as policy.¹¹⁵¹

Washington representatives produced hundreds of detailed studies and made nearly 1,000 policy decisions. Nearly all these assessments, made at the sub-cabinet level, became official U.S. occupation policy, guiding the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers (SCAP) General Douglas MacArthur and his staff. These handbooks, orders, and objectives were prepared to address the expected situation on the ground. When U.S. forces arrived in late August 1945, SCAP was

1149 Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1947) 553.

1150 Schwartzberg, Steven (1993). “The ‘Soft Peace Boys’: Presurrender Planning and Japanese Land Reform.” *The Journal of American-East Asian Studies*, Volume 2, Number 2, Imprint Publications.

1151 The only major decision that was reversed concerned the dismantling of the Zaibatsus or Japanese industrial combines, a decision paralleled later in Germany. Both were based on the unanticipated postwar expansion of Communism in Europe and Asia.

armed with the information necessary to act effectively and adapt quickly in the chaotic post-war environment.

SWNCC's most valuable output was a coherent set of objectives that provided a flexible action plan for the occupation. The most important points—the preservation of the institution of Emperor, retaining the existing government apparatus, defining the rights of all citizens, and the reformation of land tenure—were implemented within a few months of MacArthur's arrival, and formed the economic and social foundation of a stable post-conflict environment that persists today.

U.S. planners recognized that an occupying force faced a narrow window in which it can shape expectations and behaviors that will prevail throughout the undertaking. A prescient Department of War memo stated:

The American public will unquestionably become restive under a prolonged occupation of Japan by American forces. It will not wish to assume the burdens of governing Japan over an extended period. Demands for withdrawal are likely to begin within 6 months after the surrender of Japan and thereafter to build up increasing political pressure to that end.¹¹⁵²

This memo shows clear recognition that a well-planned occupation arrives in overwhelming force, uses its momentary advantage over a scattered opposition to accomplish key objectives, and steadily decreases its footprint over time. This is impossible without close interagency cooperation akin to that described above. The American military was not designed to manage this window without clear political guidance from Washington. Conventional military training did not prepare U.S. personnel to take the political and economic action necessary to capitalize on the initial period of social shock. However, other departments were unable to manage security or conduct

1152 “[Anonymous Department of War Memorandum]” *World War II Text Records*, National Archives and Records Administration College Park. Record Group 331. See Appendix.

autonomous operations in a post-war environment. Success was achieved through close cooperation, not a division of labor.

With the defeat of Japan rapidly approaching, U.S. policy makers had no illusions about their priorities. As stated succinctly by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee documents and reflecting the words of the Potsdam Declaration:

The ultimate objectives of the United States in regard to Japan, to which policies in the initial period must conform, are:

- To insure that Japan will not again become a menace to the United States or to the peace and security of the world.
- To bring about the eventual establishment of a peaceful and responsible government which will respect the rights of other states and will support the objectives of the United States as reflected in the ideals and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The United States desires that this government should conform as closely as may be to the principles of democratic self-government but it is not the responsibility of the Allied Powers to impose on Japan any form of government not supported by the freely expressed will of the people.¹¹⁵³

The Potsdam Declaration signaled to the Japanese people and their government that the U.S. occupation would be benign, even enlightened. The Declaration also stated:

Japan shall be permitted to maintain such industries as will sustain her economy, [have] access to raw materials,...[and eventually participate] in world trade relations....[The Allied Forces] shall be withdrawn from Japan as soon as these objectives have been accomplished and there has been established in accordance with the freely expressed

1153 “U.S. Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan,” SWNCC 150/3, August 22, 1945, accessed at <http://210.128.252.171/constitution/e/shiryu/01/022shoshi.html> on 12/12/2006.

will of the Japanese people a peacefully inclined and responsible government.¹¹⁵⁴

This position was fiercely debated within SWNCC and throughout the foreign policy community. Some Treasury Department and military officials advocated a punitive, scorched earth policy for post-war Japan and Germany. Two years prior to the signing of the Potsdam Declaration, Robert Fearey, a senior State Department representative dealing with Japan, wrote a memo outlining various options for managing postwar Japan.¹¹⁵⁵ He delineated three distinct schools of economic thought. One position held that Japan be “deprived of her entire modern industrial plant and cut off from foreign trade.” A second group proposed that Tokyo keep light industries and be permitted to resume a modicum of foreign trade. The third option involved “dismantling or converting to other purposes the armament industries” but eventually allowing Japan to normally participate in the global economy without the burden of punitive allied policies.

Fearey notes that if the first option were chosen, 45 million Japanese might starve. Almost the entire population would “fall below the subsistence level and extinction of a fourth or more of the population (fifteen to twenty million Japanese) would be rendered almost inevitable.”¹¹⁵⁶ Although it is highly unlikely that the American public would have tolerated the extinction of millions of Japanese, the retaliatory proposals for Japan (and similar ones for Germany) were strongly supported by key members of the advisory group. These policy makers believed that the Japanese were responsible for the war and should be punished.¹¹⁵⁷

1154 Proclamation Defining Terms for Japanese Surrender. Issued at Potsdam, July 26, 1945.

1155 Robert A. Fearey, “Japanese Post-War Economic Considerations, July 21, 1943” *The Occupation of Japan*. Congressional Information Service, Bethesda, MD and Maruzen Pub. Co, Tokyo, Japan 1987-1995. “US Planning Documents 1942-1945” L.O.C. Microform Call Number 89/9022.

1156 Ibid.

1157 Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau and presidential advisor Harold Ickes were proponents of the most severe option, not the military. Amongst the most senior planning staff and war secretaries, this extreme position spawned a verb, “to Morgenthau” which meant to de-industrialize and ruralize the national populations.

However, the Japan experts at State totally opposed the punitive approach, arguing that “a first, if not the first, prerequisite” for postwar success is turning Japan to “a course of peaceful and orderly development” that would maintain or improve Japanese living standards by reviving “peacetime industry and trade.”¹¹⁵⁸ Planners also questioned the practicality of such harsh proposals given the necessity of a long term U.S. presence in a hostile environment. In the end, the matter had to be forwarded to the president and his advisors for a decision. Fortunately, the president and his staff concluded that having a stable democracy and prosperous capitalist Japanese nation, rather than a poor, de-industrialized agrarian state was in the long-term interest of the United States.¹¹⁵⁹

The arguments against a punitive occupation were likely made more palatable to government hard-liners since the news of the atom bomb had begun to circulate among senior U.S. officials in late July. Although the bureaucracy itself lacked information about the bomb, by the spring of 1945 planners had already begun preparing a plan of benevolent occupation rather than brutal invasion. This was certainly due, in part, to the new composition of the planning organization, which merged the military planners with Japan experts who spoke the language, had lived in the country, and had sympathy for the people.

With this background, it is less surprising that SWNCC developed a policy that would not simply maintain existing incomes and economic structures, but would forge legal and institutional changes to *increase* Japan’s prosperity. SWNCC and its predecessors planned for the management and modernization of every aspect of the Japanese economy, in particular, for an expansion of property ownership and the regulation of corporate control. Japan was deprived of its colonies, but SWNCC plans aimed to create the legal, regulatory and institutional environment needed to foster widespread entrepreneurship and drive a modern economy. SWNCC’s plan, and

1158 Ibid.

1159 Interestingly, the secret Morgenthau Plan for Germany was partially implemented for the first two years of the Allied occupation of Germany before the Marshall Plan was begun in 1947. It was only after the JCS 1779 of July 1947 replaced JCS 1067 (May 1945) that U.S. policy changed from taking “no steps looking towards the economic rehabilitation of Germany.”

SCAP's application of it, provided Japan with necessary institutions for an affluent society.¹¹⁶⁰

In the months prior to Japan's surrender, SWNCC was generating the final set of policies that would guide the military and civilian bureaucracies running the occupation. Moreover, SWNCC policies steered the operational directives issued by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to combatant commanders. The latter were instructed how to create military plans in accordance with civilian guidelines generated by SWNCC. Upon receiving these directives, General Douglas MacArthur and Admiral Chester Nimitz ordered their staffs to prepare parallel operational plans for the invasion of Japan. Both wrestled with the challenge of attacking a hostile Japan, and each drafted a plan for amphibious landing on the home islands.

In the spring of 1944, both also created plans to manage Japan's sudden surrender and a relatively peaceful occupation. Apparently, this was done without knowledge of the development of the atomic bomb. When the Japanese finally surrendered, the Navy's "Operation Campus" and the Army's "Operation Blacklist" were finished and ready to direct the occupation, as was a plethora of detailed SWNCC guidance. There was considerable squabbling between the Army and the Navy about who should be the highest authority over the occupation, but eventually the Navy ceded and MacArthur was named supreme allied commander.

Evaluating SWNCC's Strategy Creation

In reviewing the interagency process during World War II, one analyst points out three key features: "senior leader involvement, sustained interaction, and thorough integration" of policy at or below the level of assistant secretary.¹¹⁶¹ Planning for the occupation of Japan within the SWNCC was successful because it provided a forum for the formation of interagency relationships, incorporated experts from

1160 There are two articles by the author comparing Marshall and MacArthur, available at (<http://www.tcsdaily.com/article.aspx?id=092506B>) and (<http://www.tcsdaily.com/article.aspx?id=110106B>).

1161 Robert Kolterman, *Interagency Coordination Past Lessons, Current Issues, and Future Necessities* (U.S. Army War College 2006),2.

across the government, and integrated their outputs into sanctioned statements of national policy. The quality of the interagency process during this period is demonstrated by the fact that of the 750 issues considered by SWNCC before the National Security Act of 1947, only six cases were forwarded to the president for final resolution.¹¹⁶²

For several years after the war, SWNCC's structure and interagency character was preserved. Thereafter, its successor, the State-Army-Navy-Air Force Coordinating Committee (SANACC), operated in parallel with the National Security Council (NSC). Vital to the effectiveness of both organizations were techniques of decentralization and interagency cooperation as well as mechanisms that permitted a sensible allocation of resources and integration of effort within the government. Lower levels of the SWNCC process—subcommittees, informal working groups and communities of interest—all operated on a strict consensus basis guided by clear but broad objectives outlined by the executive branch.

Functionally, SWNCC was an independent agency staffed by top experts who were organized in such a way as to operate on a consensus basis. They were judged on the quality of their collective output so there was no bureaucratic imperative to defend their home agency's turf, agenda or budget. Although some priority working groups had hand-picked staff which were sometimes mandated and given very specific tasks by senior officials, the overall SWNCC structure was aimed at creating a permissive environment for dialogue and information sharing. SWNCC posts were considered high status, and the atmosphere was aimed at producing tangible and practical results. Participants were motivated by the immediacy of their contributions; instead of gathering dust in a filing cabinet, their work would be used to shape the outcome of the occupation. The output of SWNCC subcommittees was submitted for periodic review to a group of superiors with the authority to speak for their departments. This group was empowered by the department heads and the president to resolve disputes, set general policy guidelines, and act as mediators between political and career officials.

1162 *Ibid.*, 5.

In the rare instances when SWNCC and the Committee of Three could not reach a consensus, the cases advanced to the president for a final decision, which led to a unified policy emerging from the agencies and fully sanctioned by the White House. In policy areas which lacked clear executive priorities, the bureaucracies were forward looking, and worked to summarize, condense, and continually update the collective wisdom of the government so that it was immediately available, as needed, to the White House or field personnel. This was possible because SWNCC brought formerly independent and fragmented policy groups together with other experts who were wrestling with the same issues.

Output and Implementation

A key operating assumption within SWNCC was that ultimately its recommendations would pass to a military commander for implementation. This viceroy would face a complex and constantly shifting postwar environment, and had to be given the necessary leeway to lead the occupation and improvise creative solutions that could not be imagined from Washington. SWNCC's policy statements, corresponding directives issued to combatant commanders through the JCS, and public declarations all shaped the behavior of General MacArthur. Once SCAP took command of Tokyo, the general exercised considerable autonomy in implementing established policy. His occupation program depended on the advice of U.S. civilian experts as well as Japanese officials and civilians who counseled him regarding policy design and implementation. This field-based deliberative process, independent of interagency development in Washington, was crucial to ensure the proper timing and emphasis of occupation programs.

Japan did not have a sovereign government for six-and-a-half years (from its surrender until April 28, 1952). However, Japan never lost self-government at any time during the U.S. occupation. Indeed, MacArthur conducted much of the occupation like a negotiation with his Japanese counterparts, though when the safety of his troops or the integrity of the country was at stake, he resorted to issuing edicts. The final wartime government of Prince Naruhiko Higashikuni—which signed the surrender on September 2, 1945—was not disbanded

but allowed to retain power and operate under the prevailing Meiji Constitution. This is a crucial point; the Emperor, the politicians, the bureaucracy, and the laws remained intact.

SWNCC 150, a document that outlined the core occupation policy and was the product of extensive revision and debate within the SWNCC secretariat, instructed MacArthur to “exercise his authority through Japanese Governmental machinery and agencies, including the Emperor.”¹¹⁶³ The strategy of using Imperial Japanese institutions to dismantle the Japanese empire allowed Americans to remain aloof from contentious debates while still setting policy when necessary. In 1942, Hugh Borton was the first State Department expert tasked with preparing a paper detailing the options to deal with the Emperor. His note dated April 26, 1944, proposed that “the Emperor be given access to his advisors” and “delegate his subordinates to carry out their administrative duties so the occupation forces would be able to use a maximum number of Japanese officials.”

With the status of the Emperor determined, planners began to consider how to approach the bureaucratic apparatus that had served him. Bureaucracies are critical to the functioning of any government. The knowledge they possess about everything from the practical to the profound is important to the operation of essential services and maintenance of national cohesion. SWNCC 150 issued the following guidance for SCAP on the bureaucracy:

The function of military government (SCAP) in these fields (“Control of Domestic Economy”) will be supervisory rather than administrative, relying to the fullest extent practicable on Japanese civil servants and other acceptable personnel. These functions shall be exercised in such a way as to facilitate the withdrawal of the occupation forces from Japan at the earliest possible date.¹¹⁶⁴

By keeping the structure of government intact while removing its most authoritarian features, SCAP maintained legal continuity while creating

1163 *United States Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan*, (SWNCC 150), available at <http://210.128.252.171/constitution/e/shiryoy/01/022/022tx.html>.

1164 *United States Initial Post-Defeat Policy Relating to Japan* (SWNCC 150/4), available at http://210.128.252.171/constitution/e/shiryoy/01/022_2/022_2tx.html.

a body of law and reinforcing expectations of stability and freedom. When examining the transformation of Japan, it is important to make a distinction between producing laws by fiat and systematically legislating through a process that creates, eliminates and adjudicates laws under conditions of transparency and formal accountability. The former ends in a collection of arbitrary rules, the latter in the rule of law. Japanese leaders and the SCAP never created rules outside an existing framework; SCAP carried out Washington’s policies and the Japanese worked within the existing legal tradition to build new institutions that conformed to the demands of the conquerors.

For example, except for General Yamashita in Manila, the prosecution of suspected war criminals took place under the auspices of international tribunals, so it was not necessary to tamper with the Japanese system of government to achieve occupation goals. In order to avoid the appearance of interference, SCAP allowed the state to fulfill its full range of obligations to the people, exerting influence behind the scenes when occupation objectives were clearly at stake.¹¹⁶⁵

Prince Naruhiko’s government was not dismissed by MacArthur but resigned in October of 1945 in protest over a directive entitled “Removal of Restrictions on Political, Civil, and Religious Liberties.”¹¹⁶⁶ Since these rights were promised in the Potsdam Declaration and this directive was taken entirely from the *SWNCC 150/4/A*, approved by President Truman on September 6, 1945, and published in Japan, the resignations must be seen as political acts, part of a negotiation between Tokyo and Washington, not as the end of the political system.¹¹⁶⁷

The Naruhiko government was replaced by that of Prime Minister Shidehara Kijuro. Although pro-American and opposed to the war,

1165 Clear guidance from SWNCC and evidence of true dialogue with the Japanese counters the dominant “great man” theory of success in postwar Japan. The idea that MacArthur ruled by edicts following procedures that he and his staff created is simply incorrect.

1166 *Removal of Restrictions on Political, Civil and Religious Liberties* (SCAPIN 93), 4 October 1945, available at http://ndl.go.jp/modern/e/img_1/M003/M003-0011.html.

1167 *United States Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan*, (SWNCC 150), available at <http://210.128.252.171/constitution/e/shiryō/01/022/022tx.html>.

Shidehara's appointment by the Diet (legislature) of Japan followed the procedures outlined in the Meiji constitution. In line with the American directive, Shidehara released political prisoners, removed about 4,000 people from the Ministry of Home Affairs and abolished the Secret Police.

The U.S. approach to the development of Japanese self-government reflects the tenth point of the Potsdam Declaration which stated, “The Japanese Government shall remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people. Freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for the fundamental human rights shall be established.”¹¹⁶⁸ In drafting a new constitution, the United States decided that the old Meiji Constitution, drafted in 1889, would be preserved where possible, permitting legal continuity, defusing potentially explosive debates, and borrowing the political legitimacy of the older document. Thus, the so-called “MacArthur Constitution” of 1946 was ultimately adopted as an *amendment* to the Meiji Constitution consistent with Article 73 of the latter document.

Following the SWNCC 150 instructions to create a government affirmed by a majority of Japanese citizens, in September 1945, SCAP asked a group of eminent Japanese government officials to write a new constitution. The work of the Masumoto Committee of Shidehara's Government began the following month and was submitted to SCAP for ratification in early February 1946. Unfortunately, a slim majority of the committee produced a document that was little more than a polished version of the Meiji Imperial Constitution.

This was unacceptable to SCAP, as the JCS, following SWNCC directives, had explicitly instructed MacArthur to ensure that the new constitution was more liberal than its predecessor. On January 6, 1946—over a month *before* the Matsumoto Committee submitted its proposed constitutional changes—SWNCC 228 instructed MacArthur on the objectives of the new constitution.¹¹⁶⁹ When it was determined

1168 Proclamation Defining Terms for Japanese Surrender, Issued at Potsdam, July 26, 1945.

1169 *Reform of the Japanese Governmental System* (SWNCC 228). NARA Record Group

that the Matsumoto Committee’s proposals were inconsistent with instructions contained in SWNCC 228, MacArthur’s team closely followed Washington’s guidance. Historian Lynn Parisi notes:

When Japanese government leaders made only cosmetic changes, MacArthur concluded that it was within SCAP’s authority to draft a completely new government charter for Japan. During *one week* in February 1946, a committee of 24 Americans, both military and civilian, drafted a democratic constitution for Japan. MacArthur approved it and SCAP presented it to Japan’s foreign minister as a *fait accompli*.¹¹⁷⁰

But that is hardly the end of the story. MacArthur’s authority to change direction was not subject to his personal whim, nor could he rewrite American policy without Washington’s consent. As Borton writes, “The only possibility of a change in American policy at that time could have been a request from General MacArthur that in his view the *Japanese people* demanded such a change and he was in favor of it.”¹¹⁷¹ He was trusted as a competent administrator, but had to work within Washington’s policy framework, not above it.

Moreover, MacArthur and his staff did not devise the new constitution entirely on their own. In fact, the Shidehara government committee was closely split between traditionalists and liberal reformers. MacArthur was not aware of this split until the first Shidehara draft was submitted. When it became clear that the Meiji Constitution was essentially unchanged and the planned election intended as a plebiscite would be meaningless without intervention, MacArthur ordered his staff to compose an acceptable document.

Despite the fact that history generally either credits or blames MacArthur for the drafting of the new constitution, the facts are

331, available at <http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/shiryo/03/059shoshi.html>.

1170 Lynn Parisi, “Lessons on the Japanese Constitution,” *The Japan Digest* (National Clearing House for US-Japan Studies, University of Illinois, 2002).

1171 Hugh Borton, “Preparation for the Occupation of Japan,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Feb., 1966), 208.

more complex. First of all, his team closely followed the position of the liberals on the Matsumoto Committee. As MacArthur explained:

I directed my staff to assist and advise with the Japanese on the creation of an acceptable draft. The Prime Minister himself became active and energetic in its final preparation. Once completed, the Emperor was shown the draft and at once approved saying that “upon these principles will truly rest the welfare of our people and the rebuilding of Japan.”¹¹⁷²

The general then began a period of very public consultation and further revision.¹¹⁷³ It is important to reflect on these events because, although they had not been specifically anticipated by Washington planners, the interagency had nevertheless provided SCAP with the research, guidance, and personnel necessary to take decisive action should the circumstances demand it.

After the Shigeru Yoshida government was installed in late May 1946, the draft constitution was ratified using the process established by the Meiji Constitution; the new document was formally submitted to the Imperial Diet by the Emperor, through an Imperial Rescript issued on June 20, 1946, entitled “Bill for Revision of the Imperial Constitution.”

On April 10, 1946—just over seven months after the beginning of the U.S. occupation—Diet elections were held under the 1889 Meiji Constitution, which was still in force. The election—one which allowed female suffrage for the first time in Japanese history—created an interim parliament under the terms of the old Meiji Constitution. Although the new Japanese constitution was signed into law on November 3, 1946, Parisi explains that even after its formal acceptance and initial elections, “MacArthur invited the Japanese to

1172 Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964) 300.

1173 Although much of it was written by MacArthur’s staff, the Japanese review committee made substantial changes. For instance, the MacArthur draft of February 1946 called for a unicameral system, but the Japanese proposed a bicameral system in their redraft of March 1946. The name of the upper “House of Peers” was changed to “House of Councillors,” who were elected, rather than appointed, thus maintaining the bicameral form as was desired by the Japanese. The House of Peers remained the upper house until the new constitution went into effect in May of 1947.

[further] review and revise the constitution between 1948 and 1949 to insure that it reflected the free will of the Japanese people.” In response to this offer:

The Japanese government established a review committee, but received only a few proposals for minor revisions [so] the fact that the Japanese government and people disregarded the opportunity to significantly change the constitution when invited to do so indicates an early level of support that renders the claim of foreign imposition somewhat moot.¹¹⁷⁴

The Japanese call their constitution the MacArthur Kempu but, as the above details make apparent, it is clearly more than that.

A Great Plan or a Great Man?

Japan’s land reform, her re-industrialization, the role of the Emperor, and the new constitution are elements of a debate about postwar management of Japan that continues to this day. Two clear sides have emerged. One side attributes extensive pre-surrender contingency planning to the success of the U.S.-led occupation. The other argues that success was derived through a version of the “great-man theory,” or the placement of wide ranging authority in the hands of an enlightened U.S. representative. In reality, these approaches converged during the occupation of Japan and the result was an effective administration that reflected the viewpoints of both the civilian and military elements of the U.S. government.¹¹⁷⁵ The case of land reform illustrates the convergence of planning and leadership.

At the end of WWII, half the farmers in Japan were sharecroppers without formal property rights. Although many families had farmed the same land for centuries, they did not own it or even have a legal right to their tenancy. This meant, at least in theory, that they could be evicted without recourse. Japanese tenants were guaranteed perpetual debt, deepening poverty, and low productivity. In U.S. post-war planning,

1174 Lynn Parisi, “Lessons on the Japanese Constitution,” *The Japan Digest* (National Clearing House for US-Japan Studies, University of Illinois, 2002).

1175 MacArthur, after all, was trapped on Corregidor when the occupation planning was begun.

it was understood that this hopelessness would make people more susceptible to Marxist alternatives or drive peasants off the land.¹¹⁷⁶

There is no question that SWNCC policy directed the overwhelming majority of important political and economic decisions made during the occupation. However, although analyst Lawrence Hewes Jr. writes that the Potsdam Declaration and the subsequent SWNCC 150 pointed towards land reform, the documentary evidence that this was the case is, in actuality, rather thin.¹¹⁷⁷ There was discussion of income equalization, allowing agricultural organizations (e.g., co-ops and associations) and labor unions to be organized to promote greater prosperity and democracy, but there was no explicit plan for land reform. Nonetheless, author Steven Schwartzberg notes, “Land reform was perhaps the single most important of the Occupation’s economic reforms.”¹¹⁷⁸

Reconciling these facts is crucial to understanding the proper balance between leadership and planning, and following the development of the land reform policy can illuminate the process. State Department official Robert Fearey and Agriculture Department expert Wolf Ladijinsky were key in developing the land reform policy and their work provides useful insight into decision-making as it moved from Washington to Tokyo. Fearey began by developing policy proposals which were eventually implemented by General MacArthur three months after the start of the occupation.

Fearey’s IDACFE report (“E155”) of July 1943 catalyzed the process. The document stated that, “the need for thorough-going agrarian reform has long been recognized in Japan,” and “its solution will be one of the first tasks facing the nation with the return of peace.”¹¹⁷⁹

1176 Wolf Ladijinsky, a speech to the Chinese Association of Land Reform, June 1951, reprinted in *Agrarian Reform as Unfinished Business*, Lewis Walinsky ed., (Oxford University Press)

1177 Lawrence I. Jr.Hewes, *Japanese Land Reform*, (NRS Report 127), Section 4, “Occupation Policy,” 15 March 1950, 13.

1178 Steven Schwartzberg, “The ‘Soft Peace’ Boys: Presurrender Planning and Japanese Land Reform,” *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (Summer 1993), 210.

1179 Robert A. Fearey, “Japanese Post-War Economic Considerations, July 21, 1943” *The Occupation of Japan*. Congressional Information Service, Bethesda, MD

The major agricultural issue to be addressed was “the prevalence of tenancy” as 48 percent of farming land was rented. The reduction of farming tenancy, the lowering of rents, and the scaling down of high land valuations were therefore identified as important objectives.¹¹⁸⁰ Fearey pointed out that tenants “must bear the full burden of loss from a poor harvest” as landlords demand the same high in-kind payments in all cases. Many farmers unable to cover their costs through agricultural work had resorted to cottage industry and an endless cycle of high interest debt just to survive.

Eighteen months later, in February 1945, the SWNCC subcommittee responsible for setting the Committee’s agenda decided to consider land tenure. In this effort, Fearey worked closely with Ladijinsky, who arrived at the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1935 and “became the U.S. government’s leading expert on rural Japan,” playing an integral role in the efforts of the U.S. occupation.¹¹⁸¹ Fearey’s ideas about land reform and agriculture were refined by Ladijinsky in a report provisionally titled, “PR-13, Japan Occupation Period: Agrarian Reform.” Although SWNCC did not formally discuss and approve PR-13, the ideas in the report about land tenure and increasing agricultural efficiency came out of the SWNCC process and had a significant impact on key committee members and ultimately on MacArthur and his staff. Largely as a result of PR-13, during pre-occupation staging at the Presidio, the government assembled a group of agricultural specialists involved in planning all aspects of land reform and agricultural issues.

After the occupation began, Fearey began revising PR-13 into an action plan to support the efforts of MacArthur’s State Department political advisor in Tokyo, George Atcheson. The issue was so important to SWNCC planners in Washington that the State Department sent its own experts to Japan to present the revised PR-13 reforms and action plan to Tokyo to work with Atcheson, on MacArthur’s staff. Initially MacArthur demanded that all personnel

and Maruzen Pub. Co, Tokyo, Japan 1987-1995. “US Planning Documents 1942-1945,” L.O.C. Microform Call Number 89/9022, 15.

1180 Ibid., 16.

1181 Ben Davis, *Wolf Ladijinsky, Tireless (and Frustrated) Advocate of Land Reform*, (Political Science Department, Temple University, October 2004) 2.

in-country be placed under his direct command and he was upset by the expert's presence.

However, Atcheson strongly supported PR-13 and so on October 26, 1945, he submitted to SCAP headquarters a document that has come to be called “The Atcheson-Fearey Memo.”¹¹⁸² Atcheson was able to persuade SCAP of the merits of PR-13 and eventually they agreed on implementation. MacArthur then moved ahead with immediate implementation, something his State advisors were reluctant to support since they thought, in general, that major reforms should not be implemented for six months.

Thus, the process of developing the ideas and forging a consensus on land reform among key government planners had been going on for well over two years by the time MacArthur saw the document. As already mentioned, there was considerable tension between the “soft peace” clique in the State Department and their hard line counterparts in the Treasury Department and the military. However, the SWNCC process required the joint creation of a consensus policy rather than segmented efforts or competing plans, so by channeling the process to require a shared policy these officials were forced to forge close relationships that broke down institutional and cultural barriers to cooperation which then resulted in the creation of a common policy. The SWNCC process had elements that were more in line with a juried verdict in a common law judicial system, than with a hierarchic, institutionally isolated bureaucratic system.

While SWNCC planning clearly played a role in crafting the land reform policy, leadership helped in its effective implementation. When MacArthur received an explanation of the revised PR-13, he understood its critical nature and moved quickly, acting against a strong consensus in Washington (including even Fearey) that major reforms should await a clearly defined “Phase Two” which was notionally seen to commence at least six months after the start of the occupation. Upon arrival in Japan, MacArthur had discovered the makings of a serious famine if the occupation government

1182 It could more precisely be called the “Fearey-Ladijinsky” memo since Atcheson's role was to sign a letter to MacArthur that had already been drafted by the experts.

failed to jumpstart the agricultural sector which drove him to quickly implement land reform. MacArthur is reported to have written a telegram to headquarters following their refusals to send emergency food supplies that read simply, “Send me food, or send me bullets.” In this case, he believed the fate of the occupation was at stake.

MacArthur instructed Fearey to present his land reform policy ideas to the Japanese. Within several weeks, Fearey’s collaborator Ladijinsky arrived in Tokyo to begin a posting as MacArthur’s advisor on agriculture. On December 5, Ladijinsky submitted a draft of the reform plan to MacArthur and four days later, it was presented as a directive to the Japanese government.¹¹⁸³ It outlined what would eventually become a legal framework for transferring ownership of large tracts of *Daimyo* lands to eligible tenant farmers in order to dramatically expand the proportion of owner-cultivated land in rural areas.

It is worth noting that the process of land reform, as implemented by the occupation, was a highly participatory, democratic process. The tenants were directly involved in executing the land reform program, and the decentralized land allocation process was based on democratically elected Agricultural Land Commissions representing the interests of 11,000 peasant associations. Thus, land reform served to reinforce values and practices that would become a fundamental part of Japan’s political system as it regained its independence following the departure of U.S. occupation forces.

Conclusion

The four key questions posed by the Project on National Security Reform are matched by critical themes from this case:

- *Planning Structure*: Did the U.S. government generally act in an ad hoc manner or did it develop effective strategies to integrate its national security resources?

1183 SCAP directive 411 on Rural Land Reform, 9 December 1945, reprinted in *Agrarian Reform as Unfinished Business*, Lewis Walinsky ed., Oxford University Press, 579.

- *Interagency Cooperation*: How well did the agencies/departments work together well to implement these ad hoc or integrated strategies?
- *Expert Advice and Military vs. Civilian Leadership*: What explanatory variables explain the strengths and weaknesses of the response?
- *Long-term Benefits of Success in Japan*: What diplomatic, financial, and other achievements or costs resulted from these successes and failures?

Evolution of the Planning Structure

The U.S. government approach to Japan's postwar environment was fashioned by a decision-making system which evolved in response to perceptions of past ineffectiveness. Early organizational structures were dominated by the president and his staff (the hub); this was seen in the policymaking process regarding Operation Torch, for example. In this system, information was largely flowing one way; presidential decisions went to his staff and then to cabinet officers who carried out his orders. The eventual changes in structure reflected fundamental changes in the various agencies' beliefs about the requirements for mission success. The Departments of State, War and Navy came to understand that they depended on the work and support of the other departments. As a result, they achieved a structure characterized by a higher level of interagency cooperation.

Initially, the United States used a War Cabinet, although it was advisory and dominated by the president. This was despite the difficulties of planning the war from the White House. With the formation of the JCS in July 1942, Roosevelt ceased to use his War Cabinet. Although the new JCS lacked a chairman until 1947, Admiral William Leahy served as chief of staff to the president and, effectively, filled that function. This structure had the perverse effect of enhancing Roosevelt's illusion that he was able to oversee war planning from the White House. His belief in the White House/JCS system contributed to both the military and civil affairs problems which became especially obvious following the 1943 U.S. invasion of North Africa. After the trouble managing North Africa's post-war

environment, the secretaries of State, War, and Navy realized that their current level of cooperation was inadequate.

A preliminary shift in planning organization took effect after plans had been set for the invasion of Sicily in July 1943. This structure was an intermediate organizational phase that attempted to address the problems which emerged in North Africa. In response to those failures, planning and staff work moved down into the bureaucracies and the flow of information and decisions became more of a two-way process. While this structure created an all-of-government enterprise, coordination between the agencies was still inadequate and there was no whole-of-government planning, implementation or oversight structure. The operationally unconnected agency spokes created a condition called “stove-piping” which limited cooperation and inevitably created competition over authority and budgets.

But with the creation of SWNCC in late 1944 a structure was established which allowed the entire U.S. government to work together in pursuit of two distinctly different goals—making war and planning the subsequent peaceful occupation—in parallel without confusing them, conflating them or overlooking their complex relationship. Only this integrated strategy that included mutually reinforcing political, economic, and social interventions allowed the postwar occupations to be successful.

Interagency Cooperation

Research for this study did not discover reorganization memos which might suggest that there was a clear point when Roosevelt came to understand that the White House driven system was not working. As best can be discerned, the process was evolutionary and was the result of the president and his staff recognizing that complex military and civilian matters could not be handled from the White House alone. As mentioned above, the iteration of the management system in 1943 still produced plans, recommendations and decisions on agency tracks, though the staff had more responsibility and the information flow in both directions was more robust.

Over the following year, the perceptions of the former members of the Committee of Three continued to shift and by the summer of 1944 they recognized the failures of the system. Secretary of War

Henry Stimson wrote that “WWII demonstrated with unprecedented clarity the close interconnection between civilian and military affairs.” He quoted Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall: “Orderly civilian administration must be maintained in support of military operations in liberated and occupied territories.”¹¹⁸⁴ Secretary of State Cordell Hull agreed with Stimson that “administration in foreign lands must initially be an Army responsibility,” while Stimson in turn fully accepted the State Department’s responsibility for the formulation of political policy.¹¹⁸⁵ The perception of their mutual dependence drove the evolution of the planning structure which started with the revival of the Committee of Three in the summer of 1944 and led to the standing up of SWNCC by that December.

In the ten months before the occupation of Japan began, all postwar planning materials passed through SWNCC for discussion and decision. These materials were supported by weekly meetings among the secretaries themselves. SWNCC was a true interagency effort. One analyst notes:

A review of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC) reveals components necessary to achieve true coordination within the [interagency]. The Committee achieved senior leader involvement, sustained interaction, and thorough integration of respective departmental guidance within the policy development process. The efforts of the SWNCC experience provide important lessons for the future.¹¹⁸⁶

With the creation of SWNCC the U.S. government had a fully integrated, formal structure. Although the output of SWNCC was technically the responsibility of the chairman of the Committee of Three—Secretary of State Stettinius—in fact it was a joint responsibility reflecting the output of the entire government and not just the three departments.

1184 Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947) 553.

1185 Ibid, 554.

1186 Robert Kolterman, *Interagency Coordination Past Lessons, Current Issues, and Future Necessities*. (U.S. Army War College, 2006) 5.

Expert Advice and Military vs. Civilian Leadership

As noted above, in policy formulation during WWII, area experts held key policy-making positions. Joseph Grew, the head of the State Department’s Far East Office and subsequently Stettinius’s deputy (Under Secretary) was the U.S. ambassador to Tokyo for ten years and spoke fluent Japanese.¹¹⁸⁷ Both Hugh Borton at State and Wolf Ladijinsky at the Department of Agriculture were Japan scholars, and had contributed at the highest levels of policy making. Moreover, once the occupation began, SCAP drew on experts throughout the U.S. government and relied almost completely on the existing Japanese bureaucracy to implement the programs, soliciting and heeding advice from Japanese officials, social and political leaders, and the general population.

It is clear that Washington’s recognition of the need to rely on experts with experience in Japan and the Far East greatly contributed to the success of the occupation. Knowledge of the planning process and good management were essential and an understanding of how American actions would be judged by the occupied society and how best to gain that society’s cooperation was crucial.

Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and his successor Edward Stettinius, believed that the military had *primary* responsibility for the initial management of the postwar environment. After the New Dealers in the Roosevelt administration were forced to accept the Army’s School Military Government in 1942, little evidence indicates that there was any serious attempt—or even discussion—of an alternative to have the military manage postwar Japan. It seems that only General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz were considered for the job of the U.S. viceroy in Japan. This seems to be, at least in part, due to the fact that the first objective of an occupation is physical security and so it was decided that the U.S. viceroy should be a military leader of great stature.¹¹⁸⁸

1187 Grew’s memoir of this time was *Ten Years in Japan*.

1188 See page 7, above, “Civil-Military Cooperation.”

Long-Term Benefits of Success in Japan

It is almost impossible to underestimate the damage vital American national interests would have incurred had the U.S. failed in post-war Japan. What is clear is that had Washington launched a campaign of deindustrialization rather than one of growth, featuring the transformation of the land tenure system and the respect and involvement of the Japanese government, a number costly consequences might have come to pass.

The worst outcome for U.S. interests would have been the rise of Communism in Japan. The costs of failure are difficult to ascertain, but had Communism gained strength, as a variety of experts suggested it might have, the United States may well have had no choice but to stand aside while the same powerful martial forces that pushed Japan into war reasserted control of the country. This would likely have led to the failure of one of the primary goals expressed in the Potsdam Declaration since Japan would again have been “a menace to the United States or to the peace and security of the world.”¹¹⁸⁹ Had Japan’s political life become dominated by a powerful Communist Party, it would have increased the probability that North Korea’s invasion of the South would have succeeded. Soviet and Chinese expansion into Southeast Asia during the 1950s would have been nearly inevitable.

Instead, the effective rebuilding of Japan has yielded numerous benefits. Despite recent economic stagnation, Japan has been the world’s second largest economy for a generation. Rather than becoming a Communist or authoritarian state, Japan is a U.S. trading partner, one of the largest sources of foreign direct investment in America, and a major donor of economic aid to developing countries. Tokyo’s financial, industrial, and technological success—a salient factor in the triumph of the four “Asian Tigers”—has been an enormous benefit to U.S. national interests and to the people of the region.

1189 “U.S. Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan,” SWNCC 150/3, August 22, 1945, available at <http://210.128.252.171/constitution/e/shiryo/01/022shoshi.html>, accessed on 12/12/2006.

The United States helped to transform Japan from a pre-modern, semi-feudal nation into a modern, democratic capitalist state. The work of a relatively small group of military and civilian bureaucrats lead by political and military elites who cooperated closely in pursuit of common objectives was crucial to achieving this change.