STUDY PROJECT

EXPLAINING THE BAY OF PIGS AND VIETNAM, 1965 DECISIONS

BY

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The alternative conceptual frameworks for analyzing governmental behavior developed by Graham T. Allison in his book, Essense of Division, Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis, are applied to the questions of why the Bay of Pigs operation of 1961 was approved by President John F. Kennedy, and why President Lyndon B. Johnson committed US combat forces to Vietnam in July 1965. The decisions are examined for two reasons. First, the paper attempts to determine if the frameworks or models produce different explanations of why the decisions were made and the value of the models in the governmental

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decisionmaking process. Secondly, the role of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff in those decisions is highlighted to provide examples of how national-level policy decisions are translated into military plans and operations. The study indicates the models are useful in the decisionmaking process; suggests that behavioral aspects have considerable impact on the process; and the models can assist in implementing decisions. In some respects, the models appear to be clusters of variables rather than coherent explanatory systems. In the Bay of Pigs decision, organizational processes seem to have played the principal role in what happened, whereas governmental politics seem to have had the most influence on the Vietnam decision. The JCS appear as having played minimal, almost non-influential roles in each case. Several ways are suggested to ensure the vital JCS views are heard by top-level decisionmakers.

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EXPLAINING THE BAY OF PIGS AND VIETNAM, 1965 DECISIONS

INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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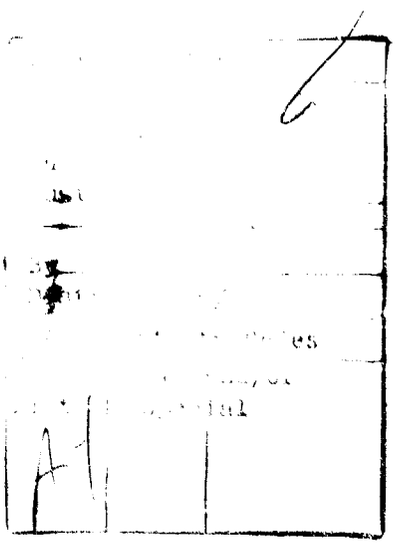

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In April 1961, a landing force of fourteen hundred anti-Castro Cuban exiles launched an attack against Cuba at the Bay of Pigs. The mission was to liberate the exiles' homeland from Communist control. Three days later, the force had been soundly defeated by the superior forces of Fidel Castro. The powerful military might of the United States was rendered useless, but the United States involvement was impossible to deny. The force had been organized, trained, armed, transported, and directed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). President John F. Kennedy took full responsibility for what happened, but many wondered how he could have approved the plan for the operation that would later be commonly referred to as a fiasco and a disaster.

On 28 July 1965, President Johnson announced that US fighting strength in Vietnam would immediately be increased from 75,000 to 125,000 and that additional US forces would be sent as they were requested by the US commander in Vietnam General William Westmoreland.[1] US forces were therefore fully committed to a land war in Asia. Thus, he "chose a path which turned into America's nightmare,"[2] and which eventually led to his decision on 31 March 196[illegible] to seek reelection. Many wondered and still do how the United States could get so deeply involved in what was, at least in retrospect, a "no-win" and losing proposition from the very beginning.

The noted author, Barbara Tuchman, writes in her recent book, The March of Folly, "A phenomenon noticeable throughout history regardless

of place or period is the pursuit by governments of policies contrary to their own interests."[3]

The United States involvement in Vietnam is one of the four episodes Tuchman uses to examine this "phenomenon." While the phenomenon may not have been as pronounced in the Bay of Pigs operation, Tuchman's questions apply to it as well as Vietnam:

> Why do holders of high office so often act contrary to the way reason points and enlightened self-interest suggests? Why does intelligent mental process seem so often not to function?[4]

Why then were the Bay of Pigs and Vietnam decisions referred to above made if they led to or were fiascoes, disasters, nightmares, or losing propositions? This is the central question of this paper.

Graham T. Allison suggests in his book, Essence of Decision, Explaining, the Cuban Missile Crisis, that the adequacy of answers to this question and ones like it depends on the analytical concepts brought to bear on the questions, for "what we see and judge to be important and accept as adequate depends not only on the evidence but also on the "conceptual lenses' through which we look at the evidence."[5] In attempting to answer the central question of this paper, for example, one would conventionally proceed from the point that what nations do can adequately be explained in terms of rationality. Using this framework, we assume that "Governmental behavior can be most satisfactorily understood by analogy with the purposive acts of individuals."[6] An event is thus explained as a consequence of a reasonable choice vis-a-vis the government's aims and objectives. Allison argues that while this is a convenient and simplified way to understand complex problems of policy, it also obscures and distorts reality. Governments, he suggests, are

conglomerates of large organizations and political actors rather than calculating decisionmakers.

The Argument

Allison's argument can be summarized by three propositions:

1. In analyzing foreign affairs, professionals single out the most relevant and significant aspects of an event as the basis or model to answer questions regarding it. This approach by its nature limits the analysis.

2. Most analysts explain governmental behavior in terms of a rational, unitary decisionmaker. This means of explanation is referred to as a "paradigm" or a model which is labeled the "Rational Actor or 'Classical' Model (Model I)."

3. Improved explanations and predictions can be obtained by using two alternative conceptual models or "paradigms" which are called the "Organizational Process Model" (Model II), and the "Governmental (Bureaucratic) Politics Model" (Model III).

Thus, the United States Government is not a single rational policy-maker, but an agglomeration of organizations each with its own interests and goals, and each part of a complex of competing bureaucracies. Policy is made by a group of political players and organizations that maneuver for position, pull and haul, and interact with one another in a complex system of bargaining relationships. It is therefore imperative for the analyst and decisionmaker to recognize these concepts to adequately explain and study governmental actions.

Larry Berman, with particular regard to Vietnam, echoes Allison:

> This historical record (documents detailing early Vietnam decisionmaking) illustrates how events can often shape the parameters of decision choice; how situations can deny flexibility in response; how

> individual world view influences the definition of a situation; how official institutional rank can place advisors in quite unequal advocacy positions; how advisor role definitions can influence advocacy strategy; and most important, how no one decision can be studied in isolation from what preceded it.[7]

This paper then will briefly summarize the basic features of each of Allison's models, and apply each separately to the question of why the Bay of Pigs and the July 1965 Vietnam decisions were made.

The Bay of Pigs application was made in a paper written by the author while a student at the Naval War College in 1974. While additional information and documents are now available, the substance of what was written then has not been changed significantly. Hence, only minor changes have been made.

The Vietnam application attempts to highlight the role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) in the decision. However, as we shall note, the JCS role was minimal and virtually non-influential.

In light of the model applications, the author will offer conclusions, observations, and thoughts about how national-level decisions can be better translated into military action and how the JCS might be more intimately involved in the actual decisionmaking.

CHAPTER I

ENDNOTES

1. David Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest, (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 432.

2. Larry Berman, Planning a Tragedy: The Americanization of the War in Vietnam, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), p. 152.

3. Barbara W. Tuchman, The March of Folly, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), p. 4.

4. Ibid.

5. Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision, Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), p. 2.

6. Ibid., p. 3.

7. Berman, p. 4.

CHAPTER II

MODEL I- RATIONAL ACTOR OR "CLASSICAL" MODEL

Model I Summary

Model I analysis represents the conventional way used by leading foreign policy analysts and historians to explain foreign policy and other governmental decisions. It attempts to explain international events by reccunting the aims and calculations of nations or governments. The nation or government is perceived as a rational, unitary decision-maker with "one set of specified goals, one set of perceived options, and a single estimate of the consequences that follow from each alternative."[1] What nations do can be explained, according to this model, by what is rational, given the nation's objectives; rational choice involves value-maximizing according to goals and objectives.

I. Bay of Pigs

A. Why was the Bay of Pigs Operation Approved?

In referring to the Bay of Pigs, John F. Kennedy wondered "how a rational and responsible government could ever have become involved in so ill-starred an adventure."[2] The most difficult question for him was "How could everybody involved have thought such a plan would succeed?"[3] It would therefore seem difficult to explain the Bay of Pigs operation according to the "Rational Actor Model." The literature describing how the Bay of Pigs operation was approved appears to provide an unfettered triumph for the "Organizational Process Model." Nevertheless, the approval for the operation, albeit irrational in retrospect, was made by

rational men. It involved two United States presidents, their senior advisers, and men in high-level governmental positions, several of whom were held in high esteem as intelligent, decisive, and, of course, rational.

B. The Eisenhower Administration

Although the Bay of Pigs operation was approved by President Kennedy, the decision process leading to it began during the latter years of the Eisenhower administration. In March 1960, two weeks after President Eisenhower had returned from a Latin American journey that included four South American nations and Puerto Rico, he ordered the CIA "to begin to organize the training of Cuban exiles . . . against a possible future day when they might return to their homeland."[4]

What was the "rational" basis for this decision? Eisenhower's basic foreign policy objective was, as he described it, "a determined pursuit of peace with justice."[5] In this pursuit, he believed it necessary to strengthen the United Nations to lessen the possibility of war and make feasible a degree of disarmament. He recognized, of course, the obstacle posed by the veto power of the Soviet Union which he considered practically insurmountable. He wanted understood throughout the world the firm purpose of the United States to assist free nations seeking cooperation in defending themselves against Communist penetration. Another part of his main objective was the "development of a ring of strong and binding alliances with other nations dedicated to freedom."[6]

The conditions of the post-war world that provided the framework for Eisenhowers's foreign policy objectives saw the Soviet Union as the main threat. Her policy was perceived as one of ambitious, persistent, and dynamic expansion which threatened the security of the United

States. China was under Communist domination and because the United Nations could not control the Cold War, there was no international authority through which the principle of collective security could be made consistently effective against direct or indirect Soviet or Communist Chinese aggression. Western Europe was hampered by conflicts of national policies and economic interests. The developing nations in Asia and Africa were acquiring importance because of location, population and natural resources. The revolutionary trend in these nations provided opportunities for the extension of Communist influence. Latin America was beset by political and economic instability, and there was concern whether the growth and travail of the Latin American countries would be a controlled revolution taking place without disruption of the inter-American system and the Atlantic community, or a scene of uncontrollable unrest and cold war competition. In nuclear armaments, it was believed that a shift to nuclear parity with the Soviet Union was occurring. United States striking power was no longer guaranteed to win or deter war. The United States had to be prepared for a wide variety of military moves, "from the fomenting of civil conflict to the launching of all-out war."[7]

With regard to the developments in Latin America, the attitudes and policies of the United States were thought to be crucial.

> Here was half of the western hemisphere, which, if it turned against the United States, would mock our leadership before the world and create a hard and lasting threat to our national security, but which, if we could work effectively with its people, might provide the world a model in the processes of democratic development.[8]

The alternatives to achieve these objectives were either intervention, or, as Eisenhower put it:

> to bring the American nations together in a collective effort to protect the hemisphere from communist imperialism; . . to organize the same kind of collective action to end . . . traditions of economic injustice by which the rich continued to get richer and the poor poorer.[9]

The experiences in the earlier years of this century when the United States had intervened in several Latin American nations led to the official policy of non-intervention, a position upheld publicly by both Eisenhower and Kennedy. It would have appeared, therefore, that intervention was not a viable alternative. Yet, the United States did intervene, albeit in a clandestine fashion, in Guatemala in 1954. Thus, although the official policy was non-intervention, Guatemala established a precedent which played no insignificant a role in Eisenhower's decision in 1960 to train Cuban exiles (in Guatemala). The rationale of this precedent was clearly stated by John Foster Dulles in June 1954 when he said the events in Guatemala "expose the evil purpose of the Kremlin to destroy the inter-American system, and they test the ability of the American States to maintain the peaceful integrity of this hemisphere."[10] The events were: communists or near-communists appointed to positions of power, expropriation of United States property, and opposition by the Guatemalan government to an Organization of American States (OAS) resolution condemning communist intervention in the Americas. These events were not unlike those in Cuba in 1959-1960. Dulles further stated that the events posed a direct challenge to the Monroe Doctrine which he considered the first and most fundamental of our foreign policies. He believed the plan was to gain a base in the hemisphere to extend Communist penetration to other Latin American countries. He stated:

> if world communism captures any American state, however small, a new and perilous front is established which will increase the danger to the entire free world and require even greater sacrifices from the American people.[11]

He added "The need for vigilance is not past. Communism is still a menace everywhere."[12]

The other alternative - collective effort - was pursued. Throughout 1958, in accordance with the charter of the OAS, the United States carefully followed a policy of non-intervention in Cuba. Public and private capital began to flow in increasing amounts to Latin American countries. Technical assistance was substantially increased, the Inter-American Development Bank was established, and the United States supported the establishment of Latin American common markets and international commodity study groups. Some would say that these efforts came too late. It certainly is not the intent to argue this point here. The fact is that despite these efforts trouble persisted for the United States policy in Latin America. It was evidenced by Vice-President Nixon's Latin American trip in 1958 after which he reported "the threat of Communism in Latin America is greater than ever before."[13]

Against this background of policy and action, Castro's Communist tendency was clearly viewed as a threat. In the latter days of 1958, the CIA suggested that a Castro victory might not be in the best interests of the United States. Allen Dulles, the director of CIA, told Eisenhower that communists and other extreme radicals appeared to have penetrated the Castro movement. In 1959, mass executions of Castro's enemies were underway. In February, Castro announced a two year postponement of the election he previously promised, and in March, Allen Dulles reported:

> the Castro regime is moving toward a complete dictatorship. Communists are now operating openly and legally in Cuba. And . . . communists have worked their way into the labor unions, the armed forces, and other organizations.[14]

Nixon talked to Castro in April 1959 and concluded he was "either incredibly naive about Communism or under Communist discipline."[15] Eventually, intelligence experts concluded that Communism had penetrated this hemisphere. Eisenhower states, "By early 1960, there was no longer any doubt in the administration that something would have to be done."[16] He firmly believed, however, that unilateral action by the United States could be fatal to the hopes of strengthening the OAS, but in light of the difficulty in getting other countries to work with the United States against Castro, he ordered the training of Cuban exiles as a possible future action.

Castro became more of a problem. Eisenhower was particularly disturbed by the possibility of Cuba becoming a Communist satellite and indicated that the United States could not tolerate a situation in which the Soviet Union might make a mutual security treaty with Cuba. CIA training of the Cuban exiles continued apace and emergency plans readied for Cuba. The possible actions included blockade, military action, and joint action with Latin American countries. Economic sanctions were subsequently imposed against Cuba. On 9 July 1960, Khrushchev threatened the use of rockets to protect Cuba against a military attack by the United States, a threat which at first was dismissed. Later in July, however, Allen Dulles reported the possibility of the Soviets putting up a short-range missile base. In August, photographs confirmed reports of the entry of Communist semi-automatic rifles into Cuba.

C. John F. Kennedy Enters

On 18 November 1960, President-elect Kennedy received a CIA briefing which presented the details of the Cuban exile operation. The day prior to his inauguration, Kennedy was told by Eisenhower "it was the policy of this government" to aid anti-Castro guerrilla forces "to the utmost."[17] Eisenhower recommended the effort be continued and even accelerated. Thus, John F. Kennedy inherited a problem which would later cause him considerable anguish.

Kennedy's main objectives were to develop a positive program for Latin America and to prevent Castro from spreading his influence to other Latin American countries. He called for the Alliance for Progress, and stressed the need for self-help, national planning, regional markets, commodity stabilization, and hemisphere cooperation in education, technical training and research. He emphasized by his often quote "progreso si, tiranía no", that political freedom must accompany progress.

Specifically with regard to Castro, Kennedy seemed to be formulating several alternatives in the first months of his administration. He had no question that Castro, as he wrote, "had betrayed the ideals of the Cuban revolution" and transformed Cuba "into a hostile and militant Communist satellite."[18] At the same time, however, he was concerned whether Castro might have taken another course had the United States not supported the Batista regime as long as it had, or had given Castro a warmer welcome during his trip to Washington in 1959. Immediately after his election, he asked for estimates of the effectiveness of the trade embargo against Cuba and of the possibilities of rapprochement. Previously, in a campaign speech, he said:

> For the present, Cuba is gone. . . . For the present no magic formula will bring it back. . . . Only by extending the hand of American friendship

> in a common effort to wipe out the poverty and discontent and hopelessness on which communism feeds--only then will we drive back tyranny until it ultimately perishes in the streets of Havana.[19]

In effect, the alternatives as he saw them were to stop the influence of Castro by helping other democratic governments on the continent, rapprochement, or use of the Cuban exile force.

Two of these alternatives were presented by the CIA plan, but were biased and from a different perspective. In effect, the choices were to assist the exiles to:

> free their country from dictatorship or leave Cuba free to subvert the hemisphere, disband an impatient army in training for nearly a year under miserable conditions, and have them spread the word that Kennedy had betrayed their attempt to depose Castro.[20]

He was told that the plan had to be implemented immediately because:

> the brigade was fully trained, restive to fight and difficult to hold off; second, because Guatemala was under pressure to close the increasingly publicized and politically controversial training camps, and his only choice was to send them back to Cuba, where they wished to go, or bring them back to this country, where they would broadcast their resentment; and third, because Russian arms would soon build up Castro's army, Cuban airmen trained behind the Iron Curtain as MIG pilots would soon return to Cuba, large numbers of crated MIGs had already arrived on the island, and the spring of 1961-before Castro had a large jet air force and before the exile army scattered in discontent--was the last time Cubans alone could liberate Cuba.[21]

The President, who had been astonished when he first heard of the magnitude of the operation and had serious doubts about it, was confronted with a now-or-never choice. Sorensen states that a few days prior to the invasion Kennedy "stressed somewhat uncomfortably that he had no alternative."[22]

Kennedy approved the operation because he believed that if it succeeded the democratic prospects in the hemisphere would be strengthened. Cancellation, he feared, would "be interpreted as an admission that Castro ruled with popular support and would be around to harass Latin America for many years to come."[23] "If he called it off, he would forever be haunted by the feeling that his scruples had preserved Castro in power."[24] He was assured that the plan would work, win or lose. "If it failed of its maximum hope-a mass uprising leading to the overthrow of the regime-it would at least attain its minimum objective--supply and reinforcement for the guerrillas already on the island."[25] He thought he had reduced the operation to a mass infiltration vice a large amphibious assault. Should the infiltration not succeed, he was assured the infiltrators could easily go into the mountains as a guerrilla force. He thought the chances of success were good and believed the cost of failure to be tolerable. As he explained to Sorensen afterward:

> If a group of Castro's own countrymen, without overt US participation, could have succeeded in establishing themselves on the island, proclaimed a new government, rallied the people to their cause and ousted Castro, all Latin America would feel safer, and if instead they were forced to flee to the mountains, there to carry on guerrilla warfare, there would still have been net gain.[26]

The caveat "without overt US participation" was particularly vital in understanding the rationale for the decision. It was the principal condition on which Kennedy insisted before he approved the plan. There was to be no direct, overt participation of American armed forces in Cuba. The Cuban exiles were to be told that if they wished to make a try on this categorical understanding, he would help them do so. Because this condition was not understood or not wanted to be, the "operation" was relabeled "fiasco."

On 17 April 1961, the members of the Cuban exile Brigade 2506 began their invasion to liberate their homeland. Frogmen were launched to mark the invasion points on the shore. The first frogman on each beach was, in spite of Kennedy's order, an American.

II. Vietnam

A. Why were US Combat Forces Committed to Vietnam?

> Our objective is the independence of South Vietnam, and its freedom from attack. We want nothing for ourselves--only that the people of South Vietnam be allowed to guide their own country in their own way.[27]

These words of President Johnson on 7 April 1965, express well the rationale for the commitment of US combat forces to Vietnam in 1965. At that time, the survival of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN or South Vietnam) as an independent entity was clearly threatened by forces deemed inimical to its interests and supported by the communist regime of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV or North Vietnam). Following Berman's words, events did shape the decision parameters and denied flexibility. The perceived imminent danger of the RVN's collapse led to a decision to send US forces to the "rescue."

While it seemed rational at the time, the view of the majority of current writers who have analyzed the decision in retrospect supports Paul M. Kattenburg's words:

> It (where analysis indicated the US stood in Vietnam) always stood at the losing end, and hopes of surmounting and overcoming the obstacles were always extremely slender when analyzed in the cold light of objective premises and the real facts of Vietnam. The United States most probably would have gone on, even with appropriate analysis and even if subconscious appraisal had not invaded the objective analysis preserve.[28]

The rationale thus seems questionable and the very rational men who were involved in the decisionmaking now appear as not having long-range foresight, or as not conducting a vitally needed comprehensive and systematic examination of Vietnam's importance to the United States.[29] Yet, again as Berman states, the decision must be considered in the light of what preceded it and the circumstances of the time.

B. A Growing Commitment

The precedence for Vietnam can be found in the aftermath of World War II and the establishment of the United States as the dominant global power. The experiences of two world wars underlined a strong US anti-colonialist view and stressed the need to establish alliances to prevent yet another war. Facing this was the perceived inchoate development of the Communist, particularly Soviet, threat to world stability.

President Roosevelt attempted to steer the middle ground between alliance politics and anti-colonialism agreeing to a French trusteeship for Indochina following the Japanese occupation of the former French colony. The trusteeship was to lead to independence for Vietnam as quickly as possible.

While President Truman supported Roosevelt's views, world events changed the focus and the emphasis. The influence and spread of Communism as affecting world stability were manifest in Iran, Greece and Turkey in 1946 and 1947. Events in Czechoslovakia, Palestine, China and especially Berlin from 1947 - 1950 added more credence to the view of communism as a spreading disease which had to be countered.

Truman placed Europe first in priority. Indeed, his Secretary of State Dean Acheson's so-called "perimeter speech" in January 1950 even placed Indochina and Korea outside of the US defense perimeter against

communism. Indochina was seen as a French problem. However, the fall of China to communism in 1949, combined with the North Korean invasion of South Korea in June 1950 caused a rethinking of policy in light of what was then seen as a monolithic Sino-Soviet communist bloc aimed at world domination. The legacy of appeasement leading to World War II was clearly felt and the prevailing view was that the line had to be drawn against the communist spread. Thus, Korea provided a catalyst for the US to establish a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) in Vietnam, and to accelerate US military assistance to the French who were then struggling with an incipient communist-led movement to oust them from Indochina.

The Eisenhower administration witnessed the end of the official French presence in Vietnam following the defeat of her forces at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954. It also witnessed an increase in the MAAG presence to over 300 personnel which in essence created an American presence as a substitute for the French one. While obviously miniscule compared to the eventual US commitment, the increase established a mini-bureaucratic force with vested interests in Vietnam and Washington.

As noted in the Model I application to the Bay of Pigs, Eisenhower was firm in his purpose to assist free nations defending themselves against Communist penetration. China was seen as in the Soviet camp. Thus Ho Chi Minh's apparent strong ties to the USSR and his affiliation with China were seen by the administration as yet other elements in the threatening spread of communism. At the time of the battle of Dien Bien Phu, Eisenhower referred to the situation in the often to be repeated "falling dominoes" vein. Indeed, Ho Chi Minh's military forces had been active in Laos in offensives related to their military strategy in

Vietnam. At the same time there was considerable concern about French participation in the collective Allied security of Europe. A principal fear was that a French defeat in Indochina would adversely affect her prestige and her resoluteness to join the European alliance.

With this background, that of the Truman days and with the Korean armistice behind him, Eisenhower decided to substantially increase military assistance to the French to the point where, in 1953 - 1954, it comprised 80 percent of the total cost of the war to France. As noted, the MAAG was increased to 300 people--mostly aircraft technicians and mechanics to help the French with US B-26 bombers sent for their use. The purpose was to keep the French in the war in order to avoid a communist takeover. However, Eisenhower would not intervene directly to help the French without Allied accompaniment—a condition developed in consultation with key Congressional leaders. Attempts at obtaining international assistance failed and the US role remained an indirect one.

The strong anti-communist US policy amplified by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and broadened in no small degree by hysterical McCarthyism led to US refusal to support the agreement reached at Geneva following the French defeat, and to the establishment of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). These actions provided a blueprint for "Americanization" of the conflict. The US supported the then designated President of the RVN, Ngo Dinh Diem in his refusal to accept the Geneva accords; to allow general elections in 1956 aimed at reunifying Vietnam; and thus a refusal to recognize the temporary nature of the 17th parallel dividing line separating that portion alloted to Ho Chi Minh and the one that had been controlled by French forces. SEATO, an

entity that was created as a result of the French defeat and the erroneous perception that the Vietnamese communist movement was part of the world-wide Sino-Soviet communist threat, provided a "legitimate" basis for further military and economic aid to Diem's fledgling enterprise in the south. Of course, Ho Chi Minh had every intention to use the Geneva accords as a way to achieve reunification. Therefore, the stage was set for further conflict between Ho's forces and a SEATO supported Diem. Unfortunately, SEATO turned out to be principally a US show.

It is worthy to note JCS input to the decisionmaking in 1954. The JCS rational actor mode led principally by General Ridgway (then Army Chief of Staff) saw little hope for Diem's chances to develop a viable government in the South, and was quite pessimistic about the effectiveness of external pressure and assistance in preventing a communist victory in South Vietnam.[30] As Barbara Tuchman notes, "With hindsight, it is impossible to avoid asking why the American government ignored the advice of the persons appointed to give it."[31] This is cited here because it is indicative of a developing trend which in essence made the JCS virtual "non-players" in the major Vietnam decisions. More will be written about this in the Model III (Governmental Politics) application.

C. Kennedy Era

President Kennedy came to office with the pledge to "get the country moving again" and with the now famous inaugural words, "to bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, and oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty." His administration's foreign policy was immediately challenged in 1961 by the Bay of Pigs, the Berlin crisis, his meeting with Khrushchev in Vienna, and the situations in Laos and Vietnam. The administration believed that the US was perceived abroad as weak and tentative as a result of events that year.

Coupled with the Soviet threat to support "wars of liberation," South Vietnam was seen as a testing place for US resolve to match Kennedy's rhetoric, for US communist containment policies and the "domino theory."

At the same time, US defense policy was moving away from the "massive retaliation" doctrine espoused by John Foster Dulles toward the nation of "flexible response." US military forces were being reorganized and increased in personnel and equipment to meet contingencies that did not warrant the risk of nuclear war but were nonetheless important to prevent the spread of communism. Vietnam was one of these contingencies.

As was the case in the Eisenhower administration, the conflict in the RVN was seen by Kennedy as the primary responsibility of the Diem regime. Eisenhower conditioned US aid on Diem's assurances that he would or could establish a political-sociological base of support in the south that would lead to a national identity and acceptance of governmental legitimacy. A Presidential mission to the RVN in 1961 in the persons of Maxwell Taylor and Walt Rostow confirmed that Diem was not doing well at all in either establishing a viable government or in prosecuting the so-called "insurgency." Thus Taylor recommended a commitment of eight thousand US military personnel to provide the logistical help and US base security needed to support the build-up of RVN military forces. Taylor clearly indicated that this might just be the beginning and even suggested that it might be necessary to initiate bombing against the north. Kennedy opted for lesser involvement in the hope that a smaller increase in aid coupled with diplomatic pressure on Diem to reform would improve the situation.

Also at this time, the military doctrine of counterinsurgency came into vogue at the exhortation of General Edward Lansdale. The doctrine

which stemmed from the conflicts in the Philippines and Malaya called for a combined political-economic-sociological-military solution to the Vietnam problem. The doctrine was accepted wholeheartedly by Kennedy and led to the creation of US Special Forces and to the commitment of 400 "green berets" to Vietnam in 1961. By the end of 1961, there were over 3,000 US military personnel in the RVN.

Despite the increased assistance the situation continued to deteriorate. RVN Armed Forces seemed unable to successfully prosecute the military side of the counterinsurgency doctrine. US military advisers were sent to assist the RVN military. By the end of 1962, 11,300 US personnel were there. The MAAG became the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam headed by a four-star general officer. At the time of President Kennedy's assassination, there were over 16,000 US personnel in South Vietnam.

In addition to the large increase in personnel, the US became even more involved in political developments. In November 1963, President Diem was overthrown by a military led coup d'etat that had the tacit consent and support of the United States Government. As a result, the US was inextricably locked into supporting the successive regimes that came to power over the next two years in what appeared to be revolving door coups d'etat. No regime could survive without US backing, and the US objective of preventing a communist takeover of the RVN could not succeed without a South Vietnamese government. While seemingly rational based on the objective, this US involvement in the author's view removed what may have been the last best opportunity to stop the steady US slide into the black hole of Vietnam.

D. Enter President Johnson

This very broad background then is a key to understanding the rationality of why US combat forces were committed to South Vietnam. President Johnson inherited the sunk cost of 20 years of US involvement and a continuing objective of preventing a communist takeover in the south. What he faced was a continuing deterioration of the political and military situations there. In March 1964, the administration issued a policy statement which reiterated the objective of an independent, non-communist South Vietnam and portrayed failure of achieving this objective as tantamount to the loss of all of Southeast Asia to communism. This then was the basic element in our rational actor model. The next step was to define the options or courses of action to achieve the objective.

The options defined by the Johnson administration in 1964 were to maintain the large-scale advisory effort and to develop contingency plans to pressure the North into stopping its support for the Viet Cong forces in the South. Those contingency plans included Air Force bombing of appropriate targets in the North. Johnson was advised that bombing would normally entail a declaration of war, but since it would only be selective and punitive that a declaration of war would be too strong an action vis-a-vis domestic politics.[32]

Domestic politics are more the purview of Model III, but they did affect the rationale and should be briefly mentioned at this point. Johnson clearly established the "Great Society" as his top priority, and perhaps rightly so. Vietnam was a distractor to that priority. He therefore defined options in that light, that is, he was in 1964 to do only what was enough to prevent a defeat in Vietnam while pursuing his domestic goals. Yet it was obvious that he was aware of the deterioration in

Saigon and was conscious that more would have to be done in the future. He was also aware that in an election year he would be best served by Congressional support for whatever he decided to do.

Congressional support was forthcoming in August 1964 with the so-called "Gulf of Tonkin" resolution in which it was stated that:

> The Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, . . to take all necessary measures to repeal any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression. The United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in Southeast Asia . . . to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member of protocol states of Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom.[33]

The incidents involving US destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin also led to bombing reprisals against the North. Having thus set the precedent and armed with the almost incredible amount of power granted by the Congressional resolution, the stage was set for the fateful 1965 decisions.

The question remained what should the US do to stop the rapidly deteriorating situation. President Johnson realized that bombing alone would not be sufficient and thus toward the end of 1964 began considering sending US combat forces.[34] In February 1965 a bomb destroyed a US billet in Pleiku while McGeorge Bundy, Johnson's National Security Advisor, was in Saigon reviewing the situation with Ambassador Taylor. Bundy's report indicates the rationale applied to subsequent events. Berman emphasizes this rationale in quoting from Bundy's written assessment:

> The prospect in Vietnam is grim. . . .
>
> There is one grave weakness in our posture in Vietnam which--is within our own power to fix--and that is a widespread belief that we do not have the will and force and patience and determination to take the necessary action and stay the course.
>
> At its very best, the struggle in Vietnam will be long.
>
> The situation in Vietnam is deteriorating, and without a new US action defeat appears inevitable. . . .
>
> The stakes in Vietnam are extremely high. The American investment is very large, . . .
>
> The international prestige of the United States, and a substantial part of our influence, are directly at risk in Vietnam.
>
> . . . and there is no way of negotiating ourselves out of Vietnam which offers any serious promise at present.
>
> . . . and any negotiated US withdrawal today would mean surrender on the installment plan.[35]

The subsequent events were the bombing of the North in reprisal for Pleiku, the introduction of North Vietnamese Army ground combat units into the South, and, in turn, a sustained bombing campaign against the North called "Rolling Thunder." To protect the aircraft and air base involved in 'Rolling Thunder," 3,500 Marines were sent to Da Nang in March 1965. In April 1965, a decision was made to increase the size of the Marine force by about 20 thousand and to permit them to engage in offensive operations aimed at protecting US installations.

Despite the increase in US forces and the bombing of the North, the situation looked desperate in April 1965. In a conference convened by McNamara in Honolulu, it was recommended that US forces enter the war directly. The recommendation was quickly approved by President Johnson. While there was considerable discussion about how many troops, their

role, and when they were to be sent, there really was no serious question about the necessity to do so. Nevertheless, the discussions did prolong the final specific decision until the end of July 1965.

Much can be said about the irrationality of that decision as well as those decisions leading up to it. The evidence <u>now</u> strongly supports the conclusion that Vietnam was a colossal mistake and that had a rational and complete analysis been conducted <u>and accepted</u> by the President the mistake was avoidable. From the Model I application, the prevailing reason for the commitment was the perceived need to contain Communism. The US as the dominant superpower could not risk its credibility by not showing firmness, determination and persistence in Vietnam. Our leaders could not, or were determined not, to lose to communism. This overarching view dominated all the decisionmaking and virtually blinded decisionmakers. As we shall see later, the JCS had no decisive input to these decisions.

CHAPTER II

ENDNOTES

1. Allison, Essence of Decision, pp. 32-3.

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3. Theodore S. Sorensen, Kennedy, (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 294.

4. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Waging Peace, 1956-1961, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), p. 533.

5. Ibid., p. 363.

6. Ibid., p. 364.

7. US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Study on Basic Aims of US Foreign Policy, (Washington: G-PO, 25 November 1959), p. 4.

8. Schlesinger, p. 187.

9. Eisenhower, p. 533.

10. Robert L. Branyan and Lawrence H. Larsen, ed., The Eisenhower Administration, 1953-1961, A Documentary History, (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 314.

11. Ibid., p. 315.

12. Ibid., p. 316.

13. Eisenhower, p. 520.

14. Ibid., p. 523.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., p. 525.

17. Schlesinger, p. 164.

18. Schlesinger, p. 224.

19. Ibid., p. 225.

20. Sorensen, p. 295.

21. Ibid., p. 296.

22. Ibid., p. 295.

23. Ibid., p. 297.

24. Schlesinger, p. 258.

25. Ibid., p. 256.

26. Sorensen, p. 297.

27. Lyndon b. Johnson in a 7 April 1965 speech at Johns Hopkins University, quoted in various sources.

28. Paul M. Kattenburg, The Vietnam Trauma in American Foreign Policy, 1945-75, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1980), p. 183.

29. Leslie H. Gelb, The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1979), p. 190.

30. Tuchman, The March of Folly, p. 273.

31. Ibid., p. 274.

32. Berman, Planning a Tragedy, p. 32.

33. Quoted in Berman, Planning a Tragedy, p. 33.

34. Berman, pp. 34-5.

35. Quoted in Berman, pp. 43-4.

CHAPTER III

MODEL II- ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESS MODEL

Model II Summary

Model II emphasizes the processes and procedures of the large organizations that constitute government. It explains decisions not as rational acts or deliberate choices but as outputs of loosely allied organizations functioning according to certain regular patterns of behavior, conditioned by their established routines, SOPs, and repertoires.

> Government behavior relevant to any important problem reflects the independent output of several organizations, partially coordinated by government leaders. Government leaders can substantially disturb, but not substantially control the behavior of these organizations. To perform complex routines, the behavior of large numbers of individuals must be coordinated. Coordination requires standard operating procedures: rules according to which things are done.[1]

Model II also posits that the complexity of organizations does not permit the surfacing of all the issues to decisionmakers. Those same organizations often have trouble dealing with uncertainty and thus the alternatives presented are those that tend toward short-run, concrete results and avoidance of uncertain long-term solutions. Snort-term solutions by their nature limit the search for alternatives.

I. Bay of Pigs

A. Why was the Bay of Pigs Operation Approved?

"With hindsight it is clear that what infact he (Kennedy) had approved was diplomatically unwise and militarily doomed from the outset."[2] In his first State of the Union speech, Kennedy deplored the "gap between

decision and execution, between planning and reality." This is what was important about the Bay of Pigs affair. Sorensen writes:

> That so great a gap between concept and actuality should exist at so high a level on so dangerous a matter reflected a shocking number of errors in the whole decisionmaking process-errors which permitted bureaucratic momentum to govern instead of policy leadership.[3]

In order to understand how the gap Sorensen refers to was created, we must begin with more details on what Kennedy thought he was approving. First, he thought the operation was to be a quiet, large-scale infiltration. Second, should the exiles fail to hold a beachhead, they would go into the mountains, join other rebels, and begin anti-Castro guerrilla operations. Third, he understood that the exiles would decide whether they wished to undertake the risks involved without overt American support. Fourth, the plan was expected to succeed with the help of the Cuban underground, deserters from Castro's military forces, and eventually with a popular uprising. Finally, he approved a plan which was presented on a "now-or-never" basis on the grounds that Castro's growing military capability would defeat it later. The gaps between what he thought he had approved can be attributed in large measure to the organizational processes involved.

B. Newness of the Administration

Both Sorensen and Schlesinger attribute the gaps, at least in part, to the newness of the President and his administration. Kennedy had been in office only seventy-seven days when he made the decision.

In his "Organizational Process Paradigm", Allison indicates that the decisions of government leaders contribute to organizational activity. He states "important shifts in the behavior of governments can take place with little change in a particular organization's parochialism and

SOPs."[4] In this case, an entire shift in administrations took place and even if Kennedy had the ability to control changes in organizational goals or SOPs, he clearly could not have done so in seventy-seven days. Richard E. Neustadt suggests

> the first twelve to eighteen months become a learning time for the new President who has to learn-or unlearn-many things about his job. Regardless of his prior training, nothing he has done will have prepared him for all facets of that job.

Thus, the organizational process which requires a new President every eight years contributed to the gaps. Kennedy did not know his advisers, nor did they know him well enough to raise the hard issues with force and candor.

> He had not geared the decisionmaking process to fulfill his own needs, to isolate the points of no return, to make certain he was fully informed before they passed, and to prevent preshaped alternatives from being presented to him too late to start anew.[6]

The fact that the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the CIA, and senior foreign policy officials were unanimous for going ahead strongly influenced his decision because he was not confident enough in his own instincts against expert judgment.

C. Information Process/Alternatives

> Formal governmental choice centers or the information provided and the options defined by organizations, the existing organizational capabilities that exhaust the effective choices open to leaders, and the outputs of relevant organizations that fix the location of pieces on the chess board and shade the appearance of the issue.[7]

The President obviously needs help, and indeed help has been given to him in ever increasing amounts, a development which scholars call "institutionalized Presidency" or Schlesinger's "Imperial Presidency." Neustadt states:

> His first need is information. No doubt he needs the data that advisers can provide. He also needs to know the little things they fail to mention. . . . He must assume that much of what he needs will not be volunteered by his official advisers.[8]

He also needs the choices which may not reach him because of the organizational processes. In the Bay of Pigs decision, it is clear that the information required to make the choice was not sought, nor was it provided by the organizations involved. That which was provided proved inaccurate or incomplete and obviously biased.

First, despite the President's insistence and belief that he was approving a quiet reinfiltration of Cuban exiles back to their homeland, this could not have been the case. Months after Eisenhower first approved the formation of the Cuban exile group, no decision had been made on what to do or how to do it. The CIA had operational responsibility for the force, but the overall planning was done by what was allied the "Special Group" - top officials of the State and Defense Departments, the CIA and the White House. At first, the plans called for a guerrilla operation, but in November 1960, the guerrilla operation was replaced by a plan calling for an invasion and direct action. Once this decision was made, the organizational processes took over.

On 4 November, the CIA ordered a reduction of the guerrilla force to a strength of sixty and directed its men to "use conventional arms and training for everyone else."[9] The CIA men conducting the training received detailed instructions on how the change in training was to take place, employing World War II infantry assault landing tactics. "It became the Bible of the training camp. From that date any talk in the camp of guerrilla warfare was regarded by the CIA as a sign of weakness."[10]

As this decision later proved crucial to the approval of the operation, it might be wise to examine briefly how the organizational processes led to it. The change was proposed by the CIA. Early in December, the new plan went in a routine way before the Special Group. Its sponsors now said little about guerrilla infiltration except as a diversionary tactic. Instead they envisioned 600 to 750 Cubans coming ashore along the southern coast of Cuba. Air strikes and artillery fire were to be provided before and during the landing. The mission would be to seize and hold an area large enough to attract anti-Castro activists, induce defections, and set off an uprising.

The new plan raised serious questions. As it called for a force of size, scope and visibility against superior forces, could the United States deny its role in an expedition well trained and equipped to conduct an amphibious invasion? If it could not, could it afford to let the invasion fail? The rule that the operation had to look like one which the Cuban exiles organized and carried out on their own had already been stretched to the point of no return with several newspapers reporting preparations for an invasion with American assistance.

It would therefore have seemed that the new plan was not compatible with the rule of no United States participation; but no one in the Special Group seemed to feel final responsibility.

> Not wishing to anticipate the new administration, it did not formally approve the new scheme or even subject it to very severe scrutiny. Instead, it encouraged the CIA to press on with the training in Guatemala and start work on operational planning in Washington.[11]

It also appears that the decision to change the plan was made without the participation of President Kennedy.[12]

Another information gap involves the alternative of the exiles taking up guerrilla warfare with Cuban rebels in the mountains should they fail on the beach. As we have seen, this alternative was thought to be part of the plan Kennedy approved. Infact, the exiles were given contrary instructions to fall back on the beaches if they failed; the area chosen for the invasion was not suitable for guerrilla warfare; and the eighty mile escape route to the mountains was never a realistic alternative. The exile leaders were never told of the alternative plan; it was not planned by the CIA leaders of the operation, and the President was never told the CIA leaders thought this option was out.

Thirdly, the issue of no overt American support was never made clear to the exiles. One consistent theme noted throughout the exile leaders' accounts of the operation was their strong impression that American armed forces would openly and directly assist them to prevent their defeat. In some cases, they were even told this by their American advisers. Kennedy made his position clear on several occasions, most notably in a 12 April 1961 press conference when he said "There will be no Americans involved inside Cuba . . . no intervention by American forces."

The exile leaders also assumed a larger exile force would land with them, that guerrillas would join them, and a diversionary landing would be made elsewhere on the island. Their assumptions were never made known to the President and his were not made known to them. Schlesinger writes "I doubt whether anyone in Washington really knew what was taking place in Guatemala."[13]

Fourth, anti-Castro popular uprisings are considered essential to the success of the operation, or at least Kennedy thought so. Allen Dulles said much later he knew of no estimate that a spontaneous uprising

would be touched off by the landing. Yet the impression given Kennedy at the time of the decision was that the invasion would set off organized uprisings by armed members of the Cuban resistance. In fact, the underground or resistance had been a vital part of the CIA planning from the beginning. When the CIA leaders were questioned in early April about the prospects of internal resistance, they indicated over 2500 persons belonged to the movement, 20,000 more were sympathizers and, once established, the exiles could expect the support of a quarter of the Cuban people. It appears, however, the CIA planners and operators had serious doubts about the resistance capabilities, discounted or ignored this aspect of planning as the time passed, and put all their efforts into the invasion. At no time were their doubts brought to the attention of the President. Kennedy himself apparently discounted evidence that would have cast doubts on a popular uprising. A writer for the New York Herald Tribune who had just visited Cuba reported Castro was still popular with the young and those who had benefited from the social changes of the revolution. Eisenhower had written "Fidel Castro was a hero to the masses in many Latin American nations . . . his crimes and wrong doings . . . had little effect on the young, the peons, the underprivileged. . . ."[14] Also, intelligence reports from agencies other than the CIA indicated Castro's political strength was stronger than the CIA had estimated. Another factor involved the effectiveness of Castro's police state measures, a question which was not adequately addressed. Castro, aided by mass arrests which followed the landing of the invasion force, proved far stronger than the planners had claimed.

Fifth, the estimates of Castro's military strength were wrong. British and State Department intelligence reports indicated Castro was

militarily stronger than the CIA had estimated, but the reports were rejected or at least not sufficiently debated.

Kennedy is said to have had deep-rooted doubts about the entire affair, yet the vital information he needed to make a decision was either not provided or not sought. No real alternatives were presented. He allowed the bureaucratic momentum to sweep him away without adequately considering the consequences if the plan were not successful.

D. The CIA and JCS

Sorensen writes that the gaps referred to previously "arose in part because the new administration had not yet fully organized itself for crisis planning, enabling the precommitted authors and advocates of the project in the CIA and JCS to exercise a dominant influence."[15]

The leaders of the CIA were certainly able men who had the national interests at heart, but they were placed in a position of advocating a course of action on which they had personally worked and in which their organization had a heavy interest. A similar CIA operation had been successful in Guatemala in 1954 and there was no reason to suspect it would not work in Cuba. Because of their bias, no realistic alternatives were presented.

The primary CIA expertise involved covert activities, and, because the Bay of Pigs was intended to be a covert (non-US involvement) operation was clearly too large to be covert and therefore the measures taken to cover United States involvement became ludicrous.

The estimates upon which much of the CIA planning was based suffered from the "need-to-know" standard operating procedure.

> It appeared later that the Intelligence Branch of the CIA had never been officially apprised of the Cuba expedition and that CIA's elaborate national

> estimates procedure was never directed to the question whether an invasion would trigger other uprisings.[16]

At the State Department, the Cuban analysts, who received the daily flow of information from the island, were not asked for their comments. Thus, the same men both planned the operation and judged its chances of success. In effect, the secrecy aspect excluded "much of the expertise of the government at a time when every alert newspaperman knew something was afoot."[17]

The plan as it evolved became a military operation which the CIA was not equipped to handle. It tried to direct an operation step by step from Washington, over a thousand miles from the scene without adequate, direct and secure communications. As a result, the CIA men on the scene became central figures in the planning and control of the operation. The answers to presidential doubts thus came from people most committed to supporting the plan with no one else in between in a position with sufficient expertise to counter what was offered.

The JCS endorsed the CIA plan but only gave it limited study.

> In as much as it was the responsibility of another agency and did not directly depend on their forces, they were not as close or critical in their examination as they might otherwise have been, and depended on the CIA's estimates of Castro's military and political strength. Moreover, they had originally approved the plan when it called for a landing at the city of Trinidad . . . and when Trinidad was ruled out as too conspicuous, they selected the Bay of Pigs as the best of the alternative sites offered without informing either Kennedy or McNamara that they still thought Trinidad preferable.[18]

JCS collaboration with the CIA in refining the plan gave the White House the impression of their wholehearted support.

In essence, the authority of the President was delegated to the organizational level where it was impossible to consider and debate

alternatives. Organizational theorists would have told Kennedy that the human beings which make up organizations do not consider all alternatives, and pick actions with what seem to be the best consequences from their perspective. They estimate the probabilities of possible outcomes, but are reluctant to base actions on estimates of an uncertain future. By avoiding uncertainty, they limit the alternatives. Their repertoires and past experiences limit their choices. They often select the first alternative that appears to satisfy a goal and thus, the order in which alternatives are turned up is crucial. "Search is biased by the special training and experience of the various parts of the organization, the interaction of hopes and expectations, and the communication distortions reflecting unresolved conflict."[19] All of these characteristics were "operative" at the time the decision was made. Armed with this theoretical knowledge, Kennedy should have considered the consequences of failure in infinitely more detail than he did. He should have probed more, developed other alternatives.

> In as much as he was unwilling to conduct an overt operation through the Department of Defense, he should have abandoned it altogether as beyond the CIA's capability. He should have insisted on more skepticism from his staff, and made clear that their courage was not to be questioned by the advocates.[20]

II. Vietnam

A. Why were US Combat Forces Committed to Vietnam?

> In Indochina choice of the alternative (supporting independence movements like that of Ho Chi Minh's) would have required imagination, which is never a long suit with governments, and willingness to take the risk of supporting a Communist when Communism was still seen as a solid bloc. . . .Support of Humpty-Dumpty was chosen instead and once policy adopted and implemented, all subsequent activity becomes an effort to justify it.[21]

> President Johnson is famous for his 'consensus building' approach to national security policy. It was not that the president sought to reach a consensus in the Congress or even in most of the executive branch when policy was actually being formulated. Rather, such a consensus was usually sought after he had taken a decision. Essentially, the consensus-building approach was a tool to get the Congress and NSC advisers on record as being in agreement with major, sensitive decisions.[22]

The striking feature encountered in reading how this momentous decision was made was the dominance of President Johnson and a very small group of advisers. Johnson inherited his predecessor's foreign policy structure which comprised small ad hoc groups whose composition was flexible and which were responsible for policy formulation and execution.[23] Johnson had little of the Kennedy flair for foreign policy matters. He was, however, determined not to lose the war.

The way Johnson dealt with it was through fragmented and piecemeal consideration of a number of interrelated issues. Rather than conducting a comprehensive assessment of what the US was trying to do, defining objectives early, obtaining divergent views and developing a coordinated strategy, he chose to try to make the existing system work. As such, each agency involved tended to do its own thing in response to decisions made at the top policy level.

Very little dissent was heard or accepted. The resident iconoclast, George Ball, was tolerated as a vehicle to provide Johnson with the ammunition to deal with critics who lamented the lack of differing views. It was almost a case of "group think." In the critical 27 July 1965 meeting at which it was decided to commit the US to combat in Vietnam, it was also decided that there would be no Reserve call-up. All present to include General Wheeler, the Chairman of the JCS, agreed. However, Berman points out:

> But Johnson failed to understand the nature of unanimity and its future costs. To wit, when the president had conducted a similar poll at the 21 July meeting, unanimity also prevailed, but in favor of a Reserve call-up. . . .The President had succeeded in forging consensus between his advisors on the decision to move ahead with the Americanization of the war.[24]

B. Pre-eminence of Military Solutions

The result of the "closed shop" decisionmaking, exclusion of dissenting views, and inadequate analysis was that each agency tended to do its own thing, and not necessarily in coordination with other agencies involved. Each element involved in Saigon reported back to its parent headquarters or department in Washington and responded to guidance in return. Since there was no central coordinating element in Washington, guidance was often contradictory, objectives were never clear, and it was difficult to pinpoint responsibility. Coordination was not much better in Saigon. Although the Ambassador was nominally in charge, the organizational tendency was one of non-interference in the military sphere. Since the overwhelming US presence in South Vietnam was military, and since the military effort seemed to receive the most attention in terms of programs and money, it was only natural that the military effort would become the primary consideration at the top level of decisionmaking, and would shape the field implementation of the many programs that were adopted.

With the military arguing for military resources, there tended to be little consideration of the political implications. Indeed, if ever there was a time for consideration of the political implications it was in 1964 in the aftermath of the coup d'etat against Diem. Political stability was virtually non-existent. As each of the six different regimes came to power, key Vietnamese governmental leaders, heads of

agencies, bureau chiefs, department heads and ministers changed. There was simply no way that government could be effective even if it had been one that had widespread support. Thus the military both on the US and Vietnamese sides appeared to represent the only function over which some influence could be brought to bear.

From the very beginning, the US Army did not buy into the counter-insurgency doctrine. Yet, as Townsend Hoopes points out with regard to the 1961 Kennedy decision to increase the US presence,

> Ingrained preferences as to military means were thus already beginning to subordinate political purpose and dictate strategy. In that report of November 1961 (Taylor-Rostow report), the future was foreshadowed.[25]

Richard Betts states that the military is actually more wedded to policy than politicians and therefore:

> . . .where civilians often sought loopholes and room for maneuver in crisis decisions, the military were likely to pose starker alternatives and to couch them in terms of necessity rather than choice. Only the differences in military interpretations of necessity provided the flexibility that Presidents valued.[26]

What then happened was that military options drove policy rather than policy determining what the military should do. Betts says it well, "Policy may require military commitments that are not militarily rational if they achieve political goals that outweigh military costs."[27] The problem was of course that political goals were never clear and the military reverted to recommending and doing what it knew best—fighting conventionally. The South Vietnamese Army was created in the image of its maker, trainer and supporter. The resultant large unit operations, massive firepower, huge logistic trains and a wedding to home bases were not suited for the type of enemy encountered in Vietnam. As that Army

became less and less successful, the military followed its normal tendency to ask for more and more personnel, equipment, weapons and the like.

Meanwhile, back in Washington, the situation appeared bleak. As the model would indicate, alternatives seemed limited to military ones. Several trips were made by the President's top level advisers to Vietnam and several meetings were held at the White House with Johnson participating. In most cases, the JCS was represented by Secretary McNamara. As indicated earlier, the recommendations centered around how to handle the situation vice basic policy matters and objectives. Military recommendations came from those on the ground in Vietnam. Unfortunately the JCS saw their function as supporting the field commander's recommendations rather than assessing them, this despite their reservations. Those reservations included the extremes that the US ought not be involved militarily, and that the number of troops being proposed was insufficient to do the job. The JCS eventually recommended the SOP-like large-scale, massive commitment that was politically unacceptable to the President. There was never a clear understanding of the President's policy to limit the war with limited resources. The allocation of manpower, resources, and material would not be allowed to affect Great Society programs. The fear of Soviet and/or Chinese intervention restricted military operations against the North. The North Vietnamese were to be convinced that they could not succeed but it was never clear how that was to be translated into military tactics and operations. The ensuing result was a fundamental disagreement between the military and the top-level decision-makers. Rather than raise their voices in protest, the JCS saluted and said "yes sir." They allowed themselves to be co-opted out of the major

decisions by accepting less than they knew was necessary to succeed in achieving the objective as they interpreted it to be. Again, Betts is on the mark,

> The costs of insufficient professionalism and insufficient insistence on their own autonomous judgment by the chiefs in 1965 may have been as great as the costs of excessive demands for autonomy by MacArthur in 1951.[28]

C. Lack of Analysis

A most intriguing question raised by the extensive reading done for this paper is why policymakers did not in 1964-65 ask the hard questions about US involvement, its long-range implications, the chances of success; and why they did not question the fundamental premise that South Vietnam's viability was vital to US national interests. In short, why did not someone ask "why"? Were they blinded by the all encompassing fear of communism, by the psychology that there could never be another "Munich," by the perceived need to maintain the image of an all-powerful and wise United States? Yes, to a great extent, but institutional biases, perspectives, norms and regular ways of doing things also created an inertia of its own that compounded the normal organizational impediments against the kind of basic analysis that should have been conducted prior to the commitment of US combat forces.

It is most interesting to note with regard to the lack of basic analysis that the usual organizational procedure of worst case analysis was either not applied or disregarded. The same seemed true for the Bay of Pigs decision. Since President Johnson had the same principal advisers as Kennedy, one tends therefore to lend credence Betts' statement, "Liberals usually criticize worst-case analysis as a frame of mind that risks becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy."[29] Even more in tune with our model application is:

> Worst-case analysis has most effect when the issues are prospective or when advisors have reason to fear failure, and it has least effect when issues are immediate and costs of abstention seem certain while costs of actions seem lower.[30]

In another way, it can be said that a common organizational mode of "can do" prevailed. In the JCS case, "can do" clouded judgment, thinking and the seasoned intuitive knowledge that the US was getting deeper and deeper involved in a tragic nightmare.

Another major problem in the lack of adequate analysis was the difficulty in obtaining accurate data. As noted above, each organization involved tended to act independently. Each measured progress in different ways. Each had members whose careers could be made or broken over Vietnam. The assignment of military officers for twelve month tours not only limited the development of expertise, but also significantly diminished the incentive for long-range thinking and performance. Optimism reigned supreme in the official reporting that went to Washington. Military reporting dominated intelligence reports to the point where pessimistic evaluations of non-military agencies were for all intents and purposes disregarded. Turning once again to Betts:

> In the case of Vietnam reporting, both factors-fraud and dysfunction-played a mutually reinforcing role. The incentive of careerism . . . abetted the organizational dynamics of inaccurate reporting and over-optimism and contradicted the classic standards of military professionalism (realism, honor, asceticism, and sacrifice).[31]

> Vietnam was a routinized war, which made careerism particularly acute.[32]

Even in the optimistic reports there were plenty of pessimistic notes combined therein to confuse policymakers. A common ploy among organizations, particularly the military, was to cite an optimistic or positive trend and then state that such a trend would not, or could not be continued unless additional people were provided, more funds were made available, increased bombing was authorized and the like.

The fact remained that accurate, realistic and perceptive reporting was available. The office of National Estimates provided such reporting and indeed George Ball voiced that reporting to the President and the key principals with remarkable prescience. That he and the reporting was ignored is a sad commentary on the system.

D. Military-Civilian Differences

One final point is worth noting in applying the organizational process model. We have already noted how the military view tended to dominate the decisionmaking. We should note well Betts' statement:

> A civilian-military difference that came to complicate policymaking in 1964 was that for those in uniform, the articulated policy was the independent variable that should drive tactics; to the civilians, policy was a dependent variable subject to reevaluation in light of tactical results.[33]

The problem is that articulated policy, as we have said, was never very clear and thus the military tactics drove the strategy since tactical vice strategic decisions were the order of the day in Washington. Betts again is most profound:

> Military advice is less salient in establishing basic policy and strategy than it is in evaluating tactical capabilities, and therefore interpretations of capabilities have been their major channel of influence.[34]

Unfortunately, those capabilities drove the policy train that led to the fateful decisions in 1965.

Another civilian-military difference operative in the 1965 Vietnam decisions was the diplomatic preference for negotiation whereas the military always prefers early decisions to implement plans/operations before the enemy can strike, i.e. to seize the initiative. We see that today in most of our worldwide military commands where military leaders attempt to get civilian policymakers on board with contingency plans to preclude delays should actual decisions have to be made.

One also notes in the Vietnam decisions that the military tended to avoid political issues and left the politics to civilians while they concentrated on combat operations. President Kennedy found this a shortcoming in military leaders and thus eventually tended to ignore their advice. The reason Maxwell Taylor rose to such prominence in the Kennedy administration was because he was very much attuned to political realities. That sensitivity however eventually spelled his disfavor with the Johnson administration in face of total emphasis on military solutions.

E. Overall

An analysis of the overall organizational process model application reveals that, unlike the Bay of Pigs, the impact of organizational processes in the July 1965 Vietnam decision was somewhat limited. The overriding concern was to prevent a Communist takeover of Vietnam, a concern that was forged by the cold war and the gradual and growing commitments of several presidents. Even if the organizational process ensured a widespread debate and permitted all points of view to be heard, the decision would likely have been the same. Yet, the organizational process offers at least partial explanations for what ensued. Leslie Gelb states,

> Like the Frankenstein monster, the bureaucracy, once created, became uncontrollable. It played only a subsidiary role in setting the basic American commitment in Vietnam but a central role in shaping the war itself.[35]

R. W. Komer adds:

> Bureaucratic inertia--sheer reluctance to change accepted ways of doing business except slowly and incrementally--appears to have been a major factor. The organizational politics involved in shifting the distribution of power also played a role, each proposal for change arousing the protective instincts of the various departments, agencies, and ministries concerned. These institutions had long since carved out their respective operational areas, and were generally careful not to violate the conventional dividing lines between their responsibilities.[36]

CHAPTER III

ENDNOTES

1. Allison, Essence of Decision, p. 67-68.

2. Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 301.

3. Ibid., pp. 301-2.

4. Allison, p. 87.

5. Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power, (New York: Wiley, 1960), p. 198.

6. Sorensen, p. 304.

7. Allison, p. 79.

8. Neustadt, p. 53.

9. Haynes Johnson, The Bay of Pigs; The Leaders' Story of Brigade 2506, (New York: Norton, 1964), p. 54.

10. Ibid.

11. Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 234.

12. Johnson, p. 54.

13. Schlesinger, p. 268.

14. Eisenhower, Waging Peace, p. 525.

15. Sorensen, p. 305.

16. Schlesinger, p. 248.

17. Schlesinger, p. 248.

18. Sorensen, p. 305.

19. Allison, p. 77.

20. Sorensen, p. 306.

21. Tuchman, The March of Folly, p. 245.

22. BDM Corporation, A Study of the Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam, Vol. III-US Foreign Policy and Vietnam, 1945-1975 (McLean, Virginia: BDM, 1980), p. 3-36.

23. Townsend Hoopes, The Limits of Intervention, (New York: Longman, 1978), p. 5.

24. Berman, Planning a Tragedy, p. 126.

25. Hoopes, p. 23.

26. Richard K. Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crisis, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 76.

27. Ibid., pp. 91-2.

28. Ibid., p. 51.

29. Ibid., p. 162.

30. Ibid., p. 161.

31. Ibid., pp. 184-5.

32. Ibid., p. 185.

33. Ibid., p. 24.

34. Ibid., p. 84.

35. Gelb, The Irony of Vietnam, p. 240.

36. R. W. Komer, Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on US-GVN Performance in Vietnam, (Santa Monica, California: Rand, 1972), p. 91.

CHAPTER IV

MODEL III-GOVERNMENTAL (BUREAUCRATIC) POLITICS MODEL

Model III Summary

According to this "paradigm", governmental behavior is an outcome of bargaining games along regularized circuits among players positioned hierarchically within the government. This model sees no unitary actor, no unified group of leaders, but many actors as players, each with considerable baronial discretion. The actors

> focus not on a single strategic issue but on many diverse intra-national problems as well; players who act in terms of no consistent set of strategic objectives but rather according to various conceptions of national, organizational and personal goals; players who make government decisions not by rational choice but by the pulling and hauling that is politics.[1]

What the nation does is sometimes the result of the triumph of one group committed to that course of action over other groups fighting for other alternatives. "Equally often, however, different groups pulling in different directions produce a result . . . distinct from what any individual or group intended."[2] Neustadt supports this when he says we have "a government of separated institutions sharing power."[3] Allison continues,

> Men share power. Men differ about what must be done. The differences matter. This milieu necessitates that government decisions and actions result from the political process . . . what moves the chess pieces is not simply the reasons that support a course of action, or the routines of organizations that enact an alternative, but the power and skill of proponents and opponents of the action in question.[4]

He adds that the president's "bargaining advantages are rarely sufficient to assure enactment of his will."[5]

I. Bay of Pigs

A. Why was the Bay of Pigs Operation Approved?

1. Campaign Politics[6]

By the closing days of the presidential campaign, Cuba had become a dominant international issue. Early in September, Castro has announced that Cuba would recognize Red China; then he tore up a 1952 military pact with the United States and openly welcomed the military support of Russia and China. In the United States, pressure for action became greater. The rhetoric and the charges, the attacks and the rebuttals, grew sharper and more personal. "Castro, perfectly gauging the American temper and characteristically acting in spite of it, called the United States a 'vulture . . . feeding on humanity'."[7]

The candidates kept up the attack. Following Khrushchev's shoe-banging performance at the United Nations, Nixon denounced Kennedy as "soft" on Quemoy-Matsu and by implication on Communism. The Manchester, New Hampshire Union Leader was printing that Kennedy was a Communist sympathizer. Kennedy retorted to the Republican charges by issuing a statement

> We must attempt to strengthen the non-Batista democratic anti-Castro forces in exile, and in Cuba itself, who offer eventual hope of overthrowing Castro. Thus far these fighters for freedom have had virtually no support from our Government.[8]

Nixon, who within the confines of the Eisenhower administration had urged a more aggressive Cuban policy and presumably approved the decision to begin the exile training, immediately called Kennedy's statement irresponsible.

Infact, Kennedy had not seen the statement prior to its publication, but probably would have approved save for changing "fighters for freedom" to "forces for freedom."[9] He certainly did not intend to mean unilateral action by the United States. He meant only moral and psychological, not military support, and he was committed to working within the framework of the OAS.[10]

With regard to the campaign effects on the decision to approve the Bay of Pigs operation, Sorensen states

> His (Kennedy's) campaign pledges to aid anti-Castro rebels had not forced his hand, . . but he did feel that his disapproval of the plan would be a show of weakness inconsistent with his general stance.[11]

Some would argue, however, that his campaign pledges did force his hand.

2. Bureaucratic Politics

In the Bay of Pigs operation, the Kennedy administration was much too new for bureaucratic politics to be a dominant factor. There really was only one group involved, the CIA, and it tended to dominate the discussions. Surely the JCS was involved, but only late in the game, and, given the condition that there would be no overt United States involvement, they did not give the plan the attention they should have. Also, as we noted earlier, there were no realistic alternatives presented. All the discussion seemed to have centered around a plan that was already in operation.

As we have seen in our model, players act according to various conceptions of national, organizational and personal goals. Neither the CIA nor the JCS could judge the Bay of Pigs operation and its possible consequences from the President's viewpoint. They made their judgments in the light of their own responsibilities, not his. Unfortunately,

Kennedy did not have sufficient time to judge or test them and they did not know him well enough to raise the difficult questions.

One of the key factors in this regard was Kennedy's insistence that there would be no United States intervention. The JCS and perhaps the CIA realized the operation could not succeed without American assistance, particularly air support, but no one raised any objection to the President's basic condition.

> They were so intent on action that they were either blind to danger or willing to assume that the President could be pressured into reversing his decision once the necessity arose. Their planning, it turned out, proceeded almost as if open US intervention were assumed, but their answers to the President's specific questions did not. Could the exile brigade achieve its goals without our military participation, he asked? He was assured in writing that it could—a wild misjudgment, a statement of hope at best. Were the members of the exile brigade willing to risk this effort without our military participation, the President asked, and to go ahead with the realization that we would not intervene if they failed? He was assured that they were. . . .[12]

As a result of these assurances, the President pledged no United States intervention in his 12 April press conference.

If the CIA and the JCS had realized what risks were involved from the President's perspective, and understood the meaning and strong intent behind his words, they may have answered his questions differently and averted a serious blunder in United States foreign policy.

The only opposition came from Senator William Fulbright and Arthur Schlesinger, but "this did not bulk large against the united voice of institutional authority."[13] Chester Bowles strongly opposed the invasion in a memorandum to Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and asked if the Secretary disagreed with him, to talk to the President. The fact that Rusk himself was part of the "newness" seems to have precluded Bowles from being heard. Therefore, it would seem that the operation was

approved without the give and take of governmental politics. Rather, it appears to have been the product of pre-established political forces within the bureaucracy.

3. Revolutionary Council Politics

Below the governmental level, however, politics played a significant role in Kennedy not being presented with the information and alternatives he needed. The politics involved the pulling and hauling of the Cuban exile groups.

As we have seen, one of the key elements in Kennedy's approval of the plan was his thinking that he was permitting the exiles to decide on the risks of the invasion on the condition of no overt United States support. The President's thoughts were to be communicated through the Cuban Revolutionary Council and brigade leaders as representatives of the exiles. The Council, which was to be the basis for a Cuban provisional government once the invasion had gained a foothold, was so politically splintered that it was kept largely uninformed on the landing and out of touch with the brigade. Its President, Doctor José Miro Cardona believed only American armed might could overturn Castro, but did not pass on the message he received from Kennedy's emissaries that no American military help would be provided.

The Eisenhower decision in March 1960 directed that the CIA bring together a broad range of Cuban exiles with those who were pro-Batista (Communists excluded) into unified political opposition to the Castro regime. When the use of exiles was first proposed in the spring of 1959, only pro-Batista people were available and, although they were not a significant part of the Revolutionary Council, some of them became active members.

There were actually two main groups in the Council. First, the pre-Batista/right-wing group which was committed to the restoration of the political democracy they had known before Batista. They advocated constitutional democracy, civil rights and a free press. They were identified with Cuba of the past: "traditional parties, progressive intent and ineffectual performance."[14] Some were racketeers who found politics lucrative. Others had been Batista henchmen. Their objectives were compatible with the interests of the Eisenhower administration and were considered tractable. They were therefore persuaded to form a front group (á la CIA SOP) for the exile operations, but did little more than talk among themselves. The CIA man in the front was Manuel Artime, a disenchanted Castro official brought out of Cuba by the CIA. He was the only Cuban link between the CIA's political and military operations. Because he was young and politically inexperienced, he was easily controlled by the CIA. Meanwhile, the CIA paid little attention to the front while it began its recruiting and training of exiles.

The second group represented the anti-Batista elements and might be classified as left-wing. Although they had fought with Castro and served in his government, they opposed him for turning the revolution over to Communists. They shared the democratic idealism of the right-wing, but wanted a social and economic revolution to accompany the return to constitutional democracy. They were led by Manuel Ray, who, after resigning from Castro's government, organized the People's Revolutionary Movement (MRP) and spent most of 1960 in Cuba organizing an anti-Castro underground, as he had done against Batista. He believed the only way to overthrow Castro was from within and that the Cuban people must be the ones to do it. He believed the "uprising would succeed only if its clear purpose was to rescue the revolution from the

Communists and resume the revolutionary task of building a new and progressive Cuba."[15] He opposed the invasion idea and refused to bring the MRP into the front. His opposition and "his advocacy of the underground thesis posed a threat both to the status of more conservative exiles and to the control of the CIA."[16]

Because of this problem, the CIA attempted to make policy by backing one group against the other. They tried, with the help of other exiles, to discredit Ray. His policy was denounced as "Castroism without Castro." He was denied access to CIA's secret radio transmitter and other forms of support. Resentment was created in the front and the men most capable of rallying popular support in Cuba were left out. The front leadership began to realize it lacked authority, and that it was not being told what was going on.

The resentment in the front led to problems in the training camp. The anti-Batista members, concerned that the leaders of the brigade had once served in Batista's army and therefore might be pro-Batista, supported a mutiny in the Guatemalan training camp against these leaders. United States advisers intervened, but of the 500 who had resigned from the brigade, a few still held out, were arrested and held prisoner under pitiful conditions deep in the jungle of northern Guatemala. Artime, the most amenable member of the front, was brought in as one of the military commanders. "The CIA was now in complete command."[17]

It is doubtful if this incident was reported to Kennedy. If it were, it may have caused him to think twice about reports that morale in the brigade could not have been higher and may have led him to question other aspects of the operation.

The CIA proceeded with its planning for the invasion. It was directed to bring Ray and his people into the front. Negotiations between the two groups proved futile however and eventually they were coerced into uniting under the Revolutionary Council. Ray and his people did not like either the CIA control or the invasion idea, "but, supposing that the United States backing guaranteed success, they wanted to defend the interests of the Cuban underground and to assure their own part in a post-Castro future."[18]

The upshot of this conflict is best described by Sorensen:

> Cooperation (of the underground) was further impaired by the fact that some of the exiles' left-wing leaders were mistrusted by the CIA, just as some of their right-wing leaders and brigade members were mistrusted by the Cuban underground. As a result, . . no coordinated uprising or underground effort was really planned or possible. . . .[19]

As we noted earlier, the help of the underground was considered vital to the success of the operation and was one of the factors which Kennedy counted on when he approved the operation. The fact is that because of the political bickering, the CIA paid little attention to this all important aspect.

II. Vietnam

A. Why Were US Combat Forces Committed to Vietnam?

If the Bay of Pigs was an unfettered triumph for the "Organizational Process Model," the July 1965 Vietnam decision may have been the same for the "Governmental (Bureaucratic) Politics Model." However, the distinction between the two models is hazy. In the Vietnam case, there was little group fighting at the top policymaking levels. As we have noted, the decisionmaking was limited to a very small group and, unlike Allison's view that the president's bargaining advantages are limited,

President Johnson dominated the process. He created a consensus among his principal assistants, but that consensus was more a group think process led by Secretary of Defense McNamara and given strong support by McGeorge Bundy.

Allison states that deadlines and faces of issues determine where each player stands. "Because deadlines raise issues in one context rather than in another, they importantly affect the resolution of the issue."[19] With regard to the issue at hand in July 1965, Berman states:

> . . .the fundamental fact of international politics in July 1965 was South Vietnam's impending fall to Communist control, unless the United States provided enough ground support to deny Hanoi its goal of unifying Vietnam under Communist leadership. Lyndon Johnson's time of reckoning had arrived. . . .[20]

As our model suggests, one cannot divorce governmental decisions from politics. Johnson knew in 1964 that the situation in Vietnam was bad and getting much worse. He was aware of the need for an increased US commitment—indeed he caused contingency plans to be drawn up for that increase. He was also faced with an election campaign against the "hawkish" Barry Goldwater. Goldwater struck fear of large-scale war into a majority of voters. Johnson therefore positioned himself in opposition emphasizing that the Vietnamese conflict (as it was then called) should be prosecuted by the Vietnamese and that "American boys" should not do it for them. He very masterfully obtained the Gulf of Tonkin resolution knowing full well that Congressional support (in that case overwhelming) would stand him well in the election in November 1964. The fact is that such support was envisioned by the president as necessary several months before it was enacted. The rather suspicious incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin simply provided the most propitious time

to request the resolution. Armed then with such an open-ended resolution and his landslide election, Johnson was determined to first and foremost pursue Great Society legislation while preventing a Communist takeover in Vietnam. Therefore there was no real question of the "what" in Vietnam. Rather it became a matter of "how" and the "how" was clearly the dominant mode vice groups or individuals pulling against each other.

B. Department of Defense (McNamara) Domination of the "How"

President Johnson in essence abandoned Eisenhower's original basis for support of the South Vietnamese government, i.e. a stable and meritorious government supported by the people. The successive coups d'etat made it clear that stability was not to be in the near term. Thus, he turned to military solutions in an effort to bolster the South Vietnamese government of the moment in the hope that increased US involvement would buy the time necessary for reform and the emergence of a strong national leader. However, Johnson was clear that the increases would only be the minimum necessary to prevent a communist victory. To that end, he turned to the Department of Defense and Secretary McNamara.

McNamara was a premiere example of what Paul Kattenburg describes as the "economic and technocratic effectiveness (which) took over the central role in our policymaking."[21] Most authors read for this study would agree that this economic and technical bent gave rise to "can-do" attitudes for all problems; macro theories of political behavior like monolithic communism; emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness of governmental machinery vice what government was doing; and the resulting pervasiveness of systems, mathematical, unit cost approaches to decision-making.

McNamara, as we know, applied his quantitative penchant to running the military departments. His success in the private sector showed that even the most difficult of problems could be solved by numbers, overpowering force, determination and hard work. After all, how could the North Vietnamese stand up to the pressure to be applied by the world's foremost military power? The increased capabilities of US conventional forces which came about in response to the "flexible response" doctrine seemed a good match for the conflict faced in Vietnam. McNamara's brilliance and his ability to harness the military chiefs established him as the pre-eminent member of the small Vietnam decisionmaking group.

McNamara's dominance of the JCS was total. His virtual disdain for military advice effectively left the chiefs out on a limb. Military leaders were in a quandary. As we have learned at the War College the military is most negative when capabilities are lacking to accomplish the mission, and most positive and confident when capabilities match requirements. In the Vietnam case, the situation fell between those extremes. The chiefs faced differing estimates of capabilities and different assumptions of goals. They were guarded, perhaps even reluctant, toward committing US combat forces. However, given the requirement to plan for that contingency, they followed the natural dictum to go all out. In the July 1965 deliberations for example, General Wheeler estimated that it would take 700 thousand to one million US troops seven years to defeat the North Vietnamese/Viet Cong forces and complete the pacification effort. Those maximum-type solutions were just not acceptable to a president bent on minimum responses that would not endanger domestic legislation. As a result, the president tended to distrust military advice and turned to McNamara to keep his thumb on the uniformed "warriors."

An upshot of McNamara's control of the military was the creation of his own civilian analytical staff. That staff followed their leader's quantitative approach and provided him with the recommendations that would fit the president's guidance and political bent. The civilian analysts in fact dispossessed the military in management and strategic planning. With the emphasis on technocratic efficiency and low unit cost, political, social and military expertise were relegated to the "back burner." Berman's account supports Betts' words,

> It (the record) shows that Lyndon Johnson took the lead in promoting infusion of United States troops, hoping partial measures might stave off defeat, despite military warnings that they would not succeed.[22]

David Halberstam states it best:

> Thus did the Americans ignore the most basic factor of war, and when they did stumble across it . . . it continued to puzzle them. McNamara's statistics and calculations were of no value at all, because they never contained the fact that if the ratio was ten to one in favor of the government, it still meant nothing, because the one man was willing to fight and die and the ten were not.[23]

Paul Kattenburg's words are equally telling:

> The very fact that the top leadership shied away from the hard political decisions that had to be made about Vietnam in itself explains why technocrats and managers, whose job it is to be specialists and maintainers of the status quo, got such a large share of the action.[24]

C. Abdication of the State Department

"The forthright dominance of the State Department in war councils, obvious in the spring--of 1961, was now (1964) a thing of the past."[25]

Robert Komer states that the Pentagon Papers

> paint a picture of . . . near-abdication (by State) of any executive responsibility for the US effort except when it bore on the limits to which our out of country operations were subject.[26]

The State Department hierarchy, with the exception of George Ball, viewed its role as political only and did not, as it should have, recognize and voice the point that political concerns were the sine qua non of the situation in Vietnam. The department did not exercise its managerial responsibilities over all program aspects in Vietnam. It should have been the central coordinating point in Washington and in Saigon. The appointment of Maxwell Taylor as ambassador should have changed that situation with his political-military outlook. However, the record shows that his advice and his reservations were largely overcome by JCS-seconded recommendations from General Westmoreland. He opposed sending in the first Marines in March 1965. In an April 1965 meeting with the president and key advisers he urged (successfully he thought) restraint in additional troop commitments. Upon returning to Saigon, he learned through a series of messages that the acceleration of troop deployments was about to take place despite what he believed were the decisions made when he was in Washington.

Perhaps the most stalwart of all in supporting the president and in anti-communist, falling domino fervor was the Secretary of State himself, Dean Rusk. He appears to have accepted without reservation the prevalent military solutions. He yielded the floor to Secretary McNamara, and even quashed the strong anti-involvement views of his deputy, George Ball, in private recommendations to the president.

As a result of State's abdication, the military options developed and championed by McNamara with putative and perhaps grudgingly given JCS blessing rose to the top of the slippery pole that slid the US deeper and deeper into Vietnam.

D. Total Support of the Country

One must keep in mind that in July 1965, the president faced very little opposition to his policies in Vietnam and infact had the support of virtually all centers of principal influence.

We have already noted that his landslide election was seen as a mandate for his policies. Congressional support was overwhelming in terms of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. The press was supportive and optimistic. Public opinion polls showed that a large majority of Americans supported the president's policies.

It is not surprising then that the giving and taking, pulling and hauling aspects of Model III were minimal in the 1964 through mid-1965 period of deliberations.

E. Absence of Debate

> So there was never any real debate, any meeting of the minds, any searching analysis of the reasons behind US involvement in Vietnam, any posing of the really vital questions that could ignite a meaningful debate.[27]

As Berman points out, President Johnson was very much in charge and framed the issues not only toward military options and the "how", but also to restrain those options in fear of Chinese and Soviet reactions. Thus, one is struck in reading the various memoranda containing action recommendations for the president by what George Ball calls the "Goldilocks Principle." He says it best:

> Working groups of seasoned bureaucrats deliberately control the outcome of a study assignment by recommending three choices. . . . By including with their favored choice one 'too soft,' and one 'too hard,' they assure that the powers deciding the issue will almost invariably opt for the one 'just right.'[28]

As it turned out, Ball favored what was both too soft and too hard. He believed and voiced the view that Vietnam was the wrong place to become

involved at the wrong time in the anti-communist crusade. That obviously was too soft, but his view that "the painful reality that America could arrest the galloping deterioration of its position only by the surgery of extrication" was too hard for Johnson to accept. His views were sought and well considered. However, the problem was that unlike a debate, only those who sought a way out had to prove their contentions. Those who favored escalation and increased commitments did not have to provide assurances that their policy recommendations would be successful. Again, we must keep in mind that we are talking about a very small group of advisers whose penchant for secrecy excluded many who might have supported Ball and caused more real debate. Vice President Humphrey was excluded after February 1965 when he wrote in opposition to reprisals against North Vietnam for the Pleiku bombing. The CIA director's view (John McCone) was that more US ground forces could not win, but he was not to be a key participant either. His successor, William Raborn's questioning of the basic military assumptions went for naught. McGeorge Bundy's coordination role led to the development of questions that if they had been permitted to cause or dominate the deliberations would have presented very real problems and pessimism with regard to US objectives. Thus, the President, uncertain and insecure as he was in the foreign policy arena, saw the world in very simplistic terms; avoided the costs and risks of both winning and losing by favoring the middle or "just right" course; encouraged excessive optimism; allowed secrecy to obliterate or at least dilute "any parochial advocacies or . . . bureaucratic or political tendencies which might prove obstacles to the determination of the national interest."[29]

F. Summary

Our model application shows an almost frightening method of decisionmaking at the highest levels. It is almost impossible to understand today the absence of debate. There is no question that President Johnson dominated the process. His basic insecurity caused him to fear that he might be the first president to be tagged as a "loser." The "group think" that ensued did him no favors. The reliance on military option without the benefit of good hard military analysis and reservations augured poorly for success. The momentum and inertia built up from the days of Truman through successive presidents made it appear that he had no other choice. Unfortunately, Barbara Tuchman's words may have applied, "No one is so sure of his premises as the man who knows too little."[30]

CHAPTER IV

ENDNOTES

1. Allison, Essence of Decision, p. 144.

2. Ibid., p. 145.

3. Neustadt, Presidential Power, p. 33.

4. Allison, p. 145.

5. Ibid., p. 148.

6. Allison is not clear as to whether campaign politics is a part of Model III; however, in Chapter 6 of his book, he cites Republican-Democrat give and take when he applies Model III to the Cuban missile crisis in a section entitled "Politics of Discovery", p. 187. For this reason, campaign politics is included here.

7. Johnson, The Bay of Pigs, p. 49.

8. Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p. 72.

9. Ibid., p. 73.

10. As Schlesinger saw it, p. 73.

11. Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 297.

12. Ibid., p. 298.

13. Schlesinger, p. 259.

14. Ibid., p. 227.

15. Ibid., p. 230.

16. Ibid., p. 231.

17. Ibid., p. 237.

18. Ibid., p. 244.

19. Allison, p. 168.

20. Berman, Planning a Tragedy, p. xi.

21. Kattenburg, The Vietnam Trauma, p. 190.

22. Berman, p. 27.

23. David Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest, (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Crest Paper, 1972), pp. 562-3.

24. Kattenburg, p. 207.

25. Gelb, The Irony of Vietnam, p. 98.

26. Komer, Bureaucracy Does Its Thing, p. 61.

27. Gelb, p. 213.

28. George W. Ball, The Past Has Another Pattern, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), p. 388.

29. Kattenburg, p. 162.

30. Tuchman, The March of Folly, p. 319.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

I The use of these models, the questions they require answered or at least examined, and the logical thought processes involved are effective ways to understand the dynamics of governmental decisionmaking. They can increase our understanding of policy processes and the outcomes they lead to, thereby enhancing the value of policy analysis and policy advice.

After the Bay of Pigs, President Kennedy asked, "How could I have been so far off base? All my life I've known better than to depend on the experts. How could I have been so stupid, to let them go ahead?"[1] The answers showed him how organizational processes and governmental politics led to the decision. Kennedy seemed to have learned the lessons well by his handling of the Cuban missile crisis. Some believe he would have extricated the US from Vietnam, but there is no hard evidence to support that belief.

The War Powers Resolution passed by the Congress in reaction to Vietnam is another example of what the models show, i.e. the absolute need for debate and public support for foreign policy ventures. Surely we see that recognition now in the case of El Salvador. Let us hope that the debate raises the hard questions.

The kind of analysis proposed by Allison's models can also assist our military leaders to determine how best to get their views known, and more importantly, what questions they should ask to understand what is desired by political leaders.

II. The recognition that behavioral-organizational and political aspects have significant impact on the decisionmaking process can lead to a better comprehension of why events occur as they do, and assist in providing advice in decision implementation. It can be argued that it is often more important to change behavior than to change policy. It is also more difficult, and for that reason alone, an understanding or at least an awareness of the organizational and behavioral influences in decisionmaking is essential.

In this respect, it might be said that the models, while a valuable basis for analyzing decisions, do not focus on the outcomes of decisions, and more importantly, on how decisions are implemented. Yet, the models do suggest ways of asking and answering questions pertaining to implementation. It would seem most beneficial, for example to consider the configurations of organizations, their norms and procedures, the extent of support for these norms and procedures, and the political configuration on top of and outside relevant organizations in selecting alternatives for solving problems and implementing solutions. Ways must be found to improve the capabilities of the "system" to select and implement actions.

III. The models present a basis for serious reexamination of foreign policy decisions. In the Cuban case, Sorensen writes that

> Instead of the President telling the bureaucracy that action was necessary and that they should devise certain means, the bureaucracy was telling the President that action was necessary and that the means were already fashioned. . . .[2]

Perhaps if a systematic examination of how the bureaucracy concluded that action was necessary was conducted, Kennedy's consideration of rapprochement with Castro might have been a more realistic alternative.

The anti-Communist crusades of the fifties seem to have had a "snowballing" effect. Some historians might have argued that United States policy in Latin America was the catalyst behind Castro, and that a significant change in policy could have averted the adverse effects of the Bay of Pigs on the world-wide United States foreign policy objectives. Neustadt indicates that Kennedy learned that in another country an effective politician can have motives very different from his own. What were Castro's motives? What were the organizational processes operating in Cuba? What political events were occurring in Cuba? Given the answers or at least an attempt to answer these questions, one might have seen the rapprochement possibility as an alternative. Certainly, if there was ever a chance of rapprochement, the Bay of Pigs destroyed it.

Similarly, a strong case can be made for recognizing that Ho Chi Minh was more nationalistically and anti-colonialist motivated than representative of a monolithic communist bloc. Having recognized that, the US might have concluded that North Vietnam was not about to give up and taken the many opportunities presented along the way to deeper involvement to extricate itself or to attempt to reach a political solution. Surely, one would now see that the lack of a firm political base in the South spelled failure for US objectives. Perhaps then the reexamination of Vietnam has led to the emphasis we now place on political stability in El Salvador.

IV. In the defense arena, the models may serve to improve our ability to more accurately define the enemy threat. Was Castro a threat to our national security in 1961? Did he have the organizational capabilities to subvert other Latin American countries? What were his objectives?

Could other Latin American countries resist attempts to subvert them to Communism? If Castro was a significant threat, could the Alliance for Progress have been a more effective tool than an invasion?

In Vietnam, what was the nature of the threat we faced? Could we defeat a guerrilla force by conventional means? Were we not fighting the last war again? Was the airmobile concept really what we needed or would we have been better served by securing area by area and staying put to maintain more than temporary security? What effects would bombing of the North have? Did not our experience in Europe show that strategic bombing was not as effective as we would have thought? Did we really expect the bombing to cause the North Vietnamese to give up the quest? What did the French experience demonstrate?

These and many other questions may have produced very different answers under Model II and Model III analysis than the prevalent "rational actor" approach.

V. Model II and III analyses require extensive information which often cannot be obtained. The internal workings of special governmental task groups are not always documented. The secrecy shroud around the CIA would make an examination of its organizational SOPs very difficult. In the Vietnam case, presidential papers have only recently been declassified.

If the models are to assist in the decisionmaking process, it would seem imperative that the detailed information necessary for the analysis be made available to more than just special action groups. In the Bay of Pigs affair, only the CIA and JCS had an opportunity to study the details of the plan. Only a small number of officials and advisers even knew of the plan's existence; and for meetings with the President,

memoranda were distributed at the beginning of each session and collected at the end, making virtually impossible any systematic criticism or alternatives.[4] Johnson apparently did not learn this lesson despite his involvement in the Kennedy Administration.

If there are lessons to be learned from such major decisions, one cannot wait until the "insiders" publish their "exclusive" accounts, or until Presidential papers are allowed to be examined by scholars. Of course, the individuals involved may have learned their lessons, but what about those that followed? The information necessary for the detailed Model II and III analyses should be made available as soon as possible after events if effective policy advice is desired.

VI. Allison's argument that most analysts explain the behavior of national governments in terms of the "Rational Actor Model" cannot be substantiated by the sources used for this paper. Sorensen and Schlesinger's accounts of the Bay of Pigs are only portions of their lengthy books on the Kennedy administration but nevertheless explain the rational actor, organizational processes and governmental politics aspects of the Bay of Pigs. Haynes Johnson's account also considers all aspects. Gelb, Kattenburg, Berman, Tuchman and others cover the waterfront very well. Komer's study by its very title, Bureaucracy Does Its Thing, shows how the organizational process model is applied. Betts' Soldiers, Statesmen and Cold Crisis is perhaps the very best example of the application of all models.

It might be argued that decisions like the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban missile crisis and Vietnam are particularly susceptible to model analysis. An extension of that might be that the models, while applicable to

high-level crisis decisions, are not equally applicable to other governmental actions. An examination of some of the significant non-crisis governmental decisions using the models would help to further determine their applicability.

VII. One of the organizing concepts of Model II is "Factored Problems and Fractionated Power." Allison states that problems are

> cut up and parceled out to various organizations. Within the US Government, the Department of State has primary responsibility for diplomacy, the Department of Defense for military security, the Treasury for economic affairs, and the CIA for intelligence.[5]

It would appear that the lack of such "parcelling" in both the Bay of Pigs and Vietnam was detrimental. Infact, contrary to Gelb's view (The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked) that the system worked, it did not in this author's view. Gelb's argument seems to be that US leaders realized what they were doing when they decided to do it, and that because of that the foreign policy decisionmaking system worked. There is no question that leaders knew what they were doing. However, the decisionmaking system was never used completely during the time of Johnson's 1964 and 1965 decisions. Our model applications show lack of analysis; pro-forma debate that did not deal with the "what"--only the "how"; a very limited spectrum of advice; excessive optimism; very little consideration of political aspects; no room for dissenting views; overreliance on military solutions; and lack of ability to make hard decisions. If that is the way the system is supposed to work, God help us!

VIII. A most frequently heard criticism is that the models are merely clusters of variables instead of coherent explanatory systems. The question arises as to whether these clusters of variables-to the extent

they are treated as coherent explanatory systems-are in competition with one another or are mutually supporting and complementary. Allison states "The proof of the pudding is in the demonstration that the frameworks produce different explanations."[6] In the Bay of Pigs decision, the models appear to be coexistent and complementary and do not necessarily provide alternative explanations. In the Cuban missile crisis analysis, the models produced quite different explanations of the same set of circumstances. In the Bay of Pigs and Vietnam decisions, the differences are not as striking.

In this vein, there seems to be a hazy distinction between some aspects of Models II and III. The basic unit of analysis for Model III is governmental action as a political resultant; that what happens results from compromise, conflict, and confusion of officials with diverse interests; the activity is best characterized as bargaining among individual members of the government. Many of the officials and individual government members belong to or head organizations. Their goals are determined by the organizations to which they belong. Their actions are actions of the organization rather than of themselves. The question is where does one draw the line between them?

Within Model II analysis, there is room for Model I. Those involved in the Bay of Pigs and Vietnam decisions certainly acted on what they rationally perceived to be the national objectives. The difficulty is that one might have to define "rational" in political terms and above all what the national objectives really are or really should be before proper analysis can be conducted.

This is not to say that there is no distinction between the conceptual models, but it does seem they run into each other in some respects.

The criticism that they are clusters of variables instead of separate systems is well founded. There is no question that the models broaden analysis and help to uncover aspects that might otherwise be overlooked. Neustadt is correct though when he states:

> We do not pull apart these models for the sake of independent application. We have no notion that the casual factors emphasized by each are separable in real life. But having sorted these out analytically, we now are in position to begin their reassembly, asking ourselves where, against what circumstances different combinations of those factors yield most fruitful explanations. Typology is our immediate concern; our aim becomes a single framework built of movable parts, with indicators telling us which parts we need investigate, in what priority order, as we set about explaining given outcomes of assorted types.[7]

IX. The "proof of the pudding" remains the same. The reexamination of the Bay of Pigs and 2 July 1965 Vietnam decisions demonstrates that while not necessarily different explanations of the decision were produced, the models are most helpful in providing a complete and useful analysis of major governmental decisions.

X. Military Implementation of National Policy

What do our model applications tell us about the translation of national-level policy guidance into military plans and actions?

A. First and perhaps most important is the absolute necessity for the military to be as clear as possible as to what the objective is. The JCS and entire chain of command must question what they are told to do if there is any doubt, and if no doubt verify the mission by repeating it to the decisionmakers as it is understood to them.

To that end, top-level military leaders cannot afford to ignore political realities, limitations or conditions. There is no such thing as a purely military solution. After all, do we not all know from

memory the Clausewitz dictum that war is a continuation of policy by other means. Those that would argue otherwise are deluding themselves. Recommendations that do not consider various alternatives vis-a-vis political realities lose credibility.

B. Once the policy/objective analysis is understood, a thorough, objective analysis of military capabilities to accomplish the objective must ensue. The results of that analysis must be presented without garnishment. Forget the "can-do" if it shows a "cannot-do." State uncertainty and the risks involved candidly and succinctly. Keep in mind that "a service's interests are not always served by employment of the service's forces."[8]

C. Closely analyze the threat involved. Don't accept conventional wisdom if there might be a better way. Never stop asking "why."

D. It is necessary for military leaders to understand their limitations, weaknesses and organizational tendencies. For example, the military desire for autonomy in operations may very well be detrimental to political goals. They must be prepared to rein themselves in or be reined in by political leaders and thereby lose credibility.

E. The Chairman of the JCS must have the authority to veto outright Service decisions which do not serve national policy interests. Less than optimal solutions derived by consensus will be discarded along with the solution bearer.

F. A key difficulty faced by military leaders, more specifically the JCS, is what to do when they disagree with the President or the Secretary of Defense. The answer is not an easy one. Some alternatives are:

1. Forget being "yes" men. Do all that one can to get views across. Seek meetings with the President directly if nothing else works. Do not harbor lingering doubts.

2. Develop alliances and understandings with counterparts in non-military agencies that will allow contrary views to be presented with the added weight of more than one agency. George Ball may have been more effective if he had Department of Defense or JCS support.

3. Resign and take the case to the public. If one is going to resign in protest to policies, it makes little sense for someone of JCS stature to remain silent. If he is to remain silent publically, he might as well stay in and fight for his views as best he can.

G. Finally, there is no place for inter-Service rivalry and parochialism which adversely affects national security. The stakes are too high. The Services have an unquestioned [illegible] to accept objectivity in the application of their unique capabilities to given situations.

Above all, our military leaders cannot afford to underestimate the value of their seasoning and expertise in our national councils. That value must of course be tempered by objectivity, political savvy, realism, a willingness to speak their minds and the perseverance and courage to ensure their views are heard and understood.

CHAPTER V

ENDNOTES

1. Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 309.

2. Sorensen, p. 306.

3. Allison, Essence of Decision, p. 95.

4. Sorensen, p. 304.

5. Allison, p. 80.

6. Ibid., p. 8.

7. Richard E. Neustadt, Alliance Politics, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 141.

8. Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen and Cold War Crisis, p. 124.

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