

## Article

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# The 'Bowl of Jelly': The US Department of State in the Kennedy and Johnson Years, 1961-68<sup>1</sup>

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*The article explores efforts to reform the State Department under presidents Kennedy and Johnson, with the intention of making the Department better able to lead and coordinate the sprawling foreign policy apparatus. However, Kennedy soon gave up on what he described as the 'bowl of jelly', so the reform effort was left to Johnson. Under him there were attempts to boost the State Department's internal efficiency and its ability to support counterinsurgency efforts. Yet there was a justified perception by the end of 1968 that the State Department was unredeemed managerially and in terms of its standing in the foreign policy nexus. Reasons for the lack of progress include sporadic presidential engagement, and Secretary of State Dean Rusk's limited aptitude for managerial affairs.*

Key words: State Department, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Dean Rusk.

Veteran diplomat Dean Acheson once reflected that 'All presidents I have known have had uneasy doubts about the State Department.' The doubts were 'strongest at the beginning of presidential terms, when the incumbent and his new associates in the White House believe that foreign affairs are simpler than they in fact are and that they can be confidently approached under the guidance of principles ... even without much knowledge or experience.'<sup>2</sup> John F. Kennedy proved no exception to Acheson's view. Kennedy, who was determined to reinvigorate the United States' international position after the alleged stagnation of the Eisenhower years, considered the State Department to be beset by inertia and conservatism, and strove to align it with the progressive spirit of the 'new frontier' and to give it a greater role in the leadership and coordination of the foreign policy apparatus. However, Kennedy soon experienced frustration in the pursuit of reform, and gave up on what he described as the 'bowl of jelly'.<sup>3</sup> President Lyndon B. Johnson, although less engaged with the issue, also strove to boost the standing of the State Department, with the particular intention of supporting counterinsurgency efforts against the background of the Vietnam War. Furthermore, the Johnson years saw a number of dynamic internal reforms under Deputy Under Secretary for Administration William J. Crockett. Yet there was still a justified perception by the end of the Johnson years that the State

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Monteagle Stearns, *Talking to Strangers: Improving American Diplomacy at Home and Abroad* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp.86-87.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr, *One Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p.365.

Department was unredeemed in terms of its internal organisation and management, and its standing in the foreign policy nexus.

US foreign policy in the Kennedy and Johnson era has been explored thoroughly, but the bureaucracy and management of foreign policy in these years is less well covered. The literature, so far as the 1960s is concerned, is dated and fragmented.<sup>4</sup> This is a significant omission because examining the institutions of foreign policy can shed light on changing international priorities and challenges. During the Johnson period, for example, the Vietnam War came to occupy ‘a substantial percentage of the time and thoughts of top officials’ in the State Department,<sup>5</sup> while the deteriorating security situation in neighbouring Laos brought about a ‘distortion of effort’ from diplomatic to military affairs for State Department staff involved with the country.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, escalating conflict in southeast Asia could not help but boost the standing of the Pentagon at the expense of State, although there were already other agencies – such as the CIA, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and the United States Information Service – participating in foreign affairs and in doing so weakening the State Department’s primacy.

This article draws on a range of sources including formerly-classified US government documents, transcripts of presidential telephone calls, oral history interviews, and secondary accounts. It also uses analyses by the British Embassy in Washington, whose staff was well acquainted with the operation of the State Department. It is noted that progress strengthening the Department of State in the year 1961-68 was very limited, for reasons that included sporadic presidential engagement and Secretary of State Dean Rusk’s limited aptitude for managerial affairs. He was a hard-working and dedicated diplomat, negotiator and a defender of policy, but his coordination of the State Department and of the foreign affairs apparatus more broadly was singularly lacking.

The article contributes to the general literature about foreign ministries as well as to knowledge of the history of the US State Department. Foreign ministries in general have long faced threats to their standing, reflecting the growth of government

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<sup>4</sup> See Randall B. Woods, ‘Beyond Vietnam: The Foreign Policies of the Kennedy and Johnson Administration’, in Robert D. Schulzinger (ed.), *A Companion to American Foreign Relations* (London and New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), pp.330-74. The following texts explore aspects of the State Department and the reforms of the 1960s: William I. Bacchus, *Foreign Policy and the Bureaucratic Process: The State Department’s Country Director System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974); John Franklin Campbell, *The Foreign Affairs Fudge Factory* (New York: Basic, 1971); Keith C. Clark and Laurence J. Legere (eds), *The President and the Management of National Security* (New York: Praeger, 1969); I.M. Destler, *Presidents, Bureaucrats and Foreign Policy: The Politics of Organizational Reform* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972); John P. Leacacos, *Fires in the In-Basket: The ABC’s of the State Department* (Cleveland and New York: World, 1968); James L. McCamy, *Conduct of the New Diplomacy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); Frederick C. Mosher and John E. Harr, *Programming Systems and Foreign Affairs Leadership: An Attempted Innovation* (New York and Oxford: OUP, 1970); Smith Simpson, *Anatomy of the State Department* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967); Donald P. Warwick in collaboration with Marvin Meade and Theodore Reed, *A Theory of Public Bureaucracy: Politics, Personality and Organization in the State Department* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1975).

<sup>5</sup> State Department paper, undated, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter *FRUS*) 1964-1968 XXXIII *Organization and Management of US Foreign Policy; United Nations* (Washington: USGPO, 2004), p.89.

<sup>6</sup> Hamilton to Bundy, 28 August 1967, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.288.

agencies involved in foreign affairs since the Second World War and the need to navigate a world of growing complexity. In 1965, Permanent Undersecretary of Britain's Foreign Office (FO) Paul Gore-Booth complained that independent contacts with the US government by representatives of the Treasury, Ministry of Defence and other Whitehall departments meant that 'views are being exchanged and even decisions taken which have an important bearing on foreign policy without the Foreign Office being consulted or even informed'. The FO and its successor from 1968, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, were subject to several formal enquiries and reviews in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>7</sup> The challenges to foreign ministries have been a global phenomenon. In recent years, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has lost influence due to the expansion of domestic foreign policy actors in the country, including the Ministry of Commerce, the People's Bank of China and the Ministry of Finance. The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been obliged to centralise policy making in relation to free trade agreements, exerting greater control over the ministries of agriculture and the economy.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Need for Reform**

Coordinating the apparatus of US foreign policy in the 1960s was an issue of particular urgency in the light of how the world was changing. As a 1967 analysis noted:

In 1945 there were 55 countries. The crucial questions related very largely to one region – Europe. The United States alone had nuclear weapons. Our foreign policy aims, though challenging, were conceptually simple: to contain one great adversary and to aid in the reconstruction of half a continent of exhausted but advanced and cohesive societies. In 1967 there are 135 nations. The events of three regions vitally affect us. Five nations possess nuclear weapons. And US purposes are more complex and ambitious: to check several adversaries, themselves in shifting relation, and to aid in the development of three continents of largely backward, fragmented and unstable societies.<sup>9</sup>

The foreign affairs machinery needed to be in good condition to meet the challenges of the day. Dean Rusk sketched the work of the State Department, which was located in the Truman building on C Street at 22<sup>nd</sup> St Northwest in the Foggy Bottom district

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<sup>7</sup> David Allen, 'United Kingdom: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office: "Flexible, responsive and proactive"', in Brian Hocking (ed.), with foreword by Jacques Bilodeau, *Foreign Ministries: Change and Adaption* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp.207-25; John W. Young, *Twentieth Century Diplomacy: A Case Study of British Practice, 1963–1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), chapter 3, 'The Diplomatic Machine', pp.31-58 (Gore-Booth quotation p.53).

<sup>8</sup> Brian Hocking, Jan Melissen, Shaun Riordan and Paul Sharp, *Futures for Diplomacy: Integrative Diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', 2012), p.54. See also R.P. Barston, *Modern Diplomacy* (London: Pearson, 2006), pp.16-35; Geoff Berridge, *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), pp.5-24; Brian Hocking, Jan Melissen, Shaun Riordan and Paul Sharp, 'Whither Foreign Ministries in a Post-Western World?', *Clingendael Policy Brief*, 20 April 2013; Keith Hamilton and Richard Langhorne, *The Practice of Diplomacy: Its Evolution, Theory and Administration* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp.217-21; Brian Hocking and David Spence (eds), *Foreign Ministries in the European Union: Integrating Diplomats* (London: Palgrave, 2005); Zara Steiner, *The Times Survey of Foreign Ministries of the World* (London: Times Books, 1982).

<sup>9</sup> Final Report of the President's Task Force on Foreign Affairs Organization, 1 October 1967, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.290.

of Washington DC. State dealt 'almost entirely with policy and negotiations ... Its main responsibility is to recommend and administer foreign policy as the arm of the President'. It did this through 'daily contacts with foreign governments through 293 posts abroad (111 embassies, 66 consulates-general, 86 consulates, 17 consular agencies, 6 missions, 5 special offices, and 2 legations) and about 75 international organisations, and by constant discussions between 115 foreign embassies and legations and the Department in Washington'. Most of the Department's business with foreign governments was transacted through its posts abroad, but the most important decisions were made in Washington; only there was it 'possible to develop our policy toward a particular country in light of all the factors that may bear on it'. Most of the Department's business was transacted through telegrams, with some 1,000 or so sent daily, and approximately 1,300 received. There was also a regular flow of letters, airmails, despatches, and other communications.<sup>10</sup>

Organisationally, the State Department comprised four major units. At the top, situated on the seventh floor of the Truman building, were the offices of the Secretary of State, the Under Secretary of State, and the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. They were supported by the five regional bureaus: African Affairs, European Affairs, Far Eastern Affairs, Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, and Inter-American Affairs. Established in 1909, these bureaus did not correspond to the continents, so that activities of the bureaus tended to cut across one another. Each bureau was headed by an Assistant Secretary of State, each of whom was in effect a Secretary of State for his own area, subject to broad direction from Rusk. Below each Assistant Secretary of State were several Deputy Assistant Secretaries, and, at the operating level, Country Directors and Desk Officers. The third major unit was the functional bureaus such as International Organizations which dealt with UN matters, and Economic Affairs, addressing foreign economic problems. Jurisdictional jealousies created difficulty in coordinating the work of the geographical bureaus with the functional ones. The fourth chief unit was occupied by the Deputy Under Secretary for Administration, head of the Administrative Area. This was known as *O*, after Kennedy's Deputy Under Secretary for Administration William Orrick (1962-63). *O* contained almost half of the State Department's 7,000 or so Washington employees, and dealt with tasks concerning budget and finance, personnel, and relations with Congress. The Administrative Area was the least prestigious of the State Department's units.<sup>11</sup>

The State Department had grown from a budget of \$15 million in 1930 and \$300 million by the 1960s. The expansion could have been better coordinated. According to veteran diplomat George F. Kennan, the State Department was 'a machine so elaborate that the bulk of its energy is consumed by its own internal friction'.<sup>12</sup> Although the Department had grown considerably relative to itself, it was losing ground to other foreign affairs agencies. The emergence of additional agencies such as the CIA reflected how the Cold War had led to the increasing specialisation of

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<sup>10</sup> Rusk to Johnson, 31 December 1964, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.31.

<sup>11</sup> Rusk to Johnson, 31 December 1964, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, pp.29-31; Leacacos, *Fires in the In-Basket*, p.43; Simpson, *Anatomy of the State Department*, pp.18-19; Warwick et al, *A Theory*, pp.25-29.

<sup>12</sup> Kennan to Kennedy, undated, *FRUS 1961-1963 XXV Organization of Foreign Policy, United Nations; Scientific Matters* (2001), p.101.

government departments. In 1961 the US Embassy in London housed representatives of 44 different US government agencies.<sup>13</sup>

President Franklin D. Roosevelt had tended to rely not on his Secretaries of State but other Cabinet members and personal envoys such as Averell Harriman, who ran the Lend-Lease operation in London. The forceful presence of Secretaries of State George C. Marshall and Dean Acheson helped recapture the Department's standing, in part because President Truman permitted them the leeway to play such roles. The Eisenhower years saw another prominent Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, who used the National Security Council (NSC) at the expense of the State Department. As one study has indicated, the NSC 'reached the summit of its importance' in this period.<sup>14</sup> State's problems were explored in a dozen or so official and quasi-official studies and proposals in the period 1945-1968.<sup>15</sup> There were two key concerns: first, bringing the range of foreign affairs activities under the control and coordination of the State Department; and, second, organising the Department internally to promote greater responsiveness and efficiency in relation to White House concerns.

### **Kennedy's Reforms**

During the election campaign of 1960 John F. Kennedy exploited President Eisenhower's alleged complacency in foreign affairs and maintained that the United States had fallen behind in the Cold War – demonstrated above all by what turned out to be unfounded assertions of a 'missile gap' heavily favouring Moscow. A pre-inauguration task force referred to the 'tremendous institutional force' in the State Department 'which unless manipulated forcefully from the outset will overwhelm and dictate to the new regime', so there was a particular concern about how far State was attuned to the thrusting ethos of the 'new frontier' and the 'new diplomacy'.<sup>16</sup> The Kennedy administration soon abolished the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB), an interagency unit associated with Eisenhower's NSC. Kennedy set great store by the advice of National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy, but he felt that institutionally the NSC was large and bureaucratic. Furthermore, Senator Henry Jackson's Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery, which held hearings from 1959 to 1965, had criticised the OCB. It was intended that the Department of State would perform the work of the board, thereby enhancing State's role in the foreign policy nexus. A further Kennedy measure was the creation of new agencies - the Peace Corps, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and the Office of the Special Representative for Trade Negotiation – under State Department control.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Dean Rusk as told to Richard Rusk, *As I Saw It* (New York: Norton, 1990), p.528, p.531. For biographies of Rusk, see Warren I. Cohen, *Dean Rusk* (Totowa: Cooper Square, 1980); Thomas J. Schoenbaum, *Waging Peace and War: Dean Rusk in the Truman, Kennedy and Johnson Years* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988); Thomas W. Zeiler, *Dean Rusk: Defending the American Mission Abroad* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> Clark and Legere (eds), *The President and the Management of National Security*, p.62.

<sup>15</sup> Schlesinger, *Thousand Days*, pp.368-70; William I. Bacchus, 'Diplomacy for the 70s: An Afterview and Appraisal', *The American Political Science Review*, 68, 2 (June, 1974), note 1, pp.736-38. See also Bacchus, *Foreign Policy*, pp.3-7, for an account of the difficulties facing the State Department.

<sup>16</sup> Schlesinger, *One Thousand Days*, pp.367-70. See Robert Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), Chapter Seven, 'John F. Kennedy and the Domestic Politics of Foreign Policy', pp.169-99, for 'the ideology of masculinity' that permeated the Kennedy administration.

<sup>17</sup> John Prados, *Keepers of the Keys: A History of the National Security Council from Truman to Bush* (New York: Morrow, 1991), p.106; Thomas Paterson, 'Introduction: Kennedy and Global Crisis', in

There were personnel changes, too, reflecting the thinking, as ‘Camelot’ insider Arthur Schlesinger put it, that ‘Old Frontier people cannot carry out New Frontier policies’.<sup>18</sup> Direct appointments were made in Washington, including those of Dean Rusk (Secretary of State), Chester Bowles (Under Secretary of State), Mennen Williams (Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs), Averell Harriman (Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs), and Harlan Cleveland (Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs); while ambassadorships were given to David Bruce (the United Kingdom), John Kenneth Galbraith (India), Lincoln Gordon (Brazil), and Samuel Berger (South Korea). Under Kennedy the Foreign Service gained an unprecedented share of ambassadorial appointments, and allowances were raised so that that career officers could afford to take major embassies. The intention was to win support among career diplomats for fresh policies. Chester Bowles noted that new staff had made the State Department’s Policy Planning Council, for example, ‘a respected producer of new ideas and perspective’. Similarly, the new Director of the State Department’s Intelligence and Research Bureau, Roger Hilsman, reduced the Bureau’s size substantially, and geared its output to issues directly pertinent to current foreign policy challenges.<sup>19</sup> Such changes suited what President Kennedy had in mind.

Furthermore, William J. Crockett, a dynamic figure who since the early 1950s had performed a variety of administrative roles in the field and in Foggy Bottom, became Assistant Secretary for Administration. He continued to be the mainstay of the internal reform effort for several years. Robert F. Kennedy, who was inclined to compare State with his own responsive and politically-attuned Department of Justice,<sup>20</sup> told him bluntly that ‘Your job ... is to make sure that all the personnel in the [State] Department understand that they work for the President and that they are to be loyal to him.’ Crockett should ‘kick people in the ass so hard that teeth will rattle in all the Embassies’.<sup>21</sup> Inspired by such eloquence, Crockett, with the assistance of his deputy Roger Jones, made rapid changes. As Bowles described it late in 1961, Crockett and Jones were soon very busy ‘slashing’ red tape in Washington and in the field.<sup>22</sup>

Separate missions abroad had multiplied since the Second World War. In May 1961 Kennedy wrote to all US ambassadors strengthening their authority over the disparate elements in embassies: ‘You are in charge of the entire United States Diplomatic Mission, and I shall expect you to supervise all of its operations. The Mission includes not only the personnel of the Department of State and Foreign Service, but also the representatives of all other United States agencies’.<sup>23</sup> At Kennedy’s instigation, Dean

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Thomas Paterson (ed.), *Kennedy’s Quest for Victory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.19; editorial notes, *FRUS XXV*, pp.2-3, 21.

<sup>18</sup> Schlesinger to Bundy, 11 August 1961, *FRUS XXV*, p.72.

<sup>19</sup> Schlesinger, *One Thousand Days*, 383; Bowles to Kennedy, 28 July 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963 XXV*, p.68; Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday), pp.69-72.

<sup>20</sup> Brandon H. Grove interview conducted by Thomas Stern, 14 November 1994, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST), Washington DC.

<sup>21</sup> William J. Crockett interview conducted by Thomas Stern, 20 June 1990, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, ADST.

<sup>22</sup> Bowles to Rusk, 18 August 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963 XXV*, p.79.

<sup>23</sup> Crockett to McGhee, 5 March 1965, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.61; Rusk, *As I Saw It*, p.528.

Rusk emphasised to the State Department the importance of providing ‘leadership of foreign policy’ and the need to ‘take charge’. The abolition of the OCB, he noted, testified to the active expectation that State would fulfil this leadership role. Later, the President addressed the Foreign Service Association, acknowledging the importance of its contributions.<sup>24</sup>

During the Berlin crisis of summer 1961, an Operations Center was established in the State Department. The intention was to enable the Secretary of State to respond more quickly to ‘emerging foreign policy problems’.<sup>25</sup> The creation of ‘Ops’ helped to bring the State Department in line with the Pentagon, which had a War Room equipped with around-the-clock communications to US military bases across the world, and with the CIA, which had the latest communications and enciphering technology at its disposal. At the same time, Ops was headed by an officer of higher rank than that at the other operation centres. That officer could release a cable over the name of the Secretary of State without having to seek his clearance.<sup>26</sup> Other organisational steps included grouping bureaus with politico-military-intelligence functions under the Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs; the abolition of more than a hundred departmental committees; the improvement of internal communications; and the use of automation in various Departmental operations.<sup>27</sup>

### **Obstacles and Criticisms**

Yet the picture was of only partial progress. Chester Bowles noted at the end of July 1961 that while in certain areas of the Department ‘fresh ideas have begun to flow, morale is high, and there is a clear sense of purpose and direction’, in other areas there was ‘resistance to fresh thinking and a continuing attachment to the sterile assumptions and negative policies we criticized so vigorously when we were out of office’.<sup>28</sup> According to Arthur Schlesinger, Kennedy complained about the difficulties of changing the attitude of the State Department towards Laos (the focus of an international conference 1961-62 that led to the country’s neutralisation), and the slow pace of the Department’s response to the Soviet challenge in Berlin. According to Schlesinger, Kennedy complained that ‘Bundy and I get more done in one day in the White House than they do in six months in the State Department... They never have any ideas over there ... never come up with anything new ... The State Department is a bowl of jelly. It’s got all those people over there who are constantly smiling. I think we need to smile less and be tougher.’<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, in Schlesinger’s account, Kennedy bemoaned the State Department’s ‘acquiescence’ in the disastrous US-sponsored invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961.<sup>30</sup> It should be understood that the State Department had opposed military action, and Kennedy had pressed on despite its cautious and what turned out to be very sound counsel. McGeorge Bundy told the President in February, for example,

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<sup>24</sup> Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, 24; editorial note, *FRUS XXV*, pp.98-100.

<sup>25</sup> Operations Center, attached to memorandum from Johnson (NSC) to Professional Staff of the NSC, 19 June 1961, *FRUS 1961-63 XXV*, p.32.

<sup>26</sup> Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, 29; Bruce A. Flatin interview conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 27 January 1993, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, ADST; Leacacos, *Fires in the In-basket*, pp.72-76.

<sup>27</sup> Memorandum, undated, *FRUS 1961-1963 XXV*, pp.58-59.

<sup>28</sup> Bowles to Kennedy, 28 July 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963 XXV*, p.68.

<sup>29</sup> Schlesinger, *Thousand Days*, p.365.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*



that the Department 'took a much cooler view [towards military action], primarily because of its belief that the political consequences would be very grave both in the United Nations and in Latin America'.<sup>31</sup> Dean Rusk urged caution, too, arguing that the President should not allow himself to be pressured.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, during the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 Rusk played an important role in the deliberations, contrary to statements from Robert F. Kennedy in *Thirteen Days* that he was often absent from the ExComm meetings and when he did attend he had little to say. However, Rusk in fact attended nineteen out of the twenty ExComm meetings from 16 to 29 October, and made important contributions. According to historian Sheldon Stern, Rusk 'constantly injected the diplomatic perspective into the meetings... If anything, his colleagues felt that he spoke too often and too long about the diplomatic viewpoint.'<sup>33</sup>

There were instances where criticism about Rusk was on firmer ground – above all in relation to management and administration. As has been seen, the President looked to the State Department to replace OCB, but there was little response.<sup>34</sup> State also suffered from continued competition from other agencies, with Defense, the Peace Corps and the CIA all resisting the implications of Kennedy's May 1961 letter strengthening the authority of ambassadors. It was reported in 1964 that field representatives of other agencies still had certain rights and prerogatives that had not been delegated to ambassadors.<sup>35</sup> There was probably only one embassy where the directive had the desired impact. William Sullivan, Ambassador in Laos 1964-1969 when the United States was waging a covert war against the Pathet Lao and against North Vietnamese infiltrators, noted that 'the agencies ... in Washington were more than ever acutely sensitive' to ensuring 'that their representatives in Laos did not repeat earlier performances', when different agencies were pulling in different directions. Instead, 'there was a very sincere effort ... to be sure that their representatives conformed with the letter and the spirit of President Kennedy's letter'.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, the reform effort had some effect, but the progress might have been more extensive. A limiting factor was the somewhat distant relationship between Dean Rusk and President Kennedy. Bowles suggested that they were 'relative strangers... the State Department during much of this period was also pretty well cut off from the White House'.<sup>37</sup> Schlesinger and Theodore Sorenson have claimed that Kennedy intended to seek a new Secretary of State after the 1964 election, although White House aide Kenny O'Donnell has argued to the contrary. Rusk himself stated that

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<sup>31</sup> Bundy to Kennedy, 8 February 1961, *FRUS X*, p.89.

<sup>32</sup> Memorandum of meeting, 8 February 1961, *FRUS X*, p.90.

<sup>33</sup> Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days* (New York: Norton, 1969); Sheldon M. Stern, *The Cuban Missile Crisis in American Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), pp.68-71.

<sup>34</sup> William J. Crockett interview by Thomas Stern, 20 June 1990, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, ADST.

<sup>35</sup> Campbell, *The Foreign Affairs Fudge Factory*, p.60; Crockett to Rusk, 9 November 1964, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.23.

<sup>36</sup> See Douglas S. Blaufarb, 'Organizing and Managing Unconventional War in Laos, 1962-1970', report for Advanced Research Projects Agency, RAND Corporation, 1972, pp.57-58.

<sup>37</sup> Chester B. Bowles interview conducted by Robert R.R. Brooks, 2 February 1965, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

Kennedy was not considering a replacement.<sup>38</sup> Kennedy's personnel plans cannot be assessed with any confidence, but it is clear that Rusk lacked managerial inclinations and capabilities. This seemed all the more striking against the dynamic organisational and doctrinal reforms in the Pentagon under Secretary of Defense Robert S.

McNamara. McGeorge Bundy noted that while Rusk had many positive qualities such as 'integrity ... loyalty ... discretion ... experience', he had 'only a limited ability to draw the best out of those who work with him'. There was 'little sense of effective operation. He does not move matters towards decision with promptness. He does not stimulate aggressive staff work. He does not coordinate conflicting forces within his own department.'<sup>39</sup>

In his defence, Rusk had little time for such enterprises, given that he occupied what was undoubtedly one of the most gruelling positions in official Washington. Walt Rostow of the Policy Planning Council and National Security Council described the Secretary of State position as being

... loaded with inescapable overhead commitments: protracted ordeals before Congressional committees; overseas trips to international conferences; an endless flow of meetings with ambassadors; White House and diplomatic dinners; state visits, with the need for fine-grained exchanges with foreign visitors; an intense series of bilateral exchanges at the annual gathering of the foreign ministers in September for the United Nations General Assembly – all this plus the need to administer a large department; to be fully informed on the state of a fissionable world; to be responsible for the daily flow of cables to every corner of the globe, of which half a dozen were liable to carry heavy freight and require that every word be weighed; and then, the need to be prepared to render advice to the President at any hour of the day or night.<sup>40</sup>

Under Secretary Bowles complained that the Secretary was too busy to back the process of administrative rebuilding.<sup>41</sup> Bowles had his own limits, which were all the more critical in the light of the demands on Rusk's time and energy. He was a great source of creative ideas but tended to overwhelm his subordinates with them, generating defensiveness and resistance, and he did not follow up matters thoroughly.<sup>42</sup> His successor, George Ball, displayed little interest in management. Bundy suggested that while he was a 'brilliant lawyer, a lucid and persuasive draftsman, and a formidable debater', he was 'a lone wolf' who did 'not use the administrative staff effectively'.<sup>43</sup> Like Rusk, Ball had to contend with a mammoth

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<sup>38</sup> Schlesinger, *Thousand Days*, p.860; Ted Sorenson, *Counsellor: A Life at the Edge of History* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), p.234; Kenny O'Donnell and David Powers, with Joe McCarthy, *Johnny We Hardly Knew Ye': Memories of John Fitzgerald Kennedy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972), p.282; on Rusk's suggestion that Kennedy did not wish to replace him, see Richard L. Schott and Hamilton, *People, Positions and Power: The Political Appointments of Lyndon B. Johnson* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), pp.39-40.

<sup>39</sup> Bundy to Johnson, 21 January 1964, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, pp.34-5.

<sup>40</sup> Walt W. Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power: An Essay in Recent History* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), p.163.

<sup>41</sup> Theodore Sorenson, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p.287.

<sup>42</sup> Warwick, *A Theory of Public Bureaucracy*, p.122; Mosher and Harr, *Programming Systems*, p.27; Leacacos, *Fires in the In-basket*, p.354.

<sup>43</sup> Bundy to Johnson, 21 January 1964, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, pp.34-5. For biographies of Ball, see James A. Bill, *George Ball: Behind the Scenes in US Foreign Policy* (New Haven and London: Yale,

workload. The upshot was that John F. Kennedy had largely written off State by the end of 1961, relying instead on individual advisers in the White House. Bundy suggested that 'The State Department had not proved to be as effective an agency of executive coordination as we hoped, and, above all, it has not shown the capacity for interdepartmental coordination which we hoped to force upon it'.<sup>44</sup> The Department lacked the dynamism, creativity and speed for which Kennedy had hoped.

### **Johnson and Dean Rusk**

Kennedy's successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, was no admirer of the State Department, either, feeling that it was full of 'sissy fellows' who were 'not worth a damn'. In 1964, when he sought new initiatives toward the Soviet Union, he complained that 'all these State Department career men ... all they've said is "This is what we *can't* do, Mr President."' Dealing with State was 'like a man trying to punch his way through a big thick mattress. You just can't do it. You hit it and the damned thing just 'gives'. Furthermore, Johnson bitterly resented State's propensity to leaks, commenting that it 'nearly breaks my spirit every day'. However, Johnson held Dean Rusk in higher regard than had Kennedy. He valued the Secretary of State's discretion and reliability, describing him as 'as loyal as a beagle'. Loyalty meant a lot to Johnson, who would 'rather have a one-eyed farmer as Secretary of State than, by God, a fellow that I can't write a memo to without having it on the front page of the [*New York Times*]'.<sup>45</sup>

The relationship between Johnson and Rusk was strengthened by their status in the Kennedy administration as relative outsiders,<sup>46</sup> and there was the additional bond forged from their modest, rural Southern backgrounds – Rusk joked that they used to argue 'over which of us was born in the smaller house'. Additionally, Rusk respected the President's work ethic: even after a typically late night Johnson 'would wake up at four or five o'clock in the morning and call the Operations Room of the Department or the White House to see how things were going in Viet Nam'.<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, there were occasions when Rusk expressed reservations about the President's style, telling Director of the CIA John McCone early in 1965 that he 'did not focus on issues of very great importance to the Department, and refused to receive foreign visitors except when subjected to great pressures'.<sup>48</sup> Overall, though, Johnson was much closer to Rusk and met with him more frequently than had Kennedy. They forged a close working relationship, with Rusk's role being especially prominent in relation to Vietnam.

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1997); David DiLeo, *George Ball, Vietnam and the Rethinking of Containment* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

<sup>44</sup> Bromley K. Smith, *Organizational History of the National Security Council during the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations* (University of Michigan Library, 1988), p.49.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Beschloss (ed), *Reaching for Glory: Lyndon Johnson's Secret White House Tapes, 1964-1965* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001); pp.333, 371; Michael Beschloss (ed), *Taking Charge: The Johnson White House Tapes, 1963-64* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), p.145; editorial note, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.190; editorial note, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXII Dominican Republic, Cuba, Haiti, Guyana* (2005), p.603.

<sup>46</sup> Schott and Hamilton, *People, Positions and Power*, p.37.

<sup>47</sup> Dean Rusk interview I, conducted by Paige E. Mulhollan, 28 July 1969, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library (LBJL).

<sup>48</sup> McCone to Johnson, 18 March 1965, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.69.

## William Crockett's Reforms

Johnson had no inherent interest in bureaucracies, and beyond making Presidential appointments he displayed little interest in the management of the State Department. That – fatefully - was down to Rusk, who delegated, as he noted himself, ‘to the Under Secretary and the Deputy Under Secretary for Administration’.<sup>49</sup> The latter position was now in the hands of William J. Crockett. Thomas Stern, one of Crockett’s close colleagues, has noted that he had ‘a unique management style which really blossomed when he became Deputy Under Secretary. The style was based on the assumption that every employee could be fully productive if given the right incentives and proper support from the top.... He did not believe in the need for middle management.’<sup>50</sup> Building on measures in the Kennedy years, Crockett began in 1965 to trim the bureaucracy in his own office, the Administrative Area of the State Department. The reconfiguration removed 125 positions, and transferred 160 to other parts of the Department.<sup>51</sup> Numerically, this was a modest beginning, but it was progress all the same. However, the programme only got so far. The following year there was a regressive organisational change, in the form of the imposition of an Executive Group just below Crockett’s office. Rusk and Ball had been concerned about Crockett’s ‘span of control’, which now extended to over fifty separate operations. This, as Thomas Stern has noted, was ‘completely contrary to all academic attitudes towards span of control’.<sup>52</sup>

In 1966 Crockett issued *A Management Program for the Department of State*, outlining a number of projects and programmes to improve management and organisation. These projects included the controversial ‘T-group’ meetings, in which participants were, according to Crockett, ‘encouraged to express their feelings in an effort towards self-improvement ... to become more effective in [their] relationships with others’.<sup>53</sup> The intention was to further a cultural transformation that would promote greater cooperation and efficiency. Thomas Stern has commented, though, that ‘In most cases, people just wouldn't share their most inner secrets or even thoughts. In the worst situations, some group members broke down and found the emotional drain too great a strain and had to leave the session.’<sup>54</sup> One of the advocates of the T-group initiative was Chris Argyris, an organisational psychologist from Yale. In *Some Causes of Organizational Ineffectiveness within the State Department*, Argyris wrote that State Department personnel tended to exhibit characteristics such as ‘minimal interpersonal openness’ and ‘disguise of emotional responses and feelings’. Officials complained that professional attitudes were being confused with personal psychology. The Argyris report generated derisive press comment, with

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<sup>49</sup> Dean Rusk interview I, conducted by Paige E. Mulhollan, 28 July 1969, LBJL.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Stern interview conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 16 May 1993, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, ADST.

<sup>51</sup> Warwick, *A Theory*, pp.9, 27.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Stern interview conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 16 May 1993, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, ADST.

<sup>53</sup> Editorial note, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, pp.180-81; Plischke, *US Department of State: A Reference History*, pp.456-57; William J. Crockett interview conducted by Thomas Stern, 20 June 1990, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, ADST.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Stern oral history interview conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 16 May 1993, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, ADST.

headlines such as ‘State Department Study Finds Diplomats Avoid Policy Debates’.<sup>55</sup> Crockett, who was responsible for publishing the report, was blamed for the negative publicity.

The Johnson years saw various other developments in the State Department. At the behest of Walt Rostow’s Policy Planning Council, in February 1964, National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 281 granted the Secretary of State responsibility for producing National Policy Papers, which were described as ‘comprehensive, authoritative and unifying statements of US policy’.<sup>56</sup> The National Policy Papers project was used to support steps towards ‘programming’ in foreign affairs. Inspired by comparable efforts in the Pentagon, a system of analysis known as the Comprehensive Country Programming System (CCPS) was implemented to help ensure that the resources invested in foreign policy closely reflected the goals. Jack R. Binns recalled that he was ‘sent ... along with some twenty-five other relatively junior officers around the world, to run the CCPS and to serve as a staff aid to the Ambassador’ to the country in question. Binns had ‘to disaggregate .... policy objectives into discrete lines of actions or strategies designed to attain those objectives. Then we had to relate somehow the priorities assigned to these objectives to budgetary allocations.’<sup>57</sup>

Crockett noted early in 1965 that in the previous thirteen months CCPS had been installed in 23 countries, and the fact that CCPS was under State Department control had substantiated ‘the principle that the Secretary of State is the President’s principal instrument of coordination and of leadership in the field of foreign policy’.<sup>58</sup> In 1966, President Johnson asked Secretary of State Rusk and Kermit Gordon of the Bureau of the Budget to review US programmes on a country-by-country basis, with the intention, in the light of balance of payments difficulties caused by spending abroad, of making cuts.<sup>59</sup> Soon the Executive Review of Overseas Programs (EROP), a review of US representation in thirteen countries, was underway. The results of EROP were not impressive. A December 1966 assessment claimed starkly that in the United Kingdom and West Germany it was a ‘failure, if not disaster’. EROP had placed the ambassadors ‘in an impossible position – requiring them to recommend curtailments in other agency activities and thereafter failing to support them and their decisions when chips were down’.<sup>60</sup> Consultant Frederick Mosher suggested in January 1967 that ‘the current feeling about both CCPS and EROP ... is critical and negative’.<sup>61</sup> Another Crockett measure had run adrift. Furthermore, the National Policy Papers plan did not prosper. There was a view that if a ‘paper can be agreed to, it will not say much, and thus hardly will be worth the effort’.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Chris Argyris, *Some Causes of Organizational Ineffectiveness within the State Department* (Washington DC: USGPO, 1967); Stearns, *Talking to Strangers*, p.104; Leacacos, *Fires in the In-basket*, pp.436-37.

<sup>56</sup> Editorial note, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.9.

<sup>57</sup> Jack R. Binns interview conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 25 July 1990, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, ADST.

<sup>58</sup> Crockett to Rusk, 12 February 1965, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.51.

<sup>59</sup> Editorial note, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, pp.72-3.

<sup>60</sup> Adams to Crockett, 30 December 1966, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, pp.219-28.

<sup>61</sup> Report prepared by Frederick Mosher, 17 January 1967, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.249.

<sup>62</sup> Memorandum for the record, 20 April 1964, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.16.

One of the problems was that Dean Rusk provided limited support for State Department reform. This situation derived in part from the increasing dominance of the Vietnam War on top of the already vast policy demands of his position. By 1966 Rusk, who supported the direct use of US military power in Vietnam, was crossing swords with influential opponents of the war such as J. William Fulbright of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Moreover, Vietnam policymaking was a major preoccupation, consuming more and more of the countless hours he spent engaged with substantive issues. Vietnam also had considerable ramifications for other aspects of US foreign policy. It contributed, for example, to the growing demands from Senator Mike Mansfield and others to reduce US commitments in theatres such as Western Europe. The upshot was, according to Crockett, that the Secretary was 'so bogged down ... in the details of foreign policy making that he didn't have time to manage'. Nor, as he once told his staff, would he provide backing in any bureaucratic battles, only in substantive matters.<sup>63</sup> This was rather ominous for Crockett, an ambitious professional administrator. He resigned in 1967 largely because of resistance to his pursuit of reform. President Johnson had played a part in wearing him out. As part of his duties, Crockett was responsible for accompanying the President on foreign visits. He described a trip to Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand late in 1966 as 'a nightmare ... It was an awful trip.' After a minor mix-up over a gift to a foreign leader, the President launched an angry tirade at Crockett.<sup>64</sup> Crockett left to work in private business. His successor, Idar Rimestad, set about undoing Crockett's reforms by restoring much of the former hierarchy.<sup>65</sup>

### **NSAM 341**

The Vietnam War - the dominant policy issue of the era - brought fears, as John McCone noted, that the Soviets and Chinese would 'pursue an aggressive program of political action, subversion and insurgency in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East'.<sup>66</sup> Although President Johnson was less concerned about reinvigorating the State Department than was his predecessor, he did feel a need to strengthen the Department to deal with the threat of counterinsurgency beyond Vietnam. In 1965, just as the United States was undertaking a direct combat role in Vietnam, Johnson asked former Chief of the Army Staff and ambassador in Saigon General Maxwell Taylor to explore how 'to assure our readiness to cope with other situations similar to that in South Vietnam'. The outcome was NSAM 341 in March 1966, which, as Taylor described it, assigned 'responsibility for the direction, coordination and supervision of overseas interdepartmental activities to the Secretary of State'.<sup>67</sup> The well-informed British ambassador in Washington, Patrick Dean, suggested that Taylor had been 'diplomatically extremely clever in gaining everybody's agreement' to the measure.<sup>68</sup> Taylor's efforts led to the establishment of a Senior Interdepartmental Group (SIG) consisting of the Secretary of State plus heads of the CIA, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the National Security Council and other agencies. NSAM 341 also established

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<sup>63</sup> William J. Crockett interview conducted by Thomas Stern, 20 June 1990, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, ADST.

<sup>64</sup> William J. Crockett interview by Thomas Stern, 20 June 1990; John M. Steeves interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy and Thomas Stern, 27 March 1991, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, ADST.

<sup>65</sup> Warwick, *A Theory*, pp.53-54.

<sup>66</sup> Conversation between McCone and Rusk, 18 March 1965, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.67.

<sup>67</sup> Taylor to Johnson, 17 May 1967, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.278.

<sup>68</sup> Dean to Gore-Booth, 7 May 1966, PREM 13/2453, The National Archives (TNA), Kew, Surrey .

Interdepartmental Regional Groups (IRG) for each geographical division of the Department of State, under the chairmanship of the relevant Assistant Secretary of State.<sup>69</sup>

The SIG/IRG system created a White House structure that was theoretically the coordinating power comparable to the Ambassador's responsibility in the field, and would, according to Patrick Dean, provide 'a major opportunity for the [State] Department to establish real primacy in foreign policy'.<sup>70</sup> The first thirteen SIG meetings took place in March-July 1966, under the chairmanship of George Ball, covering a variety of topics including problems in Asia, Africa, and in relation to NATO.<sup>71</sup> However, the SIG soon lost momentum, not least due to Under Secretary Ball leaving office in 1966. The Inspector General of the Foreign Service reported at the beginning of 1967 that the new machinery had been used 'relatively little', with the SIG not having met since July. The potential of the SIG-IRG system 'for the management of 'Government-wide foreign affairs' was unfulfilled.<sup>72</sup> Walt Rostow, who had succeeded McGeorge Bundy as National Security Adviser, complained that he 'felt the lack on many issues', such as 'the Middle East, Vietnam', and 'counterinsurgency problems in Latin America'.<sup>73</sup>

One of the problems, as Frederick Mosher suggested, was that few in the State Department and Foreign Service 'seemed to attach much importance to NSAM 341'. The attitude was 'I'll believe it when I see it'.<sup>74</sup> In response to Presidential pressure, George Ball's successor, Nicholas Katzenbach, brought a modest resurgence in the system, with the result that from 19 July 1967 to 25 January 1968 there were fourteen SIG meetings.<sup>75</sup> Rostow concluded that the State Department had at last begun to 'assume its responsibilities'.<sup>76</sup> However, problems remained. Arguably, Katzenbach's commitment to the new structure was half-hearted. John Killick of the British Embassy noted in November 1967 that while Katzenbach had discussed the SIG/IRG machinery in a speech to the Foreign Service he did not

document his assertion that the object of this machinery is to decide issues, and only describes its work as 'on the whole' very successful. He is no more than 'hopeful' that the idea of using this machinery to reach decisions on the basis of what is best for the US will filter down through all levels of government. The clear implication is that it has not yet done so and that vested interests in separate Government Departments still carry too much weight.<sup>77</sup>

The IRGs did not prosper, either. Patrick Dean wrote that 'Several of the Assistant Secretaries who chair them made it pretty clear that they disliked the reorganisation

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<sup>69</sup> National Security Action Memorandum No. 341, 2 March 1966, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, pp.128-30.

<sup>70</sup> William J. Crockett interview conducted by Thomas Stern, 20 June 1990, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, ADST; Dean to Gore-Booth, 7 May 1966, PREM 13/2453, TNA.

<sup>71</sup> Lesh to Clark, 7 February 1968, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.303.

<sup>72</sup> Memorandum, 30 January 1967, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, 258.

<sup>73</sup> Rostow to Johnson, 27 June 1967, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.277.

<sup>74</sup> Report prepared by Frederick Mosher, 17 January 1967, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.251.

<sup>75</sup> Maxwell D. Taylor, *Swords and Ploughshares* (New York: Norton, 1972), p.362; Lesh to Clark, 7 February 1968, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, pp.303-04.

<sup>76</sup> Rostow to Johnson, 28 July 1967, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.283.

<sup>77</sup> Killick to Diggins, 24 November 1967, AU 1/6, FCO 7/744, TNA.

... and proposed not to operate it seriously'.<sup>78</sup> Dean Rusk, according to Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs U. Alexis Johnson, lacked wholehearted commitment to the SIG-IRG system: his 'great respect for the roles and responsibilities of his Cabinet colleagues' made him 'very reluctant to intervene in what he felt was their business'.<sup>79</sup> For Maxwell Taylor, 'The leaders of the State Department had missed a great opportunity in failing to exploit the grant of authority given them by President Johnson and had vindicated those who had warned me that State would never rise to the challenge.'<sup>80</sup> Ultimately, as Patrick Dean suggested, NSAM 341 had

come at a time when all the top people in the State Department were exhausted and fully occupied with current business.... There was nobody with sufficient standing and forcefulness to put it through properly and there was too much dead wood about the place at Assistant Secretary level and below, either to put it into effect or staff it at the lower levels.<sup>81</sup>

In 1969, the new administration of Richard M. Nixon wasted no time in abrogating NSAM 341 and dismantling the SIG-IRG machinery.<sup>82</sup> Just as John F. Kennedy and to a lesser extent President Johnson had wanted to reshape the apparatus of foreign policy, so did Nixon. Now, though, there would be an effort to strengthen the NSC at the expense of the State Department, with the result that Secretary of State William P. Rogers would be left out in the cold on most major policy initiatives.<sup>83</sup>

### Country Directors

A final noteworthy reform, which survived the Kennedy-Johnson years, was the appointment of 'Country Directors' for each country in the geographic bureaus of the State Department. These provided a single point of contact for the associated ambassador. The new arrangement was implemented on the back of NSAM 341, to support the SIG/IRG mechanism.<sup>84</sup> Inevitably, the measure generated mixed feelings among State Department personnel. For Robert Anderson (speaking in 1990), 'The country director system was one that I wish existed today because it helped streamline the decision-making operation of the State Department', eradicating numerous clearances 'on virtually every telegram'. However, William E. Schaufele felt that there was no real change: 'things continued much the same, but with different kinds of groupings - that's all'. Harry Symmes was critical, believing that the break-up of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs caused complications in dealing with Arab-Israeli issues.<sup>85</sup> Patrick Dean noted how 'professional Middle East experts' had 'keenly resented the fact that [Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs] Gene Rostow

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<sup>78</sup> Dean to Gore-Booth, 11 August 1967, AU 1/6, FCO 7/744, TNA.

<sup>79</sup> U. Alexis Johnson oral history interview conducted by Paige E. Mulhollan, 14 June 1969, LBJL.

<sup>80</sup> Taylor, *Swords and Ploughshares*, p.362.

<sup>81</sup> Dean to Gore-Booth, 7 May 1966, PREM 13/2453, TNA.

<sup>82</sup> National Security Decision Memorandum No. 2, 20 January 1969, *FRUS 1969-76 II*, p.33.

<sup>83</sup> See *FRUS 1969-1976 II Organization and Management of Foreign Policy* (2006) for documents.

<sup>84</sup> Memorandum, 8 March 1966, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.149; Bacchus, *Foreign Policy*, p.66.

<sup>85</sup> Robert Anderson interview conducted by Horace Torbert, 12 March 1990; William E. Schaufele Jr. interview conducted by Lillian Mullin, 19 November 1994; Harrison M. Symmes interview conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 25 February 1989, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, ADST; Dean to Gore-Booth, 11 August 1967, AU 1/6, FCO 7/744, TNA. See also Hamilton to Bundy, 28 August 1967, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, pp.286-88.



should have pressed on' with his own policies 'in defiance of the facts of life and their advice'.<sup>86</sup> For better or for worse, the Country Director arrangement was one of the few enduring reform measures in the State Department during the Kennedy-Johnson years.

## Conclusion

It should be acknowledged that parts of the State Department performed very well. The Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), for example, operated on a modest budget and was accurately pessimistic about the prospects of military victory in Vietnam.<sup>87</sup> On at least one occasion Patrick Dean had reason to praise the bureaus of European Affairs and International Organization Affairs.<sup>88</sup> Institutional criticisms of the State Department derived in part from policy concerns. According to a contemporary study, 'foreign ministries are rarely popular, particularly in periods where the inability of diplomats to discipline an intractable world is painfully apparent'. The disparagement of foreign ministries 'amounts to discontent with specific foreign policies or, more fundamentally, with the state of the world itself'.<sup>89</sup> Although Kennedy and Johnson had wanted pathbreaking initiatives, the State Department embodied continuity and institutional wisdom, in contrast to the more short-term priorities of the White House. Sometimes the Department simply could not win. When in April 1964 it responded quickly to a coup in Laos, President Johnson complained that it would have been better to have waited 'until we see the situation much more clearly'.<sup>90</sup> He often bemoaned the State Department's slow pace of operation but now he objected to a fast response.

Although undoubtedly it had some strengths, the State Department of the Kennedy-Johnson years did need reform because, as Crockett suggested, it definitely had 'some of the aspects of the jelly bowl or the fudge factory',<sup>91</sup> with the inertia, inefficiency and irresolution such metaphors implied. John F. Kennedy had pushed for reform measures, but his limited management experience may explain why he had lost interest by the end of 1961.<sup>92</sup> Battered by the Bay of Pigs disaster and by Soviet

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<sup>86</sup> Robert Anderson interview conducted by Horace Torbert, 12 March 1990; William E. Schauffele Jr. interview conducted by Lillian Mullin, 19 November 1994; Harrison M. Symmes interview conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 25 February 1989, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, ADST; Dean to Gore-Booth, 11 August 1967, AU 1/6, FCO 7/744, TNA. See also Hamilton to Bundy, 28 August 1967, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, pp.286-88.

<sup>87</sup> In February 1965 Thomas Hughes, head of INR, wrote a memorandum with Vice-President Hubert Humphrey to President Johnson suggesting that any boost to South Vietnamese morale engendered by a sustained bombing campaign would be short-lived, and that allied support for American policy would be severely tested by such bombing. See Andrew Preston, *The War Council: McGeorge Bundy and the NSC* (Cambridge and London: Harvard, 2006), pp.180-81; and Humphrey to Johnson, 17 February 1965, *FRUS 1964-1968 II*, pp.309-313. On the organisation and functioning of INR, see 'Sixteenth Report of the Intelligence Organization of the Department of State', October 1967, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, pp.588-92. For an interesting INR product, see Jonathan Colman, "'What Now for Britain?'" The State Department's Intelligence Assessment of the "Special Relationship", 7 February 1968', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 19 (June 2008), pp.350-60.

<sup>88</sup> Dean to Gore-Booth, 11 August 1967, AU 1/6, FCO 7/744, TNA.

<sup>89</sup> Clark and Legere (eds), *The President and the Management of National Security*, p.116.

<sup>90</sup> Memorandum for the record, 19 April 1964, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXVIII Laos* (2001), p.44.

<sup>91</sup> Crockett to Katzenbach, 27 January 1967, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, 255. The term 'fudge factory' was used by *Washington Post* journalist Joseph Kraft in 1966.

<sup>92</sup> Chester B. Bowles interview conducted by Robert R.R. Brooks, 2 February 1965, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

belligerency over Berlin, he realised, moreover, that policymaking was more complex and demanding than he once thought, not least because of the need to consider the views of dozens of foreign governments.<sup>93</sup> President Johnson considered State Department reform to be a desirable goal but he did not engage with the issue in a wholehearted and sustained way. He was much more interested in domestic affairs than was Kennedy, only to find to his sorrow that Vietnam came to dominate his presidency.

As for Dean Rusk, Patrick Dean wrote that he had ‘failed to communicate a sense of purpose to the State Department or to control and use it effectively as piece of active machinery in the conduct of foreign policy’. He worked largely ‘as a braking and moderating factor, discouraging rather than stimulating ideas and initiatives coming up to him’, making Rusk’s office ‘a dead hand rather than a source of inspiration’.<sup>94</sup> In other words, a deficient manager oversaw a complex and in many ways ineffective administrative structure. Rusk scarcely began to make inroads into the problems of the State Department. While he took pride in how by the time he left office ‘there were 350 people fewer in the Department of State than when I arrived in 1961’,<sup>95</sup> his positive managerial contributions are hard to detect. To be fair, Rusk was not alone in his unwillingness to get to grips with managing the State Department. A recent analysis has suggested that ‘Typically, secretaries of state invest little in the professionalisation of their department. Instead, they spend all their time on policies rather than the functioning of the institution.’<sup>96</sup> There was the structural issue that the offices of Secretary and Under Secretary of State did not permit much scope for management activities. McGeorge Bundy noted in 1963, for example, that the ‘Congressional, diplomatic and expeditionary responsibilities’ of Rusk and George Ball ‘make it certain that neither the Secretary nor the Under Secretary can be the day to day operating executive of the Department of State’.<sup>97</sup> Several studies in the Kennedy-Johnson years, including appraisals from the Herter Committee in 1962 and the Foreign Service Association in 1968, advocated establishing a position of ‘Executive’ Under Secretary or ‘Permanent’ Under Secretary position below the Under Secretary. It was thought that this would help the Secretary of State to ‘run’ the Department. However, Rusk opposed the establishment of the proposed position, instead maintaining that ‘the secret to effective operation of the Department is delegation of authority’.<sup>98</sup>

As such, many of the administrative burdens fell upon William Crockett, whose activism met with reservations, even hostility.<sup>99</sup> It is clear that Crockett’s dynamism outpaced State’s capacity to absorb change, not least in the absence of firm support from above. Warren Christopher, then a consultant to the State Department, suggested that it was ‘difficult to see how anyone could handle’ the post of Deputy Under Secretary for Administration ‘successfully.... until the leadership ... (the Secretary

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<sup>93</sup> Sorenson, *Counsellor*, p.234.

<sup>94</sup> Dean to Gore-Booth, 11 August 1967, AU 1/6, FCO 7/744, TNA.

<sup>95</sup> Rusk, *As I Saw It*, p.530.

<sup>96</sup> Kori Schake, ‘State of Disrepair’, *Foreign Policy*, 11 April 2012, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/04/11/state\\_of\\_disrepair](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/04/11/state_of_disrepair)

<sup>97</sup> Memorandum from Bundy, 25 January 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963 XXV*, pp.110-11.

<sup>98</sup> Pedersen to Rogers, 30 December 1968, *FRUS 1969-1976 II*, p.661.

<sup>99</sup> Thomas Stern oral history interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 16 May 1993, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, ADST.

and Under Secretaries) is ready to correct the shortcomings of the Foreign Service'.<sup>100</sup> For Patrick Dean late in 1967, the State Department 'really has become the "bowl of jelly" as which President Kennedy is believed once to have described it'. There is no reason to think that Dean's critical views were untypical among foreign diplomats in Washington. He also suggested that the Department's weakness was especially evident during the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967, when former National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy had to be drafted into the White House to lead a special Task Force on the Middle East. This represented 'a disturbing sign of failure on the part of the State Department as a machine to take a grip on affairs', and, incidentally, 'greatly complicated' British 'efforts to keep in close touch with what was really going on'.<sup>101</sup> A report to William P. Rogers at the end of the following year suggested 'the Department has not been adequately managed either from an administrative or substantive point of view and is therefore not fully responsive to policy decisions'.<sup>102</sup> The criticism was firmly-founded. The mixed managerial contributions of the two Presidents, the limitations of Dean Rusk and the substantive policy demands on his time, plus the inertia of a sprawling and complex institution, explain the limited progress in strengthening the Department of State, 1961-68.

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<sup>100</sup> Editorial note, *FRUS 1964-1968 XXXIII*, p.212.

<sup>101</sup> Dean to Gore-Booth, 11 August 1967, AU 1/6, FCO 7/744, TNA. The Task Force, known also as the Special Committee of the National Security Council, was established to provide high-level crisis management of the war and its immediate aftermath. The Committee also ended up playing the leading role in establishing the postwar US position. Note 12, *FRUS 1964-1968 XIX Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1967* (2004), p.291.

<sup>102</sup> Pederson to Rogers, 30 December 1968, *FRUS 1969-1976 II*, p.661.