



**WILEY-  
BLACKWELL**



The Center  
for the Study  
of the Presidency

---

Foreign-Policy Advising: Models and Mysteries from the Bush Administration

Author(s): Patrick J. Haney

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Jun., 2005), pp. 289-302

Published by: [Blackwell Publishing](#) on behalf of the [Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27552683>

Accessed: 28/02/2012 04:51

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



Blackwell Publishing and Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Presidential Studies Quarterly*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

# Foreign-Policy Advising: Models and Mysteries from the Bush Administration

PATRICK J. HANEY

*Miami University*

*There is a wide range of scholarly approaches to studying presidents, advisers, and foreign-policy making, all aiming to capture the genesis of policy, the "essence of decision." While we have made some progress in capturing the complexity of how presidents construct foreign-policy advisory processes, and the kinds of ways they wield power so as to control the policy process, our conceptual models may not be keeping up with practice. While a range of theories exists to explain foreign-policy cases of a variety of types, and may do so in discrete ways, we are less able to come to terms with how the foreign-policy process can be both open to a vast range of forces from inside and outside the White House and dominated by the president using unilateral mechanisms of power all at the same time. I use U.S. policy toward Cuba and in Iraq during the first administration of George W. Bush to illustrate this empirical challenge to our conceptual models.*

There is a long tradition in the analysis of U.S. foreign policy to study how presidents assemble teams of advisers to help make decisions. Starting especially in the 1970s, a series of new works helped push our understanding of how presidents put these teams together, how they do their work, and what effects the structuring of decision making has on the process of reaching decisions and policy. Exploring the links among decision structure, process, and outcomes has been a consistent theme in the literature. While we have seen a diverse set of approaches to studying these questions in the last twenty or so years, they all trace themselves back in one way or another to the seminal works by Graham Allison (1971), *Essence of Decision*; Richard T. Johnson (1974), *Managing the White House*; Alexander George (1980), *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice*; and Irving Janis (1972), *Victims of Groupthink*.

---

*Patrick J. Haney is professor of political science at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, where he teaches classes on U.S. foreign and national security policy. He is the author of Organizing for Foreign Policy: Presidents, Advisers, and the Management of Decision Making, and the coauthor with Walt Vanderbush of The Cuban Embargo: The Domestic Politics of an American Foreign Policy.*

*AUTHOR'S NOTE: I would like to thank Ryan Barilleaux, Chris Kelley, Bill Mandel, James Pffiffner, Phil Russo, and Walt Vanderbush for their help and insights.*

In this article, I try to highlight some of the conceptual developments we see in the literature in understanding presidents and their advisory structures since these works. I do so not in the form of an exhaustive review of the literature but rather by pointing to several examples of the kind of scholarship that has developed around these issues in the domain of foreign policy. Then I use two heuristic cases from the present Bush administration to show how the literature helps us understand some things about the policy process and the role of the president in it but frankly leaves us unable to fully grasp some others. U.S. policy toward Cuba and policy in Iraq, I argue, are interesting because many of the models from the literature are helpful in understanding how President Bush and his advisers work in a broader policy environment to craft foreign policy. But they also show the limits of what we can understand. We have models that help us see the president caught in a vast bureaucracy or porous policy environment rife with congressional and interest group activism where presidents must lead through persuasion; and we have models that help us see the president as the dominant foreign-policy player who leads by fiat. In short, though, what we have yet to develop are theories that help us understand how the president can be both of these things at the same time in the same policy domain. Analysts of foreign-policy decision making have long understood small-group processes, and have perhaps more recently come to appreciate the impact of institutions and domestic politics on decision making, but now must take into account the increasing power of the president to act alone, even when in the midst of a dizzying array of political forces that constrain the White House.

### Models of the Foreign-Policy Process

Research that attempts to understand how U.S. presidents have organized the White House for policy making has long explored the possible effects of those structures on policy making. Probably the most well-known study of the process of decision making is Janis's *Victims of Groupthink* (1972). Janis was motivated to explain performance failures, such as the American fiasco at the Bay of Pigs, by examining the internal dynamics or group processes that lead ultimately to group decisions. "Groupthink" is when individuals within cohesive groups seek unanimity or concurrence to such an extent that they cease to vigilantly perform the tasks of decision making. Janis hypothesized that the presence of groupthink during the process of decision making might lead to policy failures. While a psychological phenomenon that cannot be directly observed, Janis argued that groupthink produces behavioral consequences or symptoms that can be observed—and that can be avoided with proper planning.

Richard Johnson takes a more structural approach to these issues; he explores how the president "manage[s] a team of men to provide him with information, staff out his alternatives, and otherwise extend his reach" (1974, xxii) so that the president can be successful at leadership and policy making. Johnson focuses on how the White House is organized for general policy making. He identifies three generic models of organization that presidents have used—a formalistic, a competitive, and a collegial model of decision making. Alexander George (1980) picks up here and applies Johnson's models to

the foreign-policy domain to discuss how modern U.S. presidents structure advisory networks and the impact of that on information processing.

Graham Allison's (1971) approach is to explore how organizational structures and bureaucratic games shape the policy-making process and direct policy outputs or outcomes. This bureaucratic politics approach, or family of approaches, opened the "black box" of decision making to analysis and to explore the ways that internal political processes affect foreign-policy making. An emphasis on the ways that organizational processes and procedures (Allison's Model II) and bureaucratic bargaining and infighting (Allison's Model III) affect the decisions reached by groups is central to this approach. Allison examines these components in American decision making during the October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

A variety of recent approaches to understanding how presidents construct a foreign-policy process are worth mentioning, each representing a broader strain of theoretical and empirical research. In *Organizing the Presidency* (2002), Hess and Pfiffner track the ways that modern U.S. presidents have structured White House operations. Besides describing the organizational styles of each administration, they discuss how presidents learn from the perceived organizational mistakes of each former president in an effort to fine-tune the structure of policy making. Burke and Greenstein (1989) examine the importance of advisory groups as well as presidential personality and the political environment during two cases of American decision making about Vietnam: Eisenhower in 1954 and Johnson in 1964-65. They seek to explain why two presidents who were faced with very similar problems responded in such very different ways. Their analysis indicates that the way presidents organize advisory groups may have an important impact on the process of decision making, but that the individual president's style and the political climate also affect the process of decision making. In my own work (Haney 2002), I tried to take the models developed by Johnson (1974), applied to foreign policy by George (1980), and apply them specifically to foreign-policy crises, showing how presidents constructed hybrids of the ideal types to suit their needs.

In *The Institutional Presidency* (1992), Burke argues that studies of the U.S. presidency need to begin to examine in more depth the nexus between the enduring institutional (structural) features of the presidency and the management strategies and styles of particular presidents, and the implications of each for the other. He attempts to move in this direction by showing how modern U.S. presidents have dealt with these issues. In a similar vein, Ponder explores how presidents have tried to control policy making by centralizing the process inside the White House. He focuses particular importance on the use of staff to help the president. Bringing some of the "new institutionalism" into this domain, he also views the White House as an institution whose rules are determined endogenously, thus open to presidential influence (2000, 176-77). Garrison (1999) also follows in this general approach, examining what she calls the structural, procedural, and interpersonal influence maneuvers used in policy making by different advisers.

Picking up on the evolutionary model of Hult and Walcott (2003), Newmann tracks the development of policy-making structures over time in an administration. He shows how the initial decision-making structures represent what he calls a president's administrative theory—the president's preferences about the methods and goals for

foreign-policy making, and the president's beliefs about what is the proper relationship to have with advisers. He shows how these structures change over the course of an administration, and argues that while each president is unique, there are patterns of evolution across administrations (Newmann 2003, 24-25). Newmann shows a general narrowing of participants as the president seeks advice from an ever smaller number of individuals. He also shows that for policies on which the president places a high priority, he is likely to try to exert more control—by managing the pace of the process; defining policy content; and by excluding participants.

Preston (2001) pursues these issues by asking what difference the personality, leadership style, and policy experience of the president makes for foreign policy. Or, under what circumstances do these factors matter? He uses the "personality at a distance" technique developed by Margaret G. Hermann to "type" leaders along two dimensions of personality and political experience: (1) the need for power or control and the level of presidential involvement in policy making, and (2) the president's need for information (cognitive complexity) and the president's attentiveness to the external environment. This approach also feeds off the earlier effort to show how different foreign-policy decisions are likely made by different kinds of "ultimate decision units." By "decision unit," we mean whether a decision can be reached by a single dominant leader, by a small group, or the result of bargaining among multiple autonomous actors (Hermann, Hermann, and Hagan 1987), and what difference that may make not just for understanding the processes involved but potentially what impact it has on outcomes as well.

In a study that picks up from Janis's work on groupthink more than Johnson's (1974) or George's (1980), Herek, Janis, and Huth (1987) use a case survey methodology to try to study the relationship between decision-making processes and crisis outcomes across a variety of cases in American foreign policy. They show that in general, the greater the number of decision-making process defects there are, the more likely the decision reached is to lead to a policy failure—thus drawing attention to the importance of constructing sound or vigilant foreign-policy advisory processes.

While each of the examples of newer literature on foreign-policy advising takes its own unique approach, there is a common ground among these otherwise diverse works—progressing from the starting points laid out by Allison, Janis, Johnson, and George. I would argue that increasingly work in this area also shares a basic acceptance of the "new institutionalism," summarized by March and Olsen in their argument that institutions affect the flow of political life through them. They take as their basic assumption that the organization of political life matters, that institutions "define the framework within which politics takes place" (March and Olsen 1989, 18). Our models of understanding the interplay among psychology, interpersonal dynamics, and decision structures have become more sophisticated. Our understanding of the dangers of flawed processes has become more certain. And our capacity for taking into account not just the broad political environment but the broader institutional environment within which presidents and their advisers must work has also increased. These theoretical and empirical developments help us understand much about the presidency and foreign-policy making today, but as the two cases to which I turn now suggest, we are still faced with serious empirical challenges.

## Tightening the Grip on Cuba (Policy)

The policy process that surrounds the U.S. embargo of Cuba is one that has evolved over time from an era of tight presidential control in the Eisenhower and Kennedy era to one that is now widely recognized as infused with domestic political and electoral interests and congressional and interest group activism. If policy toward the island was run out of the Oval Office in the 1960s, by the 1980s it was largely driven by the powerful ethnic interest group, the Cuban American National Foundation, which had close ties to the Reagan campaign and White House. But in the 1990s, Congress became much more involved in setting the course of policy toward Cuba, ultimately codifying the embargo into law in the controversial Helms-Burton Act in 1996. President Clinton tried to reassert presidential control by using “licensing” power embedded in the law to allow certain kinds of exchange with the island in 1998 and 1999, thus essentially ignoring Helms-Burton and daring Congress to do something about it. His efforts to establish a “blue ribbon” commission to study and make recommendations on U.S. policy toward Cuba, however, were thwarted by domestic political considerations when Cuban Americans in south Florida began calling the commission the “Gore Commission”—a sure sign of electoral danger for the Democrats in Florida in 2000. Many saw the idea of such a commission as a way for the Clinton-Gore administration to get political cover for loosening if not calling for an end to the embargo.

The response from many in Congress who were moving to a more negative view of the embargo but who nevertheless wanted to continue to set policy toward Cuba, led by business interests and farm state Republicans, interestingly, began to allow the sale of food and medicine to Cuba in 2000. At the same time, many in Congress began to set their sights on killing the “travel ban” that prevents U.S. citizens from visiting the island and spending money by eliminating money for its enforcement from the Treasury Department budget (see Bardach 2002; Brenner, Haney, and Vanderbush 2002; Fisk 2000, 2001; Haney and Vanderbush, 2005; Kaplowitz 1998; Kiger 1997; Morley and McGillion 2002; Torres 1999).

The point of this brief review is to suggest that the policy process around U.S.-Cuba policy had largely escaped the firm grasp of the White House by the time President George W. Bush came to office. The range of actors involved in Cuba policy, and its center of gravity on the Hill rather than in the White House, had come to make the Cuba policy process look more like a domestic-policy issue than a foreign-policy one. And momentum was shifting away from the embargo and toward increased openness with the island. As George W. Bush came to Washington, Cuba policy did not seem an area ripe for tight presidential control as one might expect in other foreign-policy cases. Even after the attacks of September 11, when the Bush administration suggested that Cuba was not playing a productive role in the war against terrorism and that Cuba had a biological weapons capacity, the range of anti-embargo—and especially anti-travel ban—forces continued to grow (Davies and Tamayo 2002; Miller 2002). Bush had to resort to the use of a “recess appointment” to put his preferred person at the State Department as assistant secretary for the Western Hemisphere, Otto Reich, whom the Senate would not confirm.

Bush made no moves to change the “wet foot/dry foot” immigration policy that Clinton established. And he did not allow the lawsuits against foreign companies for “trafficking” in stolen property in Cuba that had belonged to U.S. nationals to proceed. This right to sue is provided in Helms-Burton but was waived by Clinton every six months. Candidate Bush seemed to indicate he might allow the suits to proceed, but in the face of heavy pressure from allies (whose companies would be the objects of the lawsuits), he has continued to exercise the waiver that blocks the suits, including in January 2005—the first such opportunity since his reelection. In other words, Cuba policy can at first glance seem largely outside of the president’s control. Advised on Cuba policy by his brother Jeb Bush, the Governor of Florida with close ties to the conservative Cuban-American community, Congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL), and others, Bush has mostly not engaged in Cuba policy except to try to fight back efforts to end the travel ban (including threatening to veto a spending bill that did not include money for the enforcement of the travel ban).

Thus, this first look at the Cuba policy process seems to show a porous process with little opportunity for firm presidential control. Such a process would seem not well-suited to a type of analysis that examines the president’s advisory system as if it were the genesis of policy. And I would argue that this look does reflect one reality about the Cuba policy process. But there is another policy and process that must be balanced against this view—one dominated by President Bush and a relatively small group of like-minded insiders. This policy process would seem ripe for exactly the type of analysis for which Cuba policy seemed inappropriate before.

Many of the most hard-line anti-Castro Cuban Americans in Miami, those who worked hard for Bush’s election in 2000 and his brother’s in 2002, were less than thrilled with what little effort the administration made to reverse some of the policies from the Clinton administration with which they disagreed, such as the wet foot/dry foot and the lack of full implementation of Helms-Burton. With respect to Bush’s Cuba policy, one noted analyst, Damian Fernandez, commented: “He’s tiptoeing around the margins. . . . The question is one of heightened expectations. For many in the Cuban American community, it’s ‘We voted for you; you won Florida; you promised—where are the deliverables’” (quoted in Bumiller 2003).

In an effort to court these voters in Florida—voters who turn out to the polls in extremely high numbers—for the 2004 election, Bush formed the President’s Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba. The commission released its report in May 2004, and called for tightening the embargo by limiting family visits to the island, for redefining “family” to mean only *immediate* family, and for a reduction in the amount of money that could be spent during family visits, among other things. President Bush took a number of their suggestions, including the more limited definition of what constitutes a family for the purposes of sending money home to “family,” and announced new limits on family travel (now only one visit every three years instead of one per year, with no exceptions) and remittances, as well as a \$45 million increase in funds to promote a democratic transition on the island (San Martin and Ross 2004). Some suggested that the moves would cost Bush votes from moderate members of the exile community whose travel to Cuba and ability to help members of their family still living on the island was made more dif-

ficult by these reforms (see Yanez 2004). Perhaps in response to this potential loss of support, the Bush administration did not immediately move to enforce the restrictions on travel and spending by Cuban Americans, though they eventually did (see Tyler 2004).

In this case, we see the president enacting a set of reforms that were unpopular with many, though very popular with a select few. While there was a veneer of “inclusion” in the process, in the form of the commission, it appears the policy was the result of a small group of policy/political advisers and the president himself. What was really more an interagency committee than a “commission” of experts was chaired by Secretary of State Colin Powell and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and Cuban American, Mel Martinez. The merging of politics and policy, and the effort by the White House to take control of policy and create a process that existed alongside yet largely separate from the dynamics with which we had become accustomed for Cuba policy, is striking.

Cuba policy under President Bush has certainly been affected by his political advisers’ calculations about Cuban-American voters, but that is only one of a variety of factors that currently shape U.S. policy toward Cuba. U.S. economic interests, including both the larger desire to maintain global trade momentum and the particular interests of various domestic economic groups, are also part of the story. Institutional interests are also on display as members of the legislature compete with the executive for control over policy (see Haney and Vanderbush 2005). All this serves to remind us that understanding the policy process today is not just about understanding the president and his policy and advisory preferences. Nor is it only about trying to build a type of explanation that can account for the impact of forces in the larger political and institutional environment on the president. Rather, it is trying to find ways to study both at the same time, even when that seems paradoxical. How can the president be both a virtual policy bystander, or perhaps a “first among equals,” and a driving force at the center of decisions at the same time? Or put another way, how can a policy domain be characterized as being driven by a “predominant leader,” “multiple autonomous actors,” and “small groups” (Hermann, Hermann, and Hagan 1987), all at the same time? I would argue that coming to terms with this complexity is perhaps the central challenge of studying presidents, advisers, and foreign-policy making today.

### **The Vulcans, the Exiles, the Reporters, and Iraq**

The decision to invade Iraq, and to thus put the Bush Doctrine into full effect, is a similarly puzzling mix of a porous policy environment alongside a strikingly powerful president. In an era when we had become accustomed to seeing presidents unable to cut through the bureaucracy at State or Defense, or to escape the oversight of Congress, President Bush both reflected those expectations and at other times entirely destroyed them. How a handful of people were able to wrest control of the bureaucracy and outmaneuver Congress and the public to move forward with a war in Iraq is no easy question to handle. Even Richard Haass, then director of Policy Planning at the State

Department, has trouble answering how this came about. "I will go to my grave not knowing that. I can't answer it. I can't explain the strategic obsession with Iraq—why it rose to the top of people's priority list" (Lemann 2004, 157).

One thing is certain: the policy process involved in Iraq policy was run by a small, tightly controlled group of loyalists, who Mann calls the "Vulcans," and yet at the same time the process was surrounded by a wide range of outsiders and outside interests pushing in all directions. On the porous side of the equation, there were outside groups such as the Iraqi National Congress and its leader Ahmed Chalabi pushing for regime change in Iraq, and of course Congress and even the Clinton administration had called for such a change. The Project for a new American Century had called for such a policy as prelude to a wider remaking of the Middle East. Chalabi had close ties to Richard Perle, then chairman of the Defense Policy Board, a nongovernmental advisory panel for the secretary of defense. And former Director of Central Intelligence James Woolsey had become a mainstay on television calling for Saddam's ouster (Mann 2004, 334-36; Hersh 2004, 168). These were outsiders but their close personal connections linked them in important ways to those inside the administration.

But the group around the president was (and is) small. Richard Clarke said that Bush "doesn't reach out, typically, for a lot of experts. He has a very narrow, regulated, highly regimented set of channels to get advice" (quoted in Lemann 2004). Woodward also said that Bush told him, with respect to Iraq, "I have no outside advice. Anybody who says they're an outside adviser of this administration on this particular matter is not telling the truth" (quoted in Lemann 2004).

The vision that tied the group around Bush together was that of an "unchallengeable America, a United States whose military power was so awesome that it no longer needed to make compromises or accommodations (unless it chose to do so) with any other nation or groups of countries" (Mann 2004, xii). Insiders included Bush, Vice President Cheney, his chief of staff Lewis "Scooter" Libby, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, his deputy Paul Wolfowitz, the Undersecretary for Policy Douglas Feith, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and his deputy Richard Armitage and undersecretary Marc Grossman, Rice's deputy Stephen Hadley, the NSC's regional specialist for Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad, the NSC counterterrorism expert General Wayne Downing, DCI George Tenet, Deputy Director of the CIA John McLaughlin, and the chairman and vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of State. They all agreed that containment was not a viable plan for Saddam and wanted regime change (Mann 2004, 332-33).

This group of insiders also worked to make it clear that dissent would not be tolerated. Richard Clarke recalls that the day following the 9/11 attacks Bush said to him: "Look, I know you have a lot to do and all . . . but I want you, as soon as you can, to go back over everything, everything. See if Saddam did this. See if he's linked in any way." After an effort to assure the president that there is no good evidence there, Bush said testily, "Look into Iraq, Saddam" (Clarke 2004, 32). When General Eric Shinseki, then chief of staff of the Army, testified before Congress in February 2003 and in response to a question about force levels expressed concern that present force levels were too low, his view was quickly repudiated at the Pentagon and his successor—with Shinseki still

months from retirement—was named by the administration (Daalder and Lindsay 2003, 150; Clarke 2004, 270).

In another example, according to Hersh, in the summer of 2001 a career officer at the Pentagon was assigned the task of rethinking the assumptions of the Vulcans about Saddam's ouster, a "what could go wrong?" study. But the officer found that no one cared, and he was told that the Pentagon's leadership "wanted to focus not on what could go wrong but what would go right" (2004, 168-69). In another example, a group called the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans was established to go back through all the intelligence available about Iraq, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and terrorism, including data from the Iraqi National Congress, and assemble a picture that would be persuasive to the public (Hersh 2004, 207-11). According to Hersh, they called themselves "the cabal" (2004, 207). Before long the public discourse was dominated by the view that Saddam would easily be overthrown and U.S. forces would be greeted as liberators with flowers and chocolates.<sup>1</sup>

The record seems mixed on from whence came the genesis of the policy shift toward the Bush Doctrine and the war in Iraq and away from the tenets of containment and realism. What is clear is that many came to the administration with not just a long history with Saddam but with a formed opinion that he should go and American military power should be used to accomplish this, even in the form of an all-out invasion. Clarke asserts that "the Administration began with Iraq on the agenda" (2004, 264). Many of the people now inside the administration were part of a group actively calling for his overthrow during the Clinton administration. And Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz had long been part of the wing of the Republican Party that had been less accepting of détente and containment in the Cold War; with that gone, they began to assert a new more powerful role for the United States, led by military power, to reshape the political map. Then the attacks of September 11 helped underscore the realities of this new system and the potential for American power to reshape it (Mann 2004, 339). The question many ask is, "Where was Bush on September 10th?" Was he with the neoconservative Vulcans, or not? The view in PBS's *Frontline* (2003) suggests he may not have been, that the attacks provided the opportunity for Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz to win the president's ear over Powell and others seen as more "realists" and less as neoconservatives. But Daalder and Lindsay disagree: "September 11 did more to reaffirm Bush's view of the world than to transform it" (2003, 79). This view included the key points that "the world is a dangerous place. . . . International agreements and institutions could not protect the American people; that only the might of the American military could" (2003, 80).

Having set their sights on Iraq, starting on at least September 12 according to Clarke, the administration sold its case that Iraq posed a test case of the Bush Doctrine: a case for preemptive military action against an imminent threat from WMD either delivered directly or indirectly by giving the weapons to al Qaeda. Because no WMD

1. Today many of the same actors call the insurgents in Iraq just a few hundred (or perhaps a few thousand) "dead-enders," contrary to the report released by the National Intelligence Council that calls Iraq the new central training ground for the next generation of professional terrorists (see Priest 2005, A01).

stockpiles were found in Iraq, or even advanced programs to develop the weapons, many have begun to point to a range of other reasons for the now clearly preventive war in Iraq (see Mandelbaum 1995; Daalder and Lindsay 2003, 127). But even Haass admits that “the only serious argument for war was weapons of mass destruction” (quoted in Lemann 2004, 158). And there is reason to believe that at the upper levels of the government they *knew* Saddam had no such weapons. Richard Clarke argues Bush and his advisers “had to know there was no imminent threat” from Iraq (2004, 268). The uranium tubes story and the African uranium story both seemed flimsy at best. But the press was not well situated to confront Bush and his advisers. In his book *Plan of Attack*, Woodward concedes that he had his doubts about the intelligence on WMD, but nevertheless he was in no position to take on the administration: “I did not feel I had enough information to effectively challenge the official conclusions about Iraq’s alleged WMD. In light of subsequent events, I should have pushed for a page one story, even on the eve of war, presenting more forcefully what our sources were saying” (2004, 355-56). Other journalists pushed stories that highlighted certain intelligence, only to have it turn out to be false as well (see, e.g., Editors 2004; Jackson 2003).

Within this porous political environment the president was nonetheless able to act with great unilateral and relatively unchecked power. Another domain in which this story played itself out was with respect to the way prisoners suspected of being terrorists could be treated under U.S. law. The White House developed a very broad interpretation of what constitutes torture and the process involved in drafting that ruling perhaps looks familiar. White House Counsel Alberto R. Gonzales, “working closely with a small group of conservative legal officials at the White House, the Justice Department and the Defense Department—and overseeing deliberations that generally excluded potential dissenters—helped chart other legal paths in the handling and imprisonment of suspected terrorists and the applicability of international conventions to U.S. military and law enforcement activities” (Smith and Eggen 2005).

And of course there is more to be written in the future on how the president, in the midst of an entangling web of powerful actors, nonetheless acts with great unilateral authority. According to Hersh, President Bush has made the decision to expand the war on terrorism to Iran through covert means (for now) and has placed such actions under the Pentagon’s control. “The President has signed a series of findings and executive orders authorizing secret commando groups and other Special Forces units to conduct covert operations against suspected terrorist targets in as many as ten nations in the Middle East and South Asia.” By assigning the job to the Defense Department rather than the CIA, Bush “enables Rumsfeld to run the operations off the books—free from legal restrictions imposed on the C.I.A.” (Hersh 2005).

Two standard theories of foreign-policy advising seem to explain some of this pattern. First, the bureaucratic politics explanation, with its focus on players in position who vie to win the game of policy, seems to have some traction here. Inside the Bush administration are a core of actors who have long held a different view of the role of American power in world affairs, and a strong view about Saddam. Once inside government not at a tertiary level but as key players, and aided by the changed political environment after the attacks of 9/11, these actors seized the day and changed the direction

of American foreign policy, one might argue. Depending on one's view, President Bush was either always with this group or was persuaded to join them after 9/11. The versions of the policy process found in Woodward (2004), Daalder and Lindsay (2003), and Clarke (2004), and most other versions of the emergence of the Bush Doctrine and the war in Iraq, all seem to reflect versions of this bureaucratic politics explanation. Lemann's counterfactual about how the administration would not only be staffed differently but would perhaps not have gone into Iraq had Cheney not joined the ticket, but instead someone like former Senator John Danforth (R-MO), for example, also seems energized by such a perspective (2004, 150). Perhaps the thing that the bureaucratic politics approach helps us see best is the way that solutions can wait for years until the right problem emerges. The neoconservatives had long pushed for regime change in Iraq, but after 9/11 their policy had its day.

But such a focus may put too much emphasis on players in position and not enough on the power of ideas. One can see in Mann (2004) and Daalder and Lindsay (2003) a strong core set of beliefs about the role of U.S. power in the world that predated the end of the Cold War and that came to fruition after 9/11. Foreign-policy analysis has begun to take into account this competition of ideas, and I would argue this perspective helps lend insight into the current policy process.

Another view of the advisory process and its link to the lack of WMD in Iraq and the underestimation of the level of violence in postwar Iraq that is worth some consideration in this case is Janis's groupthink hypothesis. The team of advisers around President Bush would seem to fit Janis's description of relatively small, cohesive, and like minded. There appears to have been some pressure exerted on dissenters in this case, and an overestimation of the ability to find WMD and to bring about security and democracy in Iraq. This all fits in Janis's model of the organizational prerequisites for groupthink and some of the behavioral symptoms of groupthink that could contribute to policy failure. But on the WMD side of the equation, there is perhaps some reason to believe that many in the administration knew, or suspected, there were no such weapons in Iraq. While it appears true that DCI George Tenet told the president that with respect to WMD in Iraq it was a "slam dunk case," Clarke suggests that many knew the case was not so clear-cut and that this clarity, and the mushroom cloud imagery, was part of a public relations strategy more than it was policy analysis. My view would be that it cannot be groupthink if they knew there were no WMD in Iraq. Only with the passage of more time will we be able to come to more satisfying answers about how this policy process developed, what was an intelligence failure, what was a conceptual error, and what was incompetence, and what may have been purposeful deception. In any event, the answers to these questions have great significance not just for our understanding of the policy advising process but also for the health of the republic.

### **Models and Mysteries: Studying a Different Kind of Power?**

In *Essence of Decision*, Allison was not only making a point about the policy process; he was making a powerful statement about the *study* of the policy process. Analysts,

Allison argued, needed to add these new conceptual models to their analytic tool kit so as to be able to see these things when they happened. Without understanding how presidential power and policy making might work, we would not even know it if we saw it. I would argue that those who study presidents, advisers, and foreign policy have largely taken Allison's warning to heart, but the Cuba and Iraq cases suggest that while we can see and understand much, our models have not mastered political reality. Having settled on the idea, for example, that a policy might be driven by a "small group," by a "single dominant leader," or by "multiple autonomous actors" (Hermann, Hermann, and Hagan 1987), we have yet to capture how a policy might be driven by two or even three of these constructs all at the same time. How can the president be so weak, so embedded in a range of powerful actors, and yet still also act—in the same policy domain—with striking unilateral power with few if any checks?

In recent books, Louis Fisher (2000) and Gordon Silverstein (1997) each make compelling arguments that since World War II the president has garnered significant unilateral control over much of foreign policy and war power, often with the unwitting (and even witting) help of Congress. Mayer makes a similar point with his new institutional approach, which "begins with the assumption that presidents seek control over policy and process" (2001, 24). For Mayer, the politics of the presidency is about getting control of the institutions that create and implement policy. While the conventional wisdom is that the presidency is weak and thus leadership must rest in Neustadt-like persuasion, Mayer argues that throughout U.S. history presidents have relied on their executive authority to make unilateral policy without interference from either Congress or the courts. While both Cuba policy and policy with respect to the war in Iraq are policy domains in which President Bush is encased in interested and powerful actors and institutions, often left relatively powerless among them, he at other times has been able to act with surprising strength and without constraint. Kelley (forthcoming) devotes an edited volume to the different ways presidents have come to rely on their command powers to control policy unto themselves. And Ponder makes the point too: just because other institutions are out there does not mean the presidency is weak (2000, 199).

If in the 1970s the central challenge for those who studied foreign-policy advising was to take into account a new literature from psychology and organizational theory and apply it to foreign-policy cases, and if over time that challenge became broadened to include an appreciation for how Congress, interest groups, and public opinion also set the political environment in which presidents and advisers work, then the central challenge for us today is to take into account the growing literature on the unilateral executive. This challenge, though, is not just to take into account another new (or renewed) line of theory, it is to find ways to see this powerful unilateral president as existing alongside the more powerless one we see when we embed the president in an array of other powerful forces. How can the president be both Gulliver, tied down by the Lilliputians, and the Puppetmaster, pulling the strings, at the same time?

As Allison reminds us, we must know what we *might* see if we are to see it at all. Many of our approaches to understanding presidents and advisers in foreign-policy making are perhaps too narrow; others may be too imprecise. The challenge of the Bush Doctrine for us as analysts is not only that it represents a potentially dramatic policy

change, but also that it underscores the limits of our models. We know enough from our models as they stand that the foreign-policy process we see today is extraordinary in a variety of ways, and we need to keep up if we are to truly understand just how extraordinary it may be.

## References

- Allison, Graham T. 1971. *Essence of decision*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Bardach, Anne Louise. 2002. *Cuba confidential: Love and vengeance in Miami and Havana*. New York: Random House.
- Brenner, Phillip, Patrick J. Haney, and Walt Vanderbush. 2002. The confluence of domestic and international interests: U.S. policy toward Cuba, 1998-2001. *International Studies Perspectives* 3(May): 192-208.
- Bumiller, Elisabeth. 2003. Bush promises Cuban Americans to keep up pressure on Castro. *New York Times*, October 11, p. A5.
- Burke, John P. 1992. *The institutional presidency*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Burke, John P., and Fred I. Greenstein. 1989. *How presidents test reality*. New York: Russell Sage.
- Clarke, Richard A. 2004. *Against all enemies: Inside America's war on terror*. New York: Free Press.
- Daalder, Ivo H., and James M. Lindsay. 2003. *America unbound: The Bush revolution in foreign policy*. Washington, DC: Brookings.
- Davies, Frank, and Juan O. Tamayo. 2002. Cuba hampers war on terror, U.S. says. *Miami Herald*, September 18. Available from <http://www.hermanos.org/docs/tmh091802.htm>.
- Editors of the *New York Times*. 2004. The Times and Iraq. *New York Times*, May 16. Available from [http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/26/international/middleeast/26FTE\\_NOTE.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/26/international/middleeast/26FTE_NOTE.html).
- Fisher, Louis. 2000. *Congressional abdication on war and spending*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M Press.
- Fisk, Daniel W. 2000. Economic sanctions: The Cuba embargo revisited. In *Sanctions as economic statecraft*, edited by Steve Chan and A. Cooper Drury, 65-85. New York: St. Martin's.
- . 2001. Cuba: The end of an era. *Washington Quarterly* 24(Winter): 93-107.
- Frontline. 2003. *The war behind closed doors*. February 20. Available from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/iraq/>.
- Garrison, Jean A. 1999. *Games advisors play: Foreign policy in the Nixon and Carter administrations*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M Press.
- George, Alexander L. 1980. *Presidential decisionmaking in foreign policy: The effective use of information and advice*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Haney, Patrick J. 2002. *Organizing for foreign policy: Presidents, advisers, and the management of decision making*. 2nd ed. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Haney, Patrick J., and Walt Vanderbush. 2005. *The Cuban embargo: The domestic politics of an American foreign policy*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Herek, Gregory M., Irving L. Janis, and Paul Huth. 1987. Decision making during international crises. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 31(2): 203-26.
- Hermann, Margaret G., Charles F. Hermann, and Joe D. Hagan. 1987. How decision units shape foreign policy behavior. In *New directions in the study of foreign policy*, edited by Charles F. Hermann, Charles W. Kegley, and James N. Rosenau, 309-36. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Hersh, Seymour M. 2004. *Chain of command: The road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib*. New York: Harper Collins.
- . 2005. The coming wars. *The New Yorker*, January 24. Available from [http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?050124fa\\_fact](http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?050124fa_fact).
- Hess, Stephen, and James P. Pfiffner. 2002. *Organizing the presidency*. 3rd ed. Washington, DC: Brookings.
- Hult, Karen M., and Charles E. Walcott. 2003. *Empowering the White House: Governance under Nixon, Ford, and Carter*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.

- Jackson, William E., Jr. 2003. Miller's star fades (slightly) at 'NY Times.' *Editor & Publisher*, October 2. Available from [http://www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/news/article\\_display.jsp?vnu\\_content\\_id=1991338](http://www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/news/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1991338).
- Janis, Irving L. 1972. *Victims of groupthink: A psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascoes*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Johnson, Richard T. 1974. *Managing the White House*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Kaplowitz, Donna Rich. 1998. *Anatomy of a failed embargo: US sanctions against Cuba*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Kelley, Christopher S., ed. Forthcoming. *Executing the Constitution: Putting the president back into the Constitution*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Kiger, Patrick J. 1997. *Squeeze play: The United States, Cuba, and the Helms-Burton Act*. Washington, DC: Center for Public Integrity.
- Lemann, Nicholas. 2004. Remember the Alamo: How George W. Bush reinvented himself. *The New Yorker*, October 18, pp. 148-61.
- Mandelbaum, Michael. 1995. Lessons of the next nuclear war. *Foreign Affairs* 74(March/April): 22-37.
- Mann, James. 2004. *Rise of the Vulcans: A history of Bush's war cabinet*. New York: Viking.
- March, James G., and Johan P. Olsen. 1989. *Rediscovering institutions*. New York: Free Press.
- Mayer, Kenneth R. 2001. *With the stroke of a pen: Executive orders and presidential power*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Miller, Judith. 2002. Washington accuses Cuba of germ-warfare research. *New York Times*, May 7, p. A6.
- Morley, Morris H., and Chris McGillion. 2002. *Unfinished business: America and Cuba after the Cold War, 1989-2001*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Newmann, William W. 2003. *Managing national security policy: The president and the process*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Ponder, Daniel E. 2000. *Good advice: Information and policy making in the White House*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M Press.
- Preston, Thomas. 2001. *The president and his inner circle*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Priest, Dana. 2005. Iraq new terror breeding ground: War created haven, CIA advisers report. *Washington Post*, January 14, p. A01.
- San Martin, Nancy, and Karl Ross. 2004. Bush to tighten Cuba sanctions, seek new funds. *Miami Herald*, May 7, p. 1A.
- Silverstein, Gordon. 1997. *Imbalance of powers*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, R. Jeffrey, and Dan Eggen. 2005. Gonzales helped set the course for detainees: Justice nominee's hearings likely to focus on interrogation policies. *Washington Post*, January 5, p. A01.
- Torres, Maria de los Angeles. 1999. *In the land of mirrors: Cuban exile politics in the United States*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Tyler, Jeff. 2004. Getting along with Cuba. *National Public Radio: Marketplace*. June 8. Available from [http://marketplace.publicradio.org/shows/2004/06/08\\_mpp.html](http://marketplace.publicradio.org/shows/2004/06/08_mpp.html).
- Woodward, Bob. 2004. *Plan of attack*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Yanez, Luisa. 2004. Policy on Cuba will cost Bush votes, group warns. *Miami Herald*, May 11, p. 5B.