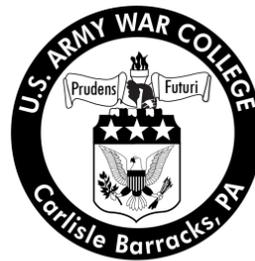


# Strategy Research Project

## Enhancing Strategic Decision-Making: Lessons from History

by

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United States Army War College  
Class of 2012

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**ENHANCING STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING: LESSONS FROM HISTORY**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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Dissent is a critical part of the democratic process in America. To establish and protect democracy, dissenting viewpoints must be integrated into a coherent national strategy. Leading strategic teams to make effective decisions requires the leader to develop a group culture that not only tolerates but elicits dissent and molds strategic coherence out of differing opinions and priorities. Strategic leaders must proactively elicit dissent as part of their team process or the decision-making process will break down and groupthink will ensue. Dissent occurs in two types, internal to the decision-making team, and external to it. Both are important, but effectively integrated internal dissent both improves the decision-making process and can pre-empt the need for external dissent. The main outcome of failed strategic decision-making is groupthink. History is full of examples of leaders who dissented on vital strategic decisions but were overruled by groupthink, resulting in disaster on a national scale. This paper will investigate historical decision-making examples to illuminate the democratic underpinnings of dissent, and the breakdown in decision-making process that results in groupthink and disaster.



## ENHANCING STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING: LESSONS FROM HISTORY

Democracy is no easy form of government. Few nations have been able to sustain it. For it requires that we take the chances of freedom; that the liberating play of reason be brought to bear on events filled with passion; that dissent be allowed to make its appeal for acceptance; that men chance error in their search for the truth.

—Senator Robert F. Kennedy, February 19, 1966<sup>1</sup>

*E Pluribus Unum*: out of many, one. Carried in the beak of the eagle in the great seal of the United States, this motto indicates unity and diversity exist together in the American democratic republic.<sup>2</sup> Founded on democracy, rooted in the ideas of freedom, America flourishes not on the basis of its military might, its economic prowess, or its leadership, but because of its foundation in democracy. Our government recognizes the right of the individual to participate in the political process and respects the individual's voice in that process. The National Security Strategy of the United States is unique because it is founded in the nature of American democracy, a democracy it seeks to protect and export.<sup>3</sup> The representative nature of our democratic republic ensures strategy in the United States is ultimately subject to the will of the people.

The strategic leader must understand the underpinnings of democratic participation when serving the electorate. History proves decisions made by this leader are especially important in times of great national crisis where the consequence of poor decisions can be catastrophic. That leader should understand how to build teams that elicit dissent, encourage open dialogue, and avoid the major trap of the strategic decision-making process, groupthink. Dissent must be elicited and integrated by team structure in the strategic team's internal decision-making process, external (public) dissent after the decision is implemented rarely gains useful results.

## Internal versus External Dissent

There is a key distinction between internal and external dissent. Internal dissent as used in this paper means differing opinions within and confined to the decision-making team. It is creative and alternative thinking, and a necessity for a strategic team to make good decisions that consider multiple alternatives. It must be designed into the team's culture and be a proactive team process, not a reactive afterthought. The leader must encourage and in fact demand dissent, and team members must be loyal enough to engage in dissent when necessary. Effective internal dissent resolved to a coherent strategic plan normally results in more effective strategic decisions, and is the focus of this paper.

External (public) dissent should happen rarely if at all, but is also important for the good of the nation, part of the democratic process, and still important to the strategic decision-making process. External dissent serves a useful long-term purpose in democracy, but is rarely conducive to solving the strategic problem at hand. Don Snider encourages military leaders to strongly promote and follow the existing professional ethic which discourages public (external) dissent because of the risks to the profession's essential trust relationships with elected leaders.<sup>4</sup> But he also acknowledges dissent by military leaders is sometime necessary and healthy:

The military is, therefore, the servant of its constitutionally-mandated masters and through them, the citizens of the Republic. A desirable pattern of U.S. civil-military relations—including legitimate military dissent—would therefore enhance democratic political control while also facilitating sound strategic decision-making and the creation of effective military institutions.<sup>5</sup>

The fundamental idea is internal dissent should be frequent and timely. When used properly, it is desirable and constructive. External dissent should be used

sparingly, if ever, and is rarely constructive. While true that external dissent is needed on occasion, internal dissent properly expressed, understood, and integrated into the decision process is more effective in a democracy. Internal dissent gives the strategic leader the opportunity to integrate divergent viewpoints into a coherent strategy, and possibly discover new and innovative solutions to difficult problems. It helps avoid the pitfalls of groupthink, and allows leaders to build consensus by taking the time and effort to consider divergent viewpoints. Disaster awaits a nation that suppresses or ignores dissent. From ancient Greece to recent history, valuable lessons exist in a study of dissent and the breakdown in group process that results from its absence.

#### Dissent and Dialogue: Athens' General Nicias

American democratic ideals germinated in the Greek city-state (polis) of Athens in the late fifth and fourth centuries B.C.<sup>6</sup> Although Athenian democracy looked quite different from the democratic republic that is the United States, democracy and dissent were a major part of the political process, and in fact, go hand in hand. True democracy cannot exist without dissent, and dissent resolved is the bedrock of the democratic process. For the strategic leader making crucial decision in times of crisis, managing dissent is crucial. By the time of the Peloponnesian Wars, open debate was a major part of the decision-making and strategy formulation process in Athens, and provides an example.

In his fascinating history, Thucydides vividly recounts political debate throughout the course of the long and destructive Peloponnesian War. One particularly telling example is the Athenian debate concerning the planned invasion of Sicily. It illustrates the nature of dissent within democratic Athens.<sup>7</sup> There are many lessons for the modern strategic leader in a careful study of the debate surrounding Athens' critical decision,

particularly the dissenting position of Athens' General Nicias against the supporters of the Sicilian invasion, led primarily by Athenian General Alcibiades. These lessons include the critical difference between dialogue and discussion, the speaking skills required in both, the danger of decisions based solely on emotional arguments without due consideration for facts, and the tendency for democratic debate toward this emotionalism.

In March of 421, Sparta and Athens signed the Peace of Nicias after ten years of devastating war. The troubled treaty, which was meant to last fifty years, was unsuccessful and would only last six before full-scale hostility resumed across the Hellenic Peninsula. The treaty was named after the Athenian politician and general who would play a central role in the signing of this peace treaty, as well as the coming invasion into Sicily--Nicias.<sup>8</sup> Nicias was the central figure in democratic Athens at this time and made repeated arguments for restraint and continued peace with Sparta. If Athens had accepted his arguments, it might have been saved from its crushing defeat in Sicily, and the resulting, eventual loss of the war to Sparta.<sup>9</sup>

Thucydides records Nicias and Alcibiades first came into conflict with each other over matters regarding an earlier treaty with Sparta.<sup>10</sup> Alcibiades was offended with the Spartans for not including him in the negotiation of this treaty, and led an Athenian faction that subverted the treaty and proposed to make a different treaty with the Argive Alliance.<sup>11</sup> Mary Williams writes "This passage sets the stage for understanding the characters of Nicias and Alcibiades and how they were to influence the state. The one who is completely concerned with self-interest and is treacherous is contrasted with his antithesis."<sup>12</sup> The antithesis is Nicias, portrayed by Thucydides as "steady, moderate,

cautious, concerned with justice, and interested in negotiation.”<sup>13</sup> He also possesses strategic foresight and is an able military planner with, to this point, a sterling record as a commander. However, he is not interested in the expansion of the Athenian empire, is unpersuasive as a speaker and will prove to lack energy as a General in the upcoming campaign.<sup>14</sup> These shortcomings would soon work against him.

Scholars disagree as to whether Nicias first supported the Sicilian expedition then later changed his mind, or opposed the expedition from the beginning. While these arguments are tangential to the purpose of this paper, it is worth noting that epigraphic evidence from at least two stelae found on the Athenian Acropolis, commonly accepted as record of the Sicilian debate, contain a record of this discussion. The Assembly discussed the fleet of 60 ships, and more specifically the possibility of appointing only one general to command the fleet. Kagan says this discussion must have been in the first Assembly since the meeting concluded with a decision to commence the expedition and appoint three generals to command the 60 triremes.<sup>15</sup> Nicias was one of these generals and from that point, Thucydides records he assumed a dissenting role as he felt the polis did not come to the right decision about the risk involved in the planned invasion, or the value of the Egestan alliance. Alcibiades, who led the arguments for the invasion, was also chosen to lead the expedition. As previously mentioned, Nicias was already at odds with Alcibiades, who was often described as power-hungry and reckless. The power-struggle between these two Athenian leaders would cripple the expedition from the outset.

Nicias presented his dissenting position and argued the Assembly should choose inaction over action, and reverse its decision for the expedition. Thucydides dramatically

left open the question if Nicias would be able to match the Periclean standard of moral authority and persuasive ability.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately he failed to do so. Nicias admitted the Assembly had been called to discuss ways and means, the ends having already been determined in the first meeting.<sup>17</sup> To his detriment, he twice mentioned his speech was out of order and admitted his logic would likely not dissuade the expedition, thereby weakening his case even as he argued it. He desired to show the Athenians their “ardor is untimely and their ambition is not easily accomplished.”<sup>18</sup>

Despite these shortcomings in procedure and eloquence, Nicias attempted to demonstrate the incoherence in the polis’ decision to invade Sicily with three main points. He argued the expedition was dangerous in light of the continued struggle with Sparta, the Egestans could not be fully trusted as it was in their interest to lie, and the main contest was against the Spartan desire to impose an oligarchy on Athens, not the Sicilian barbarians. He echoed Pericles by encouraging the Athenians to secure the empire they had before attempting to win another.<sup>19</sup> His focus was on national interests and he pointed out Alcibiades lacked this focus, but instead was full of personal ambition and selfish motivation. “Nicias appeals again and again to polis and patris and in a key passage argues that forethought (*pronoia*) is the best thing for the state, intense desire (*epithumia*) the worst.”<sup>20</sup>

At this point, Alcibiades, as the primary supporter of the invasion, countered Nicias’ dissenting argument. Thucydides records here a fascinating commentary on Alcibiades’ personal ambition and extravagant lifestyle. He points out that Alcibiades’ excessive ambition caused the Athenians to not only mistrust him, but eventually hand over polis affairs to other men, which contributed to the ruin of the city.<sup>21</sup> Josiah Ober

asserts this commentary cut to the heart of the Funeral Oration. In this famous speech, Pericles framed the “fragile ideal of Athens politeia as a meritocracy that had no need for inquiries into the private lives of citizens.”<sup>22</sup> Williams adds Alcibiades’ “eagerness to increase his personal wealth and power goes counter to Pericles’ praise of the Athenian soldiers and contrasts with Pericles’ reputation for incorruptibility.”<sup>23</sup> Thucydides implies the Athenians had long forgotten Periclean logic, but while rejecting Alcibiades based on his private life, they were quick to accept his flawed strategic arguments.

The first part of Alcibiades argument was a defense of his private life. He argued that, in Athens, a successful risk-taker should be able to claim a superior status, an argument shocking to common Athenians. He argued his personal ambition and extravagance in essence justified a superior status and haughty attitude. Kagan notes “Alcibiades conflates categories usually kept separate in Athenian ideology, the political (equal) and social (unequal) standing of the citizens.”<sup>24</sup> With his credibility established at least in his own mind, he went on to also argue three main points: the Sicilians were not united and could be easily defeated, the Spartan alliance was not anxious to resume the war, and Athens must uphold commitments to her Sicilian allies. Thus arguing for Athenian honor and interests, he concluded with a warning that failure to launch the expedition in defense of their allies would endanger the Athenian empire. At this point in the debate, Alcibiades briefly mentioned the grander strategic end he desired for the expedition; the control of all of Greece.<sup>25</sup> His jingoistic appeal carried the day, and the Athenians became eager to launch the expedition.<sup>26</sup>

Nicias now realized he had lost the debate concerning the ends and decided to argue from another angle, grossly overestimating the amount of forces needed to

launch the expedition. He hoped to discourage the Assembly by portraying a picture of excessive ways and means. Ober says “by embarking on a deceitful rhetorical strategy, Nicias implicitly accepts Diodotus’ ‘Cretan Liar’ Paradox—the claim that even the best democratic politician will be unable to accomplish anything good for the polis except by deception.”<sup>27</sup> He goes on to argue that Nicias engaged in political dishonesty by overestimating the resources and danger involved, an affront to the Athenian aristocratic tradition. It was also a hypocritical position given his last argument accusing Alcibiades of dishonest motivation.<sup>28</sup>

Nicias went on to predict the difficulty and danger of the endeavor, and asserted it should not be launched without overwhelming (and by definition expensive) forces. Far from deterring the will of the Assembly, the Athenians’ desire (*epithumi*) increased all the more. Instead of convincing them not to launch such a risky endeavor, Nicias’ arguments reinforced their belief that, if resourced as he requested, the positive outcome would be guaranteed. Indeed, Thucydides writes that a “passionate lust (*eros*)” for the expedition overcame everyone, young and old.<sup>29</sup> The debate concluded, the Sicilian expedition was resourced and launched. Nicias had failed to convince the polis, but assumed his duty as a leader of the doomed expedition.<sup>30</sup>

### Lessons for the Strategic Decision Maker from the Sicilian Expedition

Athanassios Platias and Constantinos Koliopoulos write “In our opinion, the Sicilian expedition was a strategic blunder of the first magnitude, whose consequences were made even worse by horrendous ineptitude at the tactical level.”<sup>31</sup> The debate leading to this expedition contains a treasure trove of linguistic learning points for the strategic leader. These linguistic basics make up the fundamental ability to participate in

a democracy; and at first blush appear basic, but with deeper reflection are critical to the decision-making process. This debate illustrates the difference between dialogue and debate, the danger of impassioned emotional arguments, and the importance of solid rhetorical skills which contribute to the democratic process. Critical to understanding not only Greek culture, but strategic dissent is the difference between dialogue and discussion, and the synergy that should exist between them.

Dialogue, says Peter Senge, comes from Greek *dialogos*, *Dia* meaning “through” and *logos* meaning “word” or more broadly “meaning.” The purpose of dialogue is to go beyond individual understanding and gain collective insight that would not be achieved individually; it makes people observers of their own thinking. As dialogue occurs, people realize incoherence in their own thoughts and collective thought becomes more coherent and sensitive to incoherent thinking. Incoherence is indicated by contradictions and confusion, but becomes obvious when our thinking produces unwanted consequences. Dialogue was a revered tradition in ancient Greece, and Senge feels it is all but lost in larger society today.<sup>32</sup>

Senge contrasts dialogue with discussion which he notes is more like a ping-pong game where the “ball,” that is the idea, is hit back and forth with the focus being on one side “winning” by having their ideas accepted by the group. In a discussion, different views are presented and defended, the outcome being a decision. Senge concludes “Both dialogue and discussion can lead to new courses of action; but actions are often the focus of discussion, whereas new actions emerge as a by-product of dialogue.”<sup>33</sup> The difference between dialogue and discussion is important when holding a dissenting position. Dissent best occurs in dialogue, but leadership teams often tend

toward impassioned (*epithumia*) discussions, especially when facing difficult strategic problems such as decisions concerning war. The outcome of these emotional high-stakes discussions can be flawed decisions based on this *epithumia*.

Forethought (*pronoia*) versus this intense *epithumia* is also a major theme running through Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian war. His work is not the only one to explore this tension. This theme is common in literature, art, movies and other media where rushing emotionally to the sound of the guns results in tragedy and disenchantment.<sup>34</sup> Thucydides follows this theme through his entire work, but the Sicilian expedition and its outcome seem his most telling example. The conquest-thirsty populace full of nationalistic emotion (*epithumia*) instilled by self-interested leadership cannot be deterred. The ends are not clearly planned (*pronoia*) or even considered after the argument for unlimited means fails, and the expedition departs. He vividly records the departure of Athenian forces for their ill-fated invasion of Sicily in the summer of 415.<sup>35</sup> This optimistic departure is portrayed against the outcome, after Thucydides tells the tragic story of the destruction of the Athenian alliance, and the unjust execution of Nicias.<sup>36</sup>

If the people had heeded Nicias' dissent, they would not have come to this tragic end. Instead, as Ober points out, opposition was impossible because of the intense desire (*epithumia*) of the great majority. Those few who still had doubts would not speak out against the expedition lest they appear traitors to the polis.<sup>37</sup> He goes on to state "Born of selfish and factional interests, midwifed by clever public rhetoric and ignorance, the myth of perfect unity possessed the Athenians...it is the *demos volatile* reaction to what they heard, not the speakers' actual intentions, that ultimately determined

Athenian policy.”<sup>38</sup> Ober concludes “this unity is of course false, but it is highly dangerous to oppose the consensus in public, and so all critics of unanimity are gagged; political dissent loses its voice when faced by the hegemonic will of the mass of citizens.”<sup>39</sup> The most difficult part of dissent is opposing the will of the majority, especially in situations of deep emotion where the collective will is set. In this decision, the Athenians became single-minded and convinced themselves they no longer faced an uncertain future, for uncertainty had been transformed into a sure victory simply by the enthusiastic rhetoric of Alcibiades and others who supported the expedition. To oppose this intense *epithumia*, the dissenter must focus on *pronoia* based on fact and clearly communicated to the decision-making body. In democratic dissent, words must be chosen carefully and logically when making the case. Leadership must establish a culture of dialogue and avoid discussion, especially in the early stage of a crisis. Dissenters must be able to communicate their message convincingly to get the point across. Consensus should be built informally with a smaller group if possible prior to registering dissent. Thucydides mentions briefly that some spoke in favor of Nicias’ dissenting position, but does not record efforts by Nicias to enlist them into an organized body of persuasion.<sup>40</sup>

The inescapable reality of rhetorical skills must also be mentioned. Winning the “rhetorical war of words” is a reality in a democratic society, as many a hapless presidential candidate has discovered. The dissenter is walking treacherous and difficult ground, and must do so adroitly. In his desire to dissuade the demos, Nicias was not successful. The debate lost and the expedition launched, tragedy was ahead for everyone: Nicias, the members of the expedition and to lesser extent Alcibiades.

Thucydides argues the main reason Athens lost the war was that Pericles' political successors lost control of affairs by infighting and attempting to please instead of leading the demos. The Sicilian debate illustrates this problem as Alcibiades plays to the emotion of the people, and Nicias fails, in spite of his efforts, to lead them away from an impassioned but incorrect decision. This political reality in Athens led naturally to mistakes such as the Sicilian invasion. Thucydides saw a distinct difference between Athens led by Pericles, which was a democracy in word only but in practice tended toward the rule of the first man. Thucydides introduces Pericles as "the most powerful man of his time and the leading Athenian statesman."<sup>41</sup> Ober points out this was an uncompromising statement about his character and was supported by the text as his speeches were the only ones by Athenian politicians not countered or paired with opposing speeches.<sup>42</sup>

Underlying Thucydides' portrayal of the war is a denial of the ability for a pure democracy to become or stay truly great. Decisions after Pericles became predicated on speech contests like the one that occurred before the Sicilian expedition, rather than on facts and strategic planning. Eventually actions launched by these speech contests were shattered by the inevitable collision with reality. When the demos confused ideology with truth and political speech with reality, a brief and intense groupthink of unity took over Athens, and dissent was useless.<sup>43</sup>

As President Lincoln so eloquently laid out in the Gettysburg address, America advertises itself as a "government of the people, by the people, for the people." Yet, as observed by Thucydides and cited by Ober, the nature of our democratic republic, like other democracies before it, can be one of tension between the will of the people and

the best strategic direction for the country. Indeed, many argue the founding fathers shared Thucydides' distrust of the demos, thereby necessitating the representative nature of our democratic process.<sup>44</sup> Although democracy has this tension, its plurality of inputs from the self-governed electorate results in long-term stability. It is the process which made America great and keeps it so even today.

The strategic leader seeking to keep America great should understand the inevitable weakness of the democratic process as observed by Thucydides and reflected within the decision-making process on his team. That leader must remember that while they work for the people of the United States, they answer directly to their elected representatives. Dissent is necessary in a democracy, or democracy is not truly present. At times, that leader must be the one to register that dissent, for if he fails to do so tragedy may ensue. These times occur both in private and in public, and require virtuous, impassioned, and eloquent leadership as modeled by Pericles. Like Pericles, the strategic leader must "skillfully communicate the essential material bases of state power."<sup>45</sup> Nicias' experience in the Sicilian debate is a useful study for the strategic leader, who both serves and operates in this American democracy, crafting or executing the National Security Strategy. The leader would do well to understand the critical nuance of rhetoric, avoid major decisions based on purely emotional arguments, and understand the nature of our democratic system that allows, but often does not accept dissenters. National security decisions are too important to back away from or shroud the truth, Athens learned that lesson the hard way.

## Forming and Leading the Team: Abraham Lincoln

American democracy looks quite different than that in Nicias' Athens. Our governmental and private organizations are now largely led by a strategic team, but a prominent leader is almost always the final voice in our national security decisions. Whether that team is elected or chosen, team performance as measured by effective decision-making is crucial to a successful outcome for any organization. There is a vast body of literature available about strategic team formation and performance outside the scope of this paper. One key aspect, however, is to build a team who can bring coherence to the decision-making process, a coherence Athens lacked during the Sicilian debate.

Doris Goodwin provides an excellent example of successful strategic team building in her book about Abraham Lincoln, *Team of Rivals*:

That Lincoln, after winning the presidency, made the unprecedented decision to incorporate his eminent rivals into the political family, the cabinet, was evidence of a profound self-confidence and a first indication of what would prove to others a most unexpected greatness...every member of his administration was better known, better educated and more experienced in public life than Abraham Lincoln....It soon became clear, however, that Lincoln would emerge the undisputed captain of this most unusual cabinet, truly a team of rivals.<sup>46</sup>

Lincoln had the foresight to form and lead a diverse cabinet in very difficult circumstances, and this incredible leadership was critical during one of the most perilous times of American history. He built team process that tolerated and encouraged dissent in the decision process, essential inclusivity that was critical for the nation during the Civil War, which was threatening the unity (*E Pluribus Unum*) of our young republic.

Lincoln understood the implications strategic-level decisions during the crisis of the American Civil War. His ability to integrate diversity into the strategic decision-

making process and produce coherent national strategy was a key component of his superb leadership. Donald Vandergriff defines leadership as “a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective, and directs his or her organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent.”<sup>47</sup> He cites classic cognitive psychology studies which began in the 1970’s to look at the decision-making process employed by leaders. From this work, the Military Decision-making Process (MDMP) was eventually derived, an analytical decision-making model popular in the United States Army. Interestingly, this analytical model had its genesis in the German Army’s decision-making process of the late 1800’s. The MDMP gives the decision maker an orderly process to reach a logical decision through a thorough and orderly analysis of a particular mission and situation.<sup>48</sup>

This analytical model of decision-making is contrasted with the naturalistic or heuristic model. Here, Vandergriff stresses adaptability and the importance of intuition and experience in decision-making. John Boyd of the United States Air Force was a proponent of one heuristic system named the “OODA loop”, (observe, orient, decide and act). Heuristic constructs are useful because they stress a rapidly changing environment, personal knowledge, experience and action.<sup>49</sup> While useful at a tactical level, this construct loses effectiveness at the operational and strategic level where decisions are much more complex, impacts are larger and personal experience is quickly exceeded. For these difficult problems, the leader must successfully build a strategic team that has the construct and culture to not only tolerate, but encourage dissent. Vandergriff says Army leaders should not regard dissent based on sound principles and research as disloyal, and instead should actively encourage critical

thinking.<sup>50</sup> To do this, the leader needs to carefully select the strategic team, or understand the team if it's already formed.

The book *Senior Leadership Teams* provides considerations when selecting the strategic team faced with crucial strategic decisions.<sup>51</sup> When selecting a leadership team, the authors argue, it's important to choose the right players, people who understand not only the operational process of the organization, but who can think strategically and critically about the enterprise and engage in constructive debate when deciding a course of action. They should have the needed skills and expertise required in the enterprise, but should also have a robust and confident self image. Conceptual thinking is a key requirement and team members must be able to clearly communicate these thoughts with other team members as they engage in robust discussions. Finally, in debate they must have empathy for others and integrity during execution of the team's decision. Even when they disagree with the team's chosen course of action, they must show willingness to enact it as if it was their own.<sup>52</sup>

#### Lessons for the Strategic Decision Maker from Lincoln's Cabinet

Lincoln's cabinet is an example of a strategic team that produced an exceptional outcome in a very difficult environment. It is crucial for the strategic leader to build a team with diverse background, outlook and experience. The leader must then take those diverse inputs and fashion them into a coherent strategic direction. This is the most important element of strategic leadership, and the point at which leaders often fail. The strategic leader must move from simpler decision-making models to higher-level integration of opinion and experience diversity. This is very difficult to do in a democracy, especially a democracy in crisis.

Edward Schein speaks of organizational culture and says it starts fundamentally with the beliefs and values of the team leader.<sup>53</sup> Lincoln built group process that integrated diverse perspectives but maintained coherent direction. Lincoln, as the “team leader,” valued his cabinet and was an expert at gaining unity out of diversity. He was able to impress his purpose and direction at every juncture during the difficult years of the Civil War, but was known to change direction if his cabinet convinced him it was necessary. Even the secessionist paper the *Charleston Mercury* realized this, saying “What he lacked in individual ability, learning, experience or statesmanship...he has collected around him in every department.”<sup>54</sup> This superb, inclusive, leadership, combined with his exceptional rhetorical ability, enabled him to lead the broken nation back toward unity. The words of his second inaugural address reflect this perhaps more than any other:

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for him who shall have born the battle, and for his widow and his orphan--to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.<sup>55</sup>

Other strategic teams, however, have not fared so well. History provides countless examples of flawed decisions spawned from groupthink. Groupthink is the primary trap that awaits strategic leaders facing difficult decisions with few good options available. It results from broken team structure and process, and proves fatal for many strategic teams.

#### Groupthink Resulting in War: Japan’s Admiral Yamamoto

On April 18, 1943 Army Air Corps P-38 pilot Tom Lanphier dropped in to attack the Japanese “Betty” bomber over the Bougainville jungle. With Japanese “Zero” fighter

aircraft approaching from every direction, he had only one chance for the attack so fired one long burst of his guns. The bullets tore through the right wing of the Betty, and set the wing and engine on fire. Despite the damage, the Japanese gunner in the rear of the Betty returned a steady stream of bullets as the wing of the airplane came off. The approaching Japanese Zero pilots watched helplessly as the plane that carried their Commander in Chief, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto burned and fell into the jungle.<sup>56</sup> So ended the life of a strategic leader who, if heeded, might have saved Japan from the disastrous loss it experienced in World War 2. The consequence of groupthink at the strategic level is usually tragic. A company might lose money or face bankruptcy, which is indeed traumatic. How much higher are the stakes a government faces! History is filled with examples of strategic decision-making teams that fell into groupthink and made poor decisions with serious or catastrophic outcomes for the people they represented.<sup>57</sup>

Of all the considerations when leading a strategic team, the most important may be to understand groupthink and build a team culture that will encourage healthy dissent in the decision-making process. The responsibility for this task clearly falls on the strategic leader, who is responsible for the team's culture, and must be especially attuned to the tendency toward groupthink. A strategic leader must know what constitutes groupthink, be aware of the characteristics of a group experiencing it, and avoid groupthink with a deliberate process which not only welcomes dissent, but in fact elicits it while encouraging alternative thinking in the decision-making process. This starts with an understanding of groupthink.<sup>58</sup>

Irving L. Janis, in his landmark book on groupthink, defines the problem as “a mode of thinking in which people engage when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the member’s strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action.”<sup>59</sup> Janis comments that group dynamics exercise an incredible power over members of the group. He cites extensive research proving that, as group cohesiveness increases, the power of the group to enforce conformity to its norms and goals also increases, and these highly cohesive groups provide security to their members and heightens their self-esteem.<sup>60</sup> He also states, “It has long been known that group solidarity increases markedly whenever a collection of individuals faces a common source of external stress, such as the threat of being injured or killed in military combat.”<sup>61</sup> Within service cultures and across the joint culture of the Department of Defense, tight groups based on common “military” experiences provide these benefits to their members, but also result in teams who may be particularly susceptible to the trap of groupthink. The military strategic leader should be aware these same qualities will work against good strategic decision-making.

Japan provides a poignant example still relevant to today’s strategic leaders. In the years leading to World War 2, Japanese strategic leadership, especially in the Imperial Army exhibited classic groupthink, to which Admiral Yamamoto was a dissenting voice:

In the years after World War I, the government in Tokyo had been taken over by the Imperial Army and its nationalist supporters. The army had invaded China with bloody results and had bathed in the euphoria of easy victories. The United States and other nations demanded that Japan stop its murderous rampage, and when those directions were ignored, Washington responded with an embargo of oil and steel and other vital goods that threatened to strangle the Japanese military machine. To break that grip, the generals decided to go to war against America and Emperor

Hirohito gave his assent. Admiral Yamamoto had been an outspoken opponent of this plan in the councils of war, urging caution and criticizing the government's expansionist policies and seeming lust for battle.<sup>62</sup>

Once strategic leaders understand groupthink, they must be much attuned to its eight symptoms, which include invulnerability, rationale, morality, stereotypes, pressure, self-censorship, unanimity and mind guarding.<sup>63</sup> These all occurred to some degree or another in pre-war Japan, beginning with the government's sense of invulnerability. Invulnerability refers to a misplaced trust in the ability to handle obvious dangers, and may lead the group to become overly optimistic and take extraordinary risks.<sup>64</sup> Admiral Yamamoto had a clear understanding of the dangers of war with America; the Imperial Army clearly did not. While studying at Harvard University he took time to travel around the United States and observe American industry, oil production and other matters important to his naval service. He knew Japan's dearth of natural resources would not be able to stand up to the industrial might of the United States, and once awakened, the fighting spirit of America would be impossible to defeat.<sup>65</sup> When questioned by the Prime Minister, Prince Konoye about the chance of winning the coming war, Yamamoto famously said "I can raise havoc with them for one year, or at most eighteen months. After that I can give no one any guarantees."<sup>66</sup>

Instead of heeding Yamamoto's warnings the Imperial leadership rationalized them away. Rationale, says Janis, is when victims of groupthink ignore warnings or rationalize away warnings of a failed plan, often committing themselves to past decisions without considering current relevant evidence.<sup>67</sup> The Army nationalist leaders did not listen to Yamamoto's warnings or consider alternate courses of action. In fact, they went so far as to assassinate several governmental leaders, and any others who

were vocal in dissenting with their nationalist ambitions. This included an unsuccessful plot to assassinate Yamamoto.<sup>68</sup>

The assassinations demonstrated that Japanese Army leaders had fallen to another of Janis' groupthink characteristics, the belief in the inherent morality of the cause, without question. The Imperial Army clearly ignored the moral and ethical consequences of their decisions and actions.<sup>69</sup> This lack of regard for morality led to many well-documented atrocities committed across Asia, which influence Asian politics even today. Edwin Hoyt provides an example: "The murder of 250,000 Chinese men, women and children, soldiers and civilians in the Rape of Nanking, convinced the world that the Japanese army's behavior was barbaric in the extreme."<sup>70</sup>

Stereotyping means a group trapped in groupthink will look at leaders of belligerent groups as so evil they cannot negotiate with them, or too weak or stupid to deal with the group.<sup>71</sup> Japanese nationalistic leadership had views toward America which were well understood as being both derogatory and inaccurate. Jeffery Record points out Japanese leadership believed "Japanese racial and spiritual superiority could neutralize America's material superiority...they had long believed, that the unique qualities of their race...could defeat the strong but soft Americans."<sup>72</sup> Yamamoto on the other hand understood the inherent strength of industrial America and warned they would not be easily defeated.

From studying the Civil War and biographies of President Abraham Lincoln, he had discerned the singular truth that when the threat was great enough, common Americans would fight, and die, for their country. Carving up a backward nation like China could not be compared to fighting the United States, an industrial giant that was already helping Great Britain and showing it had no fear of the Germans.<sup>73</sup>

A group may apply direct pressure to individuals who momentarily express doubts about any of the shared groups or illusions, or who question the validity of the arguments supporting the policy favored by the majority.<sup>74</sup> As Yamamoto became more vocal in his dissent with the imperialist leaders of the Army, his life came under threat. Davis says “Much of what the Admiral said went against the tide of popular opinion, when right-wing fanatics targeted him for assassination, the navy command sent him back to sea to keep him alive.”<sup>75</sup>

The illusion of unanimity exists within a group when expressed majority views are left unchallenged and accepted as the unanimous view, causing each member of the group to feel they must be true. This consensual validation tends to replace critical thinking and reality testing.<sup>76</sup> Japan’s military leadership was especially susceptible to this trap based on staffing and promotion policies at the time. In prewar Japan, Army leadership was divided between a small elite group comprised of graduates of the Japanese Army War College, who would fill the choice command and staff assignments, and the vast majority of the other officers faced a mundane career in which their opinion mattered for little.<sup>77</sup> The illusion of unanimity, combined with the harsh treatment of dissent, resulted in wide-scale self-censorship at the strategic leadership levels in Japan. Janis notes self-censorship occurs when the members of the group keep silent about misgivings they might have with the group plan, or minimize the importance of doubts they may be feeling.<sup>78</sup> Because of the political situation and the power of the Imperial Army, the Naval High Command became the sole institution able to stand up to the Imperial Army and avert their push towards war. They were starkly aware a long conflict with America would result in defeat and invasion. However, when

the Imperial Army's General Hideki Tojo became Prime Minister in 1941, Navy leadership was afraid to tell him defeat was certain and instead drifted along with plans for war.<sup>79</sup>

Finally, mindguards are victims of groupthink that appoint themselves to protect the leader and fellow members from adverse information that might impact the decision-making process.<sup>80</sup> The Imperial Army acted as leadership mindguards to the Emperor, not only in the decision for war, but as Japan started experiencing defeat in the Pacific. After their stunning loss at Midway, the Imperial general staff sold it to the Japanese people and the Emperor as a victory. Robert Guillain says "the truth about Midway was hidden from the Son of Heaven himself. Information I received later indicated that the false reports used to trick the Japanese public were also given to the Emperor."<sup>81</sup>

#### Lessons for the Strategic Decision Maker from Japan's experience.

Japan's rush to war with America in 1941 shows it is critical for strategic leaders to have a clear understanding of group decision-making process, especially the prevalence of groupthink, and establish explicit policies and procedures to avoid it. Perhaps the most important way to avoid groupthink is for the leader to ensure a team culture of learning, and encourage healthy dissent and alternative thinking among its members. Admiral Yamamoto dedicated himself to a lifetime of learning about his profession as well as America; because of this he had a clear vision of the likely outcome of war with America. He was concerned not only for his own education, but the education of his fellow naval officers. While studying in America, he would greet every other Japanese naval officer that arrived to study with the same advice, telling them not

to speak Japanese for six months, to tour cities by subway or bus, not taxis as “not one ever found out much about any city by riding in taxis.”<sup>82</sup>

A comprehensive knowledge of a the strategic problem in question is the foundation of a learning team; however, Edgar Schein suggests a learning culture goes beyond mere knowledge by actively seeking feedback and taking time to reflect, analyze and assimilate the implications of the feedback. He contrasts a learning culture with a passive culture of fatalistic assumptions in which learning becomes more difficult and may very well end altogether.<sup>83</sup> It is clear pre-war Japan did not have a learning culture that could tolerate dissent and alternative views at the strategic level barring a few certain exceptions like Admiral Yamamoto and the Naval High Command.

Founded on this culture of learning, the strategic leader can implement several specific techniques to help the team elicit healthy dissent and optimize effective decision-making. This must be a proactive, planned part of the team process; it cannot be left to chance hoping that dissent will arise of its own accord. Janis provides useful specific advice with the following nine strategies, useful for the strategic team leader.

These tools give the leader a plan to elicit dissent and integrate it into coherent strategy:

- The leader should assign a specific role as critical evaluator to each member of the team, encouraging open discussion of objections and doubts.
- When approaching strategic problems, adopt an impartial stance on the issue instead of stating preferences and expectations from the beginning.
- The team should sponsor outside agencies and evaluation groups working for another leader to deliberate the same issues and compare outcomes.
- At several stages in the decision-making process, the strategic team should pause to discuss the problem with organizational members outside the team.
- The group should invite outside experts to each meeting to challenge the views of the core members.

- When evaluating alternative courses of action, at least one member of the team should be assigned to challenge the majority position.
- If the decision involves rivals, the team must devote extensive time to survey their warning signals and investigate alternative scenarios based on this data.
- The team should periodically divide into sub-groups with different chairmen and discuss the same matters, reporting back to the larger strategic team.
- When a decision is made, the team should hold a “second-chance” meeting to allow discussion of any last dissent or doubts about the chosen strategy.<sup>84</sup>

Had the political situation in Japan favored open dialogue and these nine methods been employed, the decision to launch a preemptive strike against America may have been different.<sup>85</sup> It is ironic that Admiral Yamamoto, the one man who could have saved an entire nation from their disastrous loss of World War 2 did not live to see his predictions fulfilled, but died as a result of his part in leading a war effort he did not support. Although he did not agree with the war, Admiral Yamamoto was the chief architect of the attack on Pearl Harbor, a brilliantly conceived and conducted operational victory, albeit tragic from the American perspective. Accordingly, on 18 April 1943, he became the target of American fighter pilots. His legacy, in addition to that of a brilliant naval officer, serves as a stark reminder to strategic leaders of their duty to avoid groupthink and encourage dissent as they build their team culture and make critical decisions.

#### Effective Team Process: President John F. Kennedy

Another naval officer soon became the 35<sup>th</sup> President of the United States and faced similar, difficult circumstances requiring principled leadership. President John F. Kennedy, like Abraham Lincoln, learned how to form a team that elicited dissent and developed an effective decision-making team process. The success he found facing the

Cuban Missile Crisis (CMC), was forged in the crucible of the Bay of Pigs disaster. In Periclean fashion, President Kennedy was a master orator and became decisive when running the cabinet; but as the new President, he learned a difficult lesson on the shores of Cuba in 1961.

The Bay of Pigs was called by some “one of the worst fiascos ever perpetrated by a responsible government.” In this disastrous plan, President Kennedy allowed an invasion of communist Cuba by Cuban exiles, planned by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to proceed shortly after he took office. The original plan was ironically first proposed by Kennedy’s chief political opponent, Richard Nixon, when he was Vice President for the Eisenhower administration. Eisenhower instructed the CIA to organize Cuban exiles into a unified political movement, and provide military training for those who were willing to return to Cuba and engage in guerilla warfare. The CIA morphed this original directive into a planned full-scale invasion of Cuba, supported by the CIA, the Air Force, and the Navy. The brigade of about 1400 Cuban exiles landed at the Bay of Pigs on April 17, 1961. The invasion was an absolute disaster and the brigade was decimated in only two days, with 1200 members of the brigade carried off into Cuban prison camps.<sup>86</sup>

The decision-making process in the Kennedy administration was badly flawed during the Bay of Pigs disaster. Group structure devolved, and flawed groupthink doomed the operation. The illusion of invulnerability overtook the new and confident administration. Under Kennedy’s leadership his talented and optimistic advisory group felt it could not fail, and in retrospect had a naive trust of the CIA’s plan. Arthur Schlesinger, serving as a special assistant to the President said “euphoria reigned; we

thought for a moment that the world was plastic and the future unlimited.”<sup>87</sup> This statement eerily echoes the *epithumia* which overtook the masses as a result of the Sicilian debate. Members of the administration suppressed personal doubts about the plan, another characteristic of groupthink. Schlesinger authored a strongly dissenting memo for the President and Secretary of State, but failed to speak out in White House meetings. He writes of his deep regret about failing to dissent saying; “I bitterly reproached myself for having kept so silent in those crucial discussions in the Cabinet Room.”<sup>88</sup> Schlesinger goes on to tell the story of Robert Kennedy acting as a mindguard to the President, pulling him aside at a party and, after listening to his concerns about the invasion plan, stating “You might be right or you may be wrong, but the President has made his mind up. Don’t push it any further.”<sup>89</sup> Janis cites these and other classic groupthink symptoms as contributors to the Bay of Pigs failure, providing hard lessons for the new administration.

These lessons would be valuable when Kennedy faced off against Nikita Khrushchev one year later over Soviet nuclear missiles stationed in Cuba. According to Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, the CMC stands as a seminal event. “History offers no parallel to those thirteen days of October 1962, when the United States and the Soviet Union paused at the nuclear precipice.”<sup>90</sup> The world had never before seen nuclear brinksmanship, and if nuclear war had come, it could have meant the death of 100 million Americans and 100 million Russians.<sup>91</sup> The crisis proved a watershed in the Cold War, as both nations eventually backed away from the brink of full-scale nuclear war and edged toward *détente*. The authors argue the CMC is mandatory study for every serious student of strategic leadership.<sup>92</sup> The CMC provides a telling example of

effective group process which integrated dissenting positions, avoided purely emotional decisions, and avoided the trap of groupthink.<sup>93</sup>

In late summer of 1962, everyone knew the Soviet Union was sending vast quantities of arms and some troops to bolster Cuba's defenses, partially as a result of the Bay of Pigs invasion the year prior. A concern arose that these shipments might include nuclear arms, but the Soviet Union had never before stationed nuclear weapons outside of its territorial borders. Anatoly Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador in Washington, assured the United States that only Russia was only providing defensive weapons. On September 4, Dobrynin gave this assurance directly to the president's brother, Robert Kennedy, then serving as the Attorney General of the United States. The reassured administration released a public statement later that day stating there was no evidence the Soviets were putting bases or ballistic missiles into Cuba. One week later, the Soviet government issued a similar statement reassuring the world it had no intention of stationing nuclear weapons outside of its borders.<sup>94</sup>

The United States government remained uneasy about the Cuban buildup and it soon became a major issue for the upcoming mid-term congressional elections. Within the administration, a dissenting voice did not trust Soviet assurances. Director of the CIA (DCI), John McCone had serious doubts about the situation based not on any solid evidence, but intuition because of anti-aircraft missiles discovered going into Cuba, and ominous reports from CIA agents inside Cuba. McCone thought anti-aircraft missiles would only be needed to shield a base of ballistic missiles aimed at the United States.<sup>95</sup> CIA agents inside Cuba sent reports warning the Russians brought with them offensive atomic weapons, but overflight of Cuba by U-2's was controversial because of the

political ramifications to the upcoming elections and international reaction if a U-2 was downed.<sup>96</sup> McCone, on his honeymoon in Paris, continued to strongly advocate reconnaissance overflight, authoring what became known as the “honeymoon cables” and warning of Soviet offensive missiles in Cuba. He was opposed by the Secretary of State Dean Rusk and several other powerful cabinet members, but continued to push the issue until he gained the support of Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who during the September 10 meeting said “Let’s sustain the overflights and hell with the international issues.” The cabinet agreed on a compromise of four short reconnaissance flights, but new rules restricted the flights to 25 miles from the coast to keep the U-2’s out of Cuban defensive missile lethal range. This restriction made the intelligence gathered of little value.<sup>97</sup>

Opposition to McCone’s views continued when on September 13 the President asked for a Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) about the Soviet position. The SNIE was ready for the President by September 19, after input from the entire intelligence community (IC), including the military. The United States Intelligence Board (USIB) headed by Sherman Kent of the CIA was the last to see it before it went to the President. The report concluded there was not enough intelligence to suggest the Soviets were moving offensive missiles into Cuba. The IC concluded not only had they not moved them in, but they would not do so. In the final meeting to approve this estimate, Kent asked everyone in the room, a large collection of intelligence professionals, to express their opinion on the report. No one was left out, even the junior Cuban analyst. Kent wanted to know who agreed with McCone’s view on the situation;

no one in the room spoke up to support McCone's conclusions.<sup>98</sup> The groupthink of the national IC's was here vividly contrasted against the informed dissent of DCI McCone.

McCone returned from his honeymoon in late September and asked for a map showing actual photographic coverage since the earlier U-2 missions. He was shocked to find out no flights had overflown Cuba since early September, and met with the Special Group on October 3, taking Secretaries Rush and McNamara to task over the shortage of useful overflight reconnaissance. Over the objections of much of the cabinet, he obtained Presidential approval for four overflights of the Cuban interior, and transferred the mission from the CIA to the Strategic Air Command due to the anticipated dangerous nature of the reconnaissance flights. This set the stage for renewed U-2 overflights of Cuba. On October 14, 1962 mission number 3101 discovered recently completed buildings for ballistic missiles, and a launching pad with an offensive SS-4 nuclear missile located on the ground right next to it in San Cristobal, Cuba.<sup>99</sup> The thirteen days of the CMC had begun.

President Kennedy immediately called together a group of advisors which was later called the Executive Committee (ExComm) of the National Security Council. Most of this group served the year before during the Bay of Pigs fiasco, and had learned valuable lessons about crisis decision-making. This team had faced a shattering defeat in the Bay of Pigs disaster but Janis says, their group cohesiveness and learning allowed them to face the CMC with confidence.<sup>100</sup> The President set a clear direction saying he would not acquiesce to nuclear weapons in Cuba, and the group was to find a way to get the weapons out of Cuba before they became operational. He rejected a

diplomatic solution from the outset, in spite of the fact that some members of the ExComm at first favored this approach.<sup>101</sup>

With the President's directive, the ExComm set out on October 16 to generate solutions that met his objectives, meeting continually for the next five days. They often times met several times a day in order to arrive at a strategic plan. The first best choice seemed to be a threatened air strike, with the hope that the coercive threat would cause Khrushchev to withdraw the missiles. During this time, Janis says, the pressures toward groupthink were intense, but the group continued to disagree with each other and explore alternatives in spite of intense pressure to come to a quick consensus. ExComm members were extraordinarily successful in independent thinking, despite all the strains and pressures of the thirteen day crisis."<sup>102</sup>

The ExComm followed effective decision-making process by following Janis' strategy to consult with subordinate staff from their departments. Grattan writes that although ExComm was a dominant coalition; the individual members were briefed by many others in their departments. This advice was often based on rigid doctrinal solutions (the way we do things here), particularly advice from the Department of Defense (DOD). ExComm had to interpret this advice in light of larger strategic issues and revise it to new strategic parameters in the rapidly evolving crisis. At several points during ExComm dialogue, new ideas did come up from below and were rapidly interpreted and integrated into the wider view of the situation. ExComm discussions became a "mixture of rational and generative thinking" that considered analytic and logical analysis presented to them by entities such as the DOD, but employed imaginative, informal deliberations to proceed toward decisions. As Kennedy continued

with his questioning, he was able to learn from others and expose muddled thinking. As his understanding of the crisis grew, he became more assertive.<sup>103</sup> Kennedy's leadership and ExComm flexibility eventually led to the famous decision to use the least aggressive course they could, a blockade, which they called a quarantine to avoid the problems of international law associated with a blockade.<sup>104</sup>

### Lessons for the Strategic Decision Maker from the Cuban Missile Crisis

President Kennedy learned from the Bay of Pigs failure that setting effective team culture and decision-making processes as modeled positively by Lincoln and negatively by Japanese pre-war leadership, is the first and most important duty of the strategic team-leader. The next is to give the group a clear direction and an effective roadmap. In the CMC, the President set the "lanes" and "direction" for his team, making clear his strategic goals, but allowing ExComm the freedom to explore many varying options toward those goals. This critical step in the decision-making process can be hazardous for the strategic leader, and should be exercised thoughtfully. Excessive control by the strategic leader, or giving in to purely emotional arguments will often lead to groupthink as it did in Japan. On the other hand, giving little direction will result in incoherent strategy that results in disaster such as the Sicilian expedition. Dissent should be welcome, and was in Kennedy's administration, but it is most constructive within the parameters of the senior leader's boundaries for the strategic decision. This is especially important in a crisis, although it would be best to consider every possible course of action, time constraints may make this difficult.<sup>105</sup> The decision process can go afoul if the leader charts a course that does not allow realistic or innovative solutions to the problem and then encourages explicit criticism of those solutions. Japanese Army

leadership in the days leading up to World War 2 did not encourage critical thinking about friction with the United States. Although they did not desire war, they were unable to generate solutions other than war to their crisis with the United States.

During the CMC Kennedy's team leadership proved effective. He allowed his subordinates freedom to explore options and kept a lid on purely emotional positions. In particular his manner of engaging his subordinates, asking for details and challenging positions in a respectful manner created a culture that encouraged alternative solutions and questioned entrenched thinking. Robert Grattan says

President Kennedy, despite his relative youth and lack of experience at this level, provided the steadying hand on the tiller. His approach was generally non-assertive, particularly as he (and the others) struggled to assign meaning to the events. Perhaps as a result of his bad experience with the Bay of Pigs fiasco, he adopted a Socratic method, proceeding by questioning.<sup>106</sup>

Grattan analyzed the CMC tapes and found at the start of the crisis, over 62 percent of Kennedy's inputs into ExComm dialogue were questions, and they shaped the team's search for understanding of everyone's views. "Here was no dominating, macho leader, but a subtle facilitator extracting, forming and sharing ideas."<sup>107</sup> Kennedy effectively used dialogue in the best Greek tradition during the entire course of the CMC.

During the CMC, ExComm deliberations and actions were the anthesis of groupthink. After the Bay of Pigs failure, the group implemented several new group procedures. First, the President assigned group members specifically as skeptical "generalists". Instead of looking at the problem only through the lenses of their own agency, he wanted his team to consider greater strategic ends. Next, Robert Kennedy and Theodore Sorenson were specifically assigned roles as intelligence watchdogs. They were instructed to pursue every disagreement to avoid errors rising from

superficial analysis of pertinent issues. They both took seriously their “devil’s advocate” roles and questioned everything so effectively they became unpopular with some of the team! Also, Kennedy brought in fresh and different advisors during the CMC. Aware of the tendency for visitors to remain silent, he specifically would ask their opinion. Finally, the ExComm was periodically broken into separate subgroups to discuss and dissect the deliberations of the larger group. When the President presided over ExComm meetings, he took great pains to ask men in secondary positions for their opinion. He realized these men would not contradict their bosses’ opinion voluntarily. Also, President Kennedy would sometimes specifically absent himself from some meetings, realizing his mere presence influenced the group. Robert Kennedy supported this action, saying “I felt there was less true give and take with the President in the room.”<sup>108</sup>

Janis claims these procedural changes resulted in new group norms for ExComm. While forming a cohesive group, the team avoided groupthink, instead striving for thorough and open-minded evaluation of all known alternatives. The group specifically made trying to fully investigate and consider all options a new group norm. They were acutely aware of the dangers involved in premature closure of debate during the crisis, and although they all expressed impatience with the difficulty involved in considering all courses of action, they continued to do so until they arrived at their chosen solution.<sup>109</sup> Through the general roadmap provided by the President, Socratic dialogue, and effective team culture, ExComm developed an effective strategic plan. Grattan concludes “the leadership provided by President Kennedy guided the discussions between the “hawk” and “dove” extremes, and used a Socratic, questioning approach to a large degree. The President acted as a facilitator, rather than a dictator of

strategy.”<sup>110</sup> President Kennedy’s effective changes in group procedures and his accommodating leadership style helped ExComm avoid the trap of groupthink and develop a viable course of action.

The dissenting role of DCI McCone cannot be overstated. He had to stand against the entire IC, his own CIA and the President’s cabinet. Absher says:

The insistence of the DCI on overflights as opposed to continued peripheral flights was a critical factor in obtaining the President’s approval for the October 14 flight. McCone was correct in his assessment that the SA-2 sites had been established to “blind our reconnaissance eye.”...McCone deserves the major credit for pushing the administration out of what was a politically “safe” mind-set of peripheral flights and into overdue U-2 coverage of the interior of Cuba.<sup>111</sup>

Like Nicias and Yamamoto, McCone was able to see the flawed logic in the group’s chosen direction. He was in a position where he could build support for his dissent and engaged in logical, well argued and supported dialogue about his concerns. Unlike Nicias and Yamamoto, President Kennedy had adjusted his team’s culture and process to encourage innovation and welcome alternative thinking; McCone’s dissenting views were considered and acted on. Absher says “for a brief yet momentous time in our history, DCI and Presidential leadership successfully combined to provide accurate intelligence. Our national security system worked and possible disaster was avoided.”<sup>112</sup>

#### Team Structure: Empirical Evidence

Internal dissent properly elicited and integrated by the strategic leader helps avoid the primary strategic decision-making pitfall, groupthink. A recent study conducted by Mark Schafer and Scott Crichlow took a qualitative look at Janis’ research on antecedent conditions of groupthink in 19 cases of cold war crisis, including the CMC. Schafer and Crichlow conclude that some antecedent conditions cited by Janis, including group homogeneity and a recent failure of the group do not correlate to faulty

decision-making. However, leadership style, traditional group procedures, and patterns of group behavior do correlate to decision quality. In one example, the authors specifically compare the discussions in the Johnson and Eisenhower administrations. The Eisenhower administration held much more deliberate and careful discussions, considering a larger variety of outcomes than the Johnson administration, and had much better success avoiding groupthink.<sup>113</sup>

This study provides research support to the lessons learned from the historical examples presented in this paper. First, the authors suggest that a faulty structural environment that exists prior to information processing is primarily at fault when groupthink occurs. Janis' antecedent group conditions are less problematic than anticipated. Also, situational factors like a short time constraint, high personal stress, and a recent failure do not cause faulty decision-making. Homogenous groups do not appear to produce more defective decisions than nonhomogeneous groups.<sup>114</sup>

According to the authors, problems for group decision-making fall into three areas: leadership style, traditional group procedures, and patterns of group behavior. These factors strongly correlate with both information errors, and unfavorable decision outcomes. When the group and leadership fail to structurally organize themselves in the first place, faulty decisions will likely result.<sup>115</sup>

Policy makers would be well advised to develop patterns of impartial leadership and methodical procedures and avoid overestimation of the group, closed-mindedness, and pressures toward uniformity. If these things happen, then fewer information processing errors should emerge, and outcomes are more likely to be favorable.<sup>116</sup>

The authors argue by the time a group engages in information processing, it is generally too late to avoid faulty decision-making. Instead, the group leader should create the proper decision-making environment prior to a crisis. Leadership style, group culture

and patterns of group conduct should be the focus for the strategic leader.<sup>117</sup> These powerful conclusions show it is critical for the strategic leader to pay attention to these three areas. In both history and in research these have proven critical to help the strategic team avoid groupthink, and make the best direction.

### Conclusion

Dissent is a foundation of the American democracy. It occurs in two types, internal to the decision-making team, and external to it. Both are important, but effectively integrated internal dissent both improves the decision-making process and can pre-empt the need for external dissent, helping avoid the major pitfall of strategic decision-making, groupthink. The strategic leader is responsible, in this democratic environment, to integrate dissent into a coherent strategy. This means that leader must not only tolerate, but elicit dissent and mold strategic coherence out of differing opinions and priorities. The leader does this by open and accepting leadership style, ensuring a disciplined group culture that elicits and considers dissenting positions, and interaction via dialogue, as diverging opinions are considered. This group will integrate dissenting positions and come to a more coherent and effective decision. President Kennedy's leadership in the CMC was one good example of this model.

Strategic decisions for war or other crisis situations are critical points in a nation's history. A cursory scan of world history shows these critical decisions are often in error, and lead to tragic consequences. Strategic leaders should study carefully this history and be prepared when these defining moments occur. In America, the strategic leader must understand democracy is dissent resolved and integrated into the decision-making process; the bedrock of our democratic republic. Those who must dissent should

understand how to approach these difficult and emotional situations, learning the lessons of our Athenian predecessors. Strategic leaders must build teams and set cultures that not only encourage, but elicit alternative viewpoints as did Abraham Lincoln, and John F. Kennedy. Those leaders should fully understand groupthink is endemic in history, causing tragic outcomes as it did for the Japanese empire in World War 2, and the Athenians in the Peloponnesian war. *E Pluribus Unum* is still the power of the American democratic republic, and must construct future strategy for the United States.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Sue G. Hall, *The Quotable Robert F. Kennedy* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1967), 52.

<sup>2</sup> Ravi Zacharias, "Thales, Unity and Diversity," June 15, 2000, <http://www.rzim.org/resources/read/asliceofinfinity/todaysslice.aspx?aid=9098> (accessed December 19, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Barack Obama, *The National Security Strategy* (Washington D.C.: The White House, May 2010), 37.

<sup>4</sup> Don M. Snider, "Dissent and Strategic Leadership of the Military Professions," (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, February 2008), viii.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Josiah Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens, Intellectual Critics of Popular Rule* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), 3.

<sup>7</sup> Athens lost the war because it abandoned the Periclean grand strategy, an indirect approach validated by the Peace of Nicias. Instead, Athens turned to the strategy of annihilation suggested by Alcibiades and invaded Sicily, an offensive strategy they continued to the end of their unsuccessful war. This switch in strategy occurred when Athens made the fated decision for the Sicilian expedition. Athanassios G. Platias & Constantinos Koliopoulos, *Thucydides on Strategy, Grand Strategies in the Peloponnesian War and Their Relevance Today* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 59-61.

<sup>8</sup> In late 416 and early 415, the Athenians, fresh off their successful siege of Melos, resolved to invade Sicily. Thucydides and Diodorus both write of an opportunity afforded Athens for this invasion by the request of ambassadors from the Sicilian city of Egesta, and a fraction of

Leontines who wanted Athen's help in a war against the neighboring city of Selinus and its ally Syracuse.<sup>8</sup> According to Donald Kagan, the Congress of Gela in 424 resulted in a type of Sicilian "Monroe Doctrine," which barred the Athenians from Sicily. This arrangement favored the Sicilian city-state of Syracuse since the Athenians were allied with Leontini and other cities in western Sicily. Syracuse was not long in taking advantage of this situation and viciously depopulated Leontini. The internal strife in Sicily caused renewed interest in Athens, which sent three ambassadors to Sicily and Italy in 422. This mission did not accomplish much other than showing continued interest in western Sicily and reaffirm Athen's suspicion of Syracuse. Kagan concludes that this mission likely encouraged the allied enemies of Syracuse to seek help from Athens in 416. Donald Kagan, *The Peace of Nicias and the Sicilian Expedition* (London: Cornell University Press, 1981), 17-18, 159-163.

<sup>9</sup> The Egestians arrived in Athens in late 416 requesting support in this war, including an offer to pay for the expedition. Their arguments included previous alliance and justice for the atrocities committed by Syracuse against Leontini. Thucydides stresses that their main argument, however, was the possibility that a Sicily united by Syracuse could lead to a Dorian threat to Athens. The Athenians decided to send envoys to Egesta to see if they really had the financing available, and look into about the situation. These envoys were duped into providing positive reports about both the treasure and the ability for Athens to easily overcome the alliance against the Egestians. The citizens of Athens were quick to vote for war. Robert B. Strassler, *The Landmark Thucydides, a Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 365-366.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Frances Williams, *Ethics in Thucydides, The Ancient Simplicity* (New York: University Press of America, 1998), 227.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Kagan, *The Peace of Nicias*, 169.

<sup>16</sup> Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens*, 107.

<sup>17</sup> Kagan, *The Peace of Nicias*, 174.

<sup>18</sup> Strassler, *The Landmark Thucydides*, 367.

<sup>19</sup> Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens*, 108-109.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>21</sup> Strassler, *The Landmark Thucydides*, 370.

<sup>22</sup> Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens*, 110.

<sup>23</sup> Williams, *Ethics in Thucydides*, 235.

<sup>24</sup> Kagan, *The Peace of Nicias*, 110.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 182-184.

<sup>26</sup> Alcibiades states here “Moreover, we cannot fix the exact point at which our empire shall stop; we have reached a position in which we must not be content with retaining what we have but must scheme to extend it for, if we cease to rule others, we shall be in danger of being ruled ourselves.” Strassler, *The Landmark Thucydides*, 372.

<sup>27</sup> Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens*, 113.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>30</sup> Thucydides writes the following about the tragic result of this expedition: “This was the greatest Hellenic achievement of any in this war, or, in my opinion in, Hellenic history; at once most glorious to the victors, and most calamitous to the conquered. They were beaten at all points and altogether; all that they suffered was great; they were destroyed, as the saying is, with a total destruction, their fleet, their army—everything was destroyed, and few out of many returned home.” Strassler, *The Landmark Thucydides*, 478.

<sup>31</sup> Platias & Koliopoulos, *Thucydides on Strategy*, 109.

<sup>32</sup> Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline, The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday), 221-229.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>34</sup> Examples are almost endless and exist in all forms of media. These include Erich Maria Remarque’s classic 1929 novel turned 1930 movie *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Victor Hugo’s 1862 novel turned 1985 stage show *Les Misérables*, and The Who’s classic rock song “Won’t get fooled again”.

<sup>35</sup> Strassler, *The Landmark Thucydides*, 377.

<sup>36</sup> Thucydides here says “When the news was brought to Athens, for a long while they disbelieved even the most respectable of the soldiers who had themselves escaped from the scene of action and clearly reported the matter, a destruction so complete not being thought credible. When the conviction was forced upon them, they were angry with the orators who had joined in promoting the expedition, just as if they had not themselves voted it, and were outraged also with the reciters of oracles and soothsayers, and all other omenmongers of the time who had encouraged them to hope that they should conquer Sicily. Already distressed at all points and in all quarters, after what had now happened they were seized by a fear and consternation quite without precedent...they began to despair of salvation.” *Ibid.*, 481.

<sup>37</sup> Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens*, 114.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 114-115.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>40</sup> Strassler, *The Landmark Thucydides*, 370.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>42</sup> Ober says the following about Pericles' first speech to the Assembly, which established the Periclean strategy, and proved Pericles was a master of oratorical skills: "Here an individual Athenian politician, introduced as the first leader, the first man, and the most able of the Athenians, delivers a speech; we are told that there were other speakers and opinions were expressed on the other side, but they are irrelevant in the face of the force of Pericles' established leadership position and his powerfully persuasive discussion of material realities...Pericles does not rely on general maxims alone; he understands and can skillfully communicate the essential material bases of state power." Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens*, 81.

<sup>43</sup> Thucydides, Ober argues, was convinced that democracy tends to devolve into self-interested social factions. "Athenians made important decisions on the basis of speeches they heard, and they created "social facts" whenever they voted in their citizen Assembly. Yet the all-important distinction between these politically enacted "social facts" and the unalterable "brute facts" of nature tended to become blurred in the awesome power wielded by the successful democratic state. For Thucydides the category errors encouraged by democratic political process and state power led to political crisis when Athenian leaders lost the capacity to control the ambitions and desires of the citizenry through speech-when the demos came to rule in fact as well as in name." Ibid., 119-120.

<sup>44</sup> James Madison provides one example in *The Federalist #10*. He states elected representatives in a democracy "refine and enlarge" public views by passing them through a chosen body of citizens." These elected representatives bring more coherence to ideas than a pure democracy. However, he then warns of the possibility of self-serving corrupted leadership. He concludes that no matter the size of the republic, it must have a minimum level of elected representatives to avoid the "cabals of a few", but that body of representatives must be limited to a certain number "in order to guard against the confusion of the multitude." Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, *The Federalist, A Commentary on the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Random House, 2001), 59-60.

<sup>45</sup> Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens*, 83.

<sup>46</sup> Doris Kearns Goodman, *Team of Rivals, The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), xvi.

<sup>47</sup> Donald E. Vandergriff, *Raising the Bar, Creating and Nurturing Adaptability to deal with the Changing Face of War* (Washington D.C.: World Security's Institute's Center for Defense Information, 2006), 41.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>51</sup> Ruth Wageman, Debra A. Nunes, James A. Burruss & J. Richard Hackman, *Senior Leadership Teams* (Boston: Harvard Business School, 2008), 79-93.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 232.

<sup>54</sup> Goodman, *Team of Rivals*, 701.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 699.

<sup>56</sup> Donald A. Davis, *Lightning Strike, The Secret Mission to Kill Admiral Yamamoto* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 262-263.

<sup>57</sup> Some recent research opposing groupthink theory exists. Marlene Turner and Anthony Pratkanis published a paper in 1998 which investigated the historical development of the groupthink model and empirical evidence that supports it. They make several observations concerning the body of groupthink research. First, they conclude empirical research on groupthink has been miniscule largely because it is very difficult to conduct. Next, they mention few studies have documented the end result and hallmark of groupthink, low-quality, defective decisions. They conclude no research supports the causal effects of or the hypothesized resultant groupthink symptoms and defective decisions. While their criticisms of the empirical support for groupthink theory are valid, they fail to note the difficulty in experiment design. Janis argued groupthink develops in cohesive groups, and is exacerbated when facing extremely difficult problems with few obvious or easy solutions. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to design these factors into an empirical study, and it's likewise difficult to rule out other group dynamics when looking at historical examples. These reservations about objective proof for groupthink are valid, but they are concerns about the research and experimental validity, not the components of the theory. Marlene E. Turner & Anthony R. Pratkanis, "Twenty-Five Years of Groupthink Theory and Research: Lessons from the Evaluation of a Theory," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Vol. 73, nos. 2/3 (February/March 1998): 105-113.

<sup>58</sup> Fuller and Aldag lodge even more vehement objections to groupthink theory. They argue the extensive use of groupthink in research and popular culture is not only unsupported by empirical evidence, but based on arguable assumptions from its genesis. They point out that, although groupthink is only a theory, it's often presented as fact in journal articles and textbooks, and groupthink researchers have largely ignored published critique of the theory. They even coined the phrase "organizational Tonypandy," defined when "knowledgeable individuals fail to speak out against widely accepted but erroneous beliefs." Ironically, they argue that groupthink proponents are themselves engaged in groupthink about groupthink theory! Oddly, they provide no empirical evidence when arguing groupthink is unsupported by research evidence. Additionally, in several places in their paper, they cite outcomes that Janis did not intend from his writing. One example is when they cite a study that proves "cohesiveness does not regularly lead to negative outcomes," inferring Janis would argue that it does. In fact, Janis would not argue that cohesiveness always results in negative outcomes, but simply that it is a part of the groupthink equation. While their paper is an interesting critique of groupthink theory, it is based on opinion and unsupported by research evidence. It does,

however, provide a useful counterbalancing opinion on the theory and they have a valid point that groupthink is often presented as fact when it is a theory. Sally Riggs Fuller & Ramon J. Aldag, "Organizational Groupthink: Lessons from a Quarter Century of the Groupthink Phenomenon," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Vol. 73, nos. 2/3 (February/March 1998): 163-184.

<sup>59</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982), 9.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>62</sup> Davis, *Lightning Strike*, 2.

<sup>63</sup> Irving L. Janis, "Groupthink," *Psychology Today*, November 1971, 44-46.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>65</sup> Edwin P. Hoyt, *Three Military Leaders* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1993), 79-82.

<sup>66</sup> John Dean Potter, *Yamamoto the Man Who Menaced America* (New York: The Viking Press, 1965) 41.

<sup>67</sup> Janis, "Groupthink," *Psychology Today*, 46.

<sup>68</sup> Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1985), 36.

<sup>69</sup> Janis, "Groupthink," *Psychology Today*, 46.

<sup>70</sup> Hoyt, *Three Military Leaders*, 100.

<sup>71</sup> Janis, "Groupthink," *Psychology Today*, 46.

<sup>72</sup> Jeffery Record, *Japan's Decision for War in 1941: Some Enduring Lessons* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, February 2009), 48.

<sup>73</sup> Davis, *Lightning Strike*, 2.

<sup>74</sup> Janis, "Groupthink," *Psychology Today*, 74.

<sup>75</sup> Davis, *Lightning Strike*, 2.

<sup>76</sup> Janis, "Groupthink," *Psychology Today*, 74.

<sup>77</sup> Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 35.

<sup>78</sup> Janis, "Groupthink," *Psychology Today*, 74.

<sup>79</sup> One Japanese Admiral stated: The primary responsibility for Japan's going to war rests on the navy. We cannot blame the ignorant and reckless army. Neither public opinion nor the Emperor could have halted the plunge towards war, but the navy could have. The navy alone

was in a position to stand up against Tojo. If it had done so Japan could not have gone to war. The navy, with its broad outlook on the world, gave way to the insular army, the navy is to blame. Potter, *Yamamoto the Man Who Menaced America*, 41.

<sup>80</sup> Janis, "Groupthink," *Psychology Today*, 74.

<sup>81</sup> Robert Guillain, *I Saw Tokyo Burning* (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday & Company, 1981), 75

<sup>82</sup> Potter, *Yamamoto the Man Who Menaced America*, 21.

<sup>83</sup> Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 394-395.

<sup>84</sup> Janis, "Groupthink," *Psychology Today*, 76.

<sup>85</sup> Jeffery Record sadly notes groupthink had overcome the nation, saying "A fusion of state-centered honor and popular nationalism occurred in Japan that prompted an instinctive need for recognition of its status in the hierarchy of nations, and the values of hierarchy provided a behavioral norm that focused and intensified the realist drive for national power. Establishment of Japan's honor, of its reputation for power in relation to other nations, became a goal sanctioned by inherited values and norms." He goes on to say "Yet the end result of this drive for power, honor, and reputation was Japan's complete destruction and subsequent occupation by the United States. There can be no justification for a foreign policy that consciously propels a state into a war against an inherently undefeatable enemy." Record, *Japan's Decision for War in 1941*, 49.

<sup>86</sup> Graham Allison & Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman Educational Publishers, 1999), 1.

<sup>87</sup> Janis, *Groupthink*, 35.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>90</sup> Allison & Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 15.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>93</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink, a psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascoes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1972), 138; Not everyone accepts the premise that the CMC serves as a positive decision-making model. In one example, Richard Pious concludes "Kennedy contributed to our ignorance about crisis resolution. What should have been learned was the need to negotiate in such a crisis and the meaninglessness of the nuclear balance of power. The lesson should have been that crisis management often does not work, that the experts are wrong, that the military forces on both sides cannot be managed to prevent incidents. The lesson should have been that political horsetrading is often a more effective way to resolve a crisis than situation room attempts at micromanagement." He goes on

to state Kennedy was “willing, for political advantage, to leave the American people with the most dangerous illusion of all: the White House could “manage” a superpower nuclear crisis and with sufficient military force could resolve it on terms favorable to the United States.” Richard M. Pious, “The Cuban Missile Crisis and the Limits of Crisis Management,” *Political Science Quarterly* 116, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 104.

<sup>94</sup> Allison & Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 78-79.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>96</sup> Kenneth Michael Absher, “Mind-sets and Missiles: A First Hand Account of the Cuban Missile Crisis,” (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, September 2009), 3.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-39.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-41.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-46.

<sup>100</sup> Janis, *Victims of Groupthink*, 146.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>103</sup> One poignant example is the morning of October 22 when Kennedy asked about an order he instructed the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) to send to commanders in Turkey in control of the nuclear Jupiter missiles. He wanted them ordered not to fire even if they were attacked unless they had specific orders from the White House. The JCS objected to the order, so had not sent it. Kennedy repeated his instructions to send the order as he feared a U.S. attack on Cuba might spark retaliation against the Jupiter missiles in Turkey, and if they returned fire it could result in all out nuclear war without giving the National Command Authority (NCA) a chance to intervene. The Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Nitze objected saying that order compromised the standing instructions contained in the European Defense Plan (EDP). The President asked what the EDP was, and what standing instructions it contained. Nitze went on to explain the EDP was for nuclear war and required immediate response if Turkey was attacked. Kennedy stated this is why he needed a special order, as the commanders in Turkey did not know what the ExComm knew, and he wanted to avoid a conventional attack on Cuba turning into a global nuclear war. Allison & Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 198.

<sup>104</sup> Robert F. Grattan, “The Cuban Missile Crisis: strategy formulation in action,” *Management Decision* 42; no. 1 (2004), 65.

<sup>105</sup> One difficult aspect of strategic military planning is the requirement to keep plans out of the public sphere to maintain operational secrecy, while still evaluating divergent viewpoints. Formalized team-processes of internal dissent help keep plans secret, but plan the best possible strategic options. If team members are not afforded an opportunity to lodge dissent until a plan is enacted, and therefore no longer secret, it’s too late for the dissent to affect the

outcome. Robust internal dissent also helps maintain a unified face to the American people and international community when taking high-stakes actions in the public sphere.

<sup>106</sup> Grattan, "The Cuban Missile Crisis," 61.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>108</sup> Janis, *Victims of Groupthink*, 147-149.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>110</sup> Grattan, "The Cuban Missile Crisis," 67.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>113</sup> Mark Schafer & Scott Crichlow, "Antecedents of Groupthink, A Quantitative Study," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40, no. 3 (Sep, 1996) 415-422.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 428.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 429.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 427.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 429.