

ABSTRACT

THE EVOLVING NATIONAL SECURITY ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

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For most of U.S. history the vice president played little role in White House decision-making. In the 1970s this began to change. This dissertation uses a series of case studies of instances of vice presidential influence (with a focus on national security issues) to identify how and why the vice president has become an important presidential advisor. Gathering information through interviews and existing literature, this dissertation examines several factors that have facilitated the rise of the vice presidency including: the expansion of presidential power and responsibility, the institutional growth of the vice presidency in terms of staff and access to the policy process, and the modern trend of “outsider” presidents who take office with little experience in Washington DC or with national security affairs. The dissertation concludes by examining the factors that allow vice presidents to potentially exercise influence and the presidential needs that make vice presidential influence more or less likely.

THE EVOLVING NATIONAL SECURITY ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

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Dedication

To Sonia, I am lucky and blessed she gave me the nod as her running mate for life's campaign

Acknowledgements

Coming to the end of a long and challenging project I have a great many people to thank. I have many personal and professional friends and colleagues who gave me advice, helped me get in touch with useful contacts, or just listened to me drone on about the vice presidency. I cannot hope to thank each of them adequately and will mention just a few.

My good friend Joshua Pollack both recommended the University of Maryland School of Public Policy to me and suggested the vice president would be an interesting avenue for research. He gave me thoughtful advice throughout and was always a terrific source for new sources

My good friend Althea Nagai was also a tremendous help throughout. She was a source of constant encouragement, provided excellent feedback on my drafts, but also did yeoman's work helping with research, editing and layout. Dr. Nagai was perhaps the world's most over-qualified research assistant. It is to my great regret that her late husband, Bob Lerner, who also urged me to undertake this endeavor, only saw me start the process. I think he would have been pleased with the final product.

David and Meyrav Wurmser are great friends who helped get me into the international affairs business. They were always generous with their time, gave me my first job in DC, and taught me so much about so many things. Dave was also kind enough to let me interview him and to introduce me to some of his former colleagues. Dave's help was essential in illuminating the workings of the Bush-Cheney administration.

At the heart of my research were the 30 interviews I conducted. It was great fun and I met many wonderful, thoughtful people. Most of my interviews are cited in the work that follows. A few interviews were either off-the-record or more general conversations. I am very grateful to each and every one of my interviewees for their insight.

A few interviewees were exceptionally generous with their time. Leon Fuerth, Amb. Donald Gregg, Hon. Robert McFarlane, Amb. David Aaron, and Richard Moe were all kind enough to let me come back for a second interview. I am also grateful to Vice President Mondale, Hon. Sandy Berger, and John Hannah for being so very generous with their time.

Morrie Amitay, a legend among DC lobbyists, gave me some critical insight into the Middle East peace process in the Carter-Mondale administration, as well as practical insight into how Washington works. He was also kind enough to recommend me to Vice President Mondale.

While working on my dissertation, I also had a job at a computer science lab at the other end of the University of Maryland. I was fortunate enough to work at a pair of great labs, for terrific directors. Prof. Jim Hendler first hired me at MINDLAB back in 2004. Working for him at Maryland made the prospect of pursuing a PhD (one of my personal dreams and goals) possible. When Jim moved on he introduced me to his colleague, Prof. V.S. Subrahmanian at LCCD. Both of them were

remarkably patient and understanding as I balanced work with my studies and my family. They were always encouraging and flexible. I was fortunate to have a terrific research job, while pursuing my PhD. I could not have asked for a more ideal situation.

I also had many great colleagues at both of these labs. I can't list them all, but a few were particularly helpful as sounding boards and just good company including Jen Golbeck, Daniel Krech, Amy Sliva, Jana and Paulo Shakarian, and Rami Puzis.

The members of my dissertation committee were engaged in and excited about my project. Professors Chris Foreman, Phillip Swagel, and Paul Herrnson all provided terrific input that helped me make this a good dissertation but also helped me finish it – which is the best kind of dissertation.

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Few people are more pleased that I earned my PhD than my parents, Michael and Lois Mannes. What parent does not want their child to become a Doctor? Further, as a parent myself, I also appreciate it when a child grows out of an obsession. My parents heard me talk about vice presidents for nearly a decade, I'm sure that they are glad that these soliloquies are over. They were also surprised, and pleased, that their son – who had always been a lackadaisical student – chose to pursue advanced degrees. I thank them for always encouraging me to read, learn and question. Without them, none of this would have been possible - *literally*.

My children have grown up with their dad spending a lot of time focused on what – to everyone else in the world – must seem pretty obscure. They took it with patience and humor. I would tell them stories of vice presidents to help them go to sleep. At a National Park, when the Ranger asked if they knew who John Adams was, they immediately said, "He was a vice president." I was very proud that somehow my work had rubbed off on them. No matter what they do, they are a source of joy and inspiration to me.

Finally, this work is dedicated to my wife. I cannot thank her enough. When I met her, she already had her PhD and two decades later I'm still playing catch-up. She was unwavering in her support of this expensive, exhausting project. She made it possible, but she also made it worthwhile.

Table of Contents

Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xii
Chapter 1. Introduction: From Throttlebottom to the Angler - The Rise of Vice Presidential Influence..... 1	
Introduction	1
Overview of the Study of the Vice Presidency	2
Key Research Questions	7
Definitions: Activity, Advice and Influence	8
Measuring Influence	10
Hypotheses	11
The Modern Presidency and its Effect on the Vice Presidency	11
The Rise of the Institutional Vice Presidency.....	14
Outsider Presidents & Insider Vice Presidents	16
Research Approach	19
National Security Process	20
Chapter 1 Endnotes	20
Chapter 2. Exercising influence in “the most insignificant office”: The Vice Presidencies of Martin Van Buren and Garret Hobart..... 23	
A Tale of Two Vice Presidents: John C. Calhoun and Martin Van Buren	23
Calhoun’s Background and Selection as Vice President to President Adams....	25
Examples of Calhoun’s Influence in the Adams Administration	25
Calhoun vs. Van Buren in the Jackson Administration	27
Martin Van Buren as Vice President	32
Van Buren & French Indemnity Crisis	34
Analysis: Contrasting Approaches of Van Buren and Calhoun.....	36
The Modern Presidency	36
The Institutional Vice Presidency	38
Outsiders & Insiders	40
Conclusion	40

“A conspicuous factor in our scheme of government ”: The Vice Presidency of Garret A. Hobart	43
Hobart’s Background and Selection as Vice President.....	43
Accounts of Hobart’s Influence as Vice President	44
Examples of Hobart’s Influence as Vice President.....	45
Analysis.....	47
The Modern Presidency	47
The Institutional Vice Presidency	48
Outsiders & Insiders	50
Conclusions.....	52
Chapter 2 Endnotes	53
 Chapter 3. “A Vital Political Barometer”: The Vice Presidency of Walter Mondale	57
Introduction	57
1. Overview of Walter “Fritz” Mondale and his Vice Presidency	58
Mondale’s Background	58
Mondale’s Selection as Vice President and the 1976 Election Campaign	58
Formal Aspects of the Mondale Vice Presidency	60
Mondale’s Activity as Vice President.....	61
2. Overview of Mondale’s Influence as Vice President	63
Assessments of Mondale’s Influence as Vice President	63
Factors Contributing to Mondale’s Influence: An Initial Analysis	65
The Modern Presidency	65
The Institutional Vice Presidency	67
Outsiders & Insiders	73
3. Mondale’s Influence on Specific Issues	76
Domestic Issues	76
Bakke Case.....	76
Other Domestic Issues	78
Middle East Peace Process.....	79
Overview of Mondale’s Role in the Middle East Peace Process	79
UN Speech	84
Arms Sales	84
Defense Authorization Veto	86
Vietnamese Boat People Rescue	87
China Policy.....	88
Confronting the Soviets	90
Malaise Speech	92
Intelligence Reform	94
Infighting on the Foreign Policy Team	95
4. Causes of Vice Presidential Influence in the Carter Administration: A Second Look	97
The Modern the Presidency	97
The Institutional Vice Presidency	98
Outsiders & Insiders	100

Conclusion	101
Chapter 3 Endnotes	102
Chapter 4. “Reagan’s Rudder”: The Vice Presidency of George H. W. Bush	109
Introduction	109
1. Overview of George H.W. Bush and his Vice Presidency	110
Bush’s Background	110
Bush’s Selection as Vice President and the 1980 Election Campaign	111
Formal Aspects of the Bush Vice Presidency	111
Bush’s Activity as Vice President.....	112
2. Overview of Bush’s Influence as Vice President	114
Assessments of Bush’s Influence as Vice President.....	114
Factors Contributing to Bush’s Influence: An Initial Analysis	115
The Modern Presidency	115
The Institutional Vice Presidency	117
Outsiders & Insiders	122
3. Bush’s Influence on Specific Issues	126
The Cold War.....	126
Sanctioning Poland	127
Engaging the Soviets.....	130
Use of Force	133
Grenada Invasion	133
Lebanon.....	134
Noriega.....	135
Personal Diplomacy	137
Line Assignments.....	139
Iran-Contra	142
4. Causes of Vice Presidential Influence in the Reagan Administration: A Second Look	145
The Modern Presidency	145
The Institutional Vice Presidency	145
Outsiders & Insiders	147
Conclusion	148
Chapter 4 Endnotes	149
Chapter 5. “Vice President to the Wrong Bush?”: The Vice Presidency of Dan Quayle	155
Introduction	155
1. Overview of J. Danforth Quayle and his Vice Presidency	155
Quayle’s Background.....	155
Quayle’s Selection as Vice President and the 1988 Election Campaign	156
Formal Aspects of the Quayle Vice Presidency	157
Quayle’s Activity as Vice President	158
2. Overview of Quayle’s Influence as Vice President	160
Assessments of Quayle’s Influence as Vice President	160

Factors Contributing to Quayle’s Influence: An Initial Analysis	160
The Modern Presidency	160
The Institutional Vice Presidency	161
Outsiders & Insiders	167
3. Quayle’s Influence on Specific Issues	171
Domestic Issues	171
Minimum Wage Increase	172
1990 Budget Compromise	173
Philippines Coup	173
Space Council	175
Missile Defense	177
Gulf War	178
Japan	179
4. Causes of Vice Presidential Influence in the George H. W. Bush Administration:	
A Second Look	180
The Modern Presidency	180
The Institutional Vice Presidency	181
Outsiders & Insiders	182
Conclusion	182
Chapter 5 Endnotes	183
Chapter 6. “You also can feel what’s right”: The Vice Presidency of Albert Gore”	
.....	187
Introduction	187
1. Overview of Albert Gore Jr. and his Vice Presidency	188
Gore’s Background	188
Gore’s Selection as Vice President and the 1992 Election Campaign	188
Formal Aspects of the Gore Vice Presidency	190
Gore’s Activity as Vice President	190
2. Overview of Gore’s Influence as Vice President	193
Assessments of Gore’s Influence as Vice President	193
Factors Contributing to Gore’s Influence: An Initial Analysis	195
The Modern Presidency	195
The Institutional Vice Presidency	196
Outsiders & Insiders	202
3. Gore’s Influence on Specific Issues	207
Environment	207
Overview of Gore’s Efforts in Administration Environmental Policy	207
BTU Tax	208
Kyoto Conference on Global Warming	209
NAFTA	210
Russia Policy	212
Other Bi-National Commissions	214
South Africa and AIDS	215
Egypt	217

Summit of the Americas	218
Bosnia & Balkans	220
Don't Ask, Don't Tell	223
Transnational Threats.....	224
Iraq and Terrorism	224
Elian Gonzalez	227
4. Causes of Vice Presidential Influence in the Clinton Administration: A Second Look	229
The Modern Presidency	229
The Institutional Vice Presidency	230
Outsiders & Insiders	231
Conclusion	233
Chapter 6 Endnotes	233
Chapter 7. "The Iron Issues": The Vice Presidency of Richard Cheney	240
Introduction	240
1. Overview of Richard "Dick" Cheney and his Vice Presidency	240
Cheney's Background	240
Cheney's Selection as Vice President and the 2000 Election Campaign	241
Formal Aspects of the Cheney Vice Presidency	243
Cheney's Activity as Vice President.....	243
2. Overview of Cheney's Influence as Vice President	245
Assessments of Cheney's Influence as Vice President	245
Factors Contributing to Cheney's Influence: An Initial Analysis	247
The Modern Presidency	247
The Institutional Vice Presidency	248
Outsiders & Insiders	256
3. Cheney's Influence on Specific Issues	260
Losing the Senate Majority	261
Energy Issues	262
Climate Change Policy	262
Energy Task Force	264
The War in Afghanistan	265
Legal Architecture of the War on Terror	266
Iraq	271
The Decision to Invade Iraq.....	271
Seeking a UN Resolution for the Iraq War	276
The Surge	279
North Korea	282
Syria	284
4. Causes of Vice Presidential Influence in the Bush Administration: A Second Look	285
The Modern Presidency	285
The Institutional Vice Presidency	286
Outsiders & Insiders	288

Conclusion	289
Chapter 7 Endnotes	289
Chapter 8. Conclusion.....	297
Summary of Findings.....	297
The Modern Presidency	301
The Institutional Vice Presidency	305
Outsiders & Insiders	313
Looking Forward: “[T]he bastard at the family picnic’: The Biden Vice Presidency 320	
Biden’s Background and Selection as Vice President	320
Biden’s Activity and an Assessment of Biden’s Influence as Vice President ..	321
Examples of Biden’s Influence	323
The Afghanistan Surge	323
Analysis.....	326
The Modern Presidency	326
The Institutional Vice Presidency	327
Outsiders & Insiders	331
Conclusion: Biden’s Vice Presidency.....	332
Analysis I: What a Vice President Needs from the President.....	334
Analysis II: What a President Needs from the Vice President	335
Chapter 8 Endnotes	340
Appendices.....	344
Appendix A: Methodology	344
Appendix B: Measuring Vice Presidential Influence	346
Appendix C: Selected Jokes about the Vice Presidency.....	347
Bibliography	348

List of Tables

Table 1.1 Types of Vice Presidential Influence	9
Table 8.1 Vice Presidents Studied and their Influence Factors (Influential Vice Presidents in Grey).....	298
Table 8.2 Influential and Not Influential Vice Presidents Selected by Nominee or Party	302
Table 8.3 Influential and Not Influential Vice Presidents before and during Modern Presidency*	304
Figure 8.1 Hierarchy of Vice Presidential Needs	334

List of Figures

Figure 8.1 Hierarchy of Vice Presidential Needs	334
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Chapter 1. Introduction: From Throttlebottom to the Angler - The Rise of Vice Presidential Influence

Introduction

Over the past 40 years, the vice presidency has changed dramatically. A butt of political jokes, perhaps the most famous vice president of the pre-modern presidency was the fictional Throttlebottom from the 1932 musical *Of Thee I Sing*, who took the job because no one else wanted it and had to buy tickets for the tour to get into the White House. Presidential historian Arthur Schlesinger, writing only a few years before the expansion of the vice presidential role, in an essay about eliminating the position entirely, called the office a “human appendix, a vestigial organ on the body politic.”¹

Less than 40 years later, after a series of high-profile vice presidents who served as partners to the president, there has been concern about too much vice presidential power. In *The Co-Presidency of Bush and Cheney*, Shirley Anne Warshaw argues, “...the Bush-Cheney administration was dominated by its vice president, Dick Cheney. It was essentially a co-presidency . . . in which labor and responsibility were divided.”²

Warshaw’s criticism of Cheney’s role is not unique. Vice President Biden described his predecessor as “the most dangerous vice president we’ve probably had in American history.”³ Yet, according to many media accounts, Biden has also been a close confidant of the president.⁴ Over two decades, three consecutive presidents have included their vice president as a key member of their inner circle of advisors.

Understanding how and why the vice presidency has gone from obscurity to centrality in American politics is the central question of this dissertation. In particular, the research will address how vice presidents have gone from being marginal figures

to playing a substantial role in the national security decision-making process and what that shift can tell us about decision-making in the executive branch.

Overview of the Study of the Vice Presidency

There is a modest academic and popular literature on the vice presidency. Much of the former focuses on the selection process and presidential succession, less discussed is the actual role of the vice president in an administration. There are a number of biographies of vice presidents, but discussion of their role as vice president is usually a small part of the story. However, in the early 1980s, after the political turmoil of the previous decade along with the groundbreaking and influential vice presidency of Walter Mondale under President Carter, more critical studies of the vice presidency began to appear. Two books, Joel Goldstein's *The Modern Vice Presidency* and Paul Light's *Vice Presidential Power*, provide crucial insights into the increasing prominence of the vice presidency.⁵

Because the vice president is an elected official holding a constitutional office, he cannot be easily removed and thus is somewhat immune to presidential authority. For much of American history, the vice president was selected by the party and was often a political rival of the president. There were also, in early American history, two instances of vice presidents, Aaron Burr and John C. Calhoun, who nearly provoked constitutional crises, raising the specter of usurpation. Presidents had strong incentives to keep some distance between themselves and their running mate. Vice presidents have usually maintained a low profile in the face of presidential incapacity, such as when James Garfield lingered on his deathbed after being shot and Woodrow Wilson recovered from a stroke.⁶

Before the start of the modern presidency (under Franklin Delano Roosevelt - FDR) there had been small increases in the vice presidential role and some discussions about expanding it. FDR, as the Democratic vice presidential nominee in 1920, discussed the possibility of the vice president acting as a handyman for the president.⁷ Presidents Wilson and Harding invited their vice presidents to attend cabinet meetings—a substantial increase in vice presidential activity.⁸ But, the

combination of tradition, political self-interest, and, in several cases, poor personal relations led presidents to keep their political distance from their running mates.

In *The Modern Vice Presidency: The Transformation of a Political Institution*, Joel Goldstein explains that the combination of the Great Depression and World War II led to a vast increase in the size and role of the federal government and with it an increase in both the power of and expectations placed on the president. In his classic, *Presidential Power*, Richard Neustadt described this as the shift from “leader to clerk.”⁹ Prior to FDR, presidents could choose not to engage in issues due to the limited size and scope of the federal government. After FDR, while presidents had greater powers, they also had greater responsibilities. These changes also had an effect on the vice presidency. The president became much more powerful relative to his political party. Under FDR, the party nominee gained the power to select his running mate. Further, the decline of the parties made running campaigns against a sitting president much more difficult, thus reducing the threat of vice presidential rebellion.

The president also became responsible for the oversight of a vast, permanent bureaucracy – which increased presidential opportunities to exercise power. However, these increases in presidential power came at an enormous cost. The decline of the parties forced the president to spend more time on politics. The expansion of government bureaucracies reduced a president’s efficacy. Abraham Lincoln had a mere two years of “Washington experience” but could meet and persuade key people while managing his own correspondence and speech writing. With a vast bureaucracy to manage and a plethora of special interests, presidents lack the time and energy to attend to all of the demands made on them. Consequently, presidents, no longer worried about the loyalty of their vice presidents, began to give them greater responsibilities.

Paul Light in *Vice Presidential Power: Advice and Influence in the White House* examines in great depth the institutional changes to the vice presidency in the 1970s. The vice president gained an expanded staff and budget, an office in the West Wing of the White House near the Oval Office, regular private meetings with the president, and access to White House meetings and memos.

These changes were necessary, but not sufficient for an influential vice presidency. The transformation of the vice presidency required both a president prepared to give his vice president a new and expanded role *and* a vice president that was capable of taking advantage of this opportunity. Light contrasts the frustrated vice presidency of Nelson Rockefeller and the influential vice presidency of Walter Mondale. Rockefeller, who was appointed to the position by Gerald Ford, was brought into the unelected Ford Administration as a political figure of national standing who would be seen as “presidential.” One of Rockefeller’s conditions for taking the role was chairing the Domestic Policy Council. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had been a Rockefeller protégé and Rockefeller hoped to influence domestic policy in the same way Kissinger dominated foreign policy. He was unsuccessful. He clashed with the White House chiefs of staff Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney, who worked to keep him out of the loop and weigh him down with administrative responsibilities. Most importantly, Rockefeller and Ford had different priorities. Rockefeller was an enormously persuasive individual who tried to frame his initiatives in terms of Ford’s preferences, but ultimately Rockefeller was an advocate of big government while Ford sought to control spending.

In contrast, President Carter explicitly stated that he wanted his vice president to be a partner in the administration and came to office with limited policy preferences, instead viewing the world on a case-by-case basis and seeking ideal solutions to each issue. When Vice President Mondale, an experienced Washington hand, presented the president with a range of policy preferences, Carter was willing to listen. Mondale and his staff had consistent access to White House deliberations, which further increased Mondale’s opportunities to influence policy. The Carter and Mondale teams had forged a good working relationship during the campaign. Carter also personally pressed his staff to include Mondale.

However, Mondale’s strategies for exercising influence were also essential. He carefully chose the issues on which he sought to influence the president, publicly supported decisions regardless of the internal policy discussions, and framed his policy preferences in terms of the president’s priorities.

Many of Light's findings are supported a quarter century later by Jack Lechelt in his *Vice Presidency in Foreign Policy: From Mondale to Cheney* which discusses the *semi-institutionalization* of the vice presidency. This refers to both the formal institutional characteristics of the vice presidency, such as expanded vice presidential staff and the informal ones such as the West Wing office and the regular lunch with the President. Once these perks of the office were established, it became difficult for future presidents to remove them. This gave vice presidents at least some capacity for influencing policy. In this regard, the vice presidency of Quayle offers some proof. Quayle had a limited personal relationship with President Bush – who had vast foreign policy experience and a strong foreign policy team. There was little expectation that Quayle would exercise substantial influence in the Bush Administration. Nonetheless, on some specific policy areas where Quayle had expertise, he did exercise influence – most notably in persuading the first President Bush to adopt missile defense. Also foreign policy aides helped Vice President Quayle carve out roles in areas where other administration players were not interested.¹⁰

Paul Kengor's *Policy Player or Wreath Layer? The Vice President's Role in Foreign Policy* examines five vice presidents (Nixon, Mondale, Bush, Quayle and Gore). Kengor addresses the questions of "how the vice president fits into the president's foreign policy framework; and recommendations on how or whether the vice president can be used to enhance White House foreign policy." Kengor develops a framework of national security involvement by vice presidents:

- Level 0: Little or no foreign-policy involvement
- Level 1: Participating in NSC process
- Level 2: serving as a foreign policy spokesman
- Level 3: Traveling abroad as an emissary to meet foreign leaders (excluding strictly ceremonial duties)
- Level 4: Possessing his own national security and foreign policy advisors
- Level 5: Negotiating with foreign leaders on behalf of the administration

- Level 6: Heading or participating in a key foreign-policy committee at home or abroad

Kengor writes case studies on the five vice presidents who are at level five or six - Nixon, Mondale, Bush, Quayle, and Gore (the Cheney and Biden vice presidencies had not yet occurred), to identify how vice presidents can best serve in an administration. While Kengor examines situations where vice presidents performed a role successfully, he also examines vice presidential negotiations that were unsuccessful (such as George Bush's 1986 trip to the Persian Gulf in which he called for stability in world oil markets, rather than support the administration's line of pressing for lower oil prices). Kengor notes that while vice presidents can be effective in many foreign policy roles, there is no guarantee that this will be the case and that, unlike a cabinet officer, a vice president who does not perform well cannot be removed from office.

Kengor concludes by analyzing 20 recommendations about the vice presidential role. Kengor classifies these recommendations as either necessities for the vice president to be adequately informed in order to take over the presidency, possible roles depending on the administration and the president's preferences, and roles that Kengor rejects as not appropriate to the vice presidency. A West Wing office, National Security Council membership, regular private meetings with the president, and dedicated national security staff are among Kengor's musts (some of them are now statutory and others are semi-institutionalized.) Among Kengor's possible recommendations are having the vice president serve as Congressional liaison, act as foreign policy spokesman, head a foreign policy task force, or function as an emissary to foreign leaders. Kengor rejects assigning the vice president large-scale line assignments such as heading executive departments or running major inter-agency groups because of the danger that a vice president will not perform these roles effectively, but cannot be removed from the position.

An important factor related to the expansion of the vice presidential role was increased focus on the vice president due to the possibility of the vice president becoming president. Watergate, in which President Nixon resigned – after his corrupt

Vice President Spiro Agnew had resigned for unrelated reasons, brought Gerald Ford, who had not been elected to any national office, to the presidency. Prior to the Nixon Presidency, the Johnson Administration, which began with great promise, ended when a frustrated Johnson decided not to run for re-election. A decade of problematic presidents (who also suffered from serious health problems) threw into sharp relief the great demands of the presidency and the need for the “back-up equipment” to be in good working order.

Including Warshaw’s *The Co-Presidency of Bush and Cheney*, there have been an unprecedented number of books examining the role of the vice president in George W. Bush’s administration including Bruce P. Montgomery’s *Richard B. Cheney and the Rise of the Imperial Vice Presidency* along with books by political reporters such as Barton Gellman’s *Angler: The Cheney Vice Presidency* and Stephen Hayes’ *Cheney: The Untold Story of America’s Most Powerful and Controversial Vice President*. In addition, Cheney’s own autobiography has generated far greater interest than any other vice presidential autobiography in American history.

Key Research Questions

The existing literature on the vice presidency provides credible explanations as to why the vice president’s role has expanded and how the vice president has been able to capitalize on increased opportunities for influence. But, as Light notes, the most important resource a vice president can possess in terms of exercising influence is *the president’s willingness to be influenced*.

The central question is: Why has the vice presidency become a source of influence? Another way to ask that question is: Why have presidents been increasingly willing to follow the advice of the vice president?

As discussed above, the rise in vice presidential activity as a spokesperson and proxy is no surprise given the demands on the modern president. But presidents have no shortage of advisors. Why has the vice president joined these ranks and at times become the first of them? Are staff and proximity sufficient explanations?

Definitions: Activity, Advice and Influence

Following are working definitions for activity and influence, the key terms used to describe vice presidential involvement in the national security affairs. After the definitions are discussed, several examples of each are also presented.

Activity is the vice president taking actions on the President's behalf. This includes chairing commissions, acting nationally and internationally as an emissary and spokesperson, and lobbying the Senate.

Influence is best understood, in the words of Paul Light in his *Vice Presidential Influence*, as "an adviser's ability to *change outcomes from what they would have been.*" Light states that this definition covers a broader range of influence than the traditional definitions because it includes changes in the extent of a policy and changes at different stages of the policy-making process.¹¹

Vice presidential activity is easier track, since public statements, international travel, and chairing task forces are inherently public. Kengor's book focuses on vice presidential activity and Lechelt's book discusses it as well.

The vice president delivering a message (whether to the public, foreign leaders, or members of Congress) at the president's behest is implementing policy, not making it and is considered activity. Examples include Vice President Bush's chairing the crisis management group at the National Security Council, and his high profile trips to Europe and Central America. Vice President Mondale's work liaising with the Senate, Vice President Gore's debate with Perot over NAFTA, Quayle and Nixon's international diplomacy, and Vice President Cheney chairing the Budget Review Committee are all examples of activity in which the vice president worked to advance the president's policies. There are occasions in which a vice presidential statement on a topic has some policy influence – but steering off of the president's policy is a dangerous game for any official and especially the vice president to play.

Influence refers to situations in which the vice president shaped the president's decision on an issue. In the case of working for the approval of NAFTA, Gore counseled the president to push for NAFTA despite a full administration agenda. That was a modest example of influence. Gore also proposed that he debate Perot. This was also an example of influence. Many examples of influence are

relatively modest, but others are substantial policy shifts. At Gore’s behest, the Clinton administration changed U.S. policy on South African production of generic anti-AIDS drugs. Bush helped shape the U.S. response to the declaration of martial law in Poland. Vice President Cheney was an advocate for U.S. action against Iraq.

As many observers of policy-making and bureaucratic politics have observed, policies rarely are simply the result of clear distinct decisions by the president. A policy usually involves a series of negotiations and struggles between the various stakeholders on an issue up and down the hierarchy.¹² Presidential scholar Richard Neustadt points out in *Presidential Power* that seemingly small tactical decisions about how a policy or decision is presented to stakeholders can affect its outcome.¹³ Given the complicated decision making process, a broad understanding of influence is necessary to study the vice president’s role. The table below outlines broad categories of vice presidential influence.

Table 1.1 Types of Vice Presidential Influence

<i>Types of Vice Presidential Influence</i>		
Type of Influence	Definition	Examples
Trajectory	The vice president changes the details of the president’s policy	Van Buren on U.S.-France relations; Hobart on the gold standard Mondale on Israeli-Arab peace process Bush on U.S.-Soviet relations Gore on economic policy towards Russia Biden on Afghanistan surge
Bolstering	The vice president encourages the President to pursue a preferred policy about which the president is uncertain	Mondale on Defense Authorization Veto Bush on AWACS Gore on NAFTA Gore on issuing a visa to Gerry Adams Cheney on the invasion of Iraq
Oversight	The president grants the vice president latitude to shape a policy	Mondale on intelligence reform Quayle on space policy
Initiative	Vice president proposes a policy or action on which the president did not have a previous position	Mondale on Vietnamese refugees Bush on the South Florida Task Force Gore on Inter-American Summit Gore on the Gore-Mbeki commission
Persuasion	The vice president persuades the President to change a previously held policy position	Quayle on missile defense Cheney on climate change policy

The lines between vice presidential activity and vice presidential influence may not always be clear. Presidents may give vice presidents oversight of an issue. Vice President Mondale was given the lead on the Vietnamese refugee crisis and intelligence reform, Vice President Bush shaped the administration's counter-terrorism policy by chairing a task force on terrorism and Vice President Gore shaped Russia policy through the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission. Such instances of vice presidential activity do not always result in influence. Vice President Henry A. Wallace was given control of a substantial agency, the Bureau of Economic Warfare (BEW) by FDR but attempted to push policies that did not serve FDR. The BEW was dismantled and Wallace was ultimately dropped from the ticket. The same fate befell Vice President Rockefeller, who sought to become the domestic affairs czar to President Ford by chairing the Domestic Policy Council. Rockefeller had few policy successes and was also dropped from the ticket.¹⁴

Measuring Influence

To identify the factors that have led to vice presidential influence it is necessary to identify which vice presidents have been influential. Paul Light, in comparing the vice presidencies of Rockefeller and Mondale "counts" cases in which the vice president exercises influence. While this method clearly demonstrates the disparate influence between these two specific vice presidents, it is a problematic measure because all decisions are not equal and much of the influence exercised by vice presidents is done in close confidence.

Since efforts to develop a precise measure of vice presidential influence were not feasible (see Appendix B), this project simply relied on the general assessments of long-time observers of Washington affairs such as David Rothkopf, Stephen Hess, Morton Halperin, and I.M. Destler. These assessments are supplemented by additional observations from individuals who served in particular administrations or who followed them closely. Descriptions of the influence of the vice presidents rely on general impressions. For example, Carter's Attorney General Griffith Bell held Vice President Mondale largely responsible for the administration's failures

because of his outsized role in shaping administration policy.¹⁵ This claim (which is discussed further in the case study on Mondale) may be an exaggeration, but it certainly implies that Mondale played an influential role. By contrast, there were no similar claims about Vice President Quayle.¹⁶ Overall, these assessments echo general impressions about the influence (or lack thereof) of the vice presidents analyzed. For the purposes of this project that is sufficient.

Hypotheses

This project looks at nine specific factors that might have contributed to the increase in vice presidential influence in national security affairs. Overall, the hypotheses fall under three rubrics: changes to the presidency, changes to the vice presidency – the semi-institutionalization of its role, and the rise of “outsider” presidents who take office with limited experience in national security affairs.

The Modern Presidency and its Effect on the Vice Presidency

Increases in presidential power and responsibility have made the vice president beholden to the president and increased the demands on the president, fundamentally changing the president-vice president relationship. This long-term trend gives rise to two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1A: When the president is able to select his vice president, the vice president is more likely to exercise influence.

Hypothesis 1B: As the demands on the president have increased, the vice president will have greater opportunities to exercise influence.

The presidential nominee’s freedom to select their running mate is a key factor in the growth of vice presidential influence. The rationale behind Charles Dawes’ refusal to attend cabinet meetings (before Coolidge even extended the invitation) is revealing about the relations between presidents and vice presidents before FDR. Dawes argued that the cabinet must consist of the president’s *confidants* and future vice presidents may not be reliable as such.¹⁷ When the vice presidential candidate was selected by the party, he was often a political rival. When that

fundamental aspect of the vice presidency changed, presidential nominees were free to select running mates that they could trust.

The party's presidential nominee's power to select the vice president is, for the most part, a recent phenomenon. The vice presidency of Martin Van Buren, under President Andrew Jackson, is an interesting outlier that supports H1A as a key factor in the growth of vice presidential influence. After Vice President John C. Calhoun, who became a leading critic of the administration, resigned, Jackson selected Martin Van Buren as his running mate in the 1832 election. Jackson, the first populist president was in an unprecedented position to influence his party to nominate his preferred candidate. Van Buren was a well-established Jackson ally whose skill at political organization was critical to Jackson's 1828 electoral victory, had served Jackson as Secretary of State, and had been a crucial ally in Jackson's struggles with Calhoun. In office, Van Buren was criticized as being the "power behind the throne." While this was almost certainly untrue, the mere fact that the accusation was made indicates substantial vice presidential influence. Van Buren was by all accounts one of Jackson's closest advisors.¹⁸ This case foreshadows the modern situation where the president was at liberty to select his running mate based on personal compatibility and thus is also more comfortable accepting the vice president's counsel.

The changes in the presidency outlined by Joel Goldstein in *The Modern American Vice Presidency* also created important incentives for the president to give the vice president more to do, and if the vice president is charged with greater responsibilities, opportunities to "advise" the president will come with it. This does not necessarily lead to influence. Vice President Richard Nixon, who traveled nationally and internationally on Eisenhower's behalf, may be the archetype of this president-vice president relationship. Eisenhower welcomed Nixon's activity for both political and personal reasons. Politically, Eisenhower sought to appear above the partisan fray. Personally he was seriously ill several times while in office. Nixon's travels and appearances relieved demands on the president's time and energy. While Nixon participated in top-level discussions, it is not clear how much influence Nixon exercised.¹⁹

Further, the presidents that followed Eisenhower – JFK, LBJ, and Nixon - gave their vice presidents limited roles. The expansion of the presidency is an essential factor in the growth of the vice presidential role – but may not be sufficient to explain the growth in vice presidential influence.

H1B is more difficult to prove – there is no clear measure of whether the president is a “leader or a clerk.” But there are several possible indicators for the expanded presidential role: percentage of federal budget as a portion of Gross Domestic Product, number of cabinet agencies, and the size of White House and Executive Office staff. Taken as a whole they indicate an increase or decrease in presidential responsibilities. Outside of spikes in federal spending during major wars, the federal budget was below 5% of the GDP until The Great Depression. The federal budget declined after World War II, but not to the pre-war levels. Since World War II, it has been in a range closer to 20% of GDP, indicating a dramatically expanded federal role in national life with greater responsibilities. This is one indication of the expanded role of the presidency and increased incentives to give the vice president more substantial responsibilities. Comparing the occurrence of influential vice presidents with the period of increased presidential power and responsibility is the test for this hypothesis.²⁰

Another measure of the growing demands on the president has been the growth of presidential staff. Prior to FDR, presidents had small clerical staffs (Grant had a third secretary added to his staff – previous presidents had had two.) By nineteen hundred this staff was over a dozen and twenty years later had grown to over two-dozen. Many of these staffers were strictly clerical but there were many cases in which the “Secretary to the President” exercised substantial influence as an advisor and surrogate for the president – presaging modern White House staffers. This changed under FDR. Having initiated a number of domestic programs, the President was frustrated with the problems of administration. In 1936, FDR commissioned The Committee on Administrative Management, usually known as the Brownlow committee for its chair, Louis Brownlow. Brownlow’s recommendation for a broad re-organization of the federal bureaucracy were rejected by Congress, but Congress did act to enhance the president’s resources for managing the bureaucracy by

establishing the Executive Office of the Presidency and creating a positions for a half-dozen presidential assistants to provide substantive (as opposed to clerical) support to the president. The White House staff grew quickly. By 1949 it had over 200 staffers and by 1957 it had nearly four hundred. Though the number has fluctuated (rising to over 500 under Nixon in the 1970s) it has never fallen under 300.

This number reflects the White House staff, not the entire Executive Office of the President, which includes a number of attached units such as the National Security Council, the Office of Management and Budget, Council of Economic Advisors, and the Office of the Vice President. Some of these bodies existed briefly to address immediate concerns others have become ongoing institutions in their own right. Overall the Executive Office of the President has over 1500 employees.

Fluctuations of the size of the White House Office or the number of components of the EOP do not necessarily represent changes in Presidential responsibilities. Cuts in White House staff can occur for political reasons and staff functions can be farmed out to other units of the EOP. The broader trend is that for nearly the first 150 years of American history the president was served by a tiny number of aides. Grover Cleveland answered his own phone and Woodrow Wilson typed his own correspondence. For a modern president this would be impossible. That the president now requires a staff of hundreds to manage correspondence and scheduling as well as policy matters indicates the increased demands on and expectation of the president – that is Neustadt’s shift from Leader to Clerk.²¹

The Rise of the Institutional Vice Presidency

The acquisition of staff and consistent White House access (including a West Wing office, regular private meetings with the President), what Jack Lechelt describes as the *semi-institutionalization* of the vice presidency, along with an effective model of how to use these assets has been a crucial element in the rise of vice presidential influence. These trends, which originated in the 1970s, give rise to four linked hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2A: Vice presidents with their own policy staff are better able to exercise influence.

Hypothesis 2B: Vice presidents with an office in the West Wing are better able to exercise influence.

Hypothesis 2C: Vice presidents with regular access to the President, and with access to White House meetings and paper-flow, for themselves and their staff, are better able to exercise influence.

Hypothesis 2D: Vice presidents who foster allies on the president's staff, exercise "hidden hand" influence, and avoid publicity for their policy preferences are better able to exercise influence.

An alternate explanation for the expansion in vice presidential influence is the establishment of an Office of the Vice President with sufficient personnel for the vice president to have substantive experts on staff, the granting of the West Wing office, regular private meetings with the president, and access for the vice president and his staff to White House meetings and paper-flow. These changes to the vice presidency guarantee the vice president at least some access to the policy process, which is the most basic of resources for exercising influence.

In addition to this *semi-institutionalization* of vice presidential access to the policy process, Vice President Mondale established a set of strategies for influence that have since been employed by vice presidents. In particular, Mondale was discrete in his policy advocacy and strongly supported any presidential policy in public. His successor, George H. W. Bush, explicitly praised Mondale's behavior as vice president and adopted it. The institutional vice presidency consists of both an expanded office and of certain vice presidential behaviors.

Besides expanding the vice president's opportunities for influence, bureaucracies – even small ones like the vice president's staff – seek missions for themselves and can become home to policy entrepreneurs. The existence of the vice presidential staff cannot explain the rise in vice presidential influence in and of itself, but when the vice president possesses capable staffers, they may seek more challenging tasks for themselves and their patron.

However, vice presidents Agnew, Ford, and Rockefeller all had at least some of these perquisites and were unable to convert them into influence. While staff

certainly gives vice presidents a greater capability for influence, this capability rests heavily on the president's willingness to listen. Perhaps the best example for this hypothesis is Vice President Quayle. Quayle possessed all of the institutional advantages of Mondale, but served a president with extensive national security experience in his own right. That Quayle was able to exercise influence at all was, as Jack Lechelt notes, a testament to the enhanced capability of the institutional vice presidency. But the limit of Quayle's influence highlights the ultimate importance of the president's willingness to be influenced.

Outsider Presidents & Insider Vice Presidents

At the core of vice presidential influence is the president-vice president relationship. Although the growth of the institutional vice presidency increases the vice president's ability to influence policy, it does not guarantee that the president has any interest in the vice president's input. The power to select running mates creates the possibility of a warmer relationship between the top two members of the Executive Branch, but a more recent phenomenon has turned the possibility into an actuality.

Over the past four decades, outsider candidates who possess little Washington experience have been likely to prevail in presidential elections. These outsider candidates have often selected their running mates not only for political balance, but also on the basis of personal and political compatibility, and in several cases, explicitly cited their experience. In seeking compatibility, outsider presidential candidates frequently seek running mates who have experience and knowledge that they lack – such as national security affairs. Besides their own experience, outsider presidents are likely to face a number of deficits in staff experience, creating vacuums where the vice president can exercise policy influence. The *outsider president* phenomenon suggests three hypotheses about the rise of vice presidential influence:

Hypothesis 3A: Outsider presidents are more likely to select their running mates on the basis of personal and political compatibility, which increases the likelihood that the president will include them as a top-level advisor.

Hypothesis 3B: Outsider presidents are more likely to be inexperienced in areas such as national security affairs and not have strong national security teams, thus creating opportunities for vice presidential influence.

Hypothesis 3C: Outsider presidents are more likely to seek their vice presidents' input in the appointments process, which increases the vice president's opportunities for influence.

In their work, both Paul Light and Jack Lechelt note that insider presidents (that is presidents who have extensive Washington experience) do not tend to give their vice presidents much opportunity for influence. There are two fundamental reasons for this. First, presidents with Washington experience are (as was said of the first President Bush) their own brief on issues. They do not need vice presidential support for their “cognitive decision-making needs.” Another important factor is that insider presidents have loyal staffs with Washington experience that may view the vice president as a rival.

Since the initiation of the modern vice presidency under the Carter-Mondale administration, the only insider president was George H.W. Bush. His presidency illustrates both of these factors. Besides his own knowledge of national security policy (acquired as an ambassador, Director of Central Intelligence, and vice president), President Bush's close personal friend and long-time political ally James Baker was serving as Secretary of State and did not have a warm relationship with the vice president. Additionally, Brent Scowcroft, who had held the position previously in the Ford Administration, was the national security advisor.

The pre-Mondale vice presidency also illustrates these factors. For example, Vice President Agnew had little policy expertise to offer President Nixon. By some accounts JFK and LBJ, were personally friendly, but the Kennedy staffers had little interest in including LBJ who they disliked and distrusted.

Outsider presidents, in contrast, have explicitly sought vice presidents with experience that complemented their own. For state governors, the desired experience has often included national security affairs. In the cases of several recent outsider presidents, experience with national security affairs was specifically cited as one of the reasons the vice president was chosen as a running mate.

Whatever their thoughts in choosing their vice president, outsider presidents, facing a new and complex domain, are often surprised by crises on the world scene early in their administration and have difficulty organizing their national security staff in a manner that suits their needs. President Bush 43 and the terror attacks of 9/11 is the starkest example, but Reagan and Clinton also faced international crises early in their administrations and turned to their vice presidents for counsel. These situations can be exacerbated when, in the early years of an administration the National Security Advisor may wrestle with establishing an effective workflow while the vice president's staff (which is usually drawn from long-time associates of the vice president) is – initially at least – more readily able to meet presidential needs. This theory indicates that as the president gains a better understanding of national security matters and the NSC process becomes more stable and effective, vice presidential influence would decline.

Many outsider presidents have consulted extensively with their vice presidents in appointments. Besides the obvious impact of selecting cabinet members with whom the vice president enjoys a relationship, the vice president can exercise influence on the thousands of lower level appointments that influence the policy-making process at its many stages. Links to appointees throughout the bureaucracy would strengthen the vice president's ability to acquire information, set agendas, and monitor implementation. In the words of I. M. Destler:

For our overseas involvements are necessarily so large and complex, and the contribution of lower-level decisions to policy so critical, that there must be *lines of Presidential confidence* extending beyond this individual-at least down to the Assistant Secretary level-if the President is to harness very much of the foreign affairs government to his purposes. Put otherwise, the quest for coherence requires an effort to build central organizational strength spanning several hierarchical levels and to provide key men at each level with the leverage, motivation, and the mandate to fight for the President's priorities in the bureaucratic political arena.²²

By helping to select appointees, the vice president can also build these lines of confidence and have a network of influence in the bureaucracy.

None of these sub-hypotheses are specifically limited to the insider/outsider paradigm. Outsider presidencies may not possess these attributes and thus not allow a major role for vice presidential influence. This may have been the case under President Eisenhower, who possessed extensive foreign policy experience.

Alternately, an insider president may still rely heavily on a vice president with whom he shares a strong relationship. (For the purposes of this thesis, a Gore-Lieberman administration would have been very interesting as the two candidates had a long and friendly relationship as members of the Senate.)

Research Approach

This project consists of a series of case studies on every vice president from the establishment of the modern vice presidency under Walter Mondale to the current vice president, Joe Biden. There are also case studies on a pair of fascinating anomalies from early American history: Martin Van Buren, who was vice president to Andrew Jackson, and Garret Hobart, who was vice president to William McKinley. Although the United States and the presidency have changed enormously since they served, there are certain patterns from their time in office that recur decades later. Although this study focuses on influence, so that vice presidents who were not influential are less useful, a pair of vice presidents who were not influential are included. Vice President Quayle is the subject of a case study because he held the office after the *semi-institutionalization* of the vice presidency occurred and the opportunities and limits he faced as a result are instructive. Martin Van Buren's predecessor John C. Calhoun is studied with Van Buren because their behavior in office and efforts to influence policy are a striking contrast.

The case studies use process tracing to tease out the factors contributing to the rise of vice presidential influence. Process tracing, in the words of Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, "attempts to identify the intervening causal process-the causal chain and causal mechanism-between and independent variable (or variables) and the

outcome of the dependent variable.”²³ In addition to an overview of how each factor contributed to the vice president influence, each case study includes examinations of specific instances in which the vice president sought to influence policy. Looking at these specific instances will throw into sharper relief how the different factors examined in this project contributed to vice presidential influence.

National Security Process

Finally, this project focuses on national security, but for the purposes of this project that term is broadly defined and includes: foreign relations, trade, international economic affairs, space, energy, international environmental issues, homeland security, and the domestic aspects of these policies (such as Congressional relations.) For the purposes of this dissertation the terms foreign affairs, foreign relations, military affairs, intelligence policy, and national security are used interchangeably. Finally, examples of vice presidential influence on a strictly domestic issues are also discussed when they are particularly useful in illustrating how vice presidential influence operates, such as Vice President Mondale’s intervention in the *Bakke* case.

In looking at how and where a vice president can exercise influence in the national security process, this project also hopes to shed light on presidential decision-making. Vice presidents have been able to exercise influence because the president views their input as helpful. Examining vice presidential influence can help illuminate what kind of help presidents need. As the president is expected to protect American interests and lives in an ever more complex and interconnected world, this question is not merely academic.

Chapter 1 Endnotes

¹ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., “Is the Vice Presidency Necessary,” May 1974 *Atlantic Monthly* - <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1974/05/is-the-vice-presidency-necessary/305732/>.

² Shirley Anne Warshaw, *The Co-Presidency of Bush and Cheney* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 9.

³ “Transcript of Palin, Biden debate,” October 3, 2008, CNN - <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/10/02/debate.transcript/>

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- ⁴ “After Cheney,” James Traub, *The New York Times Magazine*, November 29, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/29/magazine/29Biden-t.html>.
- ⁵ Joel Goldstein, *The Modern Vice Presidency: The Transformation of a Political Institution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982); Paul Light, *Vice Presidential Power: Advice and Influence in the White House* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984.)
- ⁶ Jeremy Lott, *The Warm Bucket Brigade: The Story of the American Vice Presidency* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 114, 134-35.
- ⁷ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “Can the Vice President be Useful?” *Saturday Evening Post*, October 16, 1920.
- ⁸ Michael Turner, *The Vice President as Policy Maker: Rockefeller in the Ford White House* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982) 10.
- ⁹ Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan* (New York: The Free Press, 1990) 6-7.
- ¹⁰ Lechelt *The Vice President in Foreign Policy: From Mondale to Cheney*.
- ¹¹ Light cites a traditional definition as “where influence exists when A makes B do something B would not have done.” Light, *Vice Presidential Power*, 18-19.
- ¹² Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision* or Morton Halperin *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*.
- ¹³ Neustadt 50-72.
- ¹⁴ Light pgs. 14-15, 184-7.
- ¹⁵ Griffin B. Bell and Ronald J. Ostrow, *Taking Care of the Law* (New York: Morrow, 1982), 23-24.
- ¹⁶ Paul Kengor’s *Wreath Layer or Policy Player? The Vice President’s Role in Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000) was in great part inspired by Kengor’s impression that Quayle was vastly under-rated. While Quayle did play a role in the Bush administration, it would be an exaggeration to argue that he exercised tremendous influence in getting the president to adopt his preferred policies.
- ¹⁷ Dawes wrote to President Coolidge, “[I]f I should sit in the Cabinet meetings, the precedent would be fixed, and in the future it would sometime prove a very injurious thing to the country, in my judgment. . . . The Cabinet, and those who sit with it, should do so always at the discretion and inclination of the President. Our Constitution so intended it. . . . And Again, the relationship is a confidential one, and the selection of a confidant belongs to him who would be injured by the abuse of confidence-however unintentional. Suppose, in the future, some President, with this precedent fixed, must face the alternative of inviting a loquacious publicity seeker into his private councils, or affronting him in the public eye by denying him what has come to be considered as his right-how embarrassing it would be!” See Bascom N. Timmons, *Charles Dawes: Portrait of an American* (New York: Henry Holt, 1953), 265-66.
- ¹⁸ Mark O. Hatfield, with the U.S. Senate Historical Office. “Martin Van Buren, 8th Vice President (1833-1837),” *Vice Presidents of the United States, 1789-1993* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), 105-16.
http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/resources/pdf/martin_vanburen.pdf.
- ¹⁹ Kengor notes that while Eisenhower dismissed Nixon’s contributions when a journalist inquired, Eisenhower also apologized to Nixon shortly afterwards and Eisenhower continued to apologize to Nixon until his death. Kengor also notes several other occasions when Eisenhower praised Nixon’s work. See Kengor, *Wreath Layer of Policy Player?*, 43-46.
- ²⁰ http://www.usgovernmentspending.com/us_20th_century_chart.html

²¹ John P. Burke, *The Institutional Presidency: Organizing and Managing the White House from FDR to Clinton*, 2nd Edition (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 3-6.

²² I. M. Destler, *Presidents, Bureaucrats, and Foreign Policy: The Politics of Organizational Reform* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972) 256.

²³ Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005) pg. 206.

Chapter 2. Exercising influence in “the most insignificant office”: The Vice Presidencies of Martin Van Buren and Garret Hobart

For the vast majority of American history the vice presidency was, in the words of the first holder of the title, John Adams, “the most insignificant office.” Occupants of the office and the office itself were generally the subject of humor (see Appendix C).¹ How and why this changed is at the core of this research. Yet amidst the many marginal figures and historical footnotes there were a pair of influential vice presidents: Andrew Jackson’s second vice president, Martin Van Buren and William McKinley’s vice president, Garret Hobart. How and why these vice presidents were so different from the majority of their predecessors and successors foreshadows the factors that allowed later holders of the office to exercise influence.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is a comparison between Van Buren and his immediate predecessor John C. Calhoun. Each sought to be influential, but their means for doing so stood in stark contrast. This is followed by a look at Vice President Garret Hobart, a fascinating anomaly in the history of vice presidents who served the president with tact and discretion.

A Tale of Two Vice Presidents: John C. Calhoun and Martin Van Buren

For many historians, Andrew Jackson was among the most significant American presidents. For the study of the vice presidency it is notable for the central role that Jackson’s vice presidents played in the major political conflicts of that era. This is particularly interesting because during the four decades prior to Jackson’s presidency and for most of the century afterwards, vice presidents were not significant policy players in their own right.

Jackson's first vice president, John C. Calhoun aggressively sought to influence policy both as the vice president to President John Quincy Adams and as Jackson's vice president, and had only limited success. Jackson's second vice president, Martin Van Buren, in turn played an important and influential role in Jackson's second term in office. As such, these two men represent the extremes of the position's importance and their experiences foreshadow the successes and failures of their successors over a century later.

Both Calhoun and Van Buren sought the Presidency and fought each other to succeed Andrew Jackson. Historians still debate who was the intriguer and who was the victim in this conflict. From the distance of centuries it is difficult to sort out this question. What is clear is that the two men had very different personal styles that shaped their approach to the vice presidency.

Andrew Jackson's first vice president, John C. Calhoun was one of the many giants of the pre-Civil War United States Senate. Calhoun was a striking figure with piercing dark eyes. Arthur Schlesinger, in his *The Age of Jackson* notes, "Young men found him fascinating and listened raptly as he poured out his political ideas in abrupt, emphatic phrases..."² Van Buren in contrast was at first glance a less remarkable figure, who acquired a reputation for intrigue and maneuver. His nicknames included the Little Magician and the Red Fox of Kinderhook. In the words of a *frequent ally*, John Randolph of Virginia, Van Buren "Rowed to his object with muffled oars" and was "an adroit, dapper little managing man," who "can't inspire respect."³ In his *Autobiography*, Van Buren explained his thoughts on political leadership, noting that dramatic oratory was not critical for governance. Effective leadership required carefully timing measures, framing and guiding the debate, and developing practical objectives.⁴

The following sections describe in turn, Calhoun's first and second terms as vice president and then Van Buren's term as vice president. In each of these descriptions a particular instance in which the vice president attempted to influence policy is discussed in greater detail to tease out how vice presidents successfully influence policy – or fail to do so. During Calhoun's first term he attempted to derail

a proposed diplomatic mission to the Panama conference and during his second term he sought tariff reform. During Van Buren's term as vice president he worked to prevent a conflict over a failure by the French government to pay reparations from becoming a larger scale conflict. This section will end with an analysis of how Calhoun and Van Buren's successes and failures at influence accord with the theories of vice presidential influence initially proposed in the first chapter.

Calhoun's Background and Selection as Vice President to President Adams

Calhoun was first elected to the vice presidency in 1824. A well-known national figure from his six years in Congress and seven as Secretary of War, he had sought the Presidency. However, the field was crowded and Calhoun had powerful enemies. His presidential campaign petered out, but Jackson supporters in Pennsylvania declared for Calhoun as vice president and they were soon followed by several other states. The 1824 election was a historical anomaly. Calhoun achieved a clear electoral victory for the vice presidency, but the presidential election was left unsettled. None of the candidates had a majority of the Electoral College, although Andrew Jackson had the largest number of popular and Electoral College votes. The election was decided in the House of Representatives where Henry Clay threw his support behind John Quincy Adams in exchange for appointment to Secretary of State.⁵ Calhoun was deeply offended by this deal, which he saw as political theft, and he began aligning with the political factions opposing the Adams administration.⁶ On June 4, 1826 Calhoun wrote to Andrew Jackson that he would support Jackson's run for the Presidency in 1828. Jackson replied that Calhoun would be his vice presidential candidate.⁷ This created a situation in which the vice president was the most visible member of the opposition to the president.

Examples of Calhoun's Influence in the Adams Administration

Although Adams and Calhoun had been friendly when they served together in Monroe's cabinet, biographies make no mention of regular communications between

them when they served in the nation's two leading elected offices. Calhoun focused on his duties presiding over the Senate⁸ and the strained political relations between the president and the vice president made regular meetings unlikely.

There was a foreign policy matter where Calhoun exercised influence from his seat in the Senate that illustrates the limits of the vice president's role in the Senate. The Adams administration, led by Henry Clay sought to send an American delegation to Panama to a conference of ministers from throughout the hemisphere. Clay wanted to build relations with the newly independent republics of Latin America and the move was broadly popular with the public. Calhoun opposed it because it might lead to the recognition of Haiti, a republic of freed slaves, which would undermine the slave-holding states of the south. Calhoun wrote a warning to Adams' Secretary of the Navy arguing relations with Latin America might lead to "black" ambassadors sent to Washington, which would raise a host of social problems in the United States and potentially spark a conflict between the slave and non-slave states.⁹

In December 1825 Adams submitted the names of the members of the delegation for the Senate's approval. Van Buren, then Senator from New York, believed the proposed mission was unconstitutional and saw the political advantages in opposing it. He approached Calhoun and although the relations between the men were strained, they agreed to work together against the Panama mission. Van Buren spearheaded the opposition on the Senate floor, while Calhoun, as the Senate's presiding officer supported the opposition to the mission and was seen to favor the opposition in debate. In particular, Calhoun allowed the aged, loquacious John Randolph of Virginia to deliver rambling and in Calhoun's own words "eccentric" addresses on positions favored by Calhoun. One of Randolph's more colorful and invective filled efforts on March 30, 1826 led Henry Clay to challenge Randolph to a duel, which ended with neither man injured.¹⁰ Two weeks later a long article in *National Journal*, a newspaper affiliated with the administration, written under the pseudonym "Patrick Henry" criticized Calhoun's conduct in the Senate. Many, including Calhoun, assumed the author was President Adams. Calhoun replied in an article signed as "Onslow" (after the renown English politician Arthur Onslow). This

exchange continued through a total of five articles by “Patrick Henry” and six by “Onslow.”¹¹ It was during this period that Calhoun formally aligned with Andrew Jackson.

The Panama Mission itself was ultimately passed by the Senate, but only after months of debate. This delayed the mission for months and the Panama Congress adjourned before the American delegation arrived.¹²

Calhoun vs. Van Buren in the Jackson Administration

As vice president to Jackson, Calhoun again fell out with the president and their disagreements became major public affairs. An important component of Calhoun’s conflict with Jackson was the rivalry between Calhoun and Jackson’s Secretary of State, Martin Van Buren. Contrasting their behavior and *modus operandi* during Jackson’s first term provides insight into effective and ineffective behavior by those seeking to influence the president.

In his biography of Calhoun, Charles M. Wiltse wrote, “From the very beginning Calhoun’s relationship to the Jackson party was one of political expediency. He hoped thereby to secure the tariff reduction so impatiently demanded by the South, and he explained as much to Jackson himself well before the election of 1828. It was not to secure tariff reduction, however, that Calhoun had been accepted by the Jacksonians, but only to give an appearance of reform until the votes were counted.”¹³ According to Wiltse, this was borne out when the president consulted Calhoun only nominally about cabinet appointments.¹⁴

Martin Van Buren, the eighth man to serve as vice president (and later the eighth president) was also a unique figure in the history of the vice presidency, and in many ways Calhoun’s opposite. Whereas Calhoun effectively appointed himself as Jackson’s vice president, Van Buren is the only case where in which a long-standing ally of the President was promoted to the vice presidency.¹⁵

Van Buren was known as the “Little Magician” for his political talents. He assembled a powerful coalition, the Regency, which dominated New York politics. Van Buren was personally charming, a skilled organizer, possessed a keen legal

mind, and was a capable tactician and strategist. In the Senate he knew and had a cordial relationship with Andrew Jackson, but was not on intimate terms with him.¹⁶ However, Van Buren believed that the United States needed two stable political parties to avoid being dominated by factions and personalities. He believed that Jackson's personal views, which emphasized a small federal government and state's rights were the appropriate ones for the United States and that Jackson's enormous personal prestige made him the obvious figure around which to establish this party.¹⁷ Van Buren devoted himself to winning over Jackson's circle of friends as well as organizing on Jackson's behalf.¹⁸

At that time, New York State held a particularly large position in the Electoral College.¹⁹ In the 1828 election, the state's electoral votes were distributed proportionately based upon the popular vote (Jackson received 20 out of 36.) Van Buren worked to have the state's electoral votes assigned on a winner take all basis and in 1832 Jackson took all of New York's votes. As a reward for his efforts, Van Buren was appointed secretary of state in 1828 and quickly became a close confidant of Jackson. In his autobiography, Van Buren noted that others saw him as a steadying influence in the Jackson Administration.²⁰ As secretary of state, Van Buren met with the president daily, worked hard to make an ally of Secretary of War, John Eaton, the cabinet member closest to Jackson, and took long horseback rides with the president during which they often discussed political affairs. During one of these long rides, Van Buren persuaded the president to adopt a position on internal improvements and tariffs that was opposed by Vice President Calhoun.²¹ This was a central component of the feud between Calhoun and Van Buren and ultimately with Jackson himself. It was a multi-faceted conflict driven by policy and personal differences, society squabbles, and the ambitions of Calhoun and Van Buren.

The tariff issue was a major political issue at that time. South Carolina, which had been a wealthy agricultural state with a slave-holding aristocracy, had been suffering economic decline. South Carolina's cotton production was lagging and new states in the southwest had higher-yield cotton production. Federal policy exacerbated this situation by placing a high tariff on imported cotton goods that

protected northern manufacturers from foreign competition at the expense of southern planters. South Carolina, with its dependence on the crop and its economic decline (exacerbated by what it felt was a northern hostility to slavery) was particularly hurt by the tariff. South Carolina radicals began mooted the possibility of secession. Southerners hoped that Jackson would change tariff policies, which were associated with Van Buren, and when Jackson failed to do so tempers flared. Calhoun had written a lengthy report on the tariff situation (anonymously, but generally attributed to him), which argued that states had the option of rejecting federal laws that violated their sovereignty. This doctrine became known as Nullification. In writing this, Calhoun was attempting to achieve a framework that would protect minority rights from the majority in a number of situations. Calhoun was also attempting to balance between the increasingly polarized factions of South Carolina, some of which were moving towards secession.²²

Jackson did not see Calhoun's essay this way. Jackson saw it as a sign of personal disloyalty and of possible treason. Jackson's continual tilt towards Van Buren and his faction led Calhoun and his allies to find another method of opposing Jackson. This background framed a series of dramatic confrontations. In the historic Webster-Hayne debates in January 1830, the renowned orator Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts and Calhoun's ally Senator Robert Hayne of South Carolina debated Nullification. Calhoun presided over the Senate for the several days of this debate. Initially sparked by a move to suspend the sale of federal lands in the West, it soon became a debate over the Constitutionality of the tariff and hence the concept of nullification. Webster, who eloquently defended the permanence of the union was generally seen as the victor in these historic debates. However Jackson and Van Buren remained concerned. Politically, they were worried that the western states would shift their support from the north to the south, strengthening Calhoun at Van Buren's expense. Also, the discussion of Nullification threatened the very essence of the Union itself, a cause dear to Jackson's heart. In response, Jackson and Van Buren engineered the famous confrontation at the banquet for Jefferson's birthday on April 13, 1830. When giving a toast Jackson dramatically declared, "Our union, it must be

preserved.” Later Jackson made official statements emphasizing his commitment to keeping South Carolina in the Union and under federal law.²³

Another component of the feud within the Jackson administration was the Eaton affair. The wife of Secretary of War John Eaton had a reputation for scandalous behavior and was not accepted in Washington society. Calhoun’s wife led the effort to snub Eaton’s wife, but the affair was also seen as an effort by Calhoun to build the strength of his own faction. Jackson was very close to Eaton and considered the allegations against Peggy Eaton to be baseless (Jackson himself had suffered because of accusations against his own wife.)²⁴ Throughout Van Buren attempted to reconcile factions and maintained a warm relationship with the Eatons. Van Buren’s efforts to defuse the conflict were unsuccessful, Peggy Eaton continued to be shunned by Washington society, but they strengthened Van Buren’s relationship with Jackson, while increasing the estrangement between Jackson and his vice president.²⁵

Ultimately, Van Buren outmaneuvered Calhoun – aided by a number of missteps on Calhoun’s part. Jackson continued to support Van Buren’s preferred policies, although Van Buren shifted his positions to better align with Jackson’s preferences. Van Buren had opposed federal funding of internal improvements such as roads and canals, but Jackson supported some of them because of their military applications. Van Buren shifted his position, supporting improvements if they served a truly national purpose.²⁶ In addition, in spring 1830 (only a month after the Webster-Haynes debate) correspondence surfaced showing that Calhoun, as Secretary of War, had sharply criticized General Jackson’s conduct during a military campaign against the Seminoles in Florida. Letters were exchanged between the President and Vice President in which Calhoun sought to defend his actions, but they did little to mollify Jackson. Soon the circle of correspondents broadened, as Calhoun, Jackson and their allies sought clarification on the relevant events. Efforts were made by several interlocutors to prevent an open breach between the President and Vice President. However Calhoun wanted a public vindication of his actions, and in the process to isolate his rival Van Buren, and prepared to publish documents relating to the controversy. He sought to alert President Jackson by providing the documents to

him beforehand. However, Calhoun delivered his documents to Secretary of War Eaton (husband of Peggy Eaton), who neglected to share them with the President. On their publication in February 1831, Jackson was furious and Calhoun was purged from the party.²⁷

Calhoun accused Van Buren of plotting against him, and it is possible that this was the case. But Calhoun's actions consistently hit upon the points most sensitive to Jackson: the Eaton affair reminded Jackson of the accusations leveled against his own beloved wife, Calhoun's criticism of Jackson's military record attacked Jackson's honor, and finally the nullification doctrine was interpreted by Jackson as treason and threatened the unity of the nation – a cause to which Jackson had devoted his life. At the same time, Calhoun openly sought the Presidency. With Jackson in poor health, many believed he would only be a one term President, but Calhoun's open ambitions further soured President Jackson on his Vice President.

Unlike Van Buren, Calhoun lacked a personal relationship with the President that might have mitigated the conflict. Worse, he continually addressed disputes through high-profile public displays through his newspapers and speeches by himself or his allies. Niven, who has written sympathetic biographies of both Calhoun and Van Buren notes that Calhoun was under severe pressure from radical factions within South Carolina that constricted Calhoun's room for political maneuver and compromise. When Calhoun became the leader of South Carolina's growing Nullification movement, he did so in part to prevent the radicals from bringing the state into armed confrontation with the federal government. But it damaged his national reputation and effectively ended his chances for the presidency.²⁸

The feud between the factions within the Administration was politically costly and Van Buren proposed his own resignation as a way out. Although Jackson was deeply distressed to see Van Buren resign in April 1831, the Secretary of State had become the administration's most controversial figure. Further, with Van Buren's resignation Jackson could effectively fire the rest of his cabinet – many of whom were loyal to Calhoun.²⁹ In the Senate Calhoun fought to deny Van Buren his appointment as Minister to England, presiding over the debates and allowing Van

Buren's enemies ample opportunity to speak. The Senate failed to approve the appointment with Calhoun as Senate President breaking the tie and denying Van Buren his ambassadorship in January 1832. But it was a Pyrrhic victory, Van Buren's political martyrdom at the hands of Calhoun and Jackson's other enemies increased his reputation within the party and brought Van Buren the nomination to the vice presidency. Later, as a lame duck, Calhoun resigned from the vice presidency on December 28, 1832 to take a seat in the Senate.

Martin Van Buren as Vice President

In 1832, Van Buren replaced Calhoun on the ticket. Although the party convention selected the vice presidential candidate, Jackson's well-known preference shaped the outcome. Having established himself as a trusted advisor, Van Buren continued in that role as vice president. Robert Remini, a leading modern biographer of Jackson regularly cites letters between the President and Vice President as well as meetings. Written communications were frequent because Van Buren often stayed out of Washington, both to keep a hand in New York politics and gather information from other parts of the country. Van Buren also sometimes stayed away from Washington during controversies that could harm his own political future and when he felt Jackson's positions were often too strong.³⁰ However, due to improving rail and steamship connections letters between New York City and Washington were reliably received within 24 hours of being sent, so that even from a distance Van Buren was engaged in the decision-making process. The letters often urged Jackson to be more flexible and cautious. Despite this long-standing difference in temperament, the men were close. Remini wrote that when Van Buren arrived in Washington shortly before Jackson's second inauguration he stayed at the White House while his own quarters were being arranged and that:

...Jackson was delighted to see him again and have him close at hand as he began his new term in office. He relied on Van Buren for honest, if cautious, advice.

To demonstrate his regard and confidence in the “Magician,” Jackson showed him his inaugural address....³¹

One particular and clear instance of vice presidential influence occurred on a political matter that illustrates Van Buren’s role within the administration. In December 1833 Senator Grundy of Tennessee approached Jackson as an emissary of Sen. Daniel Webster. Webster, in alliance with Senators Clay and Calhoun were the primary source of opposition to Jackson. Webster was prepared to abandon his allies and join forces with Jackson, which would effectively shift the balance of power in the Senate. Jackson immediately summoned his vice president, who was staying at the White House on his return to Washington, to join the meeting. Van Buren vociferously opposed the alliance. He had personal reasons for this position, because it would elevate Webster’s presidential prospects at Van Buren’s expense. But Van Buren was also dedicated to a stable party system, rather than a political order based on personality driven factions. He also felt Webster was personally corrupt and that an alliance would derail Jackson’s policies. Jackson agreed to Van Buren’s arguments and the offer was dropped.³²

Jackson regularly sought Van Buren’s advice on appointments. In the fall of 1833, on Van Buren’s recommendation, Benjamin Butler was appointed Attorney General. He had been a long-time friend of Van Buren and a former law partner.³³

It should be emphasized that while Jackson and Van Buren were close and Van Buren was consulted regularly – he was not always successful in persuading the President. The dominant political issue of Jackson’s second term was the battle with the Bank of the United States. Van Buren was concerned about the economic consequences of the administration’s plan to remove government deposits from the bank. Eventually he was convinced that the administration’s plans for defeating the bank would minimize the impact and that President Jackson’s personal popularity would enable the administration to bear the consequences. In a discussion with Secretary of State McLane who had opposed removing government deposits from the bank, Van Buren explained, “I found the President so determined that I could not

oppose him.”³⁴

Van Buren & French Indemnity Crisis

Van Buren did exercise influence in one particular foreign policy crisis in Jackson’s second term. The following account draws heavily from biographies of Van Buren by John Niven and of Jackson by Remini.³⁵ As president, a central component of Jackson’s foreign policy was ensuring that the powers of Europe treated the United States with respect. The United States was owed debts by various European powers for damages to American commerce during the Napoleonic wars. For decades the Europeans had ignored American claims, but Jackson had made substantial progress in settling them. This was a testament both to Jackson’s efforts and to growing American wealth and power. However, settling the spoliation claims with France ignited a crisis before their resolution.³⁶ An analysis of this incident reveals the type of role Van Buren played as a key advisor to Jackson and some interesting similarities between how Van Buren fulfilled his office and how influential vice presidents decades later fulfilled their role.

In July 1831, the United States and France concluded a treaty to resolve the outstanding American claims in which the French government agreed to pay \$4.6 million in six installments. However the payment was held up because the French Chamber of Deputies had not authorized payments, Jackson was frustrated. In March of 1834, after the committee reviewing the bill recommended its passage, the French Chamber of Deputies voted it down by a vote of 176 to 168. When President Jackson learned of this development he was furious.

The dispute with France over the indemnity payments was occurring against the backdrop of one of the major issues of Jackson’s presidency— the struggle against the Bank of the United States. Jackson’s particular temper regarding the French payments may have been exacerbated because a year earlier the United States government drew a bill on what the French owed the United States and when the French did not pay the Bank of the United States charged the United States government for non-payment.

At the cabinet meeting after Jackson learned of the news he began discussing potential punitive measures against France. The secretaries of state and war reinforced Jackson's inclination. Secretary of Treasury Roger Taney however argued in opposition. Taney doubted that war with France was likely but felt that an aggressive stance by Jackson would reinforce impressions that Jackson was reckless. The political consequences might interfere with the administration's efforts against the Bank, which Taney was spearheading. Taney doubted he had persuaded Jackson to take a more moderate course and contacted the vice president immediately. Taney was certain that Jackson would heed the "calm & sound judgment" of Van Buren.³⁷

After meeting Taney, Van Buren immediately went to Jackson and urged him to take a more cautious stance, which is what Jackson did— waiting for the French envoy to receive his instructions before requesting authorization for punitive actions from Congress. It is not clear if Van Buren's advice changed Jackson's position or if Jackson's own prudence prevailed after his initial fury.³⁸ Later, having his call for action rejected by the president, Secretary of State McLane resigned. However, the *contretemps* over the payment of the indemnity continued and throughout the affair Van Buren was an active participant.

Jackson continued to press the French government to resolve the matter. But the French Chamber of Deputies convened in January of 1835. There was an administrative session in the summer, but the French king informed Jackson that while he wanted to pay the indemnity, the Chamber could not address the matter in the summer session and that he would not call a special session to address the issue.

Jackson wrote to Van Buren, who was in New York, and asked if he still counseled patience. He also insisted Van Buren come down from New York and help craft his annual message to Congress. Van Buren played a prominent role in this crucial task. Jackson, in discussing the French matter stated that the French had dealt with the United States in bad faith and raised the possibility of seizing French property in compensation. Van Buren was unable to soften this statement, but felt certain the Senate would not approve any action.

Jackson's remarks inflamed passions in France. In April 1835, after weeks of

heated debate, the Chamber of Deputies passed legislation to pay the indemnity but only if Jackson apologized for his insults to the honor of France. In May, when Jackson received word of the French bill, he replied, simply, “No apology.” However, the French government was becoming increasingly concerned with events elsewhere in Europe. The British were also concerned with these events and both nations felt that a Franco-American conflict was not helpful in light of these developments.

In his annual message to Congress in December of 1835 Jackson stated that he had “no intent to menace or insult” France. When Jackson’s annual message arrived in Paris on December 31, it was considered a *de facto* apology and the French began paying their debt.

Biographers of both Jackson and Van Buren note that Van Buren was engaged with the president throughout this crisis, and the nature of the engagement highlights the extent to which Van Buren was a key advisor to Jackson and how he operated within the administration. Besides the instances cited above, Jackson appeared to regularly consult Van Buren about the French indemnity issue. On March 8, 1835 Van Buren and Secretary of State Forsyth were called to the White House to evaluate the conduct of the U.S. Ambassador to France. On January 14, 1836, when the US Ambassador to France personally reported to President Jackson, Van Buren was also in attendance. Van Buren was deeply worried about this meeting and, prior to the meeting, along with the other attendees, urged the envoy to cool the President’s passion on the issue. Van Buren was one of several who reviewed the revised report to Congress. When news of the French acceptance of Jackson’s message to Congress as an apology arrived, it had been language Van Buren inserted that provided the French the needed cover to end the crisis.³⁹

Analysis: Contrasting Approaches of Van Buren and Calhoun

The Modern Presidency

Hypothesis 1A: When the president is able to select his vice president, the vice

president is more likely to exercise influence.

On the critical question of presidential selection of their running mates, Calhoun and Van Buren offer the most striking contrast. In 1826, Calhoun, who was serving as vice president to President John Quincy Adams, threw his support to Jackson. It was a unique case of the vice president effectively selecting himself as the running mate. *Van Buren, in contrast, was the only vice president who was the preferred selection of the president until 1940.* Calhoun and Jackson had an alliance of convenience and the two men had little trust for one another. Van Buren in turn, was already established as one of Jackson's closest advisors. This too was unique in the annals of the presidential-vice presidential relations. Neither before nor since has the president promoted an established member of his inner circle to the vice presidency. Van Buren's influence continued, biographies show no evidence that Van Buren's influence was changed by moving to the vice presidency from the State Department. Jackson, unlike most of his successors and predecessors, had the political authority to select his own vice president and elevated an ally who could help him govern, presaging the potential that some modern vice presidents have seen in the office.

Hypothesis 1B: As the demands on the president have increased, the vice president will have greater opportunities to exercise influence.

Although Jackson was an activist president who addressed many substantial issues during his administration and suffered from ill health, it is not clear that the demands of the office led him to consult with the vice president. He did little to seek advice from Calhoun. Rather, he consulted his vice president because the vice president was someone he trusted. One of the innovations Jackson became known for was the "kitchen cabinet," a group of informal advisors, separate from the cabinet, which performed a variety of services for the president. This group could be seen as a forerunner to the modern White House staff. The existence of a presidential "court" might have created opportunities for a vice president, without a department to oversee, to play an influential role.

The Institutional Vice Presidency

Hypothesis 2A: Vice presidents with their own policy staff are better able to exercise influence.

Several of the hypotheses associated with the rise of the institutional vice presidency do not apply to Van Buren or Calhoun. The president's staff was small; there are reports of Jackson sitting and writing his own speeches and having cabinet secretaries edit them personally. While a vice president usually also had a personal aide, the presence or absence of staff was not a major factor.

Hypothesis 2B: Vice presidents with an office in the West Wing are better able to exercise influence.

Similarly, neither vice president had an office in the White House. However, Van Buren was a frequent guest at the White House, and had selected living quarters close by (at the Seven Buildings, a boarding house at 19th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue), specifically because it was close to the White House.⁴⁰

Hypothesis 2C: Vice presidents with regular access to the President, and with access to White House meetings and paper-flow, for themselves and their staff, are better able to exercise influence.

When Van Buren was in Washington he met with the vice president frequently. Their shared long horseback rides (perhaps foreshadowing the now standard weekly lunches between the president and vice president) is one example of their relationship. The ease with which Van Buren secured a meeting with Jackson when Taney informed him of the president's frustration with the French is another. Calhoun, but contrast, when he wished to send information to Jackson sent it via an emissary. When Van Buren was traveling he corresponded with Jackson frequently, Calhoun corresponded rarely. A comparison of letter between Jackson and Calhoun

with Jackson and Van Buren between the years 1826 and 1836 finds six times as much correspondence between Jackson and Van Buren as between Jackson and Calhoun.⁴¹ There were also accounts of Van Buren sitting with Jackson to draft and edit speeches. No similar accounts exist about Calhoun. Van Buren was “in the loop,” Calhoun was not.

Hypothesis 2D: Vice presidents who foster allies on the president’s staff, exercise “hidden hand” influence, and avoid publicity for their policy preferences are better able to exercise influence.

The contrasting approaches Calhoun and Van Buren took to the vice presidency is particularly interesting. Van Buren worked hard to win the friendship of Jackson’s cabinet members and other advisors. He tried to avoid public spats with other members of the administration—and when they did occur he took great pains to not appear personally engaged. He did not interfere with cabinet departments unless he was asked to do so. Perhaps most importantly, he acquiesced to the President’s priorities.

Calhoun, by contrast, made a very public effort to influence the president on the tariffs issue through his own public statements as well as regular stories in newspapers allied with his faction. Disputes with Presidents Adams *and* Jackson became ugly public affairs that effectively burned his bridges of communication with the administration. Further, Calhoun sought to influence policy from his post as President of the Senate. He managed debates in favor of his position (as much as the modest powers of the President of the Senate allowed) and, during a brief rapprochement with the Jackson administration, Calhoun cast the tie-breaking vote in the Senate in favor of an appointment for a key Jackson ally and worked in the Senate on behalf of the confirmation of others.⁴² But the modest formal powers of the vice president offer few bargaining advantages to the office-holder.

Outsiders & Insiders

Hypothesis 3A: Outsider presidents are more likely to select their running mates on the basis of personal and political compatibility, which increases the likelihood that the president will include them as a top-level advisor.

Hypothesis 3B: Outsider presidents are more likely to be inexperienced in areas such as national security affairs and not have strong national security teams, thus creating opportunities for vice presidential influence.

Hypothesis 3C: Outsider presidents are more likely to seek their vice presidents' input in the appointments process, which increases the vice president's opportunities for influence.

Although Jackson was the first “people’s president” it is not clear that the insider/outsider paradigm for the presidency applies. Jackson had served in the Senate and had experience with national security matters. Further, an important component of the outsider presidency is the scale on which modern Washington operates. Jackson’s Washington was far smaller and had few entrenched bureaucracies.

Van Buren did offer some specialized and useful knowledge to Jackson. Van Buren had built the party infrastructure in New York state, his contacts there and knowledge of the logistics and details of politics were useful to Jackson. In the French indemnity affair, Van Buren’s knowledge of diplomacy, gained as secretary of state and minister to England, was useful in resolving the crisis and avoiding a conflict. Van Buren also had influence in the appointments process and several close allies of Van Buren held key positions in the Jackson administration.

Conclusion

Calhoun and Van Buren are exemplars of opposite approaches to vice presidential influence. Unlike most vice presidents before and after, both Calhoun and Van Buren had opportunities to exercise influence. The means by which they sought to do so could not have been more different. Calhoun represents the vice presidency as an

independent power base, attempting to respond to and act on other D.C. power-bases. This would be in line with the “thick” theory of bureaucratic politics, which includes Congress and special interest groups. To some extent, this role may have been forced on Calhoun by his role as the head of a faction in Congress, but it was also in line with his preferred methods of acting. He did little to win friends among his president’s allies and appeared to prefer open conflicts and proving his points to compromise and measurable achievement. That he relied on Secretary of War Eaton (whose wife had suffered socially at the hands of Calhoun’s wife) as a conduit to Jackson shows a tremendous lack of prudence. Finally, the formal powers of the vice president are limited, giving the holder few bargaining advantages.

Van Buren, by contrast, was a careful player of court politics who focused first and foremost on building a close relationship with President Jackson and ensuring that Jackson could trust Van Buren completely. Finally, the men got along well and Jackson appreciated Van Buren’s counsel. Future influential vice presidents would emulate Van Buren’s efforts to develop a personal rapport with the president. In the words of a noted Calhoun biographer:

Jackson required some intimate personal counselor, on whom he could implicitly rely, to be always at hand.... Jackson neither liked nor profited by the give and take of group discussion.... He did, however, like to think out loud, and because his thoughts in their initial form were often ungrammatical, sometimes violent, and occasionally absurd, he required a sympathetic ear. It was Van Buren’s skill in adapting himself to share this role that was largely responsible for his success with the old General.⁴³

Van Buren succeeded Jackson as president. He was widely viewed as Jackson’s heir and was seen as the figure that could best continue the widely supported policies of the nationally beloved General Jackson. Despite his own experience as vice president, Van Buren made little effort to include his own running mate in matters of policy and politics. A colorful figure and war hero, Richard

Mentor Johnson had distinctly not been Van Buren's choice for vice president and spent much of his term away from Washington on personal business.

After Van Buren, the primary interesting question on the vice presidency regarded its primary function: presidential succession. In the 1840 election Van Buren was defeated by William Henry Harrison, who became the first president to die in office. It was unclear whether his vice president, John Tyler was president or *acting president* until a new election could be arranged. Tyler established that he was president and could exercise the full powers of the office.⁴⁴ This was an important development, but in terms of influence in its own right the vice presidency languished for six decades after the Van Buren vice presidency.

“A conspicuous factor in our scheme of government ”: The Vice Presidency of Garret

A. Hobart

President McKinley’s vice president, Garret A. Hobart, is an intriguing anomaly. Contemporary reports described him as influential, capable and playing an unprecedented role for the vice president. However, Hobart was not the president’s choice for the vice presidency and the two men had only a limited prior acquaintance.⁴⁵ How Hobart nonetheless came to play an influential role in the administration illustrates the fundamental importance of the president’s preferences and needs and the vice president’s ability to support them.

Hobart’s Background and Selection as Vice President

Garret Hobart was not a nationally prominent politician at the time of his nomination, and his selection was driven by expressly political aims. Hobart was prominent in New Jersey, where he had been elected to and presided over both houses of the state legislature. Although active in national party affairs, he had not been elected to any office higher than state senator. He was also a prominent and extremely successful attorney, with a practice representing many major corporations with a specialty in bankrupt railroads. Hobart was a director of at least sixty companies.⁴⁶

Because New Jersey had voted for the Democratic candidate in recent previous national elections, at the 1896 Republican Convention, there was interest in placing someone from New Jersey on the ticket. Hobart did not seek the nomination and apparently had great feelings of ambivalence about accepting it. But he had the solid support of his state delegation as well as that of the powerful Republican industrialist and McKinley ally, Mark Hanna, with whom Hobart had worked in the past. Finally, Hobart offended no one and therefore was selected. McKinley, however, had preferred his friend, House Speaker Thomas Reed for the Vice Presidency, but Reed refused the second slot.⁴⁷

McKinley and Hobart handily defeated William Jennings Bryan and Arthur Sewell, securing 271 electoral votes to the Democratic ticket’s 176. Hobart did not

complete his term in office, dying on November 21, 1899.

Accounts of Hobart's Influence as Vice President

There are numerous accounts of Hobart's unprecedented active role as vice president. The only biography of Hobart, David Magie's *Life of Garret Augustus Hobart, Twenty-fourth Vice-President of the United States*, states:

The President saw in the Vice-President a man whose training and experience made him a wise counselor, and whose sense of honor would prevent him from becoming a rival.... [Except for John Hay, the] Secretary of State, no one knew more of the policy of the administration, or exerted greater influence with the President than Mr. Hobart.... So certain was the President of the loyalty and good judgment of his colleague, that the latter was consulted in all questions of general policy. ...no measure of importance was discussed with the Cabinet of which the Vice-President was not cognizant; and that members of the Cabinet, as well as the President, freely took counsel with him. The unusual title given him in some of the papers in recognition of his influence was "Assistant President."⁴⁸

Magie, a long-time friend of the Hobart family, wrote a hagiography that was more a personal sketch than a detailed political analysis. Nonetheless, his description is confirmed by numerous other contemporary accounts. One veteran Washington journalist stated, "For the first time in my recollection, and the last for that matter, the Vice President was recognized as somebody, as a part of the Administration, as a part of the body over which he presided."⁴⁹

The Washington Post wrote that Hobart be kept on the ticket for 1900 (for several decades prior vice presidents were usually changed after the first term):

The Vice Presidency, under his administration, has become a place of dignity

and influence.... He has become a conspicuous factor in our scheme of government. Vice Presidents do not usually make a mark...Mr. Hobart, however, has convinced the country of his personality and weight, and shown us that the office he fills is one of possible usefulness and potency.⁵⁰

While there are innumerable other examples of praise for Hobart's role, this entry, from the diary of Charles Dawes (a future vice president) on November 25, 1899, after attending Hobart's funeral, cites President McKinley himself:

After dinner the President spoke at length and with feeling of his regard for the Vice President and of the fact that of many popular Vice Presidents, Hobart was the one who was powerful as well. Popularity with the Senate could be easily obtained by a kind Vice President, but Hobart attained an influence, which made him one of the great factors in the fierce struggles in the Senate...⁵¹

Examples of Hobart's Influence as Vice President

Although there are many testaments to Hobart's influence and effectiveness, there is a little public record of Hobart's activities as vice president, although his tact and skill in dealing with the Senate is frequently cited.⁵² Hobart and his wife also played a leading role in Washington society. The First Lady was prone to seizures and found the entertaining expected of her as first lady difficult. Hobart and his wife took on many of those duties, while also accepting many invitations. Hobart hosted dinners with senators, which helped him build his relationships with that body.⁵³

Information about specific cases where he exercised policy influence are limited. Some of this may be the product of President McKinley's operating style. McKinley's secretary, George Cortelyou, stated, "Generally speaking, President McKinley did not write letters on important government matters. When occasion arose, members of Congress or others interested were asked to call at the White

House, where the matter would be discussed.”⁵⁴

While Vice President Hobart did not attend cabinet meetings, there are multiple sources indicating that he met regularly with President McKinley.⁵⁵ Hobart was a frequent visitor to the White House (McKinley also called on Hobart at his Lafayette Square residence less than a block from the White House) and vacationed with the president at Lake Champlain.⁵⁶ A further indication that Hobart was a significant factor in the McKinley administration is that, according to the memoirs of Hobart’s wife Jennie, the president’s confidante Mark Hanna was also a regular visitor who would breakfast with Hobart and discuss politics.⁵⁷

The clearest instance of vice presidential influence occurred during the campaign. One of the major issues of the 1896 election was whether or not the United States should remain on the gold standard or embrace bimetallism in which the silver would also back the currency. The Democratic Party, led by William Jennings Bryan, heavily supported bimetallism, believing that rising prices would help farmers with higher crop prices and reduced debts. McKinley was a moderate on the issue, nominally for maintaining the gold standard but unwilling to press the issue. Hobart travelled to Ohio and put his case directly to the nominee, with his letter accepting the nomination—which included a direct and substantive case for the gold standard. McKinley and Hanna sought to soften Hobart’s statements, not certain that they were good politics. Hobart couched his arguments in political terms, arguing that the resulting inflation would reduce the pensions of Civil War veterans and defraud those who had accumulated savings. Finally, when pressed by Hanna, Hobart asserted, “I think I know the sentiment of the Eastern men better than you can, and with this knowledge and my convictions I must retain the statements as I have written them.” Ultimately, the party strongly embraced the gold standard and won a resounding electoral victory.⁵⁸

While there are no definite records of Hobart’s influence on a specific policy in office, there are several instances that provide some insight into his closeness to the president. Hobart was engaged in discussions about the Cuba situation after the sinking of the *USS Maine* in Havana harbor.⁵⁹ He attended a March 10, 1898 meeting

on the Cuba situation with the president, the secretary of state and a prominent Catholic archbishop.⁶⁰ Later, when McKinley was attempting to resist public pressure to go to war with Spain, Hobart took the president on a drive where they could speak privately and told him, “Mr. President I can no longer hold back action by the Senate; they will act without you if you do not act at once.”⁶¹

After the Spanish-American War, Secretary of War Russell Alger was accused of mismanaging the conduct of the Spanish-American War and particularly supplies. The accusations began to include charges of corruption, damaging the president and the party’s standing. McKinley hinted to Alger that he should resign but was unwilling to do put the matter to Alger directly. Finally, after several months, McKinley asked Hobart to deliver the message to Alger. Despite being very ill Hobart met with Alger in July 1899 and persuaded the secretary of war to resign. Hobart died in office in November of that year.

A final example of Hobart’s influence was his role in appointments. When McKinley needed a new attorney general in 1898, he appointed a close friend of Hobart’s New Jersey Governor John Griggs. Further, according to at least one report, Hobart was one of the individuals recruited by Henry Cabot Lodge to press the President to appoint Theodore Roosevelt as assistant secretary of the navy.⁶²

Analysis

The Modern Presidency

Hypothesis 1A: When the president is able to select his vice president, the vice president is more likely to exercise influence

Hobart was the single vice president not selected by the president but who did exercise influence. McKinley had supported his friend House Speaker Thomas Reed for the vice presidency, indicating that McKinley may have been interested in a powerful vice president who could be an ally. Also, Hobart, as a local politician with no national base of his own did not represent a potential rival, which allowed McKinley to risk bringing Hobart into his confidence.

Hypothesis 1B: As the demands on the president have increased, the vice president will have greater opportunities to exercise influence.

It is difficult to argue that McKinley faced the overwhelming workload of modern presidents. One biographer wrote, “Much of the apparent opaqueness around McKinley’s historical stature comes from his method of operation.... There was no real demand for flamboyant presidential leadership...”⁶³

At the same time, the roots of a proto-modern presidency can be seen in the McKinley White House. While tiny compared to the post-FDR staff, McKinley had a number of clerks, and his secretary George Cortelyou played a substantial role that presaged the modern powerful chief of staff. McKinley led the country through a major war with separate campaigns on opposite ends of the globe as well as contentious tariff and financial issues. While the massive expansion of the federal government that occurred under FDR was still in the future, a government expansion that kept pace with the growth in the American size and economy would have required a larger government with greater responsibilities.

McKinley’s predecessor, Grover Cleveland, also had a powerful aide. While Cleveland was governor of New York, his assistant Daniel Lamont was known as the “other governor,” and he played a similar role in Washington. After McKinley, Woodrow Wilson also had an empowered staffer in Joseph Tumulty, as well as a high-level advisor in Colonel House.⁶⁴ This suggests that there was some modest increase in the demands on the president. Nonetheless, the fact that none of McKinley’s successors until FDR chose to expand the vice president’s responsibilities (and these include the very active presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson) provides little to support the hypothesis that greater demands on the president were what led McKinley to give a greater role to his vice president.

The Institutional Vice Presidency

Hypothesis 2A: Vice presidents with their own policy staff are better able to

exercise influence

The vice presidency had no institutional perquisites beyond the constitutionally mandated ones allowing the vice president to preside over the Senate. There was a modest vice presidential staff consisting of a few secretaries.⁶⁵

Hypothesis 2B: Vice presidents with an office in the West Wing are better able to exercise influence

Hypothesis 2C: Vice presidents with regular access to the President, and with access to White House meetings and paper-flow, for themselves and their staff, are better able to exercise influence

Access to the White House and the president was only a limited problem in Hobart's time. In the 1890s the White House grounds served as a public park where tourists could picnic. However, Hobart rented a mansion on Lafayette Place within a block of the White House and according to Magie, "The intimate and useful relation could hardly have existed had the residence of the vice president been in a part of the city distant from the White House. Frequent and informal intercourse could only exist under close proximity of residence."⁶⁶

Hypothesis 2D: Vice presidents who foster allies on the president's staff, exercise "hidden hand" influence, and avoid publicity for their policy preferences are better able to exercise influence

The president and vice president were bound by more than proximity. McKinley doted on his ailing wife. She was often unable to entertain and play the role expected in Washington society. Hobart was personally wealthy and he and his wife entertained often, with Hobart's wife Jennie taking the burden from Mrs. McKinley as well as becoming a friend and looking after her (she continued to visit her after McKinley was assassinated). Further, McKinley had nearly gone bankrupt earlier in

his career and worried about providing for his wife should she be widowed. Hobart, a wealthy corporate attorney, helped the president manage his finances.⁶⁷

Hobart also employed strategies similar to those used by influential vice presidents decades later. He devoted himself wholeheartedly to the campaign, acting as the campaign manager in the East, raising (and reportedly donating) substantial sums, and providing input about campaign conduct and strategy.⁶⁸ In office, Hobart worked carefully to make allies, while acting with discretion. The discussion between the McKinley and Hobart before the declaration of the Spanish-American War is one testament to Hobart's understanding of the need for secrecy. Hobart was also close to McKinley's ally Mark Hanna. One profile of Hobart observes: "He was a singularly modest man, and one of the plainest and least pretentious as well.... His rise from station to station had come to him not at all as the result of his own intrusion, but wholly because those around him saw the worth there was in him."⁶⁹

It is difficult to believe that Hobart, who amassed a substantial personal fortune and substantial success in business and politics was without ambition (despite his ambivalence about accepting the vice presidency). But the description highlights Hobart's modesty, discretion, and willingness to take a lower profile. These are all useful attributes for a vice president and foreshadow the careful discretion of more recent vice presidents.

Outsiders & Insiders

Hypothesis 3A: Outsider presidents are more likely to select their running mates on the basis of personal and political compatibility, which increases the likelihood that the president will include them as a top-level advisor.

Hypothesis 3B: Outsider presidents are more likely to be inexperienced in areas such as national security affairs and not have strong national security teams, thus creating opportunities for vice presidential influence.

Hypothesis 3C: Outsider presidents are more likely to seek their vice presidents' input in the appointments process, which increases the vice

president's opportunities for influence.

Before becoming governor of Ohio, President McKinley had served for a decade in the House of Representatives, including as chair of the powerful Ways and Means Committee. It is difficult to argue that he was a Washington outsider. Hobart, while a worldly and experienced individual, had not served in the national government.

The insider/outsider paradigm predicts that Hobart would have little opportunity to exercise influence. In later years, insider presidencies combined with outsider vice presidencies were the worst combinations for vice presidential influence. The two modern vice presidents who had been outsiders (Rockefeller and Agnew) exercised little influence with their insider presidents. The interesting question is why Hobart was an outlier in this regard as well.

First, Hobart was well versed in financial affairs and had strong links to the major East Coast financial interests as well as the Republican party establishment in New York and New Jersey. When McKinley took office in 1897, the United States was in a major economic slump and two of the major campaign issues were currency reform and tariffs. Hobart demonstrated the utility of his knowledge of the former during the campaign. While Hobart did not have insider knowledge of Washington DC or familiarity with national security affairs, he did have knowledge of a nationally critical issue.

Second, the insider/outsider distinction may not have mattered significantly prior to the modern presidency and the expanded bureaucratization that followed in its wake. Hobart had been an adept legislator in New Jersey and quickly rose to become the presiding officer. James Q. Wilson observed that in the decades before the executive and legislative branches bureaucratized, most of their dealings were on a personal basis.⁷⁰ In that environment the skills that allowed Hobart to rise quickly in the New Jersey legislature and become a trusted advisor to so many industrial leaders also facilitated his dealings with the U.S. Senate and the cabinet.

Conclusions

The vice presidency of Garrett Hobart stands as a monodnock of influence amidst over a century of marginal vice presidents and even during a period when the demands on the presidency were limited. Further, Hobart and McKinley had not been allies beforehand and were at best acquaintances. Hobart did work hard during the campaign of 1896 but not in McKinley's company, so a close personal bond was not forged in the heat of the campaign. Hobart also had few institutional prerogatives with which to exercise influence, although he may have played a more significant role with the Senate than most vice presidents.

Still, there are some modest elements that presage future patterns of vice presidential influence. Modern outsider Presidents have found vice presidents who could help them navigate unfamiliar territory such as national security affairs, the Senate, or the national media. McKinley faced difficult policy and personal challenges where Hobart was helpful, particularly the weak economy and his wife's poor health. Hobart's readiness to take on tasks that were difficult for McKinley (such as extensive entertaining), his proximity to the White House, his expertise on financial issues, and he and his wife's role in McKinley's personal affairs created an opportunity for Hobart to exercise influence. This was supplemented by Hobart's tact and competence, which allowed him to take advantage of this opportunity.

It is difficult to say whether the absence of any of these elements would have changed Hobart's role. Had Hobart not been as physically close to the White House, had McKinley not needed Hobart's support in his personal affairs, or had Hobart not managed the affairs assigned him so capably, perhaps the relationship would not have flourished as it did.

Teddy Roosevelt, Hobart's successor as vice president, stated the day after Hobart died, "What he did was done not by force of position, but by force of character, his rare tact, his extraordinary common sense, and the impression of sincerity he created upon every man with whom he was brought into contact."⁷¹

Hobart's personal attributes no doubt contributed to his unique role, but at least a few of the other vice presidents of that era were men of character and sense.

Hobart's anomalous influence was because McKinley saw the utility in it. Ultimately, *the president defines the role of the vice president* and Hobart had the good fortune to serve, in this regard, a unique president.

But it would be nearly 80 years before another president would grant the vice president regular opportunities to exercise influence.

Chapter 2 Endnotes

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- ¹ Jeremy Lott, *The Warm Bucket Brigade*, xi.
- ² Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1988) p. 53.
- ³ As quoted in William Cabell Bruce, *John Randolph of Roanoke, 1773-1833: A Biography Based Largely on New Material* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1922), vol. 2, p. 203.
- ⁴ Martin Van Buren, *The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920), 466-71.
- ⁵ Hatfield, *Vice Presidents of the United States, 1789-1993*, 88-89.
- ⁶ John Niven, *John C. Calhoun and the Price of Union: a Biography* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1993), 109.
- ⁷ Niven, *John C. Calhoun*, 118.
- ⁸ Hatfield, *Vice Presidents of the United States*, 83-99.
- ⁹ *Calhoun Papers*, X 39, cited in Niven, *John C. Calhoun*, 115.
- ¹⁰ Niven, *John C. Calhoun*, 116.
- ¹¹ Niven, *John C. Calhoun*, 116-17.
- ¹² Robert Vincent Remini, *Martin Van Buren and the making of the Democratic Party* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 116.
- ¹³ Charles M. Wiltse, *John C. Calhoun* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), 17.
- ¹⁴ Wiltse, *John C. Calhoun*, 20.
- ¹⁵ Over a century later, Franklin Delano Roosevelt had his Secretary of Agriculture nominated for the vice presidency. Although Roosevelt respected and appreciated Wallace's work at Agriculture, he was not a member of FDR's inner circle.
- ¹⁶ Remini, *Martin Van Buren*, 54-55.
- ¹⁷ Remini, *Martin Van Buren*, 131-33.
- ¹⁸ Remini, *Martin Van Buren*, 160-61.
- ¹⁹ In the 1828 election, New York had 36 out of 261 electoral votes (almost 14 percent of the total) and in 1842 New York had 42 out of 286 electoral votes (almost 15 percent of the total.) By comparison, in 2008 California had 55 out of 538 electoral votes (just over 10 percent of the total). See U.S. Electoral College, "Historical Election Results, Electoral Votes for President and Vice President, 1821-1837," http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/votes/1821_1837.html#1828.
- ²⁰ Cited in John Niven, *Martin Van Buren: The Romantic Age of American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 245.
- ²¹ Niven, *Martin Van Buren*, 248-51.
- ²² Niven, *John C. Calhoun*, 159-63.
- ²³ Niven, *John C. Calhoun*, 169-74.
- ²⁴ Wiltse, *John C. Calhoun*, 29.
- ²⁵ Niven, *Martin Van Buren*, 250-53.

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- ²⁶ Niven, *Martin Van Buren*, 261.
- ²⁷ Wiltse, *John C. Calhoun*, 76-85, 94-97.
- ²⁸ Niven, *Martin Van Buren*, 257.
- ²⁹ Niven, *Martin Van Buren*, 266-69.
- ³⁰ Remini, *Martin Van Buren*, 37.
- ³¹ Remini, *Martin Van Buren*, 46.
- ³² Niven, *Martin Van Buren*, 357-58.
- ³³ Remini, *Martin Van Buren*, 107.
- ³⁴ Niven, *Martin Van Buren*, 329-39.
- ³⁵ Niven, *Martin Van Buren*, 368-84; Remini, *Martin Van Buren*, 192-236, 275-292.
- ³⁶ This dispute with France, in some regards foreshadows the Skybolt Affair, chronicled by Richard Neustadt in which communications between different players within the two countries complicated formal state to state relations.
- ³⁷ Taney to Van Buren, April 9, 1860, cited in Remini, *Martin Van Buren*, 208.
- ³⁸ See Remini, *Martin Van Buren*, 209.
- ³⁹ Niven, *Martin Van Buren*, 384.
- ⁴⁰ Niven, *Martin Van Buren*, 366.
- ⁴¹ See *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, edited by John Spencer Bassett, Vol. III-V (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1931).
- ⁴² Niven, *John C. Calhoun*, 173-74.
- ⁴³ Wiltes, *John C. Calhoun*, 22.
- ⁴⁴ Lott, 57-59.
- ⁴⁵ David Magie, *Life of Garret Augustus Hobart, Twenty-fourth Vice-President of the United States* (New York, 1910), 167.
- ⁴⁶ Michael Connolly, "'I Make Politics My Recreation': Vice President Garret A. Hobart and Nineteenth-Century Republican Business Politics," *New Jersey History* 125, 1 (2010), 23.
- ⁴⁷ Mark O. Hatfield, with the Senate Historical Office, "Garret A. Hobart," *Vice Presidents of the United States, 1789-1993*, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), 289-93. http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/resources/pdf/garrett_hobart.pdf.
- ⁴⁸ David Magie, *Life of Garret Augustus Hobart*, 168-69.
- ⁴⁹ Hatfield, "Garret A. Hobart," 289-93.
- ⁵⁰ "McKinley and Hobart in 1900," *The Washington Post*, March 28, 1899.
- ⁵¹ Charles Dawes, *A Journal of the McKinley Years*, (Chicago: The Lakeside Press, R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company: 1950), 207.
- ⁵² H. Wayne Morgan, *William McKinley and His America Revised Edition* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2003), 209; Magie, *Life of Garret Augustus Hobart*, 150; Connolly p. 30.
- ⁵³ Connolly, "'I Make Politics My Recreation,'" 29.
- ⁵⁴ Cited in H. Wayne Morgan, "Bibliographical Essay," *William McKinley and His America Revised Edition*, (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2003), 458-59.
- ⁵⁵ Vice presidential attendance at Cabinet meetings only began under Wilson and Harding. As late as the mid-1920s, Vice President Dawes informed President Coolidge that it was inappropriate for the vice president to attend cabinet meetings (before Coolidge invited him.).
- ⁵⁶ Magie, *Life of Garret Augustus Hobart*, 167-80.
- ⁵⁷ Mrs. Garret A. Hobart, *Memories* (Paterson, NJ: Privately printed, 1930), 24. After Hobart died, Hanna moved into Hobart's house on Lafayette Square.
- ⁵⁸ Magie, *Life of Garret Augustus Hobart*, 103-106. See also Leonard Schlup, "Garret Augustus Hobart," in *Vice Presidents: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. L. Edward Purcell (New York: Checkmark Books, 2001), 235.

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- ⁵⁹ Hobart's one tie-breaking vote in the Senate, cast on February 14, 1899, was against an amendment that stated that the U.S. had no plans to permanently govern the Philippines. McKinley opposed the amendment and Hobart voted according to the President's wishes. Schulp, "Garret Augustus Hobart," 238.
- ⁶⁰ Schlup, "Garret Augustus Hobart," 238.
- ⁶¹ Magie, *Life of Garret Augustus Hobart*, 173-74.
- ⁶² Ivan Musicant, *Empire by Default* (New York: Henry Holt:1998), 99.
- ⁶³ Cited in Morgan, "Bibliographical Essay," 472.
- ⁶⁴ John P. Burke, *The Institutional Presidency: Organizing and Managing the White House from FDR to Clinton* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 5-6.
- ⁶⁵ Connolly, "I Make Politics My Recreation", 23.
- ⁶⁶ Magie, *Life of Garret Augustus Hobart*, 169.
- ⁶⁷ Connolly, "I Make Politics My Recreation", 29-30; Hobart, *Memories*.
- ⁶⁸ Connolly, "I Make Politics My Recreation", 23.
- ⁶⁹ William Edgar Sackett, *Modern Battles of Trenton*, II (New York: Neale Publishing, 1914) 56.
- ⁷⁰ James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 259-60.
- ⁷¹ *The National Cyclopædia of American Biography*, vol. 11 (New York: James T. White, 1909), 11.

Chapter 3. “A Vital Political Barometer”: The Vice Presidency of Walter Mondale

Introduction

The modern vice presidency was established under President Carter, who made a conscious decision to elevate the role of the vice president. During his service as Carter’s vice president, Walter Mondale exercised far greater influence than his recent predecessors. Carter, a Washington neophyte, broke with almost two centuries of tradition by actively seeking to include his vice president in the highest councils of his administration. To facilitate this new role, Carter and Mondale established a number of perquisites that created the modern vice presidency. Further, Mondale established a model of vice presidential behavior that augmented this close relationship. This case study explores the overall relationship between Carter and Mondale, as well as specific instances of vice presidential influence in order to examine how new institutional arrangements and personal factors (such as Carter’s lack of familiarity with certain aspects of politics and policy) contributed to enabling Mondale’s hitherto unprecedented influence as vice president.

Part 1 of this case study begins with Mondale’s background, his selection by Carter, the formal aspects of Mondale’s vice presidency, and his activity as vice president. Part 2 is an assessment of and overview of the factors contributing to Mondale’s influence. Part 3 describes specific instances of Mondale affected policy, both domestic and foreign, while Part 4 summarizes the causes of Mondale’s influence and then concludes with a re-examination of the hypotheses about vice presidential influence based on these instances.

1. Overview of Walter “Fritz” Mondale and his Vice Presidency

Mondale’s Background

Mondale’s background suited him for the unique role Carter offered him as vice president. The son of a Minnesota Methodist minister of modest means, Mondale studied law at the University of Minnesota, and rose quickly in state politics in great part by cultivating powerful mentors such as Senator Hubert Humphrey and Governor Orville Freeman. Mondale managed Freeman’s gubernatorial campaigns in 1956 and 1958. In 1960 Freeman appointed Mondale to his first political office, state attorney general to fill a vacancy. He was elected to the position in 1962 and appointed to the Senate in 1964 to fill Vice President-elect Humphrey’s vacant Senate seat. He was elected to the Senate twice, in 1966 and 1972. In the Senate, Mondale focused on domestic issues, particularly civil rights, although he also served on the Church Committee, investigating the intelligence practices of the CIA and FBI. Mondale briefly ran for president in 1974, although, after limited public response to his candidacy, he ended his campaign, stating he, “did not have the overwhelming desire to be president which is essential for the kind of campaign that is required.”¹

As a Senator, Mondale was successful in cultivating allies and building influence. In the words of Paul Light, “Mondale had learned the strategies and tactics of a second player. [T]he skills that Mondale acquired in gaining his major political positions in the first instance were of considerable use to him as vice president.”²

Mondale’s Selection as Vice President and the 1976 Election Campaign

James Earl Carter had served two terms in the Georgia Senate and a single term as Governor of Georgia when he ran for president. He was little known on the national scene, and many were surprised that he won both the Democratic Party nomination and the Presidency itself.³ Carter’s efforts on the campaign trail, practicing retail politics across the key primary states, were crucial to this victory but so was the shadow of the Watergate Scandal. The resignation of President Nixon had eroded

public trust in the nation's political leadership and Carter's message of honesty and lack of connection to Washington and the traditional political class appealed to a frustrated electorate. This made him the first modern outsider president.⁴

Carter's professional training prior to his political career was as an engineer, naval officer, and businessman. His time as an engineer, combined with his personal inclinations, led him to seek ideal solutions to difficult problems and made him confident in his ability to find them. This technocratic approach to the Presidency had its drawbacks,⁵ but it also meant that Carter was unfettered by past models and policies and willing to readily explore new approaches. Among the areas Carter sought to break with past practice was in giving his vice president a substantial role in the administration. Carter viewed the failure of past presidents not to give a substantial role to their vice presidents as resulting in "a wasted national asset."⁶

After identifying potential running mates who offered the appropriate political and regional balance, Carter embarked on an exhaustive process of vetting, followed by a series of lengthy personal interviews in Carter's hometown of Plains, Georgia to determine compatibility. Individuals considered for the vice presidency spent the better part of a day meeting with Carter and discussing important political issues.

Mondale prepared extensively for his interview with Carter, reading Carter's book, *Why Not the Best*, and studying a thick binder of background material on Carter Mondale's staff had gathered. They got along well politically and personally. In Carter's own words, "More important, he had excellent ideas about how to make the vice presidency a full-time productive job. He was from a small town, as I was, a preacher's son, and shared a lot of my concerns about our nation. We were personally compatible, and laughed a lot even as we discussed some of the most serious issues of the time."⁷ During the campaign Mondale integrated his staff with Carter's and moved them to Carter's campaign headquarters in Atlanta.

Mondale campaigned vigorously and had a strong showing in his nationally televised debate with the Republican vice presidential candidate, Senator Robert Dole. On November 2, 1976, the Carter-Mondale ticket won the election with 50.1% of the popular vote and 297 electoral votes.

Formal Aspects of the Mondale Vice Presidency

Prior to taking the position, Mondale had consulted extensively with two former vice presidents, his mentor Hubert Humphrey and his predecessor Nelson Rockefeller.⁸ As discussed above, both of these experienced politicians found the vice presidency a difficult experience. The former had a poor relationship with the president and the latter had a difficult relationship with the president's staff. Mondale submitted a memo outlining his requirements to successfully serve Carter. His proposed role was as a general all-purpose advisor and he stated that to fulfill this role he would require access to all of the information the president had, participation in the meetings of key groups, regular private meetings with the president, staff support, and support from the White House staff.⁹ Carter readily agreed to Mondale's conditions and Mondale learned that Carter's team had been examining an expanded role for the vice president that had developed along similar lines. Further, at that meeting, Carter proposed what was probably the single most significant change to the vice presidency, an office in the White House itself.¹⁰

Carter was also strongly committed to integrating the two staffs. Mondale's chief of staff, Richard Moe, was given the rank of assistant to the president. He spent much of his early tenure working with senior Carter adviser Hamilton Jordan to make sure the Carter-Mondale relationship was working. Ultimately he spent a great deal of time on special assignments for the president.¹¹ Vice presidential staffers were given White House privileges and kept in close contact with their West Wing counterparts. In addition, individuals close to Mondale were placed in key staff positions. Mondale's assistant for national security affairs, David Aaron, was assigned as a deputy to the national security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Mondale's domestic affairs aide, Bert Karp, was assigned as a deputy to domestic policy advisor, Stuart Eizenstat. All of this helped ensure that Mondale was always aware of what was going on and the state of play on key policy issues.¹²

Carter included Mondale in the sessions where the president learned the

procedures for responding to a nuclear attack. Previous vice presidents had not been included. While this new authority had little policy impact, it was a profound statement of how seriously Carter took the role of the vice presidency.¹³

Mondale's Activity as Vice President

Vice presidents in the decades before Mondale had been on the campaign trail, chaired commissions (some significant and others less so), and traveled abroad as international emissaries. Under Carter, vice presidential activity expanded to a higher, more substantial level. Shortly after the inauguration, Mondale made a major international trip, visiting key U.S. allies in Europe and Japan to introduce the new administration to the world and reassure allies. President Carter himself emphasized the importance of this trip.¹⁴ Mondale was also intimately involved with the Egyptian-Israeli peace process (one of the major achievements of the Carter administration which will be discussed in greater detail below). Mondale, who had strong relationships with leaders of both the American Jewish community and Israel, traveled to the Middle East to lay the groundwork for further talks, communicated with the American Jewish community to allay their concerns, and was involved in the final summit at Camp David. At the same time, because the Israelis trusted Mondale, he was well positioned to deliver tough messages to Israel's leaders as well.¹⁵ An August 1979 trip to China, in the words of Deputy National Security Advisor David Aaron, completed the normalization process and "made it normal."¹⁶ The trip included symbolic elements such as Mondale delivering an address by television and radio directly to the Chinese people and opening a consulate in the city of Guangzhou. There was also a substantive component to the trip. Mondale had helped prepare an extensive range of policies that strengthened American and Chinese bonds, including extension of up to \$2 billion in credits, assistance building a major hydro-electric project, and moving towards granting China most-favored-nation status.¹⁷

Mondale was also critical to administration lobbying efforts. Carter had no experience with the Senate and had specifically sought a vice president who could help him with Congress.¹⁸ Although the administration overall often had a difficult

relationship with the legislature, Mondale remained close to his former colleagues and on many issues was critical to pushing through legislation. In the case of the Panama Canal treaties, Mondale personally presided over the Senate on March 16 and April 18, 1978 to oversee the passage of the two treaties (the first established joint U.S.-Panamanian control until 1999, the second defined US rights to defend the canal afterwards). In the process, he both helped to shape legislative strategy and personally lobbied many of his former colleagues.¹⁹

Besides campaign duties, Mondale also acted as a foreign policy spokesperson for the administration, going on a week long “road show” to explain the SALT II agreement to the American people.

Finally, Mondale did take one line assignment. In late 1978, at President Carter’s request, Mondale chaired a task force intended to help establish and prioritize the president’s agenda. This was a short-term assignment. While it might have created opportunities for vice presidential influence, former Mondale staffer and Deputy National Security Advisor David Aaron stated that any influence Mondale exercised was done “very discreetly.”²⁰ Richard Moe stated it was primarily “a matter of keeping the books” as the agencies submitted their priorities.²¹ It did however support another Mondale priority, which was helping the White House establishing its priorities and run more effectively.

None of this activity was “influential;” they were instances of the vice president carrying out the president’s will, and any vice president would have done the same (more or less capably.) But, to be assigned these substantial duties required a very high level of trust between the president and vice president. Further, in carrying out these duties, a large number of lower-level decisions needed to be made to ensure that the proposed policies were effective, politically feasibility, and faithful to the president’s policy.

2. Overview of Mondale's Influence as Vice President

Assessments of Mondale's Influence as Vice President

There is no precise method to rate vice presidential influence, but there are innumerable testimonials to Mondale's unprecedented role as vice president, from within the administration, by scholars of the presidency and policy process, and by long-time observers of the American politics and the national security process. According to almost every account, Mondale was an influential vice president.

The first account would be Carter himself, who was true to his word in wanting a new kind of vice presidency and publicly credited his vice president as being an influential voice in his administration:

Almost invariably, when Fritz is present, when I'm approaching the time for a decision, I turn to him last and say, 'Mr. Vice President, what is your assessment?' And that's when he is always thoroughly prepared and he weighs in on the few items about which he feels very deeply.

And it's really kind of a rare thing for me not to go along with his position because Fritz tries to put himself in the role of a president and not just espouse a fairly radical argument, one way or the other, in an irresponsible way.²²

Carter readily credited his vice president as being a key advisor and cited examples of the vice president's influence. The president and vice president may be biased sources in describing their relationship, but independent sources have supported the case for describing Mondale as an influential figure in the Carter administration.

In his study of vice presidential influence, Paul Light observed that it was difficult to measure influence in the White House because, as Mondale explained, "The only reason to state publicly what you told the president is to take credit for his success and try to escape the blame for failure. Either way there is no quicker way to

undermine your relationship with the president and lose your effectiveness.” But Light did identify measures of effectiveness including examining the vice president’s policy positions prior to entering office with the president’s agenda after taking office and whether the vice president was present at major decision points. He found numerous issues where Mondale appeared to exercise influence and stated, “Mondale’s tracks run across most chronologies of domestic and foreign policy making in the Carter administration.”²³ Light also surveyed presidential and vice presidential staff, finding that all of Mondale’s staff and 80 percent of Carter’s staff felt that Mondale had influence on Carter’s agenda.

Besides academic researchers, several long-time observers of the Washington politics and the presidency noted the new vice presidential role. David Rothkopf, editor of *Foreign Policy* and former Clinton administration official, in his study of the National Security Council,²⁴ and Stephen Hess, an Eisenhower and Nixon White House staffer, in his study of the Presidency,²⁵ mentioned the dramatic expansion of the vice president’s role in the Carter Administration. Peter Rodman, who served on the National Security Council staff in four administrations and as Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Bush-Cheney administration, in *Presidential Command* wrote, “Another important and positive innovation of the Carter Administration was its elevation of the substantive role of the vice president.”²⁶

Perhaps the last word on Mondale’s influence should be left to a pair of Carter administration insiders, who, from very different perspectives, affirm Mondale’s influential role as vice president. Mondale’s National Security Advisor, Denis Clift recounts, “Mondale had invited his predecessor Nelson Rockefeller to dine at the Vice President’s Residence. During dinner, Carter called to get Mondale’s thoughts on an issue and Rockefeller wistfully noted how nice it would have been to have President Ford call him.”²⁷

Alternately, Attorney General Griffin Bell felt that Mondale exercised undue influence and wrote that Mondale was in great part responsible for, “the unclear, all-things-to-all-people voice the public heard so often from the administration”²⁸ that Bell considered the administration’s key failing. A complaint about excessive vice

presidential influence is very rare in American politics and a strong indicator that Mondale was an influential vice president.

Factors Contributing to Mondale's Influence: An Initial Analysis

The Modern Presidency

Hypothesis 1a: When the president is able to select his vice president, the vice president is more likely to exercise influence.

Carter's extensive vetting and vice presidential search process, which included lengthy meetings to determine personal and political compatibility, highlights that the selection was Carter's to make and, while he clearly considered political factors (Mondale, a northern liberal, offered ideological and geographical balance to Carter, a southern conservative), Carter also put a premium on factors that indicated his running mate would also be a helpful governing partner. This was a substantial break with previous nominees, in which only political factors were seriously considered, and it was Carter's power to choose his running mate that allowed him to break with tradition. Finally, similar to most of his recent predecessors, Carter was relatively free from internal party pressure in making his decision. In his autobiography, he wrote that he was prepared to select his running mate from among the pool of qualified vice presidential candidates to gain a majority of delegates, but that he had won enough delegates in the primaries and "had a totally free hand in choosing my vice-presidential partner."²⁹

Hypothesis 1b: As the demands on the president increase, the vice president will have greater opportunities to exercise influence.

There is no metric by which to judge how difficult one presidency is compared to another, but certainly the Carter administration was buffeted by crises. In Skowronek's typology, Carter was a president during a period of political disjunction in which a long-standing political order was no longer capable of addressing the nation's political challenges.³⁰ But Carter did not believe he was presiding over the collapse of the Democratic political order, rather he was

overseeing its restoration. The Carter administration was pummeled by domestic and foreign challenges, including the Iranian hostage crisis, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, inflation, and an energy crisis. But it is not clear that these were greater challenges than those in previous administrations. The United States was not at war, for example, as it had been for much of the decade prior to Carter's election. The federal budget was not substantially different from his predecessors, indicating that there had not been a fundamental change in presidential responsibilities.

Carter was often portrayed as over-worked, but that may have been a product of his approach to the office rather than of increased demands. In the words of presidential scholar Richard Neustadt, "The man likes to read."³¹

However, Carter took office in the shadow of Nixon's resignation, as well as in the shadow of the deaths in office of Kennedy and Roosevelt. Further, both Eisenhower and Johnson had had serious health problems in office. It is plausible to argue that while Carter's presidency was no more difficult than those of his predecessors, there was recognition of the increased demands on the president and that presidents were only human. Thus, the "back-up equipment" needed to be of presidential quality and also to be prepared for the job. This meant that the vice president needed to be fully integrated into the national decision-making.

Carter's own comments on the issue lend some credence to his view that the presidency would be a daunting challenge and that it was his duty to ensure he had an able successor on hands. He wrote in his diary on January 24, 1977:

I would like to delegate much more authority as President than I ever tried to do as governor. It's just not within the bounds of human capability to go into as much detail as I did in Georgia.³²

The Institutional Vice Presidency

Hypothesis 2A: Vice presidents with their own policy staff are better able to exercise influence.

The vice presidential staff played a crucial role in allowing Mondale to play an influential role in the White House. As a Senator, Mondale had built an experienced, savvy personal staff that followed him to the vice president's office. This staff was well-attuned to supporting Mondale to ensure he was adequately informed about policy issues, both for his discussions with the president and other policy-makers and also for his duties representing the administration to Congress, the American public, and abroad.

For example, the staff prepared memos for Mondale's private lunches with Carter and for the Friday morning foreign policy breakfasts with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski. While Mondale did not necessarily use these memos in the meetings,³³ it highlights the importance of staff work in keeping the vice president informed.³⁴

One important feature of Mondale's vice presidency was the high level of integration between the president's and vice president's staff. During the election campaign, Mondale's staff relocated to Atlanta to work closely with the Carter campaign, establishing a close working relationship that carried over into the White House. Richard Moe, Mondale's chief of staff both in the Senate and as vice president, initially focused on making the president-vice president relationship work, in particular spending a great deal of time with Hamilton Jordan, one of Carter's closest confidants to bridge the cultural and political differences between the Carter and Mondale staffs. Moe notes that there was little tension and no clear delineation between the staffs. As a sign of this high-level on integration, Moe, who was also an Assistant to the President, carried out a number of staff assignments for the president including gathering opinions from labor and business leaders and economists about possible appointments to chair the Federal Reserve and organizing the fight against the Balanced Budget Amendment.³⁵ The ability of Mondale's staffers, who were

experienced Washington hands, to help the Carter White House staff manage issues was not necessarily a source of influence, but it increased confidence in the vice president and his staff, thereby creating better conditions for influence.

Because of the close relationship between the president and vice president, initial plans were for NSC staffers to support the vice president. A. Denis Clift, who was appointed as Mondale's National Security Advisor to the Vice President (VPNSA) wrote a memo outlining why the vice president would still require staffing dedicated specifically to his needs rather than relying on the national security council staff to meet his operational requirements. Clift's memo illuminates how staffers can make a politician more effective. Among the tasks for which a vice presidential staffer might be needed include: following-up on issues of interest to the vice president in which the national security council staff papers are insufficient; ensuring the vice president has briefing papers for foreign visitors; ensuring that his own travels are tailored to his specific needs; and receiving proper background for ceremonial occasions.³⁶ Clift notes that Mondale would often see an article in *The Washington Post* or *The New York Times* on his ride into the office and mark it with a big question mark. Clift would get the background on the article and dictate a memo to the vice president within 30 minutes.³⁷

Staff could perform multiple functions to support Mondale's influence. Mondale himself noted the importance of staff work in helping the vice president track issues and manage the enormous quantity of information flowing through the White House. Staff also played a central role in facilitating vice presidential activity, which is an important function of the vice presidency. In addition, a vice president who capably carries out his public assignments is likely to be more credible within the White House. The expansion of vice presidential staff meant that the vice president's travel staff did not also have to serve as policy experts and that when the vice president travelled his staffers could still track issues within the White House on his behalf.³⁸

While Mondale's staff played a critical role in ensuring that their principal could advise the president and carry out his duties, they were circumspect was in

pushing his policies. David Aaron, the Deputy National Security Advisor, stated, “Clift attended all the NSC meetings on the sub-principal level and contributed in those meetings. But he had a good sense of what he could say in these meetings. He was very discreet and his primary role was keeping the vice president informed.”³⁹ Stuart Eizenstat echoed Aaron, in his own description of the role Mondale’s domestic policy advisor played in weekly staff meetings, stating that her primary job was to ensure Mondale was informed.⁴⁰

This type of staffing made it easier for Mondale to prepare for internal meetings and external appearances, thereby facilitating his efforts to influence policy. Proper staffing meant that Mondale was capable of advising the president when called upon to do so.

Hypothesis 2B: Vice presidents with an office in the West Wing are better able to exercise influence.

Carter’s decision to give Mondale an office in the West Wing of the White House is generally cited as the single most important change to the vice presidency. Perhaps the strongest statement of the importance of the West Wing office to growth in vice presidential influence was made by Griffin Bell, Carter’s attorney general, who often opposed Mondale and his policies. In his memoir, Bell believed Mondale exercised undue influence in the Carter administration, “because of his physical location in the west wing of the White House and because of placing some close aides in crucial posts in the policy-making apparatus.”⁴¹

In his study of the vice presidency, Paul Light discusses the importance of the West Wing office for Mondale’s influence at some length. Light interviews Carter and Mondale staffers, and one observes that the president’s top advisors have offices in the White House. Placing the vice president in the White House effectively establishes him in the public eye as a top advisor. This sent a powerful message and made it easier for Mondale to acquire information from other parts of government—because anyone calling from the West Wing must be important. Beyond image, Light notes that, with an office in the West Wing, Mondale was well placed to observe the

policy process so that he could identify key players and their positions on issues as they emerged. Light quotes one of Mondale's aides explaining, "Policy is a product of osmosis. If you're out of the loop, you're not able to affect policy. You can't pop into the president's office if it takes five minutes to walk across from the EOB."⁴² A practical illustration of the importance of proximity comes from NSA head, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who wrote, "It is quite striking how often Mondale now drops by to chat.... For example, today he came in to talk about our relations with Europe...."⁴³ This was echoed by one of Carter's closest advisors, Hamilton Jordan, who described a discussion with Mondale on December 11, 1979 about the Iranian hostage crisis and Jordan's planned trip to Panama to explore a new channel to the Iranian leadership, "Just as I was finishing my call, Vice President Mondale walked in unannounced, as he often did.... The president totally confided in Mondale, so I knew I could be open with him and told him the purpose of my trip."⁴⁴

Hypothesis 2C: Vice presidents with regular access to the president and with access to White House meetings and paper-flow for themselves and their staff are better able to exercise influence.

Another critical factor in Mondale's influence as vice president was his formal access to White House paper flow and meetings, his access to the president, and, in particular, his regular private lunch with the president. Access to the White House paper flow was not restricted to Mondale himself. As described above, Mondale aides sat in most major White House meetings, so that they could keep the vice president apprised of issues. Mondale could walk in to see the president whenever he wished, although he was careful not to abuse this privilege.⁴⁵

The private luncheon with the president was a particular source of influence because it allowed Mondale to regularly spend an hour with the president in which they discussed whatever issues were important to them. Mondale originally approached these meetings with an agenda, but quickly found that they "would discuss political things that we couldn't discuss or wouldn't discuss in more public settings."⁴⁶ This kind of lengthy, uninterrupted time with the president was,

according to most accounts, his primary forum for advising President Carter, but it was also important because it allowed Carter and Mondale to build a close working relationship.⁴⁷

Hypothesis 2D: Vice presidents who foster allies on the president's staff, exercise "hidden hand" influence, and avoid publicity for their policy preferences are better able to exercise influence

Finally, Mondale's own behavior in office established a model for vice presidential behavior and set a template for his successors. Mondale provided advice to his immediate successor, George H. W. Bush, emphasizing six key points. Points one, two, and six outline Mondale's approach to advising the president:

First, Advise the president confidentially.

Second, don't wear a president down. He should be bright enough to catch your meaning the first time. Give your advice once and give it well. You have a right to be heard, not obeyed. A president must decide when the debates must end, this nation must move on, and you must be part of that decision-making process....

Sixth, the Vice President should remember the importance of personal compatibility. [T]ry to complement the president's skills and, finally, and in a real sense the most important of all roles, be ready to assume the Presidency.⁴⁸

Mondale was, by every account, extremely diligent in abiding by his first instruction. Interviews with Carter administration staffers emphasize that Mondale was very careful not to speak in meetings and save his advice for his lunches with the president. Stuart Eizenstat stated, "[Mondale] tended not to speak in meetings. He didn't want those stories to get out. This was very hard— to sit in meetings without getting involved. It took a lot of Scandinavian constraint to pull this off."⁴⁹

David Aaron, among others, echoed this statement and both agreed that

Mondale was extremely close-lipped about his lunches with the president. Mondale did speak out in smaller meetings. Brzezinski recalls him speaking often in the foreign policy breakfasts.⁵⁰ Mondale explained that he could only speak when he was certain that nothing he said would leak, so his comments were reserved for private meetings with the president or for small meetings in which if there were a leak, it would be clear who was responsible.⁵¹ Finally, whatever was discussed during the decision-making process, when the decision was made Mondale supported it loyally.

Besides his extreme discretion and his care in choosing his fights, Mondale pursued strategies that served him well as vice president. After a presidential decision was made, Mondale publicly supported it and made it a point to give no public sense that he had had a different position. Mondale and his staff worked hard to build alliances with Carter's staffers, while not over-stepping their bounds. According to David Aaron, who had been Senator Mondale's National Security Advisor and became Carter's Deputy National Security Advisor, there was no question he worked for Carter and Brzezinski, and he stated that Mondale never placed him in a difficult position vis-à-vis Brzezinski.⁵²

At the very end of his tenure at the White House, Carter continued to speak warmly about Mondale. Hamilton Jordan, related Carter's comments on his last night at the White House in a conversation with Lloyd Cutler:

...[Kirbo said] what I should do is pick someone to be vice president whom I could get along with, who could help me with my problems and be president someday if anything happened to me. He was right, and Fritz has been extremely helpful and terribly loyal, even when he disagreed. Kirbo's personal choice was Scoop Jackson, but that wouldn't have worked. I could have handled Scoop, but it wouldn't have been much fun having to remind him every day that I was president, not he.⁵³

This statement summarizes the essence of the Carter-Mondale relationship. Mondale always sought to be helpful and consider things from the president's point of view, while never acting as though he were president.

Outsiders & Insiders

Hypothesis 3A: Outsider presidents are more likely to select their running mates on the basis of personal and political compatibility, which increases the likelihood that the president will include them as a top-level advisor.

Jimmy Carter was the first modern “outsider” president (a section of his autobiography is actually entitled “An Outsider in Washington”)⁵⁴ and he did take the selection of his vice president seriously and rely on him for help in areas in which he was less familiar. Carter specifically wrote that he intended to select a member of Congress as his running mate because of his unfamiliarity with the federal legislature.⁵⁵

Hypothesis 3B: Outsider presidents are more likely to be inexperienced in areas such as national security affairs and not have strong national security teams, thus creating opportunities for vice presidential influence.

Mondale’s area of specialization in the Senate had not been national security issues (with the exception of intelligence reform which will be discussed below). Senator Mondale had focused on civil rights and education.⁵⁶ However, Mondale and his staff had expertise on Washington politics in general and the Senate in particular that Carter and his staffers lacked. This was a gap in the policy process where Mondale reportedly played a critical role.

There were two aspects to the Carter administration’s challenges as Washington outsiders. One aspect was that the president and his staff simply were not familiar with the ways of Washington. There are numerous accounts of missteps by the Carter White House—on matters large and small—ranging from overloading the legislative agenda⁵⁷ to neglecting to engage with the Washington press corps.⁵⁸

The other aspect was Carter’s own style. Carter was frequently described as an apolitical politician, who sought ideal solutions that often ignored political realities. His old friend and his administration’s Attorney General, Griffin Bell, wrote that Carter was “about as good a president as an engineer could be.”⁵⁹

It was in this area, as a political advisor, that Mondale made many of his contributions to the Carter administration. Robert Hunter, a Carter NSC staffer stated:

He [Mondale] brought a political perspective, which was not always appreciated. The president was less political. I use 'political' as a good word, not a bad word. Unless you can sell something to Congress and to the American people, you don't have a policy.... He had a genuine instinct for integrating politics and everything else. He was a tremendous asset to the process....⁶⁰

Mondale sought to persuade the president to be more "political" by communicating more to the American people, setting clearer priorities, and building the political context into the decision-making process. Mondale told his biographer, Steve Gillon, "Carter's anti-political attitudes used to drive me nuts because you couldn't get him to grapple with a political problem. He thought politics was sinful. The worst thing you could say to Carter if you wanted him to do something was that it was politically the best thing to do."⁶¹

Mondale however emphasized that while, "[President Carter] was not interested in somebody telling him about politics, but he wanted to know realities like what's Congress doing, what are the possibilities, how can I sell this issue and so on."⁶²

Mondale, as an experienced former Senator, provided important help to Carter. In his own words, "It helped me a lot that I knew the Senate, had a lot of friends there, and knew how the Senate worked. That was a big gift."⁶³ Mondale met frequently with members of Congress, particularly Senate Majority Leader Byrd to explain the administration's actions and positions and to advise the president how things stood on Capitol Hill.

In addition, Mondale also advised Carter on his dealings with key Democratic Party constituencies with whom Carter was less familiar, such the Jewish community, organized labor, and the African-American community, as well as ways of operating in Washington in general. As will be discussed in greater detail below, Mondale, as

the “political barometer”, could provide guidance about how best to present policies in order to ensure they were politically viable.

Hypothesis 3C: Outsider presidents are more likely to seek their vice presidents’ input in the appointments process, which increases the vice presidents’ opportunities for influence.

There are effectively two distinct aspects to the vice president’s role in the appointments process. The first is the vice president’s input on appointments across the bureaucracy and the second is the vice president’s role in the shaping the White House staff in particular. The hypothesis that Mondale’s role in the appointments process created opportunities for influence in the Carter administration appears to have little support. David Aaron, who had been Mondale’s staffer at the Senate, co-chaired the National Security transition process states:

We did not get involved in personnel decisions. We were focused on establishing the structure of the NSC. Fritz had some supporters who wanted positions. Mostly they wanted ambassadorships. There was not a big coterie of Mondale supporters at State and DoD.⁶⁴

Mondale’s chief of staff, Richard Moe, echoes this point noting that their efforts in the appointments process were about helping campaign staffers and both Moe and Aaron observed the Mondale’s real focus was on domestic affairs where he did have some influence on cabinet appointments.⁶⁵ Two cabinet positions, which were primarily focused on domestic affairs, the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, were given to Mondale allies.⁶⁶

Within the White House, primarily as part of Carter’s commitment to giving Mondale a substantive role, Mondale allies were given key positions. Carter instructed the Domestic Policy Advisor, Stuart Eizenstat, to appoint Mondale’s Senate staffer, Bertram Karp, as his deputy. On the National Security Council, Mondale’s Senate staffer, David Aaron, was made the Deputy National Security Advisor. Brzezinski wrote that the decision was his,⁶⁷ but other sources suggest it

was Carter's decision.⁶⁸ Aaron himself states that while he was not surprised to get the position, there was probably an element of Brzezinski seeking Mondale's favor in his appointment.⁶⁹ Finally, Mondale's chief of staff, Richard Moe, was also given the title of Assistant to the President and ultimately performed a number of tasks on behalf of the president. To some extent, the role of Mondale staffers was not because Carter felt his administration needed their help, but rather reflected Carter's commitment to empowering his vice president. But at the same time, these individuals ended up playing key roles. The case of Richard Moe, who took on several sensitive tasks (some of which will be discussed below) in areas where the administration encountered difficulties, highlights the Carter administration's need for Washington insider experience.

3. Mondale's Influence on Specific Issues

This section explores specific cases of vice presidential influence in order to use process tracing to identify the roles played by particular elements of the institutional vice presidency and the vice president's personal background. It should be emphasized that it is not possible to gather every instance of vice presidential influence and the cases discussed below are *not* a complete record. But, they comprise a sufficient record demonstrating how vice presidential influence operates.

Domestic Issues

Although this project primarily focuses on national security affairs, Mondale was—first and foremost—concerned with domestic affairs.⁷⁰ There were several instances of his exercising influence on domestic issues that provide a perfect window into the process of vice presidential influence, particularly the *Bakke* case.

Bakke Case

One case that effectively set the precedent for vice presidential influence and illustrates its different components was a domestic policy issue, the *Bakke* case.

Much of the following account is taken from Mondale's autobiography *The Good Fight*. In autumn 1977, the case of Alan Bakke was heading to the Supreme Court. Bakke, a white student, had been denied admission to the University of California Medical School at Davis, while minority students with lower grades and test scores were accepted. Bakke sued, arguing that this decision was based on an unconstitutional racial quota. The Carter Justice Department under Attorney General Bell was preparing to file an *amicus* brief supporting Bakke. Stuart Eizenstat, Carter's domestic policy advisor, read the Justice Department's brief and interpreted it as an administration statement against all affirmative action. Eizenstat felt this statement would alienate African-Americans, a key Democratic constituency, and went against the administration's stated commitment to civil rights. Eizenstat brought the brief to Mondale because of the issue's political sensitivity.⁷¹ Mondale agreed with Eizenstat that the Justice Department brief was a political problem, that the brief was not compatible with the administration's commitment to civil rights, and that in coming out against affirmative action the brief would weaken advances in civil rights and integration. Mondale had a staffer contact university officials about the possible impact of the Bakke case. Mondale then discussed the issue with Hamilton Jordan, one of the president's top advisors, before approaching the president himself. In approaching the president, Mondale told the president:

This is something that's fundamental to you. You've made a commitment, and if we break it, we're going to pay a big price. People aren't going to believe us anymore.⁷²

Mondale couched his argument in both moral terms and political terms, explaining that since budgets were tight, supporting affirmative action was a way to demonstrate the administration's commitment to fairness and opportunity without spending money on a government program.

The Attorney General was a long-time friend of President Carter who sought to run the Justice Department without White House interference, but on this issue Carter over-ruled him and insisted the Justice Department change its position. Mondale noted that Carter's over-ruling the Attorney General (and an old friend) was

also important in establishing a new type of vice presidency; it “signaled to the rest of Washington that something had changed in the White House.”⁷³

This instance of vice presidential *initiative*, bringing an issue to the president’s attention and obtaining presidential action, highlights the elements that create the opportunity for vice presidential influence. First and foremost, the vice president had access to the president. But that access was used carefully and the vice president prepared his ground by working with allies in the administration (particularly Eizenstat and Hamilton Jordan), building an argument rooted in detailed information (vice presidential staff was crucial in gathering the needed information), and presenting the issues in terms of the president’s agenda. Mondale’s combining arguments about the political realities with an appeal to Carter’s convictions was an approach Mondale used throughout his vice presidency.

Other Domestic Issues

Mondale advised the president on a broad-range of domestic issues, with varying degrees of success. In February 1977, when the administration had barely taken office, Carter said he would veto 19 dams that were spread across much of the West. Mondale acknowledges that Carter was right on the issue, both in terms of the environment and the budget (with the Interior Department and OMB supporting the veto). But, Mondale explained to Carter the politics of the situation and how the veto brought the administration into conflict with a large number of powerful Senators and Congressman; he recommended that Carter instead target a few of the most egregious projects. Carter disagreed and vetoed all of the projects. An engineer, Carter had studied the technical reports and felt the projects were bad policy. As occurred often in the Carter administration, policy trumped politics.⁷⁴ Mondale’s access to the president and expertise on the legislature allowed him to make his case, but not to persuade the president.

On many issues, particular spending on social programs, Mondale was on the defensive. By 1978, Carter was focused on cutting spending in order to reduce the deficit and rein in inflation. While recognizing and publicly defending the administration’s efforts to curb inflation, Mondale within the White House argued

that the spending cuts hit key Democratic constituencies hardest and were both politically unwise as well as unjust. Working with Stuart Eizenstat, Mondale managed to persuade Carter to restore some of the programs.⁷⁵ This was a modest change in the trajectory of the president's policy and relied heavily on Mondale's access to the president and the policy process, his working relationship with Eizenstat, and his own expertise on these issues. It was probably also significant that Mondale showed his loyalty to the president, publicly supporting these policies, regardless of his private disagreements.

Middle East Peace Process

Brokering the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt was the most important foreign policy achievement of the Carter administration. This process has been the focus of innumerable books and a full discussion is far beyond the scope of this work. But, Vice President Mondale was involved throughout the process as an advisor, an emissary, and a spokesman. Mondale was present and heavily engaged in most of the historic Camp David summit in September 1978 that resulted in the agreement that served as the basis of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. The vice president's counsel on how to communicate both with Israel and the American Jewish community, with whom Mondale had a well-established relationship, was reportedly crucial to the process. This section begins with an overview of Mondale's role in the Middle East peace process and follows with a discussion of two specific decisions relating to the Middle East peace process in which Mondale exercised influence. It should be emphasized that the description below is not a complete account of Mondale's efforts on the Egyptian-Israeli negotiations, but rather a discussion of instances of vice presidential influence that provide a glimpse into how the vice president exercised influence.

Overview of Mondale's Role in the Middle East Peace Process

It is difficult to assess the importance of Mondale's input to the Middle East process, but there are several indications that Mondale played a crucial role. Carter did not

have a strong relationship with the American Jewish community, which, despite giving about 70 percent of its votes to Carter in 1976, was concerned about his background as a southerner and his identification as a Baptist fundamentalist. Further, throughout his time in office, Carter made statements and decisions that raised concerns among Israel's leaders and its American supporters.⁷⁶

Mondale, who had a strong relationship with American Jewish community leaders and with Israeli leaders, worked to improve this relationship and, at times, to soften Carter's tone. Stuart Eizenstat (Carter's domestic policy advisor who also had strong links to the American Jewish community) states, "Carter had a firm view, which Mondale could affect at the margins. He played a critical part in the ultimate success by reassuring the Israelis and American Jews about Carter."⁷⁷ Richard Moe, Mondale's chief of staff, reinforces this point, stating that the treaty might not have happened without Mondale's participation.⁷⁸ Brzezinski, who was not as close to Mondale and disagreed with him on many points, recognized Mondale's role, stating, "He was an important interlocutor to the American Jewish community and with the Israelis. Sometimes he was more cautious than the President."⁷⁹

As will be discussed below, at times Mondale's caution was detrimental to the peace process, but at other times it was essential. Morris Amitay, head of American Israel Public Affairs Committee during the Carter administration who communicated frequently with the Vice President, explained:

I had a long-standing relationship with Mondale.... Whenever Carter was straying, making statements inimical to Israel, I would go to Mondale. How much actual influence he had, I don't know. But Carter had to rely on Mondale for his knowledge of Congress and his relationships with the Jewish community.... Mondale was more of a brake, he tried to inject some realism.⁸⁰

Eizenstat echoes the assessment that Mondale's input helped to ground the administration's policy in what was politically possible. Eizenstat states that when Sadat made his historic visit to Jerusalem in 1977, "[T]he President's reaction was concern this would complicate a regional settlement and lead to a bilateral agreement.

Mondale and I said it was historic. Carter wanted comprehensive everything. ... Mondale saw our government as inherently incremental.”⁸¹

In his autobiography, Mondale writes that the success at Camp David of forging an Israeli-Egyptian peace was due to Carter’s resolve and focus.⁸² However, Mondale often played a key role giving tactical and political advice on both the domestic and international aspects of the peace process. Early on he recommended a timeline for pressuring Israel, noting that American leverage would be greatest prior to the 1978 mid-term elections.⁸³ In the preparations for preliminary talks in January 1978, Mondale recommended pressuring Begin on the settlements and Begin’s interpretation on UN Resolution 242. On both of those issues, Mondale argued that Israel’s American supporters were less whole-hearted in their backing of Begin. At the same time, Mondale recommended the U.S. diplomats downplay Palestinian issues, which would rouse the ire of Israel’s supporters in the United States.⁸⁴

Mondale’s advice, and particularly his counsel for caution, was not always followed. In June 1977, Mondale delivered a policy address to the Northern California World Affairs Club in San Francisco and hoped to use the opportunity to address concerns among Israel’s supporters in the United States about Carter’s policies. However, President Carter insisted that the speech clarify established U.S. policy and did little quell the concerns of Israel or its American supporters. Later, speaking to American-Jewish leaders, Carter essentially made the points that Mondale had hoped to make in San Francisco.⁸⁵

In October 1977, Mondale also warned Carter about launching a joint Middle East peace initiative with the Soviets because it would perturb the Israelis and Sadat (who had ejected the Soviets from Egypt).⁸⁶ Despite Mondale’s warnings, Carter issued a communiqué establishing the principles of a joint U.S.-Soviet Geneva Conference that also raised issues of Palestinian rights. When Jewish groups in the U.S. protested vehemently, Carter, at Mondale’s suggestion, established an informal Jewish advisory group so that he would have better channels of communication with the American Jewish community, in order to understand their concerns, to explain administration positions, and to prevent future crises by not blindsiding the

community with new initiatives.⁸⁷

In the summer of 1978, as the United States representative at the celebration of the 30th anniversary of Israel's founding, Mondale's public actions helped smooth U.S.-Israeli relations. Mondale also invited representatives of major American Jewish groups to join him, improving relations with that constituency. He met privately with Israel's Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who indicated that he was willing to go farther for peace than his public rhetoric indicated.⁸⁸ On that trip, he also visited Egypt where he met privately with Sadat who also emphasized his deep interest in reaching a peace agreement.⁸⁹ Mondale advised the president to hold high-level talks at a secluded location, led by a high-level negotiator. Mondale, however, also counseled the president not to get involved personally. Regarding Carter's decision to convene the Camp David summit, Mondale explained:

Well, to my discredit, I urged him not to do it, because I said, here you are betting your presidency, getting these two guys over here and we don't have an agreement, we don't know whether they'll agree or not. And he did it, and history will applaud him for it. So I have to say my first intervention was something that I wish I hadn't done, but once he made the commitment, then working under his instructions I tried very hard to make it work.⁹⁰

Mondale continued to make contributions, to help "make it work." Carter's initial plan for the summit included a proposal for Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank. Mondale persuaded Carter to drop this proposal, which would have been unacceptable to the Israelis.⁹¹ Mondale was also an active participant in the historic Camp David summit. By his own account, it was Carter who drove the process, but Mondale played a key role as interlocutor, particularly with Begin and the Israelis.⁹²

After the Camp David Accords, when the peace process foundered, Brzezinski wrote that Mondale urged the president not to get too involved because of the potential political controversy as they headed into an election year. But the president chose to personally re-engage regardless. Brzezinski argues that the president's re-engagement was essential to ultimately signing the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.⁹³

These examples are by no means a complete inventory of Mondale's role in the Egyptian-Israeli peace process and, as was discussed above, Carter rejected many of Mondale's specific suggestions (and Mondale publicly supported Carter's decisions after they were made).⁹⁴ Overall, however, Mondale's input shaped the trajectory of administration actions to help ensure the President's policy was more effective, particularly in maintaining relations with the American Jewish community and ensuring the U.S. domestic politics were part of the administration's calculations in the peace process.

Influencing Carter's trajectory on the Middle East peace process required, first and foremost, regular access to the President and to other key players. Mondale was involved in the critical meetings at every stage and had regular access to the key players.⁹⁵ At the beginning of the Camp David summit in 1978, Mondale was based in Washington as Carter's stand-in. After a few days, Carter asked for Mondale to join the team at Camp David, a decision that emphasizes the importance of Mondale's role.⁹⁶ Mondale's staff played an important role in enabling Mondale to participate fully in the summitry and personal diplomacy. Mondale's VPNSA Denis Clift was at Camp David for the entire summit, to bring Mondale up to speed on developments while he was in Washington and to assist Mondale while he participated.⁹⁷ In addition, Mondale's loyalty to Carter helped ensure that Carter kept him involved in the process. Mondale gave the 1977 speech despite his feeling that it did not make the necessary statements guaranteeing the U.S. commitment to Israel's security. Although Mondale was seen as the most pro-Israel member of Carter's inner circle, Israeli representatives were at times surprised when it was Mondale who delivered the tough messages.⁹⁸ Mondale's links to the American Jewish community and Israeli politics gave him insight to help Carter manage the domestic politics of the peace process as well as to reassure the Israelis. Carter did not always follow Mondale's advice, but he did so fairly often. It is plausible to argue that had Carter not had Mondale's insight into the politics of the peace process and to help present his positions on the Middle East, Israeli and/or domestic political opposition would have become too great for Carter to proceed with his historic peace-making agenda.

UN Speech

A 1978 *Washington Post* profile of Mondale and his unprecedented role in the Carter administration discusses one specific incident of vice presidential influence on the peace process that highlights the elements of vice presidential influence. The source was not Mondale, but President Carter. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance was scheduled to deliver an address at the United Nations that would have pressed the Israelis to make concessions. Mondale had advised a softer tone, believing that the statement would inflame the situation. Vance had rejected Mondale's proposed changes and sent his original draft to Carter who had approved it. When Mondale learned of this, he made a direct appeal to the President, calling in the evening while the President was in the White House Theater. Mondale successfully persuaded Carter of the importance of the softer language and Carter called Vance and instructed him to adopt it. Carter, in an interview, credits Mondale with pressing for the correct course. What is highlighted in this instance of shaping the *trajectory* of a policy is first and foremost the importance of Mondale's access to Carter— at all hours and under all circumstances. But Mondale's access to the paper flow was also essential; he knew that Vance had rejected his recommendations and that his position had not been presented to the President. Finally, it highlights that Carter respected and was open to Mondale's input. It is also significant that Carter strongly supported his vice president and was eager to let the media and general public know that his vice president was an important figure in the administration. Propagating the fact that Mondale had Carter's ear bolstered Mondale's status in Washington.⁹⁹

Arms Sales

The U.S.-Israeli security relationship was a particularly important component of the overall relationship. In several cases, Mondale intervened to modify administration decisions on arms sales that troubled the Israelis.

In early 1977, the Carter administration decided to block a planned sale of Israeli built Kfir fighter jets to Ecuador (the jets had American-built engines) and

issued a new policy restricting U.S. arms sales and technology transfers to nations worldwide, including Israel. Both decisions were seen as damaging the then-fragile Israeli economy, and the latter was seen as “devastating” to the Israeli military.¹⁰⁰ The politics surrounding the administration’s decisions irritated the Israelis and their U.S. supporters, who saw these decisions as an attempt to pressure Israel. The ostensible reason for blocking the Kfir sales was to prevent an arms race in Latin America. According to Morrie Amitay, who was then head of AIPAC, the U.S. and several other states had already tried to sell comparable jets in Latin America and Israel had had a promise from the Ford administration that the sale could go through.¹⁰¹

In spring 1977, Mondale, working with Eizenstat and Senator Humphrey, persuaded Carter to alter the administration’s decision, working out an accommodation that reduced the initial limits on arms sales and technology transfers to Israel arms sales and met Israeli security concerns.¹⁰² In 1978, Mondale worked hard to get approval for Kfir sales to Taiwan, but the Taiwanese chose not to purchase them. The administration also planned to sell F-15s to Saudi Arabia in 1978. Mondale opposed the sale because it would make the Israelis anxious. When Carter chose to go through with the sale, Mondale worked to ensure that the F-15s did not have an offensive capability so that it would be less of a threat to Israel.¹⁰³

These are also cases of the vice president influencing the *trajectory* of a decision. Considering the importance of U.S. military aid to Israel and of Israeli military concerns (by the late 1970s Israel had fought four wars with its Arab neighbors), managing this component of the relationship was a significant component of the Middle East peace process. Just as he did on a number of political and diplomatic issues described above, Mondale helped to adjust U.S. policies to better consider Israeli concerns, which in turn reassured the Israelis that they had U.S. support. These incidents of influence required Mondale’s access to the process and the president. It also highlighted Mondale’s loyalty. Although he opposed the sale of F-15s to the Saudis, he tried to help pass it on Capitol Hill. Finally, Mondale’s expertise on the political aspects of these arms sales and his ability to find solutions acceptable to the Israelis allowed him to play a significant role on this issue.

Defense Authorization Veto

In 1978, Carter was seen as weak in dealing with Congress. Administration allies were urging the President to veto a bill. Mondale pressed to veto a \$36 billion Defense Procurement bill because it included a \$2 billion nuclear powered aircraft carrier that the administration had publicly opposed (Mondale had opposed the carrier as a Senator) because it diverted needed resources from other projects. Brzezinski supported the veto and the Secretary of Defense had mixed feelings about the veto. However, the group opposed to the veto included some of Carter's closest advisors—Hamilton Jordan, Jody Powell, Stuart Eizenstat, and Frank Moore. These advisors were concerned that a major Defense Authorization bill had not been vetoed since the Polk Administration and that Congress was likely to override it, thus making the President look weaker. But Mondale argued, "If you don't do it now, you'll never get control."¹⁰⁴

In August 1978, Carter issued the veto. No less a source than President Carter himself credited Mondale with persuading him to veto the bill. Carter stated, "Fritz's courageous, almost lonely stance was very persuasive."¹⁰⁵

Further, when the administration set up a task force to mobilize Congressional and public support against a veto over-ride, the chair was Mondale's chief of staff, Richard Moe. This was an unprecedented situation in which a vice presidential aide was overseeing the activities of senior White House staffers.¹⁰⁶

This was a case of *bolstering*, in which the President wanted to pursue a policy but was unsure if it is possible. In his diary on March 17, 1978, Carter wrote that he did not feel the U.S. Navy needed another nuclear aircraft carrier.¹⁰⁷ However, vetoing the Defense Authorization bill was politically risky, which was why most of Carter's political advisors opposed the veto. Mondale's support, by Carter's own admission, helped Carter to make this decision.

The Defense Authorization bill veto highlights several components of vice presidential influence. First and foremost, Mondale was part of the discussion. Previous vice presidents were rarely part of the decision-making process at all and did not have access to the people, documents or meetings. Mondale did have the access

so that he was capable of making a contribution. This episode also indicates Carter's reliance on Mondale's expertise on Congress. Stuart Eizenstat notes, "Mondale had tested the possibility of a veto with his own contacts at the Senate. His instincts were for the veto but his knowledge of the Senate confirmed them."¹⁰⁸ The issue was not one of policy, where both the president and vice president agreed, but on politics and timing. Ultimately, Mondale's knowledge of Capitol Hill allowed him to persuade the president.

Finally, the role of Richard Moe, Mondale's chief of staff, in leading the administration's effort to prevent a veto over-ride highlights the importance of the vice president's staff. Mondale stated that Carter knew Moe and was aware of his work and his taking on a high-profile assignment on Capitol Hill was not remarkable.¹⁰⁹ Mondale was appreciated within the Carter White House for his knowledge of Capitol Hill and his experienced staff was an important component in this expertise.

Vietnamese Boat People Rescue

According to Mondale's autobiography, in early 1979, Assistant Secretary of State for Asia, Richard Holbrooke, contacted Mondale about the growing refugee crisis in Southeast Asia. The Communist governments of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were expelling tens of thousands of people. Fleeing on small boats that were attacked by pirates, thousands had drowned. Holbrooke reported that that he was having difficulty getting government action to address the crisis. Mondale pressed various government agencies to take an active role in responding to the crisis.¹¹⁰ Mondale received the President's approval to hold a National Security Council meeting to discuss the issue. In the meeting, Mondale heard the objections of the different departments, particularly the Pentagon, which felt that the Navy should not be involved in large-scale rescue operations. Mondale addressed the various concerns, noting that besides the humanitarian mission, the refugee crisis could trigger regional security problems. Mondale then called the Secretaries of State and Defense and obtained their support for American action to relieve the refugee crisis. With support

from all of the United States government stakeholders, Mondale then sought and obtained final approval from President Carter and a rescue mission was undertaken. Mondale then represented the United States at an international conference on the refugees in Geneva where he negotiated with foreign governments about accepting refugees and delivered a powerful speech in Geneva calling for international action on behalf of the refugees.¹¹¹

This example of vice presidential *initiative*, bringing a new issue to the President and obtaining Presidential action, primarily highlights Mondale's access. The fact that a State Department official approached Mondale for his help on the issue particularly emphasizes that Mondale was known to have access to the President. Mondale's role in the public aspect of this rescue, particularly the conference in Geneva where he negotiated with foreign governments to provide aid to the refugees was facilitated by his VPNSA.¹¹² In making the case to Carter, Mondale emphasized that it was an opportunity for the United States to demonstrate its commitment to human rights, which the administration had made a central tenet of its foreign policy.¹¹³

China Policy

The Carter administration sought to build on Nixon's historic opening to China and Vice President Mondale played a role in shaping the outreach. There was broad consensus in the administration about moving forward on normalization; the administration's deliberations were on the tactics and timing of initiatives.

In late August 1977, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance was sent to China. Carter had decided to press for full normalization of U.S.-China relations. On August 22, Carter cabled Vance to pull back on normalization efforts. Mondale had reportedly persuaded Carter that with the Senate debating the Panama Canal treaty, presenting a treaty normalizing relations with China would be too much for the Senate to pass in one legislative session.¹¹⁴

Following Vance's visit, there was jockeying within the administration over China policy. Both Mondale and Brzezinski wanted to go to China. Vance preferred

a vice presidential trip while Brzezinski wanted to go himself. Vance wanted to be the clear and undisputed spokesman on administration foreign policy and he also placed a higher priority on the SALT talks than on normalization with China, which he felt would interfere with the SALT talks.¹¹⁵ According to Mondale, Brzezinski wanted to expand relations with China in order to pressure the Soviets. Mondale stated, “I thought we would be better just to say, ‘we want an independent, free China and we will work with you, and leave the Soviet Union out of it.’”¹¹⁶

Brzezinski claims that in lobbying the president and attempting to overcome Vance’s objections, he built an alliance with Secretary of Defense Brown and the vice president. Brzezinski writes that in addition to personally asking the president on multiple occasions, he also asked Mondale to approach Carter on his behalf—which Mondale did, although without a conclusive result. The issue was resolved when Vance began pressing for a trip by Mondale rather than Brzezinski. Carter decided that his national security advisor would go for consultative meetings that would move the normalization process forward.¹¹⁷ Mondale only had a limited role in the negotiations with China (relations were normalized in January 1979). Brzezinski was the primary driver of the administration’s China policy.¹¹⁸

Mondale continued to seek his own trip and obtained the President’s approval in spring 1979. As vice president, Mondale learned how to use state visits as “a forcing event that would cause our own government to make decisions and endorse new steps.”¹¹⁹ In August 1979, Mondale made his own, high-level trip to China. Mondale carefully cultivated support from both the secretary of state and the national security advisor. To ensure his trip would be substantive, Mondale, aided by Deputy National Security Advisor David Aaron (his former Senate staffer), pressed the bureaucracy to approve a range of proposals to build closer U.S.-China relations.¹²⁰ Some issues, including a multi-billion dollar credit line and most-favored nation status for U.S.-China trade relations required higher-level attention. Mondale had to seek presidential approval for the former and obtain the secretary of state’s support for the latter.¹²¹ The trip itself began on a chilly note, but as Mondale presented these American initiatives, the relationship warmed. David Aaron, who was on the trip,

notes that as the diplomatic relationship warmed, the food got better.¹²² Overall, the trip was regarded as a major foreign policy success.¹²³

The vice president was not a central figure in shaping China policy, but he was clearly engaged in the issue and at least influenced the *trajectory* of the president's policy. The evolution of the administration's China policy emphasizes several components of vice presidential influence. First, Mondale had access to the president and the policy process. Although Mondale was not brought in to the team handling normalization talks with China until the very end, he was part of the regular foreign policy meetings and had regular access to the key players including the president himself. That Brzezinski, the key driver of the China policy, sought Mondale's support highlights that Mondale was very much a player in the policy process. Brzezinski grants that if Mondale had strongly opposed his trip, it probably would not have occurred.¹²⁴ Mondale cultivated allies on China policy, steering a path between the Vance and Brzezinski positions while working with both. Mondale's expertise on the legislative process was important in his persuading Carter to de-emphasize normalization talks during Vance's 1977 visit to China and also important in gaining Senate support for granting China most-favored-nation status as a trading partner.¹²⁵ Finally, the presence of Mondale staffer David Aaron as Deputy National Security Advisor helped facilitate Mondale's state visit to China.

Confronting the Soviets

The state of U.S.-Soviet relations was the major foreign policy issue of the Carter administration. By most accounts, Mondale was a part of the discussion and played a crucial role liaising with the Senate and communicating to the American people about the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks.¹²⁶ In December 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan as the government headed by its local allies collapsed. This event brought Afghanistan to the forefront of international affairs for the next several decades as the U.S. began backing anti-Soviet guerillas in the 1980s (drawing the Soviets into an intractable conflict that contributed to the Soviet Union's collapse).

This event also created a specific decision point in which the vice president sought to exercise influence.

The Carter administration began covert support operations for the Afghan resistance but also pursued more immediate and visible responses to what was considered a blatant violation of Afghan sovereignty and a case of Soviet expansionism. The Carter administration proposed two highly symbolic actions, partially embargoing grain sales to the Soviet Union and boycotting the 1980 Olympics. Mondale recognized the need for a firm response to Soviet aggression and was reportedly the first to raise the possibility of boycotting the 1980 Olympics at the regular foreign policy breakfast.¹²⁷

Embargoing grain exports to the Soviet Union was another matter. Mondale argued that politically the issue would be very costly, particularly as the President faced challenges within the party and this boycott would hurt farmers—a critical constituency in the early Iowa caucus. Mondale told Carter, “Mr. President, we need to be strong and firm, but that doesn’t mean you have to commit political suicide.” Nonetheless, Carter felt that in order to rally Western allies, it was important to show that an American president could make political tough decisions during an election year.¹²⁸

Further, there was a substantial argument that the embargo would have limited practical impact. In making this argument, Mondale had important allies in the domestic policy advisor, Stuart Eizenstat, and the Secretary of Agriculture, Robert Bergland. The latter argued that international grain markets were fungible and the Soviet Union would easily be able to buy grain elsewhere.¹²⁹

During this period of crises (the Iranian hostage crisis was also underway), Carter decided that the American people needed to see their president working on the hostage crisis. Much of the campaign duties, against Ted Kennedy’s primary challenge and later against Ronald Reagan in the general election, were delegated to Mondale. The vice president urged the President to campaign.¹³⁰ In late April 1980, Carter agreed to begin campaigning again.¹³¹

The grain embargo was an unsuccessful attempt to *persuade* the President,

that is, to shift the President to a position different from his preferred policy. Mondale had access to the President, allies within the administration in Secretary of Agriculture Bergland (who argued that the grain embargo would have little practical impact) and Domestic Policy Advisor Stuart Eizenstat, as well as expertise on the issue and the constituencies affected by the decision. Nonetheless, Mondale was not successful in persuading the president. However, Mondale publicly supported the policy on the campaign trail in Iowa, one of the states most deeply affected by the embargo. In Iowa, Mondale defended the policy against criticisms by primary challenger and former Senate colleague Ted Kennedy, criticisms that echoed Mondale's own feelings.¹³² Whatever the merits of Mondale's arguments, Carter felt strong national leadership was more important than political concerns. In the crisis atmosphere of 1980, where Mondale's proposals fit with the President's priorities, such as boycotting the Olympics, they were accepted, otherwise they were not and Mondale loyally supported Carter's decisions.

Malaise Speech

An interesting aspect of the Carter-Mondale relationship is the effort Carter put into persuading Mondale to support his policies. That Mondale would work to persuade Carter is to be expected. Carter also sought to ensure Mondale's support for a decision. For example, in his diaries on January 7, 1980, Carter wrote, "I had lunch with Fritz and tried to assuage his concern about the action we took against the Soviets."¹³³

Perhaps the clearest case of Carter's personal commitment to Mondale was illustrated in 1979. In the spring of 1979, Mondale was disenchanted with the administration's direction. As the country was wracked by inflation and increasing budget deficits, Carter sought to rein in government spending. In 1978, Mondale, although heavily engaged in the budget process, continually lost battles to maintain domestic programs that were important to key Democratic party constituencies.¹³⁴ In the summer of 1979, when the administration appeared to be floundering and the

nation was plagued with inflation and skyrocketing energy prices, Carter convened his closest aides at Camp David to plan a high-profile address to the nation. Pollster Patrick Caddell advanced the idea of a national crisis of spirit, which Carter found appealing. Mondale forcefully argued that the energy crisis and inflation were the real problems and that a speech based on Caddell's ideas would be a political disaster. Mondale stated that Caddell's approach was to scold the American people rather than address a real crisis. Stuart Eizenstat states, "It was the only time I saw Mondale angry, ever.... It was the one time Mondale really questioned Carter's judgment."¹³⁵ Carter stopped the meeting and took a walk with Mondale where they spoke privately for about half an hour. In Carter's own words, "I took a walk around the Camp David fence with Fritz, to get him cooled down. He was quite distraught. I told him my mind was set, that I had to have his support—but we didn't really get it after that. Stu [Eizenstat] came around quicker, but Fritz was extremely fearful about the consequences of what we were planning to do."¹³⁶ Steve Gillon quotes Mondale as saying, "When I think back, it is extraordinary the length Carter went to try and handle me with dignity. I will never forget his generosity." Nonetheless, Mondale was not persuaded, and, according to Mondale biographer Steve Gillon, may have threatened to resign if Caddell's ideas were the basis of the speech (Mondale himself denies he considered resigning).¹³⁷ Ultimately, a compromise proposed by Eizenstat was achieved in which part of the speech discussed the national mood, but much of it focused, as Mondale had advocated, on an energy policy. Although the July 15, 1979 speech has since been characterized as a low point for the administration and become known as the "malaise" speech, it was initially well received. Carter's approval ratings went up and many prominent figures praised it. However, two days later, without consulting Mondale, who was traveling, Carter fired his cabinet. This decision left the nation stunned and reinforced the impression of an administration in disarray. On the stump, Mondale had little to say about these developments. In his memoirs, Mondale writes that when he was handed a note about the firings during speech he thought, "Oh-oh, what do I do with this?"¹³⁸

This incident led to a perception that Mondale was no longer an influential

member of the administration. Journalists criticized him for being unassertive within the administration. Further, within the administration circles, Carter aides and Mondale aides reportedly became frustrated with one another and these conflicts leaked into the press. However, when Mondale complained to Carter about the backbiting, the President ordered that it cease and threatened to fire anyone involved in publicly disparaging the vice president.¹³⁹

This incident was an unsuccessful attempt to *persuade* the president, and highlights the essential importance of a close president-vice president relationship for the vice president to exercise influence. Although his advice was rejected, Mondale was a member of the inner circle shaping policy. That Carter would go to such lengths to insure that his vice president remained a supporter of the administration policy and was *not* isolated was essential to Mondale's securing and maintaining his role within the administration.

Intelligence Reform

Mondale was heavily involved in the administration's efforts to reform the intelligence community. As a Senator, Mondale had served on the Church Committee where he had investigated abuses of power by the CIA and FBI. He entered office resolved to prevent this kind of behavior from occurring in the future. Although he opposed Attorney General Griffin Bell on many domestic issues, on the wiretap bill, they found themselves on the same side. They both agreed that a criminal standard was necessary for the government to obtain a warrant to conduct electronic surveillance. Although opposed strongly by the secretary of defense and (to a lesser extent) the director of central intelligence and the national security advisor, the vice president and attorney general prevailed and ultimately this led to the establishment of the FISA courts.¹⁴⁰ Mondale also helped spearhead the efforts to create a legislative charter for the intelligence agencies. The process was plagued with delays caused by internal infighting – particularly between the Defense Department and the CIA, both of which sought to maintain freedom of action for the

intelligence agencies to collect information. Deputy National Security Advisor David Aaron, who had worked on the Church Commission with Mondale, chaired the working group overseeing the establishment of the charter and stated, “Carter supported Mondale heavily on intelligence issues. Mondale was really in the driver’s seat on these issues.” Aaron also explained that Brzezinski was less familiar with intelligence issues and turned it over to him.¹⁴¹ In another indication of the vice president’s influence on this issue, an intelligence community source complained during this controversy, “There’s a tendency on Brzezinski’s part not to fight too hard against something the vice president really wants.”¹⁴² Ultimately, due to crises and election year concerns, the administration did not push the issue in Congress and no charter was passed, instead the legislation was issued as Executive Orders. David Aaron states that he has studied this issue in his post-government career at the RAND Corporation and the intelligence community has abided by the drafted charter.¹⁴³

Intelligence reform was a case of vice presidential *oversight* in which the president and vice president are in fundamental agreement and the president give the vice president charge over the issue. As always, access to the president and the process is essential. Further, Mondale worked with allies wherever possible, in this case, Attorney General Bell, who had often been opposed to Mondale on domestic policy issues. On this issue Mondale’s specialized knowledge of the issue from his time on the Church Commission was important to his influence. His relationship with his former aide, David Aaron, who also had expertise on these issue and who was well placed to work with Mondale to shape policy also played a key role.

Infighting on the Foreign Policy Team

The Carter administration foreign policy team was formed in the shadow of Nixon’s effective but controversial national security process. Under Nixon, a high-profile national security advisor dominated foreign policy, while the secretary of state was relegated to the margins of foreign policy-making. Carter vowed to restore the secretary of state to its position of primacy and that his national security advisor,

while still influential, would not play as prominent a role. Carter himself intended to be the key decision-maker on foreign policy, the hub at the set of spokes. But important policy differences emerged between the national security advisor and the secretary of state, differences that were exacerbated by issues of process and style. Vance insisted that he be the administration's primary foreign policy spokesman but did not care to be the public spokesman for the administration, a role the national security advisor relished. Brzezinski also controlled the summaries of National Security Council meetings that went to the president and Vance felt that positions were misrepresented in these summaries. Eventually, these issues broke out into the open with leaks, conflicting statements by the principals, and outright personal attacks. Vance wrote:

Eventually, as divergences grew wider between my public statements and his policy utterances, Brzezinski's practice became a serious impediment to the conduct of our foreign policy. It also became a political liability, leaving the Congress and foreign governments with the impression that the administration did not know its own mind.¹⁴⁴

Brzezinski, for his part, while granting that there were significant policy differences, claimed that the Vance-Brzezinski rivalry was primarily a creation of the media, although he did write, "Cy would have been a great secretary of state in the 1880s when we did not have to deal with as many thugs in the world."¹⁴⁵

Mondale, who had his own policy disagreements with Brzezinski and also with Vance, felt these public disputes were bad for the administration and both tarnished its image and hampered its ability to make and implement foreign policy effectively. He urged Carter to rein in Brzezinski.¹⁴⁶ At times Carter did, while also castigating State Department officials for leaking. In early June 1978, after Brzezinski appeared on *Meet the Press* and issued strongly critical statements about Soviet behavior, Carter told his national security advisor to reduce his public profile. Brzezinski's media appearances declined for the rest of 1978.¹⁴⁷ However, the State-NSC conflicts continued. At several points in his diary, Carter mentioned Vance's complaints about Brzezinski or his efforts to stifle leaks from the State Department.¹⁴⁸

When Vance resigned, Mondale argued strongly for Senator Muskie as his replacement, in part because Mondale felt that Muskie would be more of a match to Brzezinski.¹⁴⁹

Mondale was attempting to *persuade* the President to change his administration's foreign policy process. But he had only limited success. As close as Carter was to Mondale, Carter was also close to Brzezinski and appreciated Brzezinski's input and, at least sometimes, his willingness to take on a public role as administration spokesperson. On some issues of white house process, Mondale appeared to have at least some influence. He helped run the administration's agenda-setting process in 1978. But on foreign policy process, he was less successful. The agenda-setting process was primarily a "book-keeping" function, where priorities could be clearly established. The issues bedeviling the foreign policy process involved personnel and fundamentally different worldviews. Carter liked and respected both Vance and Brzezinski, but after his first year in office, he had great difficulty getting them to work together. On this issue, the vice president had access to the information and the key players. Mondale could provide counsel, but ultimately only the President could mediate between his top advisors.

4. Causes of Vice Presidential Influence in the Carter Administration: A Second Look

Having examined specific instances of the Vice President Mondale's influence on Carter administration policies primarily reinforces the conclusions reached in the initial overview of the hypotheses in this case study.

The Modern the Presidency

There are two hypotheses relating to changes in the Presidency explaining the rise of vice presidential influence: that the presidency had become more difficult and that the power of presidential nominees to select their running mate allowed them to select vice presidents that they could trust and rely upon.

While there were many reports that Carter was an extremely hard-working

president and may have been overwhelmed by his duties, there is at best limited evidence that this contributed to specific instances of vice presidential influence. The demands on Carter did contribute to Mondale's activity, particularly his extensive international travel and domestic political activity. When, during the 1980 Presidential primaries, Carter decided to stay in the White House and work to resolve the Iranian hostage crisis, Mondale campaigned on his behalf. When Carter devoted himself full-time to the Camp David Summit in an effort to forge an Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement, Mondale stayed at the White House as a *de facto* "acting president" until Carter determined he needed Mondale with him at Camp David. These examples and many others highlight how Mondale took on presidential duties in order to relieve Carter of some of his burdens. They indicated a high level of trust between the president and vice president, which may have broadly contributed to Carter's willingness to listen, but it did not appear to be a contributing factor to vice presidential influence.

Carter, like the presidents prior to him, as early as FDR, chose his own vice president. However, unlike the previous presidents, he went through a careful process that not only weighed political factors but also examined personal compatibility and the skills of his running mate. There were no specific instances of vice presidential influence that clearly resulted from Carter's power to select his running mate. But Carter's freedom to select his vice president was essential for establishing the needed relationship of trust between them that allowed vice presidential influence to occur.

The Institutional Vice Presidency

Mondale initiated what Jack Lechelt calls the semi-institutionalized vice presidency, the perquisites of the office that have been important contributors to vice presidential influence.¹⁵⁰ These perquisites included regular vice presidential access to the president, White House meetings, and the White House paper flow. In addition vice presidential staff had access to the White House meetings and paper flow.

Access to the president and, more broadly, the policy process itself was

essential to Mondale's influence. Without regular access to the President, it is difficult to exercise influence. Besides his weekly private lunches with the President and almost daily contact, Mondale was a member of Carter's inner circle, attending nearly all of the most important meetings. When Carter convened his closest aides to discuss the economic and energy crisis in 1979, Mondale was one of the attendees. Mondale's regular access to Carter made other policy players more likely to approach the Vice President for support on issues. In both the Vietnamese Boat People crisis and the disagreement over the administration's response to the *Bakke* case, other figures in the administration brought an issue to the vice president who in turn took it to the president.

Mondale's influence was also enabled by his full access to the policy process. His intervention on the proposed UN speech by Secretary of State Vance highlights the importance of vice presidential access to the policy process. It enabled the vice president to intervene as issues came to a head.

Mondale's staff also played an important role in his exercise of influence as vice president. Previous vice presidents had large staffs. The expansion of the vice president's staff began under Agnew but had little effect on his influence (or lack thereof).¹⁵¹ Mondale made good use of his staff so that he could remain on top of issues. But it was the integration of his staff with the president's that was most significant. Richard Moe's additional position as assistant to the president made him well positioned to coordinate with Hamilton Jordan in keeping the president-vice president relationship working. That Moe could work White House projects may not have directly contributed to the vice president's influence but at least strengthened the vice president's credibility.

Mondale's West Wing office was undoubtedly a force multiplier for his access to the President and the process. With an office in the West Wing, it was far easier for other White House officials to approach the vice president. It also made it easier for the vice president to see the president and see top aides to follow how an issue was developing.

Some observers state that the West Wing office was the most important factor

in Mondale's influence. While Carter's granting Mondale access to all of the White House meetings and paper flow was important, the physical presence in the White House was critical to playing an active role in influencing policy. However, little of this would have had much effect without regular private access to the President.

Mondale's own strategies were central to his influence. First and foremost, he was always publicly loyal and provided his input in terms of the president's needs. Carter himself noted this. When Mondale lost a policy battle, he would nonetheless publicly advocate for the policy he had opposed in private. This was most notable in the case of the grain embargo after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Mondale's loyalty to Carter helped him build alliances with other figures in the policy process, such as Stuart Eizenstat and Hamilton Jordan. Mondale's loyalty and Carter's trust allowed other figures in Carter's inner circle to confide and work with Mondale.

Finally, Mondale conserved his influence, challenging the President on the issues most important to him, preparing meticulously, and making his appeals to the President only when absolutely necessary.

Outsiders & Insiders

Jimmy Carter was the first modern outsider president, and he conducted a comprehensive search for his vice president that included extensive vetting and personal interviews. Carter recognized his limitations and sought a vice president who could help him overcome them. Carter did not explicitly choose Mondale because of his national security experience, but he did state that experience with Congress was essential. Because the Senate plays an essential part in national security affairs, Mondale's Senate experience helped Mondale play an important role in national security decision-making in the Carter administration.

Mondale's experience did play a role in his influence in the Carter administration. On several issues, such as the Defense Authorization Veto and U.S.-China relations, Mondale's sense of the Senate helped shape Carter's ultimate decision. On intelligence reform, the national security issue where Mondale had the

most practical experience, the president reportedly gave his vice president broad discretion in shaping policy. On other political issues, Mondale's input was mixed but still valued. Mondale did not always successfully influence the President in managing relations with Israel and its American supporters, but he was successful fairly often and may have made an important contribution to one of the Carter administration's signature policy achievements. In other cases, such as the Soviet Grain Embargo, Mondale's concerns about domestic political constituencies were over-ruled by Carter's interpretation of the broader national interest. Mondale did have some success when he brought issues to the president's attention, where Mondale could couch his appeal in moral terms, such as the Vietnamese Refugee crisis.

Reportedly Mondale was consulted throughout the cabinet selection process. He advocated on behalf of two nominees in particular, Secretary of Agriculture Bergland and Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, Joseph Califano. But more important to Mondale's influence was Carter's selection of two Mondale aides to key posts on the national security and domestic policy councils. These aides, while loyal to their direct superior and to the president, ensured that Mondale was always engaged in the process. On national security affairs, David Aaron worked closely with Mondale on a number of key issues such as intelligence reform and the state visit to China. This collaboration helped maximize the vice president's effectiveness.

Conclusion

With a supportive president, who was willing to give more than lip service to the concept of engaging his vice president, Walter Mondale established a new vice presidency. The arrangement they established has held for nearly four decades and across five political administrations. Not all of Mondale's successors had the same level of influence, but none of them suffered the tremendous isolation and irrelevance felt by the majority of Mondale's predecessors.

Beyond reshaping the office, Mondale provided specific strengths to the

Carter administration. Although they clashed on many issues, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's national security advisor, respected Mondale's role in the administration:

Mondale's most important substantive contribution was his political judgment. He was a vital political barometer for the president, and Carter respected his opinion on the domestic implications of foreign policy decisions.... In general, Carter rarely, if ever thought of foreign policy in terms of domestic politics, while Mondale rarely, if ever, thought of it otherwise.... Fritz, in effect, provided a needed corrective.¹⁵²

Carter, by background a Washington outsider and by temperament a technocrat, needed this corrective. On many occasions, Mondale's political judgment played a crucial role in helping transform Carter's ideas into concrete reality.

Chapter 3 Endnotes

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² Paul Charles Light, *Vice-Presidential Power: Advice and Influence in the White House* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 215.

³ Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 230-43.

⁴ James Fallows, "The Passionless Presidency: The Trouble with Jimmy Carter's Administration," *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1979, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1979/05/the-passionless-presidency/308516/>.

⁵ Alexander L. George, *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), 159-62.

⁶ Richard Moe, "The Making of the Modern Vice Presidency: A Personal Reflection," *Minnesota History Magazine*, Fall 2006, <http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHHistoryMagazine/articles/60/v60i03p088-099.pdf>.

⁷ Walter Mondale, *The Good Fight: A Life in Liberal Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 161-63.

⁸ Mondale, *The Good Fight*, 157-58, 162.

⁹ Walter Mondale to Jimmy Carter, Memo, Re: The Role of the Vice President in the Carter Administration December 9, 1979. <http://www.mnhs.org/collections/upclose/Mondale-CarterMemo-Scanned.pdf>.

¹⁰ Mondale, *The Good Fight*, 171-72. Richard Moe, Mondale's chief of staff, argues that the most significant single act was Carter's order that requests from the vice president be treated as though they were from Carter and that anyone who worked against the vice president would be fired. Richard Moe, "The Making of the Modern Vice Presidency: A Personal

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¹³ Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1995), 40.

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¹⁵ Jack Lechelt, *The Vice Presidency in Foreign Policy: From Mondale to Cheney* (El Paso, TX: LFB Scholarly Publications, 2009), 68-75.

¹⁶ David Aaron, “Exit Interview,” June 15, 1994, Declassified February 1, 1999.

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¹⁷ A. Denis Clift, *With Presidents to the Summit* (Fairfax, VA: George Mason University Press, 1993) 183-88.

¹⁸ Carter, *Keeping the Faith*, 35.

¹⁹ Gillon, *The Democrats Dilemma*, 223-25.

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²¹ Richard Moe, interview by author, Washington, DC, October 22, 2012.

²² Martin Schram, “A Slightly Different Vice President,” *Washington Post*, December 3, 1978, Outlook.

²³ Light, *Vice-Presidential Power*, 176-77.

²⁴ David Rothkopf, *Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2005), 169-70.

²⁵ Stephen Hess, *Organizing the Presidency* (Washington, DC: Brookings 2002), 141.

²⁶ Peter Rodman, *Presidential Command: Power, Leadership, and the Making of Foreign Policy from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 123-24.

²⁷ Denis Clift, interview by author, Annapolis, MD, June 12, 2012.

²⁸ Griffin B. Bell and Ronald J. Ostrow, *Taking Care of the Law* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1982), 24.

²⁹ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 36.

³⁰ Stephen Skowronek, *Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2008) 27-78.

³¹ Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*, 230.

³² Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 35.

³³ Walter Mondale, interview by author, Minneapolis, November 8, 2012.

³⁴ Examples of the memos prepared for the President-Vice President meetings and the Friday morning policy breakfasts can be found in the Mondale papers at the Minnesota Historical Society 153.J.8.4F, viewable online at

http://www.mnhs.org/library/findaids/00697_Vice.xml.

³⁵ Richard Moe, interview by author, Washington, DC, October 22, 2012.

³⁶ A. Denis Clift, *With Presidents to the Summit*, 130-32.

³⁷ A. Denis Clift, interview by author, Annapolis, MD, June 12, 2012.

³⁸ Light, *Vice-Presidential Power*, 140-41.

³⁹ David Aaron, interview by author, Arlington, VA, October 26, 2012.

⁴⁰ Stuart Eizenstat, interview by author, Washington, DC, November 2, 2012.

⁴¹ Bell, *Taking Care of the Law*, 23.

⁴² Light, *Vice-Presidential Power*, 162-65.

⁴³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983) 33.

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- ⁴⁴ Hamilton Jordan, *Crisis: The Last Year of the Carter Presidency* (New York: Putnam, 1982), 76-77.
- ⁴⁵ A. Denis Clift, interview by author, Annapolis, MD, June 12, 2012.
- ⁴⁶ Walter Mondale, interview by author, Minneapolis, November 8, 2012.
- ⁴⁷ David Aaron, interview by author, Arlington, VA, October 22, 2012 and October 26, 2012; Richard Moe, interview by author, Washington, DC, October 22, 2012 & November 5, 2012.
- ⁴⁸ Mondale, remarks February 18, 1981, cited in Light, *Vice-Presidential Power*, 248-49. The other points discuss the vice president's role as administration spokesman and advise vice presidents to avoid line assignments.
- ⁴⁹ Interview with Stuart Eizenstat, Washington, DC, November 2, 2012.
- ⁵⁰ Interview with Brzezinski, Washington, DC, November 2, 2012.
- ⁵¹ Walter Mondale, interview by author, Minneapolis, November 8, 2012.
- ⁵² David Aaron, interview by author, Arlington, VA, October 22, 2012 and October 26, 2012.
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- ⁵⁹ Bell, *Taking Care of the Law*, p. 46-47.
- ⁶⁰ Alexander Moens, *Foreign Policy under Carter: Testing Multiple Advocacy Decision Making* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), 45.
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- ⁶² Walter Mondale, interview by author, Minneapolis, November 8, 2012.
- ⁶³ Walter Mondale, interview by author, Minneapolis, November 8, 2012.
- ⁶⁴ David Aaron, interview by author, Arlington, VA, October 22, 2012 and October 26, 2012.
- ⁶⁵ Richard Moe, interview by author, Washington, DC, October 22, 2012 and November 5, 2012.
- ⁶⁶ Lewis, *Portrait of an American Politician*, 232.
- ⁶⁷ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 34.
- ⁶⁸ Gillon, *Democrats' Dilemma*, 182.
- ⁶⁹ David Aaron, interview by author, Arlington, VA, October 22, 2012 and October 26, 2012.
- ⁷⁰ Richard Moe, interview by author, Washington, DC, October 22, 2012 & November 5, 2012.
- ⁷¹ Stuart Eizenstat, interview with author, Washington, DC, November 2, 2012.
- ⁷² Mondale, *The Good Fight*, 179.
- ⁷³ Mondale, *The Good Fight*, 177-80.
- ⁷⁴ Mondale, *The Good Fight*, 182-83.
- ⁷⁵ Lewis, *Portrait of an American Politician*, 245
- ⁷⁶ Richard Steele, Hal Bruno, Eleanor Clift, Thomas M. DeFrank, and Susan Agrest "Carter and the Worried Jews," *Newsweek*, June 27, 1977.
- ⁷⁷ Stuart Eizenstat, interview with author, Washington, DC, November 2, 2012.
- ⁷⁸ Richard Moe, interview by author, Washington, DC, October 22, 2012 & November 5, 2012
- ⁷⁹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, interview with author, Washington, DC, November 2, 2012.
- ⁸⁰ Morris Amitay, interview with author, Washington, DC, November 2, 2012
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- ⁸² Mondale, *The Good Fight*, 211.
- ⁸³ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 239.
- ⁸⁴ William Quandt, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1986), 162.
- ⁸⁵ Finlay Lewis, *Portrait of an American Politician* (New York: Harper Row, 1980), 258
- ⁸⁶ Mondale, *The Good Fight*, 204-5
- ⁸⁷ Gillon, *The Democrats' Dilemma*, 222-23.
- ⁸⁸ According to some reports, Begin himself stated that it was his conversations with Mondale that convinced him to move forward with the peace process. See Clift p. 159
- ⁸⁹ Gillon, *The Democrats' Dilemma*, 233-34.
- ⁹⁰ Walter Mondale, interview by author, Minneapolis, November 8, 2012.
- ⁹¹ Finlay Lewis, *Portrait of an American Politician*, 259-60.
- ⁹² Mondale, *The Good Fight*, 209-11.
- ⁹³ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 279-80.
- ⁹⁴ There is at least a hint that Carter became tired of Mondale's warning about the reaction of the American Jewish community, noting in his diary on August 20, 1980, "Fritz gets very excited about these decisions that affect the American Jewish community." Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, & Giroux, 2010), 459.
- ⁹⁵ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*; Quandt, *Camp David*; Gillon, *Democrats' Dilemma*; Carter, *White House Diary*.
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- ¹⁰⁴ Lewis, *Mondale: Portrait of an American Politician*, 247-48.
- ¹⁰⁵ Schram, "A Slightly Different Vice President."
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- ¹⁰⁸ Stuart Eisenstat, interview with author, Washington, DC, November 2, 2012.
- ¹⁰⁹ Walter Mondale, interview by author, Minneapolis, November 8, 2012.
- ¹¹⁰ Gillon, *The Democrats' Dilemma*, 230-32.
- ¹¹¹ Mondale, *The Good Fight*, 212-14.
- ¹¹² Clift, *With Presidents to the Summit*, 179-81.
- ¹¹³ Gillon, *The Democrats' Dilemma*, 231.
- ¹¹⁴ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 201-2.
- ¹¹⁵ Vance writes that he was concerned a Brzezinski visit would push the normalization issue before the complexities of the issue had been adequately studied. See Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy*, 25 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983) 114-15; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 203.
- ¹¹⁶ Walter Mondale, interview by author, Minneapolis, November 8, 2012.
- ¹¹⁷ In an interview, Brzezinski noted that his trip would probably not have occurred if Mondale had staunchly opposed it. See Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 204-6.
- ¹¹⁸ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 114-16; Martin Schram, "China Policy: A Born-Again Brzezinski; The Carter Presidency," *Washington Post*, February 8, 1979.

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- ¹¹⁹ Mondale, *The Good Fight*, 217
- ¹²⁰ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 418
- ¹²¹ Gillon, *The Democrats' Dilemma*, 246
- ¹²² David Aaron, interview by author, Arlington, VA, October 22, 2012 and October 26, 2012.
- ¹²³ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 115; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 418-19.
- ¹²⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, interview with author, Washington, DC, November 2, 2012.
- ¹²⁵ Walter Mondale, interview by author, Minneapolis, November 8, 2012.
- ¹²⁶ Overviews of Mondale's role in U.S.-Soviet relations can be found in Paul Kengor, *Wreath Layer or Policy Player? The Vice President's Role in Foreign Policy* (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 112-16. See also Jack Lechelt, *The Vice Presidency in Foreign Policy: From Mondale to Cheney* (El Paso, TX: LFB Scholarly Publications, 2009), 68-75. Mondale biographer Steve Gillon's assessment was that while Mondale had a number of foreign policy successes as Vice President, he had little impact on the two problems that eroded public support for Carter's foreign policy: the administration's confused approach toward the Soviet Union and his response to the hostage crisis in Iran. See Gillon, *The Democrats' Dilemma*, 293.
- ¹²⁷ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 433.
- ¹²⁸ Jordan, *Crisis*, 100.
- ¹²⁹ Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 200-1.
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- ¹³² Mondale, *The Good Fight*, 268.
- ¹³³ Carter, *White House Diary*, 389.
- ¹³⁴ Gillon, *The Democrats' Dilemma*, 203-5.
- ¹³⁵ Stuart Eisenstat, interview with author, Washington, DC, November 2, 2012.
- ¹³⁶ Carter, *White House Diary*, 341.
- ¹³⁷ Gillon, *The Democrats' Dilemma*, 262-63. In his memoirs, Mondale denies that he threatened to resign. See Mondale, *The Good Fight*, 237.
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- ¹³⁹ Gillon *The Democrats' Dilemma*, 266.
- ¹⁴⁰ Nina Totenberg, "For the U.S.: Griffin Bell, Esq: A closing argument on the departing attorney general, who hope to leave a legacy of integrity, patriotism and non-partisan justice," *The Washington Post Magazine*, July 1, 1979.
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- ¹⁴³ David Aaron, interview by author, Arlington, VA, October 22, 2012 and October 26, 2012.
- ¹⁴⁴ Vance, *Hard Choices*, 36.
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- ¹⁴⁶ Gillon, *The Democrats' Dilemma*, 238-39.
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¹⁴⁸ Carter, *White House Diary*, 198; 267; 288-89; 363; 364.

¹⁴⁹ Gillon, *The Democrats' Dilemma*, 280-81.

¹⁵⁰ Jack Lechelt, *The Vice Presidency in Foreign Policy*.

¹⁵¹ Light, *Vice-Presidential Power*, 69-70

¹⁵² Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 34-35.

Chapter 4. “Reagan’s Rudder”: The Vice Presidency of George H.

W. Bush

Introduction

After the revolutionary vice presidency of Walter Mondale, George H. W. Bush was an apparent return to business as usual for vice presidents. Bush was from the opposite political wing of the party from the nominee and had been selected primarily for political reasons. However, Bush’s extensive national security expertise, the legacy of vice presidential involvement from the Carter-Mondale years, and the prominent role of Bush’s ally James Baker in the Reagan White House allowed Bush to play a significant role in the Reagan White House. Bush also became the first sitting vice president to be elected to the presidency since Martin Van Buren nearly a century and a half earlier. This case study will examine which factors facilitated Vice President Bush’s continuation of vice presidential influence.

This case study on the Bush vice presidency begins with a brief biography of George H.W. Bush, a description of Bush’s 1980 presidential campaign, and his selection as Ronald Reagan’s vice president. This will be followed by a discussion of the formal aspects of the Bush vice presidency, including his activity as an administration spokesman, a liaison with Congress, and chair of several task forces. Part 2 is an overview of Bush’s influence as vice president including scholarly and contemporary assessments of Bush’s influence and an analysis of the factors contributing to Bush’s influence as vice president. The third section will examine specific instances of Bush’s reported influence as vice president: relations with the Soviet Union, foreign leaders and U.S. military force, and, finally, the Iran-Contra affair. This case study concludes by re-examining the different factors that contributed to vice presidential influence in light of Bush’s influence on these specific issues.

I. Overview of George H.W. Bush and his Vice Presidency

Bush's Background

Born in 1924, George H. W. Bush was the scion of a prominent Eastern establishment family. His father, Prescott Bush, had been a U.S. senator from Connecticut. In 1948, George H. W. Bush, as a decorated World War II aviator and Yale graduate, moved to Texas and was successful in the oil business. His political career began in 1963 as chair of the Harris County (TX) GOP. Bush had substantial success building the party organization in Harris County (much of which is occupied by the city of Houston). In 1964, Bush, only 39 years old, was the GOP candidate for the Senate, and, although he lost, it was the strongest performance of any Republican candidate in a statewide election up to that point. In 1966, Bush was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he was appointed to the powerful Ways and Means committee and re-elected in 1968. He lost a race for U.S. Senate in 1970. At this point, Bush was appointed to a series of posts that led later commentators to refer to him as having “the best resume in Washington.” In 1970, President Nixon appointed Bush to serve as the Ambassador to the United Nations, where he served for almost two years. After Nixon’s 1972 re-election, Bush chaired the Republican National Committee for almost two years. When Nixon resigned, Bush was on President Ford’s short list for the vice presidency. Rockefeller, however, was selected, and Ford appointed Bush as the chief of the liaison office with the People’s Republic of China. Just over a year later, in early 1976, Bush returned to Washington when Ford asked him to serve as Director of Central Intelligence (DCI). These positions varied in the challenges they presented. With Henry Kissinger dominating U.S. foreign policy, the U.N. ambassadorship and the chief liaison to Beijing positions were not major roles. However, Bush chaired the RNC during the Watergate scandal, placing him in a difficult position of extensive damage control. When Bush became DCI, the CIA was under intense Congressional scrutiny, again requiring Bush’s damage control skills.¹ All of these positions gave Bush the opportunity to acquire valuable experience and contacts within the U.S. and internationally that would serve him well throughout his career.²

Bush's Selection as Vice President and the 1980 Election Campaign

In 1979, Bush ran for President. Former California Governor Ronald Reagan, who had nearly taken the nomination from President Ford in 1976, established himself as the front-runner. After an upset victory in the Iowa caucus, Bush emerged as the leading rival to Reagan. In the campaign, Bush represented the moderate wing of the Republican Party, while Reagan represented the party's ideological conservatives. At points, campaign rhetoric between the candidates became sharp. Bush called Reagan's plan to cut taxes and balance the budget "voodoo economics."

Despite the charged relations between the campaigns, Reagan offered the vice presidential nomination to his former rival. Reportedly, former President Gerald Ford was being considered for the role but had proposed a co-presidency that Reagan decided was not a viable approach.³

The general election pitted Reagan-Bush against the Carter-Mondale administration, which had wrestled with inflation, a slow economy, a hostage crisis in Iran, and a general perception of American decline at home and abroad. Reagan's optimistic message of America's potential resonated with the electorate and Reagan won 50.7 percent of the popular vote against the incumbent Carter-Mondale's 41.0 percent. Reagan-Bush won 489 electoral votes to Carter-Mondale's 49.⁴ The new President's supporters lauded the victory as the "Reagan Revolution."

Formal Aspects of the Bush Vice Presidency

Bush retained the formal perquisites that his predecessor had obtained and consulted with the outgoing vice president about how best to approach his new position. Bush had an office in the West Wing, a slightly increased staff, and access to White House meetings and paper flow. Bush and Reagan had explicitly agreed that the Carter-Mondale relationship provided a good model for Bush's role in the Reagan administration. They also continued the Carter-Mondale tradition of weekly private lunches, which Reagan and Bush usually had on Thursdays.⁵

Bush's Activity as Vice President

Bush was an extremely active vice president, serving as an administration spokesperson and emissary around the world (visiting 68 foreign countries), while also being heavily involved in Congressional relations and chairing several task forces. In *Wreath Layer or Policy Player*, Paul Kengor rates Vice President Bush's engagement in foreign policy as a 6 (on a scale of 1-6) for negotiating on behalf of the administration with foreign leaders and running foreign policy task forces.⁶ Most of this activity was carried out on the president's instruction and was not an instance of influence in which the vice president proposed or shaped a policy. However, the importance of many of these assignments highlights that Reagan did value his vice president and, as will be discussed below, some of these assignments did create opportunities for influence.

Among Bush's more notable travels was a 1983 trip to Western Europe to help persuade European leaders and publics to support the planned American deployment of Pershing II missiles. These deployments, facing opposition among many sectors of the European public, were critical to the Reagan Administration's strategy of reinforcing NATO's deterrent and pressing the Soviet Union to negotiate an arms control agreement. The controversy over the missile deployment threatened to drive a wedge between the United States and its NATO allies. Bush's trip was generally regarded as a success. *The Washington Post* ran an editorial entitled "George Did It," praising the trip.⁷

In December 1983, on a trip through Latin America, Bush told the leadership of El Salvador that, although the administration supported them in their struggle against the Communist rebellion, if their human rights record did not improve, American aid would be cut off. Several accounts credit Bush as delivering this difficult message effectively. El Salvador's human rights record improved and U.S. aid continued.⁸

As the former U.S. representative to China, Bush also played a substantial role in U.S.-China relations, making two trips as vice president in 1982 and 1985, as well as a trip as the vice presidential candidate in the fall of 1980. The Reagan administration wanted to continue to pursue closer relations with China but needed maintain the long-standing American commitment to Taiwan. Bush had relationships with top Chinese leaders and was well positioned to reassure the Chinese that continuing American arms sales to Taiwan should not interfere with the growing U.S.-China relationship.⁹

Some of Bush's international travel created opportunities for influence. Trips to Moscow to attend the funerals of a succession of Soviet leaders gave Bush an opportunity to assess the Soviet leadership. Some of Bush's international travel was self-initiated, based on his assessments of U.S. relations and opportunities. These instances will be discussed in more detail below.

Although Mondale counseled against vice presidents taking line assignments, Bush did take on several line assignments on behalf of the president. On the domestic side, Bush was chairman of the Task Force on Regulatory Relief, which oversaw the administration's efforts to reduce government regulation. Next to cutting taxes and reducing government spending, deregulation was a central component of Reagan's domestic agenda. This assignment was an important opportunity for Bush to demonstrate his commitment to Reagan's agenda as well as an early demonstration of the president's confidence in the vice president.¹⁰ In the national security realm, Bush began chairing the White House crisis management unit in March 1981. Bush was assigned this role because of a feud between National Security Advisor Richard Allen and Secretary of State Alexander Haig. Traditionally, the national security advisor held this role, but Haig, who had declared himself "vicar" of foreign policy, did not trust Allen. Rather than choose between his aides, Reagan gave Bush the assignment. It was not a policy-making role, but it was a significant responsibility in the administration that placed the vice president in the center of operations and *may* have allowed him to exercise influence during crises. On several important occasions, Bush was the senior person in the crisis management center (for example, during the outbreak of Solidarity-backed unrest in Poland and during the 1983 invasion of Grenada, to be discussed in greater detail below). These assignments also allowed Bush to demonstrate his loyalty to Reagan and his agenda, which helped ameliorate the suspicion of some of Reagan's supporters.¹¹

Bush also headed the South Florida Task Force, which coordinated military and federal law enforcement in an effort to reduce the flow of drugs into South Florida, and chaired a Task Force on Terrorism, both of which will be discussed in greater detail below.

2. Overview of Bush's Influence as Vice President

Assessments of Bush's Influence as Vice President

It is difficult to assess Bush's influence in the White House. Every other vice president discussed in this work is easily classified as either influential or not. Most students of the Presidency and the decision-making process thought Bush was less influential than his precedent-setting predecessor. Dennis Ross, who served as the Bush campaign's foreign policy advisor in 1988, said that Bush had felt "underutilized" in the Reagan administration.¹² Rothkopf's assessment of Bush's role in the Reagan administration was mixed, describing Bush as not being a member of Reagan's inner circle, but as impressing many within the administration for his crisis management abilities;¹³ later, however, Rothkopf describes Bush as "an active and engaged vice president."¹⁴ Halperin and Clapp present Bush as an example of a vice president assigned increasing responsibilities by the president.¹⁵ Stephen Hess, on the other hand, described Bush as "winning high marks for his unobtrusiveness" and stated that his duties were "of the representational and ceremonial sorts that traditionally devolve on a vice president."¹⁶

These observers of the Washington policy and political scene found, at best, nominal support for the argument that Bush was an influential vice president. There are two important reasons for this apparent decline in influence. Unlike Mondale, Bush worked for a president with very clear preferences on a number of policy issues. This reduced Bush's opportunities for influence, particularly on domestic affairs.¹⁷ Bush also had greater incentives than Mondale to downplay his influence. Carter loyalists embraced Mondale at Carter's instruction, but Reagan loyalists, remembering the hard fought primary campaign, were deeply suspicious of Vice President Bush and concerned that Bush might undermine Reagan's agenda. Bush knew his vocal support for a policy would raise the ire of this faction. To win the confidence of the president and his supporters, Bush sought to appear completely loyal and downplay his own role.

However, many individuals who served in the Reagan administration (besides Bush staffers) stated that Bush was influential. Reagan's first domestic policy advisor Martin Anderson¹⁸ and Deputy Chief of Staff and long-time Reagan confidant Michael Deaver (among others) mentioned how the vice president had become close to the

president and was a valued source of advice. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, who was often on the opposite side of issues in policy debates, stated that Bush “exercised substantial influence” and “had a very big effect on the success of his Presidency.”¹⁹

Further, as discussed below, there were numerous instances throughout the Reagan administration where Bush did appear to affect administration policy or initiate new programs. Bush may not have had the influence of his predecessor and of some of his successors, but based on various accounts of the Reagan administration and on interviews with staffers from that era, it is fair to classify Bush as, at least nominally, an influential vice president.

Factors Contributing to Bush’s Influence: An Initial Analysis

The Modern Presidency

Hypothesis 1A: When the president is able to select his vice president, the vice president is more likely to exercise influence.

Reagan was free to select his vice president. There are multiple accounts of the selection process and of Reagan’s negotiations with former President Ford. According to long-time Reagan advisor Ed Meese, party leaders were urging Reagan to choose Ford and Reagan felt obligated to see if that arrangement could work. When negotiations broke down, Reagan turned to his former rival. Political calculations and party interests were factors in Reagan’s choice but ultimately the vice presidential selection was Reagan’s decision.²⁰

Although the nominee’s power to select his running mate had been well established for over two decades by 1980, the Bush vice presidency re-emphasizes the connection between the president’s power to select his running mate and the rise in vice presidential influence. Reagan’s advisors were concerned that if former President Ford were the nominee, it would be an indication that Reagan did not see himself as being ready for the presidency. Had the party leadership been able to dictate Reagan’s choice of vice president and made former President Ford the running mate, President Reagan would have had every incentive to isolate or at least de-emphasize the vice president’s role.

Hypothesis 1B: As the demands on the president have increased, the vice president will have greater opportunities to exercise influence.

The Reagan presidency unquestionably faced a number of challenges, but it is difficult to argue that its particular challenges led to increased vice presidential influence. Reagan was, in the Skowronek typology, practicing the *politics of reconstruction*: establishing a new political order in the wake of the breakdown of the previous order. Another previous such president, Andrew Jackson, had allowed his vice president to exercise influence, but that was the result of the pre-existing relationship between Jackson and Van Buren. The vice presidents of other presidents during periods of political reconstruction (Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and FDR) were not significantly influential. Other indicators of the increased difficulties facing the Reagan presidency (such as an increase in White House staff and the federal budget) do not provide strong support for this argument. The budget as a percentage of GDP did increase under Reagan and the White House staff increased modestly. Federal spending increased from about 21 percent of GDP in 1980 the year before Reagan took office to a high of nearly 23 percent in 1982. This increase did not reflect a fundamental change in the government's responsibilities. Since the end of World War II the federal budget as a percentage of GDP was almost always over 15 percent and averaged about 19 percent in the 1970s.

Reagan was nearly 70 when he entered office (the oldest person who become President), thus the presidency was a difficult personal challenge. In addition, he survived an assassination attempt early in his presidency, and had to undergo surgery to have the bullet removed. Besides much debated reports that he suffered from Alzheimer's disease as president,²¹ there were confirmed reports that Reagan was, at least at times, exhausted by the demands of office, particularly heavy foreign travel.²² While this might have created incentives to give the vice president expanded surrogate responsibilities, there is no suggestion that it increased the vice president's influence. Most descriptions of Reagan as president found that he bore the responsibilities of the office easily and did not particularly agonize over decisions. Ken Adelman, who had been head the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, described Reagan as having, "a wonderful way of making momentous decisions in a very easy manner, seemingly effortless."²³ Reagan biographer Lou Cannon wrote simply, "He enjoyed being President."²⁴

The Institutional Vice Presidency

Hypothesis 2A: Vice presidents with their own policy staff are better able to exercise influence.

The vice president's staff played a useful role that enabled Bush to play an influential role in the administration. They had standing invitations to subordinate level meetings and were expected to inform the vice president of any issues coming up for presidential decision.²⁵ Beyond the basic aspects of staff work such scheduling and keeping the vice president informed, Bush's staff built relationships that helped Bush exercise influence.

Some of these relationships will be discussed in detail in the context of specific instances of vice presidential influence. But there were several cases where vice presidential staffers built ongoing relationships with their counterparts that eased the relationships between the principals. VPNSA Don Gregg met regularly with George Shultz's chief of staff to facilitate the relationship between the vice president and the secretary of state.²⁶ Craig Fuller, who had been cabinet secretary in the first term, moved to the vice president's office in the second term. His relationships with the president's staff eased communications between the vice president and the president's staff in the second term when Bush's friend James Baker left the chief of staff position to become secretary of treasury.²⁷

However, while the vice presidential staff kept Bush informed and enabled his performance as vice president, they played a much more limited role as advocates for Bush's positions within the White House and within the inter-agency process. The Vice Presidential staff attended meetings on the vice president's behalf and often participated, but did so with care. Nancy Bearg explained, "I didn't try to be the VP— if I knew his position on something, I would say it. But you don't want to come in and have the VP have a major position. We didn't try to stake out separate positions. That should be between the president and the VP."²⁸ Her successor, Donald Gregg, echoed this, saying, "If I had something to say, I would say it. ... I was careful not to throw my weight around. I'm not sure how much weight I had."²⁹

The presence of a capable, experienced staff did not, in and of itself, make the vice president influential but through doing staff work, it gave him the capability to do so and, as will be discussed below, could help Bush create opportunities for influence.

Hypothesis 2B: Vice presidents with an office in the West Wing are better able to exercise influence.

Bush, like Mondale, had an office in the West Wing. While he made great use of the office, he was not there quite as often as his predecessor. For at least some of his time as vice president, Bush split his time between his West Wing office and his office in the Old Executive Office Building, although Donald Gregg recalls that he spent most of his time in the West Wing.³⁰ His personal assistant, Chase Untermeyer, who was stationed in the West Wing recalls:

Bush operated easily out of both the west wing and the EOB. ... He believed that what determined a vice president's clout was not his office but his personal relationship with the president. With a good relationship, a vice president could almost truly be in Baltimore and succeed. Without one, it would not matter if he had a desk and chair in the Oval Office itself.³¹

This may have been careful politics on the part of the vice president. With his friend James Baker as White House chief of staff, Bush was less worried about being cut off from the informal policy process. Bush's decision to be a lower-key presence in the West Wing reduced accusations from Reagan's staunchest supporters that the vice president was manipulating policy. While the West Wing office remained useful, it was not all-important for the vice president to exercise influence.

Hypothesis 2C: Vice presidents with regular access to the president, and with access to White House meetings and paper-flow for themselves and their staff, are better able to exercise influence.

Bush, like Mondale, had regular lunches with the President as well as access to the White House paper flow and meetings and to the President himself.

According to Bush's personal aide, Chase Untermeyer, initially Bush prepared for the weekly luncheon as he would a meeting. The Vice President's staff prepared background information about key issues. Ultimately, this practice ceased, and the meetings became more casual and personal. In describing the personal relations between the President and Vice President, Untermeyer stated:

Bush approached the relationship with Ronald Reagan the way he would any other person, with great desire to make a friend, and he found in Ronald Reagan somebody who himself valued friendships and good relations, so they hit it off splendidly.³²

In light of the lingering hard feelings from the 1980 presidential primary and the suspicions Reagan's followers had of Bush, this relationship building was extremely useful and at least facilitated Bush's efforts to influence Reagan. National Security Advisor Bud McFarlane recalled that Bush could see the president whenever he wished, although he did so sparingly and that Reagan actively sought to include Bush, inviting him to join him for the national security briefing.³³ According to Reagan biographer Lou Cannon, Bush was one of very few top officials, even cabinet members, who could regularly meet with Reagan alone.³⁴ Bush used his walk-in privileges carefully, but he did use them.³⁵ Nancy Bearg recalls bringing a news article to the vice president, who took it "out of my hand and took it right to the President."³⁶

Regular access to the President was apparently critical to Vice President Bush's influence. Besides the obvious point that it is difficult to influence the President without regular access to the President, the weekly lunches allowed Reagan and Bush to develop a warm personal relationship. Bush's access to White House meetings and paper-flow ensured that when he met the President he had something relevant to say.

Hypothesis 2D: Vice presidents who foster allies on the president's staff, exercise "hidden hand" influence, and avoid publicity for their policy preferences are better able to exercise influence.

Mondale was careful not to tout his influence in the Carter White House, but Bush may have gone to even greater lengths to conceal his influence. Fuller, while granting that Bush had extensive quiet influence explained, "[T]his is terrible for historians and oral history, because of a lot of it we didn't see." However, Fuller went on to explain that Bush posed seminal questions in meetings, not intending to impose his agenda, but rather to clarify the implications of policies.³⁷ Michael Deaver echoed this observation:

I think Bush was the only guy that I really think, besides Nancy, including me, that he thought he could talk to securely. He used Bush as a sounding board. They had that lunch every week, and never once was there ever a word out of any of those lunches.³⁸

Bush explained his practice of speaking only in private settings, "because you don't want to put the President on the spot or make him choose between the Vice President and two Cabinet officers."³⁹ In that same interview, Bush showed his reticence to take credit for any policy or influence, stating, when asked if he had advised Reagan about Secretary of State Haig's 1981 trip to China, "Well, who I talk to about what, again, is privileged. But I do feel that I know something about it and I've had plenty of opportunity to discuss my views with the President and the Secretary and others on that question."

Discretion was only one of the vice presidential strategies outlined by Light.⁴⁰ Bush also sought allies in Reagan's circle. He worked closely with long-time Bush advisor Michael Deaver and also built a relationship with the first lady, who was influential in the administration.⁴¹ Bush also established a strong working relationship with the secretary of state (which was facilitated by his VPNSA). In his second term as vice president, after his close friend Jim Baker had left the chief of staff position, Bush hired Cabinet Secretary Craig Fuller as his chief of staff. Fuller was a long-time Reagan supporter and his connections to the White House staff helped facilitate the vice president's relationship.

But Bush also employed defensive strategies, picking his policy interventions with care. Bush reportedly refused David Stockman's request to persuade the president to cut the deficit.⁴² The situation with Stockman highlighted Bush's prudence in using his access to the president. Cutting taxes and shrinking government was a central commitment for Reagan and a core ideological belief. Bush recognized that this was not an area where Reagan was amenable to influence and that any efforts at persuasion on his part would only serve his ideological opponents within the White House.

No incident better illustrates Bush's careful, low-key approach to the vice presidency than his behavior after the assassination attempt on President Reagan, which helped reduce suspicions Reagan's followers had of the vice president's loyalty.

On March 30, 1981, only three weeks into the Reagan administration, an unbalanced young man, John Hinckley Jr., fired five rounds at the President. One struck the President in the side and came to rest only an inch from his heart.⁴³

When Vice President Bush was notified he was in Air Force 2 heading to Texas. Details were incomplete, both because the communications channels to the vice president's plane were not secure and because the president's status was uncertain. Air Force 2 immediately changed course for Washington, DC.

After the president's motorcade got underway, the secret service realized Reagan was hit. Reagan was rushed to George Washington University Hospital and put into surgery. At the White House, when the administration spokesman could not answer the question of "Who's running the government right now?," Secretary of State Alexander Haig ran to the press room and on national television declared, "As of now, I am in control here, in the White House, pending the return of the vice president." Haig's statement raised a number of constitutional issues regarding the line of succession and sparked public concern that the nation's leadership was in disarray.

The vice president, in contrast, demonstrated a low-key competence. After landing at Andrews Air Force Base, the Secret Service pressed Bush to helicopter to the White House. Bush refused and instead travelled by motorcade, telling an assistant, "[O]nly the President lands on the South Lawn."

The day after the shooting, Bush met with the cabinet and the NSC but sat in his usual place and not in the president's seat. Nancy Bearg, Bush's first VPNSA, recalls

how before a visit to Reagan in the hospital, Bush asked for a top-secret cover sheet. When Bush went to see the president, he was seen carrying a document with a top-secret cover. Bearg did not know what the document was, but explained that seeing the vice president take top-secret material to the president reassured the American people that the president was in charge. Bush's prudence during this crisis was, according to Bearg, not calculated, but rather the vice president trying to help during a difficult time.⁴⁴ Bush's behavior during the assassination attempt and Reagan's recovery reassured Reagan's supporters of his loyalty and improved his standing in the White House. This careful, discrete approach served Bush well throughout his vice presidency.

Bush's discretion as vice president helped him to gain the President's trust, without which influence is not possible. But it also helped the vice president navigate a White House in which there were many advisors who were suspicious of Bush.

Outsiders & Insiders

Hypothesis 3A: Outsider presidents are more likely to select their running mates on the basis of personal and political compatibility, which increases the likelihood that the president will include them as a top-level advisor.

In the accounts of Bush's selection as Reagan's running mate, no mention is made of Bush's experience. Most of the discussions of Bush's joining the ticket involved his political utility as a bridge to Republican moderates and to the states of the northeast.⁴⁵ Reagan's rejection of a Ford vice presidency emphasizes that bringing additional experience to the ticket was not necessarily Reagan's priority.⁴⁶

Hypothesis 3B: Outsider presidents are more likely to be inexperienced in areas such as national security affairs and not have strong national security teams, thus creating opportunities for vice presidential influence.

While it does not appear that Reagan considered Bush's resume in selecting him as vice president, Bush's vast experience with international affairs certainly helped Bush develop

an influential role in the Reagan administration. Reagan's third national security advisor Robert "Bud" McFarlane explained, "It is not often appreciated that Reagan had enormous respect for and confidence in Bush— it was more than little things. Reagan asked Bush to join him at the daily national security briefing. He felt strongly that Bush had a far greater depth in foreign affairs than Reagan did. You saw that acknowledged by his putting Bush in charge of the NSC's Special Situations Group."⁴⁷

Nancy Bearg, the first VPNSA, explained that Bush's knowledge— of foreign governments, the U.S. intelligence community, and the UN— was an enormous resource for the administration. For example, she explained, "If there were to be covert operations, he could provide a realistic view of how something might work."⁴⁸

One testament to Reagan's appreciation of Bush's skills was giving Bush oversight of key national security and international relations assignments when the administration's efforts bogged down. Several of these events occurred in the first year of Reagan's presidency, when the disorder of the Reagan administration's National Security Council was exacerbated by a difficult relationship between the White House and Secretary of State Alexander Haig as well as the typical challenges of new administration finding its footing.⁴⁹ Bush's assignment to chair the Special Situations Group (the NSC's crisis management unit) was perhaps the most significant of these assignments, but the vice president also oversaw preparations for the president's first economic summit in 1981 and played a key role in shepherding through Congress the approval of a planned sale of Airborne Warning and Command Systems (AWACS) to Saudi Arabia. Both of these were support roles, but, like the Special Situations Group, they placed Bush at the center of an issue and at least created the opportunity to exercise influence.

In the case of the economic summit, Bush's first VPNSA, Nancy Bearg, explained that Reagan had been blind-sided by a question about acid rain in Canada. At the time, there was disarray in the White House national security process⁵⁰, so to ensure that Reagan was adequately prepared for the 1981 G-7 summit, Bush was given oversight of the preparation. While it was effectively a staffing role, Bush had the opportunity to introduce issues that he thought were significant to the agenda.⁵¹

Bush was an important public advocate and administration lobbyist for the sale of AWACS, highly sophisticated aircraft that could detect and track hundreds of planes over

hundreds of miles, to Saudi Arabia.⁵² Israel's supporters vigorously opposed the sale and the administration effort was in jeopardy. Bush reportedly urged the president to continue to press for the sale and also suggested that the president get personally involved in lobbying, in order to prevent the sale from being defeated in Congress.⁵³ While this was not a major episode of vice presidential influence, it appears that Bush at least *bolstered* the president and encouraged him to pursue a desired policy.⁵⁴

Paul Light, who has written extensively on both the president's agenda and the vice presidency, observed that, as presidents and their staff develop expertise, policy vacuums that vice presidents can fill tend to close.⁵⁵ However, in 1986 Bush chaired a task force on terrorism when the issue was causing extreme difficulties for the administration, (to be discussed in greater detail below). The fact that Bush was given this task when Reagan was in his second term suggests that Bush's expertise on national security continued to be valued and useful throughout the Reagan administration.

Hypothesis 3C: Outsider presidents are more likely to seek their vice presidents' input in the appointments process, which increases the vice president's opportunities for influence.

As discussed in the previous case study, there are two aspects to vice presidential input in the appointments process—across the bureaucracy overall and within the White House. While Bush was engaged with the broad transition process,⁵⁶ he did not press to have friends and allies receive positions. Bush's only close friend in the cabinet was the Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige. While a number of Bush supporters were placed in jobs in the Commerce department, they were not a source of influence for the vice president.⁵⁷

Within the White House staff, Bush allies received prominent roles. Reagan and Bush did not have the same level of integration as Carter and Mondale. Reagan did not place aides in key positions to facilitate vice presidential engagement as Carter had. The same effect was achieved, however when Reagan's chose Bush's former campaign manager James Baker as chief of staff. This appointment was not made in order to facilitate Bush's role in the administration. Baker was appointed because of his previous

Washington experience and his formidable political and organizational skills, which Reagan (and his wife) believed his closest staffers lacked.⁵⁸ Baker's appointment may have exacerbated the primary challenge Bush faced in achieving influence in the Reagan administration. When Reagan showed flexibility on an issue, the Reagan loyalists worried that the President was falling under the influence of the moderate Bush-Baker crowd and would press to "let Reagan be Reagan."⁵⁹

Overall Baker's appointment played an important role in Bush's vice presidency. Baker's central White House role ensured that Vice President Bush was not boxed out of policy. In the words of White House aide Craig Fuller, who later served as the Vice President's chief of staff:

It helped in another way, which I don't know that they thought much about: it helped enormously to create a comfort factor with George Bush. ... It created an element of trust and a line of absolutely confidential communication between the chief of staff, the vice president, and the president. There was no one else in the White House who could have done that. Bush wouldn't have trusted anyone else, so Baker was a perfect fit.⁶⁰

Fuller, who originally served as the assistant for cabinet affairs described how Baker would instruct him to meet with the vice president and answer whatever questions the vice president had.⁶¹ In another interview, Fuller explained that Reagan was committed to making his vice president a full partner, but without Jim Baker as chief of staff, that might not have been a priority.⁶² According to National Security Advisor Bud McFarlane, Baker would serve as an alternate conduit to the president for Bush's view, allowing Bush to make his views known to the president without constantly appearing in the Oval Office himself.⁶³ Baker may have also played a role in Bush receiving certain assignments, such as overseeing the planning for the G-7 summit.⁶⁴ With Baker as chief of staff, Bush did not have to worry about being out of the loop; his close ally oversaw the paper flow. Baker's role in Bush's vice presidency underlines how insider vice presidents may have staffers and allies with essential skills and experience that outsider presidents find essential to governing which can in turn enable vice presidential influence.

3. Bush's Influence on Specific Issues

The section above was an overview of how different factors contributed to Bush's influence as vice president. This section studies specific issues in which the vice president was believed to have exercised influence or failed to do so. It should be emphasized that the instances discussed here *do not* represent the complete universe of issues on which the vice president had influence, or even a representative sample. That information is not available since most vice presidential influence is exercised privately in conversations between the president and vice president. The point of this exercise is to look at a number of issues in which information is available in order to develop a deeper understanding of *how* the vice president exercised influence.

The first issue discussed will be what was the dominant foreign policy issue of the Cold War—U.S.-Soviet relations, including the U.S. response to events in Poland. This was not one simple act of influence, but rather a series of decisions in which the vice president bolstered the president, provided critical advice about a policy's trajectory or proposed a new policy. The second set of issues studied will be on the president's use of force. The Reagan administration deployed U.S. troops to Grenada and Lebanon, and nearly did so in Panama towards the end of Reagan's term in office. In each of these cases, the vice president was a central figure in the operation.

On several occasions, Bush provided Reagan with advice on dealing with foreign leaders and diplomacy. Several of these instances will be discussed in the next section. This will be followed by a discussion of Bush's role in line assignments in which he exercised influence: the South Florida Task Force, the Narcotics Task Force and the Task Force on Combatting Terrorism. This will be followed by an examination of the Iran-Contra scandal in which Bush's role is less clear.

The Cold War

For over three decades, the United States and the Soviet Union were locked in a worldwide conflict with geopolitical, economic, and ideological components that was the

dominant national security issue for American presidents after World War II. President Reagan took office promising to restore American strength vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and personally viewed the Soviet communist ideology as morally abhorrent, referring to the Soviet Union as “the evil empire.” At the same time, Reagan was deeply concerned about the prospect of nuclear war and sought to reduce its likelihood. Reagan is generally viewed as a central player in, if not the architect of, the end of the Cold War. The full story the Reagan administration and the Cold War is beyond the scope of this study. There were several critical points where evidence suggests that Vice President Bush played an influential role (he also played an important role as the administration’s messenger). Below is a discussion of two decisions around Poland, a Soviet satellite whose rebellion undermined the Soviet power. After these two specific incidents is a discussion of Bush’s role in U.S.-Soviet diplomacy. These situations highlight how different variables enable vice presidential influence.

Sanctioning Poland

In the late 1970s, the economic situation in Poland, a Soviet satellite state, was deteriorating. Polish workers organized (establishing the Solidarity movement), went on strike, and began demanding reforms. These strikes became a threat to Poland’s communist regime and ultimately to the Soviet Union itself. As the Reagan administration came into office, the Polish situation was one of many international challenges it faced. Reagan hoped to pursue a harder line against the Soviet Union and sympathized with Polish aspirations. But there were concerns that the Soviets might invade Poland or that the situation could escalate into a super-power confrontation.

On December 13, 1981, the Polish military declared martial law, at least in part to forestall a Soviet invasion. This event was the first use of the crisis management system that President Reagan had established that spring under Vice President Bush’s direction. Chairing the Special Situation Group placed Bush in the center of the information flow on the Polish crisis. The group included the secretaries of state and defense, top White House and national security council officials, the director of the CIA, and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and developed reports and options that were then presented to the president.⁶⁵ Highlighting Bush’s role as crisis manager, in the Christmas-New Year’s

period of 1981-82, while many Washington officials went on vacation (including the president), Bush cancelled a planned trip in order to monitor the situation in Poland.⁶⁶ In addition, Bush had met with Polish leaders several times to discuss aid packages in April and December 1981.⁶⁷

Bush was generally careful about taking positions or speaking out in NSC meetings, but declassified NSC minutes, show the vice president taking an active role. In a December 15, 1981 working lunch, Vatican Secretary Cardinal Casaroli discussed the situation in Poland with the president, vice president, and secretary of state. Bush asked, “Is there anything we should be doing now?”⁶⁸

In the NSC meetings, Bush took a strong position urging action on Poland. In a December 21, 1981 meeting Bush stated:

I have thought a lot about this problem over the weekend. I agree with the President that we are at a real turning point. I believe the President should really identify in a speech with Walesa and the Polish Ambassador. I really feel that—particularly at this Christmas time—the country is waiting for a more forward position. This is not a political matter but one of world leadership.⁶⁹

Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and Secretary of Commerce Malcolm Baldrige supported Bush’s argument. When Secretary of State Alexander Haig emphasized the importance of bringing American allies on board and carefully determining the specifics of American actions, Bush replied:

I agree with Don [Regan] and Al [Haig]. We should take the time to consult, but giving a speech now is essential. What is missing is moral leadership. You state how strongly you feel about Walesa—about Solidarity—about the Polish Ambassador and the Polish people. You can speak in generalities without spelling out details. We don’t want to delay. We are at an emotional turning point. We can do the speech but leave our options open. Identify with the turn in freedom.

Later he reiterated that point, saying, “I don’t see why the speech needs to wait.... We need to exert moral leadership.”⁷⁰

Follow-up meetings show Bush playing in active role discussing the tone and content of the President's speech as well as communications to Soviet and Polish leaders, including offering them a way out of the crisis.⁷¹ However, these documents may not show the full picture of Bush's involvement, since, as day-to-day crisis manager, Bush was regularly briefing the president. In that context, he may also have been presenting policy options and advising the president about the administration's response.

Reagan's Christmas Eve speech was a stark warning to the Soviets not to interfere in Poland and also, as Bush had suggested, a moral call to support the Polish people. The speech also announced economic sanctions on the Polish government and aid programs to the Polish people. On December 29, 1981, President Reagan placed sanctions on the Soviet Union. The pressure on the Soviet and Polish governments, combined with Western support for Poland's Solidarity movement, was an important factor in undermining Soviet strength.

It is difficult to establish exactly what Bush's role was in the decision-making around the crisis in Poland. At least one account credits Bush with persuading the president to use economic sanctions against Poland and the Soviet Union.⁷² However, given Reagan's own strong feelings about the Soviet Union, it is most likely that Bush *bolstered* the President's resolve and affected the specifics of the policy and how they were presented, shaping the policy *trajectory*. Bush's effect on policies towards the Polish crisis highlights several patterns of vice presidential influence. First, Bush's regular access to the President allowed him to develop a trusting relationship with Reagan. Reagan was then comfortable enough with his vice president to give him the crisis management assignment, which placed Bush in the center of the information flow, guaranteeing he had access to all of the needed information. Bush's role in advising the president during the Poland crisis also highlights how Reagan, who had limited experience with international affairs, relied on Bush's expertise. There was little disagreement at NSC meetings that the crisis in Poland represented an important opportunity to pressure the Soviet Union. The discussion was how best to take advantage of the opportunity, while not sparking to a super-power showdown. Bush's comments at these meetings frequently focused on policy specifics, how best to achieve these ends. This was highlighted in Bush's question to Cardinal Casaroli as the crisis began, but

continued as the vice president discussed the specifics of how to address the issue in the UN⁷³, communicate U.S. policy to the Soviets,⁷⁴ or frame the President's speech.⁷⁵ Finally, Bush's placement in the crisis management position is an interesting case of the vice president filling a critical staff role. In other administrations, insider vice presidents may have staffers and allies that can fill crucial staff functions for the president. The Reagan administration had difficulty establishing an orderly national security process until well into its second term. In this situation, Bush personally filled a crucial national security function.

Poland remained on the vice president's agenda. In 1987, Poland was still suffering under U.S. economic sanctions and still oppressing the Solidarity movement. According to his second term chief of staff, Craig Fuller, the vice president felt that Poland was on the cusp of change and a visit from a high-level U.S. official might help expedite this change and move Poland away from the Soviet Union. Fuller says that Bush urged Reagan to visit Poland, but Reagan chose not to and encouraged Bush to make the trip.⁷⁶ In September 1987, Bush made a trip to Poland in which he made a dramatic appearance on a church balcony with the leader of the banned Solidarity Movement and gave an uncensored speech on state-run Polish television calling for greater freedom. He also conducted quiet diplomacy, telling the Polish government that reforms could result in the U.S. lifting sanctions.⁷⁷ This instance of vice presidential *initiative* highlights Bush's knowledge of international affairs and ability to see an opportunity for an effective visit. It also highlights the fundamental importance of vice presidential access to the President, without which influence is impossible and the importance of staff support. Finally, Reagan's choice to send Bush rather than go himself may have reflected Reagan's own declining energy as the weight of almost seven years in the White House took its toll.

Engaging the Soviets

Policy towards the Soviet Union was the dominant foreign policy/national security issue during the Reagan era. A full description of Reagan's approach to the Soviet Union would require many volumes and is far beyond the scope of this study. Briefly, Reagan's

key advisors unanimously sought to re-establish U.S. strength vis-à-vis the Soviet Union through increased defense spending and more assertive statecraft. The disagreement was over the ultimate goals of an improved American position. Secretary of State George Shultz was generally viewed as the leader of the camp pressing for assertive diplomacy to capitalize on the improved American position. Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger preferred to continue to increase pressure on the Soviet Union. Bush, along with chief of staff James Baker and National Security Advisor Bud McFarlane, tended to support Shultz.⁷⁸

In his first term, Reagan emphasized a hardline anti-Communist approach. Towards the end of his first term and into his second term, the president was more open to dialogue and ultimately arms control agreements with the Soviet Union. There were many reasons for this shift including George Shultz becoming secretary of state, Nancy Reagan's desire that her husband not be seen as a "war-monger," Reagan's own desire for a more peaceful world, and the improved American position internationally.

There were many components and inputs to Reagan's policy, but Vice President Bush appears to have played a significant role. According to Jack Matlock, who organized the meetings, the Vice President was an active participant in a Saturday breakfast at the State Department that discussed U.S.-Soviet relations in addition to participating in NSC meetings.⁷⁹ Vice President Bush approached the president directly and through his White House allies, Jim Baker and Michael Deaver. NSA Bud McFarlane characterized Bush's position towards the end of the first term as, "Mr. President, now that you've restored our strength, now you have the opportunity to codify certain rules to contain Soviet expansionism and if I can help you I'd be glad to."⁸⁰

On January 16, 1984, Reagan gave a speech in which he stated that the United States would engage in a dialogue with the Soviets. Bush had been urging Reagan to pursue this course in their private lunches. In March 1984, Bush urged Reagan to send former national security advisor Brent Scowcroft to Moscow with a letter from Reagan in order to open up a new channel with the Soviets. Although the mission was unsuccessful, it highlighted Bush's influence in encouraging the administration to pursue new avenues of communication with Moscow.⁸¹

Bush developed his own sources of information on the Soviet Union. One important source was Bush's attendance at the funerals of three Soviet leaders. On each trip, Bush met with the incoming leadership on each trip and reported back to Reagan on their willingness to negotiate.⁸²

The Vice President had another unique channel into Soviet affairs. Donald Gregg, the VPNSA, had developed connections with the Finnish Embassy in Washington (the relationship began on the tennis court). Gregg, a former CIA case officer, was impressed with the Finns' insight into Soviet affairs and urged the vice president to visit Finland. Helsinki was added to a 1983 swing through the Nordic states and Bush established a relationship with Finland's President Koivisto. The Finns had noted the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev in the early 1980s as the Soviet Union cycled through a series of aging leaders and told Bush that he was someone to watch and that when he came to power there would be a "different Soviet Union." They established a regular communications channel between the Vice President's office and the office of the Finnish President. Gregg stated, "[W]e certainly had gotten more out of the Finns about what was going on in the Soviet Union than anybody else."⁸³ Bush took this information seriously and sought to arrange a private and confidential meeting with Gorbachev in Geneva. The Soviet ambassador was surprised at this request as Gorbachev was the relatively little-known Politburo chief for ideology and former head of agriculture.⁸⁴ Although the meeting was not arranged (Bush first met with Gorbachev after the funeral of his predecessor Konstantin Chernenko), Bush made use of his information on Soviet affairs.⁸⁵ Bush reported back to Reagan that Gorbachev was different from previous Soviet leaders and reinforced Margaret Thatcher's message that Gorbachev was a man the Americans could do business with.⁸⁶

Bush's role in *bolstering* Reagan's outreach to the Soviet Union and probably shaping the *trajectory* of Reagan's approach obviously required regular access to the president and the White House policy process, allies on the White House staff, and Bush's own expertise on international affairs. But this specific case highlights the important role White House staff can play in vice presidential influence. VPNSA Donald Gregg met regularly with his counterpart at the State Department to ensure that the two principals were not working at cross-purposes. But perhaps most significantly, it was

Gregg who made it possible for the vice president to develop an independent line into Soviet affairs, which allowed the vice president to provide specific, detailed advice about how to approach the Soviet Union. Ultimately the Reagan administration developed a new relationship with the Soviet Union and, as president, George Bush working with Mikhail Gorbachev are generally credited with bringing the Cold War to an end.⁸⁷

Use of Force

Grenada Invasion

In October 1983, a dissident faction of Grenada's ruling New Jewel Movement executed the Prime Minister and declared the country under the control of the Revolutionary Military Council. The New Jewel Movement had warm relations with Cuba's Fidel Castro and relations with the United States had been strained. After the coup, Eugenia Charles, prime minister of the nearby island of Dominica, and chair of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) asked Washington to intervene in Grenada, fearing that the radicals on Grenada would spur violent activity on other Caribbean islands. The Reagan administration was concerned about expanding Soviet and Cuban influence in Central America and the Caribbean and was moved by Prime Minister Charles's request. In addition, hundreds of Americans attended a medical college on the island and the United States was concerned that they could become hostages. On October 25, 1983, the United States invaded Grenada, removing the government.

Bush was a strong supporter of this operation and was intimately involved in the operation as chair of the administration's crisis management team. Bush was very concerned that an airport being built on Grenada would allow the Soviets and Cubans to operate more freely in the Eastern Caribbean.⁸⁸ When the crisis reached a head, the president, national security advisor, and secretary of state were golfing in Augusta, Georgia. According to then National Security Advisor Bud McFarlane, Bush had taken the call from Prime Minister Charles requesting U.S. action in Grenada and convened the Special Situations Group to consider options including an invasion. After the initial briefing, Reagan asked for the vice president's opinion. After they spoke, the president

approved Bush's recommendation for an invasion, but decided to remain in Augusta so as not to reveal the planned invasion. McFarlane noted that Reagan had confidence in Bush's ability to oversee the operation and coordinate between the various branches of government that would be involved.⁸⁹ Oliver North, an NSC staffer at the time, called George Bush "one of the unsung heroes of the whole thing."⁹⁰

According to Secretary of State George Shultz, on the 3:35 a.m. conference call in which the final order was given, the vice president proposed obtaining Venezuelan support for the operation so that the international force was not entirely English-speaking. Bush was concerned that this might be seen negatively in Latin America. Reagan rejected the suggestion because he feared it would delay the operation.⁹¹ However, the vice president's role in planning and organizing the operation appear to have been substantial. It is unclear exactly what role the vice president played in influencing the president to invade Grenada. He may have *bolstered* the president (although according to Secretary of State George Shultz, Reagan needed little encouragement)⁹² and, as the effective director of the operation, he almost certainly played a role in shaping the *trajectory* of the operation. The specific advice the vice president gave the president about including Venezuela in the operation reflects Bush's expertise on international affairs and considering multiple aspects of an issue. This episode of vice presidential influence required the President's trust in the vice president both for his loyalty and for his capability as well as the vice president's expertise in national security affairs.

Lebanon

In an exception to his typical reticence, Bush was outspoken on the issue of withdrawing U.S. marines from Beirut. In 1982, the United States contributed a component of a multinational force to stabilize Lebanon, which was mired in a civil war and had been invaded by Israel. The U.S. contingent became increasingly drawn into the conflict. On October 23, 1983, a truck bomb struck a U.S. marines barracks, killing 241 men. On the same day, another truck bomb struck the French unit, killing 58 men. Secretary of State George Shultz felt strongly that the United States must maintain its commitment to stabilizing Lebanon and that a U.S. withdrawal would send the world the message that

the United States lacked staying power. However, the vice president strongly advocated for removing U.S. forces and convened a series of meetings of the crisis-management group to speed up the departure. In his memoirs, Shultz wrote, “President Reagan was kept duly informed. I worked my telephones hard, but to no avail. I could see that the President was losing heart.”⁹³

This example of vice presidential influence was a combination of *bolstering* the president and probably an example of the vice president shifting the *trajectory* of a decision. Bush pressed for the marines to leave Lebanon as soon as possible. His position in the crisis management group made him well positioned to advocate for this shift, as did the president's confidence in the vice president. He was also allied with the secretary of defense who did not want the U.S. military deployed in ambiguous situations.

Noriega

Towards the end of the Reagan administration, with Bush running for president, Bush's relationship with Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega created a wedge between the president and vice president. Bush advocated, both within the administration and publicly, for the use of force to remove Noriega from power. When Reagan insisted on seeking a diplomatic solution, it created the only situation in which Bush explicitly and openly spoke out against an administration policy.

Bush initially came into contact with Noriega when he was the director of central intelligence. In the Reagan administration, Noriega was a useful asset who covertly provided arms for the administration's efforts to stymie communist infiltration in Central America. Noriega was also heavily involved in drug trafficking and ruled Panama with brutal force. In 1988, during the height of the campaign, the issue came to a head. The administration had been trying to induce Noriega to step down and transition Panama to civilian rule. However, federal prosecutors in Miami indicted Noriega on February 4, 1988—just before the Iowa primary. The Reagan administration continued its negotiations for Noriega to step down. Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz felt the indictment was an important bargaining chip that could be quashed if Noriega left power. However, the Noriega situation was becoming a major campaign issue.⁹⁴ For

Bush, matters were not helped either by his past experience at the CIA (which reputedly had had Noriega on payroll) or by his former chief of staff, Daniel Murphy, traveling to Panama and meeting Noriega in his role as a consultant for private businessmen.⁹⁵

In his memoirs, George Shultz described the internal conflict over within the White House over negotiations with Noriega. Within the administration, Bush pressed hard to not make a deal with Noriega in which the indictment would be quashed. Secretary of Treasury Jim Baker, Bush's long-time friend and ally, echoed Bush's arguments. Bush argued that doing so would send the wrong message to drug dealers and demoralize the justice department. He had a number of allies in this argument, including Attorney General Meese. Reagan, supported by Shultz, remained adamant that a deal in which the indictment was quashed was the best possible way to remove Noriega without using American military force. According to Shultz, Reagan told the vice president that he would publicly state that the vice president had opposed the deal.⁹⁶

Bush openly distanced himself with the effort to negotiate with Noriega. Delivering a speech at the Los Angeles Police Academy, Bush stated that as president he would not "bargain with drug dealers ... whether they're on U.S. or foreign soil." The front-page story in *The Washington Post* reporting on the speech was headlined, "Bush Splits With Reagan on Handling of Noriega; He Would Not 'Bargain With Drug Dealers.'"⁹⁷ The Vice President's chief of staff, Craig Fuller, emphasized this split: "The administration sources who have suggested that the vice president favors ending the negotiations and bringing the envoy back to Washington are essentially correct."⁹⁸

Splitting with the administration was not easy. The day before his statement opposing a deal with Noriega, Bush told reporters, "I'm part of the administration and thus can't separate myself and have no intention of doing so on this question."⁹⁹

Ultimately, the negotiations broke down when Noriega rejected the American offer, in great part because he felt that stepping down would be abandoning his supporters in the Panama Defense Force. As President, Bush would send U.S. forces into Panama to remove Noriega from power.

In some regards, the Noriega situation should have been an ideal instance for vice presidential influence. Bush had strong support from important allies, including Ed Meese and Jim Baker. This episode is a reminder of the limits of vice presidential

influence. Reagan was not *persuaded* by Bush (despite Reagan's respect for Bush's expertise in international affairs and personal regard for him) and saw the negotiations as an opportunity to improve the situation in Panama through diplomacy. Because of this fundamental divergence of interests, Bush took the unprecedented (for him) step of openly disagreeing with the administration in which he served. It was an uncharacteristic move for Vice President Bush that could only have occurred in the twilight of the Reagan administration as Bush sought the presidency in his own right.

Personal Diplomacy

In the 1980s, trade relations with Japan were a major political issue. Over the previous decade, Japan had emerged as an economic powerhouse and Japanese exports to the United States were competing with American-made goods in the United States. This was particularly notable in the automobile industry, where smaller more fuel-efficient Japanese cars were suddenly in great demand after the rise in energy prices in the 1970s. At the same time, the Japanese government had extensive restrictions on imports, leading to a persistent American trade deficit with Japan. These issues had domestic political implications and the vice president played a role in the working on them. Reagan was generally committed to free trade. However, the difficulties of the United States automobile industry were leading to increasing domestic pressures. The chair and ranking members of the senate trade subcommittee had introduced a bill to impose quotas on Japanese car imports. Reagan's own advisors were divided between cabinet members with links to the auto industry such as the secretaries of commerce and transportation and economic advisors who opposed special treatment of particular industries.¹⁰⁰ Beyond the dangers of economic conflict, Japan was important to the administration geopolitically. Japan was the most important U.S. ally in East Asia and the United States had significant military bases in Japan. A politically debilitating trade conflict with such an important ally would have been disastrous for the Reagan administration's foreign policy objectives.

In a March 19, 1981 Cabinet meeting on the auto industry and US imports of Japanese automobiles, Bush recommended that the administration suggest to the Japanese

government that they adopt voluntary restrictions on their exports without a public American request. This was the approach that was adopted and it defused a potential high-profile conflict.¹⁰¹ In his published diary Reagan wrote: “The V.P. summed it up nicely.” Reagan directed Haig to contact Ambassador Mansfield and explain the situation to the Japanese prime minister.¹⁰²

This was not the only instance in which Vice President Bush proposed that he conduct personal diplomacy. In June of 1981, the French Socialist party won an overwhelming election victory. Reagan, as biographer Lou Cannon notes, often used the terms Socialist and Communist interchangeably.¹⁰³ The administration was suspicious and unsure of how to deal with this development in a close ally. Bush proposed a vice presidential visit to France to meet the newly elected President Mitterrand. A few days before the visit, the Mitterrand asked the Communist Party to join the coalition, which led to even greater American suspicions of the new French government. According to VPNSA Bearg, there was some question as to whether or not the trip should be cancelled, Bearg pushed that it continue. She reports that Bush and Mitterrand had “an excellent, excellent meeting.” Mitterrand explained that he brought the Communists into his cabinet to give them a stake in the government. The Bush meeting established a warm relationship between Bush and Mitterrand that laid the groundwork for similar relations between Reagan and Mitterrand. According to Bearg, if Bush hadn’t been involved suspicions between the U.S. and France might have led to a tense relationship.¹⁰⁴

In December 1986, Bush met with Miguel de la Madrid in Baja California.¹⁰⁵ According to Bush’s chief of staff, Craig Fuller, Bush felt that US-Mexican relations were cooling and wanted to speak to Mexico’s President directly. Fuller recounts that arranging the trip took some doing as the president of Mexico cannot leave the country without the authorization of Mexico’s Congress. Fuller met with the Mexican tourism minister, who was close to de la Madrid, and they arranged for Bush to go fishing in Mexico while on vacation. Fuller recounts that Bush and de la Madrid were scheduled to meet for an hour, but the meeting went on for several hours with Bush building a relationship of trust with the president of Mexico.¹⁰⁶

Each of these instances in which Bush initiated diplomatic outreach highlight the vice president’s knowledge of how foreign governments operate and perceive the world.

These examples of vice presidential influence also emphasize the importance of vice presidential access to the president and of the need for a relationship of trust between them. To a lesser extent, these examples demonstrate the need for staff, not only for the basic logistics of travel. As chair of the administration's deregulation programs, Bush was familiar with the challenges of the U.S. auto industry and better equipped to participate in the discussion on Japanese auto exports as well as oversee the task force on Japanese import restrictions. Without capable staff, this would not have been possible. Also, the vice president's chief of staff played a role in arranging the 1986 meeting with Mexico's president.

Line Assignments

Although Walter Mondale advised against vice presidents taking line assignments, Bush did take on several formal assignments on the president's behalf. In the national security sphere, the most significant of these assignments was heading the Special Situations Group, serving as the National Security Council's crisis manager. In and of itself, this role was not influential, but, as was discussed above, it placed Bush in the center of the information flow and created opportunities for influence. There were two formal assignments in which the vice president exercised influence—the South Florida Task Force and the Task Force on Combatting Terrorism.

In the early 1980s, southern Florida was a major entry point for drugs being smuggled into the United States from Latin America. A bi-partisan group of Florida officials, including Jeb Bush, the vice president's son, approached the vice president about the issue. The vice president in turn discussed the problem with the president and the inter-agency South Florida Task Force was launched. The vice president oversaw this task force, which coordinated between several law enforcement agencies and the military to attempt to interdict drug smuggling. Bringing the military into a domestic law enforcement operation raised a number of legal and operational issues, which the vice president, who was not tied into any bureaucracy, was well placed to resolve. The program did not solve the problem of drug smuggling, but had important operational successes.¹⁰⁷ It was later expanded into the National Border Interdiction System

(NNBIS) with mixed success.¹⁰⁸ This example of vice presidential *initiative* highlights several important components of vice presidential influence. First, Vice President Bush had access to the president so that he could propose the policy. Second, Bush's knowledge of the national security process meant that he had some background knowledge about how to establish and operate the program. The vice president's staff was also important on this issue. Untermeyer reports that Bush's first chief of staff, retired Admiral Dan Murphy, played a central role in overseeing the South Florida Task Force.¹⁰⁹

The Task Force on Combatting Terrorism grew out the Reagan administration's policy disputes about how to address terrorism. President Reagan's public rhetoric took an uncompromising stance against terrorism, including a strong statement condemning terrorism in his inaugural address. The recent Iran hostage crisis had elevated the issue of terrorism to the political forefront. Some Reagan advisors took the rhetoric to imply that the appropriate response to terrorism should be American military retaliation or extensive covert operations campaigns. Other figures took more cautious approaches. The administration also suffered from bureaucratic conflicts, particularly between the FBI and CIA and between the state and defense departments. The single most significant issue was defining the circumstances under which military force would be used in response to a terror attack.

In a 1987 *SAIS Review* article, Bush explained the administration's counter-terror policy was hampered because "there were long-standing disputes within the government.... [T]he sum of them had produced snags in the policymaking process.... The president was not receiving an adequate array of options for action, and those he was getting did not enjoy sufficiently broad support within the government."¹¹⁰ This may have been an understatement. In 1982, the president ordered a bombing attack on Syria, in conjunction with the French, after the marine barracks bombing. According to NSA Bud McFarlane, the secretary of defense contacted the president directly through the White House military office (avoiding McFarlane) and told the president the attack was unwise and the president called it off.¹¹¹

The squabbling continued after the 1982 incident. In a speech at the Park Avenue Synagogue, Secretary of State George Shultz firmly supported forceful retaliation and

was worried the United States would become the “Hamlet of nations” as it debated its response to terrorism. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger was cautious about committing American military force in these complex situations, promulgating the Weinberger doctrine, which called for using military force only in defense of national interests and when clear objectives were present. Bush believed it might be necessary to use military force against terrorists but believed military responses had to be carefully targeted.¹¹²

To rectify these ongoing problems, a number of administration officials proposed a blue ribbon commission to study the issue. On July 20, 1985, President Reagan issued National Security Decision Directive 179, instructing the vice president to convene a government-wide task force on combating terrorism. The task force was given a broad mandate “to examine how the country identified, managed, and averted these threats” and providing the President with recommendations by the end of 1985.

The task force delivered its report to the president on January 6, 1986. It included 44 recommendations, which were incorporated into National Security Decision Directive 207, which was issued on January 20, 1986. Approximately half of the directives remain classified.

Unclassified directives assigned lead agencies for different types of terrorist incidents and establishing frameworks within the NSC for managing incidents and between different agencies (the FBI-CIA relationship was particularly tense and improved after the task force). More specific proposals called for establishing a special counter-terror intelligence center, improving international counter-terror cooperation, reviewing port security, expanding the program that offered reward money for information leading to the apprehension of terrorists, improving security for U.S. government personnel abroad, and improving outreach to hostage families.

Vice President Bush argued that the task force’s real accomplishment was not necessarily in the policy, but in the process. The many agencies and units with a stake in counter-terrorism were brought to the table, and even where issues were not fully resolved, some level of understanding was reached. This understanding also applied to the ultimate question about counter-terror. Vice President Bush wrote:

The task force did not resolve once and for all the question of when and how to retaliate with force. ... But the task force did reach agreement that force would at times be necessary. It did narrow the distance between the parties on when and how to use it.¹¹³

The task force may have had some success in this regard. After a bombing of a Berlin disco frequented by U.S. servicemen was linked to Libya, the U.S. responded with Operation El Dorado—a short bombing campaign against Libya that nearly killed Libyan leader Moummar Qaddafi and reducing his support for terrorism. In his *SAIS Review* article, Bush argued that the April 14-15 bombing campaign was possible because of the inter-agency process undertaken by his task force created guidelines about the use of force against terrorists.¹¹⁴

The vice president also argued that the process of engagement between agencies helped create rules of engagement and standard operating procedures that coordinated across the dozens of agencies with a stake in counter-terror issues. Within the administration, Vice President Bush had been an advocate for “managing” terrorism. Improving outreach and international agreements helped the administration take a lower-key approach to terrorism. In this context, the vice president could press preferred agenda items. The vice president’s support for a particular policy was not a guarantee of its ultimate adoption. Bush supported creating an analytic center within the CIA to study terrorism, but this innovation was not adopted until much later.¹¹⁵

Running the task force allowed Bush to shape the *trajectory* of U.S. counter-terror policy by framing the policy options available to the President. Bush’s role regarding counter-terror policy reflected his relationship of trust with the president and also his expertise on the national security policy. The presence of an experienced VPNSA, Donald Gregg, who had been a CIA officer, helped ensure that Bush had the staff resources to oversee the task force.

Iran-Contra

The major controversy embroiling the Reagan administration was a complex and convoluted plot run out of the NSC. Throughout the 1980s, the Iranian-backed terrorist

group Hezbollah was taking Westerners hostage in Lebanon. President Reagan was deeply distressed by the plight of the hostages and several figures on the NSC sought to secure their release by trading weapons to them. Iran at that time was locked in a war with Iraq and, as an international pariah, desperate for weapons. The plot was further complicated when the proceeds from the sale were diverted to support the Nicaraguan contras, who were fighting against the communist regime in that country. Aid to the contras was restricted by Congressional action, which sought to prevent the administration from engaging in a covert war in Central America.

Assessing the vice presidential role in this morass is difficult.¹¹⁶ When the scandal emerged to the public, Bush claimed he “wasn’t in the loop” regarding the arms deal with Iran.¹¹⁷ There is substantial evidence that this was not the case. Secretary of State George Shultz and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger both recalled meetings in which they vigorously objected to the arms deal where Bush was present and did not oppose the deal. National Security Advisor Bud McFarlane oversaw the initial outreach to Iran. On a trip to Israel, Bush received an extensive briefing from Amiram Nir, Israel’s point person for dealings with Iran, who facilitated American-Iranian contacts. Lawrence Walsh, the Independent Counsel appointed to investigate the Iran-Contra scandal believed that after this meeting Bush became an advocate of continuing the arms sales.¹¹⁸

The other side of the equation in this convoluted scheme was Bush’s role in diverting funds from these arms sales to fund the Nicaraguan contras. There is, at best, little evidence that Bush had any connection to this project. His chief of staff reported that when Vice President Bush learned about the funds diverted to the contras, he was shocked. Oliver North, NSC staffer and central figure in the scandal, stated that, to his knowledge, the vice president was never informed about the diversion of funds. Secretary of State George Shultz also states that he does not believe Bush knew about it.¹¹⁹ However, Bush and his long-time VPNSA Donald Gregg knew and had met with Felix Rodriquez, a helicopter pilot linked to the CIA who was involved in transporting supplies to the Contras. Gregg had worked with Rodriquez in Vietnam and recommended him as an advisor to El Salvador’s air force. Rodriquez had been to the vice president’s office and met multiple times with both Gregg and Bush.¹²⁰ According

to Gregg, Oliver North recruited Rodriguez to run weapons to the Contras in neighboring Nicaragua but told him not to tell Gregg about the operation. When Rodriguez shared concerns with Gregg about corruption in supplying the Contras, the VPNSA held meetings with the people involved to shut down the project. Gregg insists that he did not tell the vice president because it was an issue best handled at the staff level and in order to protect the vice president from “a skuzzy operation that was going to lead to real embarrassment on the NSC staff.”¹²¹

Ultimately, the Office of the Independent Counsel (OIC) found that Vice President Bush was aware of arms sales to Iran and participated in discussions seeking third-country support for the contras, but did not actively participate in the contra-resupply operations and that there was no evidence that the vice president committed any crime.¹²² Gregg was investigated extensively, but ultimately the OIC found the evidence “insufficient to support a prosecution requiring proof beyond a reasonable doubt.”¹²³

The scandal did not ultimately tarnish Bush’s political career. In 1988, Bush was elected to the presidency, receiving 53.4 percent of the popular vote and 426 electoral votes. (The role of his vice president, J. Danforth Quayle, will be the subject of the next section.)

Nonetheless, the incident is instructive about the pitfalls and limitations of vice presidential influence. If the vice president is fully integrated into White House operations he (or she) can be implicated in scandals based on political decisions (as opposed to personal conduct). In an extreme situation, the president and vice president could be simultaneously targeted for impeachment, which would be a constitutional crisis. On the whole, it is advantageous for vice presidential staffers to have substantial backgrounds and play substantial roles, but as the Iran-Contra scandal indicated, it can also bring unwanted difficulties and attention to the vice president’s office. Finally, this incident highlights the limits of Bush’s influence. Although the vice president filled gaps in the Reagan administration’s national security process throughout the administration, he could not persuade the president to establish an orderly national security process. When Frank Carlucci became Reagan’s fifth national security advisor to establish order after Iran-Contra, Bush provided him counsel about the position.¹²⁴ But Bush’s earlier efforts to strengthen the national security process (such as a plan to have his friend Jim Baker

switch positions from chief of staff to national security advisor) were unsuccessful. On some issues, Bush had to “let Reagan be Reagan.”

4. Causes of Vice Presidential Influence in the Reagan Administration: A Second Look

These specific instances of Bush's influence on Reagan administration policies further reinforce the conclusions reached in the initial overview of the hypotheses in this case study.

The Modern Presidency

There were two hypotheses relating to changes in the presidency. The argument that the presidency had become more difficult, leading president's to lean more on their vice presidents, was not supported in the initial analysis and there is little support for it in the mini-case studies of specific instances of vice presidential influence.

The presidential power to select the vice president does not specifically appear as a cause of vice presidential influence in the instances examined above. But it is an important background factor. If presidents cannot trust their vice presidents, they are unlikely to give their vice presidents substantial responsibility or access. Bush was Reagan's choice; he was not someone forced on him by party leaders. Reagan was thus more willing to bring Bush into his inner circle.

The Institutional Vice Presidency

There is no question that Bush benefited enormously from the Carter-Mondale legacy. Bush continued to have access to events and papers in the White House and to the president himself. Without these semi-institutionalized perquisites, Bush would have been challenged to achieve influence.

The instances of vice presidential influence studied above emphasize the importance of vice presidential access to the President. Chase Untermeyer notes that the West Wing office may not have been essential but access to the president is an absolutely necessary pre-condition for vice presidential influence. Without this access, Bush would

not have been able to propose a solution to the trade conflict with Japan, advise Reagan about the Soviet leadership, or propose the South Florida Task Force.

Bush's staff was also an essential asset to achieving influence. Bush's national security advisor, besides ensuring that the vice president was adequately staffed or represented at meetings, brought his own experience and contacts to Bush. Most notably, Gregg served as an independent source of information about the Soviet Union; this became an important component in Bush's urging Reagan to shift policies towards the Soviet Union and arms control. It is significant that the prestige of the vice president's office allowed the vice president to recruit substantial and experienced people to work for the vice president. Such experienced staffers can bring their own contacts and help create opportunities for vice presidential influence, as Gregg did in U.S.-Soviet relations. But, as the Iran-Contra affair showed, such experienced staffers can also have existing contacts and relationships that damage the vice president's image. In addition, other Bush staffers helped the vice president serve the president effectively, which helped build the confidence of the president and his staff in the capabilities of the vice president. The vice president's staffers also helped Bush serve the administration's interests on Capitol Hill and coordinate with other figures in the Reagan administration (such as Gregg's regular meetings with the Secretary of State's executive assistant, Charlie Hill.)

Finally, Bush himself continued to play the role as his predecessor had established it. Bush avoided showing any public disagreement with the president, until the very end of the administration when Bush was a candidate in his own right. Bush picked his battles carefully, choosing not to argue with the president on areas where he felt strong such as fiscal policy. Bush was also very careful in larger meetings to offer comments that framed the issue but did not advocate. And Bush took on whatever assignments he was given, capably and loyally. Bush's careful cultivation of allies allowed him to serve as an honest broker on administration counter-terror policy. Further, in order to be influential, the presidential access that Bush needed would probably have been impossible had Bush been unsuccessful in building alliances with others close to Reagan, such as Michael Deaver.

These institutional aspects of the vice presidency guaranteed that Bush had the access and information to both the president and the policy process. It ensured that Bush

was capable of offering the president advice. Bush's demeanor in office helped him earn the president's trust and the trust of other key policy players. Staff helped to keep Bush informed, carry out duties on behalf of the president, and, in some cases, work effectively with other members of the administration. In short, the institutional vice presidency allowed Bush the opportunity for influence, but the actuality of influence relied on the content of the vice president's advice to the President.

Outsiders & Insiders

Reagan, like Carter, was an outsider candidate. Reagan had no Washington experience and was not well known to the Washington policy establishment. There is no particular evidence that Bush was selected, as Mondale had been, for particular areas of knowledge where he could support the president in areas where the president was unfamiliar. However, Reagan's lack of Washington experience, particularly in the area of foreign affairs, created policy vacuums where Bush could play a role.

Bush's foreign policy experience made itself felt when Reagan faced difficult situations that did not lend themselves to easy resolutions. The early debate on Japanese trade, where Reagan's free market preferences came into the conflict with political necessity, was one example where Bush saw an alternate course that served the President's needs.

Although the President Reagan had enormous accomplishments in the international arena (most notably bringing an end to the Cold War), Reagan struggled to manage his foreign policy team, including his difficulties with his first secretary of state, Alexander Haig, the ongoing feud between the second secretary of state, George Shultz, and the secretary of defense, Caspar Weinberger, as well as ongoing disorder at the NSC. These difficulties created opportunities (but also problems) for the vice president. The vice president's role as crisis manager was developed so that Reagan was not forced to choose between Haig and his first national security advisor, Richard Allen. This position ensured that Bush at least had information and some opportunities for influence. He did play an influential role in a number of crises where the Special Situations Group was assembled, including the pullout from Lebanon, the declaration of martial law in Poland, and the invasion of Grenada. The administration's difficulties responding to international

terrorism resulted in the establishment of the vice president's task force to combat terrorism. A president with greater experience in international affairs (such as Bush himself) may have been better able to manage the national security process.

In addition, Bush had experience with international leaders and diplomacy and was able to identify opportunities to improve relations with allies (such as Mexico and France) or change a relationship with an adversary (such as the case of the Soviet Union and Poland). Research indicated the Reagan valued this input, allowing Bush to pursue his proposed diplomatic ventures and making use of the information the vice president gleaned about the Soviet Union.

Finally, although the vice president was not a major player in the transition process, his contacts in Washington played a role in the exercise of vice presidential influence. While Bush was reportedly consulted on appointments, few of his long-time allies received important positions. Despite Reagan's relative inexperience with foreign affairs, he did not rely on Bush and his web of contacts to staff his foreign policy team. The Reagan team did recognize that they had only limited Washington experience, and, in order to fill that gap, selected a figure whose work they had seen at close hand—Jim Baker. A long-time Bush friend and ally who managed Bush's 1980 campaign, Baker demonstrated his loyalty to Reagan as an operative in the 1980 campaign just as Bush did. Baker was selected due to his Washington experience, but it ensured that Bush was kept informed of White House policy debates. Baker also reinforced Bush's messages to the President so that Bush himself did not overuse his access.¹²⁵

Conclusion

Biographers note that Reagan preferred to set broad policy guidelines and surround himself with people who could turn his preferences into policy. On several foreign policy issues Bush played this role. In the first term, when a stronger line against the Soviets was Reagan's preference, Bush identified specific actions that could support Solidarity in Poland. When the administration sought to respond effectively to international terrorism, Bush oversaw the development of a framework for counter-terror options.

Donald Gregg, who served as Bush's VPNSA for six and a half years, characterized Bush as "the rudder to Reagan's sailboat."

Reagan's instincts were good; his heart was in the right place. But Bush also had it in his head. He thought practically about how to achieve his goals.

Gregg cites as one specific emblematic, example of Bush's approach. The vice president kept pressing for bomb damage assessments after a U.S. battleship shelled supposed terrorist targets in the coastal hills of Lebanon. Gregg explains, "He wanted to know if the shelling really did anything. He didn't like to do things just to make a point or for show. He wanted our actions to have a point and to achieve results."¹²⁶

Chapter 4 Endnotes

¹ One of the active participants on the Church Committee investigating the CIA was Minnesota Senator Walter Mondale, who went on to become Bush's predecessor as vice president.

² This summary draws heavily on Herbert Parmet, *George Bush: The Life of a Lonestar Yankee* (Brunswick NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2001).

³ Deborah Hart Strober and Gerald S. Strober, *Reagan: The Man and His Presidency*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 23-25.

⁴ An independent candidate, John Anderson, won 6.6 percent of the popular vote.

⁵ Lechelt, *The Vice Presidency in Foreign Policy*, 101-102.

⁶ Kengor, *Wreath Layer or Policy Player*, 30.

⁷ Kengor, *Wreath Layer or Policy Player*, 148-55.

⁸ Kengor, *Wreath Layer or Policy Player*, 142-43.

⁹ Lechelt, *The Vice Presidency in Foreign Policy*, 112-17.

¹⁰ Martin Anderson, *Revolution* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), 259-60.

¹¹ Chase Untermeyer "Looking Forward: George Bush as Vice President" in *At the President's Side*, ed. Timothy Walsh (Columbus, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 162-63.

¹² David Rothkopf. *Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2005), 265.

¹³ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 218.

¹⁴ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 261.

¹⁵ Morton H. Halperin and Priscilla A. Clapp with Arnold Kanter, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 2nd ed., (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2006), 113.

¹⁶ Stephen Hess with James P. Pfiffner, *Organizing the Presidency*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2002), 141.

¹⁷ Light, *Vice-Presidential Power*, 267.

¹⁸ Anderson, *Revolution*, 313.

¹⁹ Casper Weinberger, "Interview with Casper Weinberger," Miller Center, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, 2005. <http://millercenter.org/president/reagan/oralhistory/casper-weinberger>.

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- ²² Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), 467.
- ²³ Kenneth Adelman, “Interview with Kenneth Adelman,” Miller Center, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, 2005. <http://millercenter.org/president/reagan/oralhistory/kenneth-adelman>.
- ²⁴ Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*, 35.
- ²⁵ Robert C. McFarlane, interview by author, Washington, DC, January 14, 2013.
- ²⁶ Craig Fuller, interview by author, Frederick MD, February 19, 2013.
- ²⁷ Craig Fuller, interview by author.
- ²⁸ Nancy Bearg, interview by author.
- ²⁹ Donald Gregg, interview by author, Armonk, NY, February 19, 2013.
- ³⁰ Donald Gregg, interview by author.
- ³¹ Untermeyer, “Looking Forward,” 159. Mondale, as discussed in his case study, spent almost all of his time in the West Wing, saying that spending time in the OEOB removed him from the action and if he spent time there he might as well be in Baltimore.
- ³² Chase Untermeyer. “Interview with Chase Untermeyer,” Miller Center, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, July 27-28, 2000. <http://millercenter.org/president/bush/oralhistory/chase-untermeyer>.
- ³³ McFarlane, interview by author.
- ³⁴ Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*, 305
- ³⁵ Light, *Vice-Presidential Power*.
- ³⁶ Nancy Bearg, interview by author.
- ³⁷ Craig Fuller, “Interview with Craig Fuller,” Miller Center, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, May 12, 2004. <http://millercenter.org/president/bush/oralhistory/craig-fuller>.
- ³⁸ Michael Deaver, “Interview with Michael Deaver.” Miller Center, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, September 12, 2002. <http://millercenter.org/president/reagan/oralhistory/michael-deaver>.
- ³⁹ *National Journal*, June 20, 198, 266.
- ⁴⁰ Light, *Vice-Presidential Power*, 248-56.
- ⁴¹ Michael Deaver. “Interview with Michael Deaver.” Other sources indicate that the relationship between the Vice President and the First Lady was not always strong, see Parmet, *George Bush*, 271.
- ⁴² Randall Rothenberg, , “In Search of George Bush,” *New York Times*, March 6, 1988.
- ⁴³ The President’s Press Secretary James Brady, DC Police Officer Thomas Delahanty, and Secret Service Agent Tim McCarthy were also wounded. Brady was severely disabled. Parmet, *George Bush*, 267, 270.
- ⁴⁴ Nancy Bearg, interview by author.
- ⁴⁵ Strober and Strober, *Reagan: The Man and His Presidency*, 25-28.
- ⁴⁶ Parmet, *George Bush*, 243-46.
- ⁴⁷ McFarlane, interview by author.
- ⁴⁸ Nancy Bearg, interview by author.
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- ⁵¹ Nancy Bearg, interview with author.

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- ⁵³ Steven Weisman, “Bush prizes his behind-the-scenes influence,” *New York Times*, February 28, 1982.
- ⁵⁴ Interestingly, this issue foreshadowed some key issues in Bush’s own Presidency – a bruising battle in Congress with Israel’s supporters, but also the AWACS according to Reagan administration officials, ended up being crucial to American forces during the Gulf War. See Strober and Strober, *Reagan: The Man and his Presidency*, 200-201.
- ⁵⁵ Light, *Vice Presidential Power*, 243-45.
- ⁵⁶ Strober and Strober, *Reagan: The Man and his Presidency*, 59.
- ⁵⁷ Untermeyer, “Looking Forward,” 160.
- ⁵⁸ Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*, 70-72.
- ⁵⁹ Lyn Nofziger, “Interview with Lyn Nofziger,” Miller Center, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, March 6, 2003. <http://millercenter.org/president/reagan/oralhistory/lyn-nofziger>.
- ⁶⁰ Strober and Strober, *Reagan: The Man and his Presidency*, 64.
- ⁶¹ Craig Fuller. “Interview with Craig Fuller,” Miller Center, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, May 12, 2004. <http://millercenter.org/president/bush/oralhistory/craig-fuller>.
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- ⁶⁴ Nancy Bearg, interview by author.
- ⁶⁵ “Bush Chairs Meetings on Poland,” *Washington Post*, December 17, 1981, A21.
- ⁶⁶ Lynn Rosellini, “Washington Talk; Secretaries in Charge for Holidays,” *New York Times*, January 1, 1982.
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- ⁷⁰ Saltoun-Ebin, *The Reagan Files, Volume 1*, 113.
- ⁷¹ Saltoun-Ebin, *The Reagan Files, Volume 1*, 91-105.
- ⁷² Steven Weisman, “Bush Prizes His Behind-The-Scenes Influence,” *New York Times*, February 27, 1982, 1.
- ⁷³ Saltoun-Ebin, *The Reagan Files: Vol. 1*, 126.
- ⁷⁴ Saltoun-Ebin, *The Reagan Files: Vol. 1*, 124.
- ⁷⁵ Saltoun-Ebin, *The Reagan Files: Vol. 1*, 134.
- ⁷⁶ Fuller, interview by author.
- ⁷⁷ David Hoffman and Jackson Diehl, “Bush, in Poland, Publicly Backs Solidarity,” *Washington Post*, September 29, 1987. Much of the coverage of Bush’s trip to Poland mentions the domestic political angles of the trip in light of Bush’s preparations for his run for the Presidency in 1988. It is worth noting that Bush remained interested in Poland. As President, Bush carefully encouraged reforms and liberalization and visited in July 1989. See Minton Goldman, “President Bush and the Collapse of Communist Rule in Poland: The Search for Policy in 1989-1990,” in *A Noble Calling: Character and the George H. W. Bush Presidency*, eds. William Levantrosser and Rosanna Perotti (New York: Praeger, 2004), 279-80.
- ⁷⁸ This, simplistic description is drawn from Lou Cannon, who caveats that there were disputes within these camps as well. See Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*, 305-306.

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- ⁸⁷ Mikhail S. Gorbachev, "Mikhail S. Gorbachev Address," in *A Noble Calling: Character and the George H. W. Bush Presidency*, eds. William Levantrosser and Rosanna Perotti (New York: Praeger, 2004), 151.
- ⁸⁸ Strober and Strober, *Reagan: The Man and His Presidency*, 256.
- ⁸⁹ McFarlane, interview by author.
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- ¹⁰¹ Steven Weisman, "Bush Prizes His Behind-The-Scenes-Influence," *New York Times*, February 28, 1982.
- ¹⁰² Ronald Reagan, *Reagan Diaries* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 27. Bush later chaired a bi-lateral U.S.-Japan task force to ensure Japan followed through on its commitments to reduce import restrictions.
- ¹⁰³ Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*.
- ¹⁰⁴ Nancy Bearg, interview by author.
- ¹⁰⁵ "Bush Meets Mexican Leader," *Washington Post*, December 28, 1986.
- ¹⁰⁶ Fuller, interview by author.
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- ¹¹⁵ Naftali, *Blindspot*, loc. 2559.
- ¹¹⁶ Jack Lechelt’s summary was invaluable to disentangling the many strands to this complex plot. See Lechelt, *The Vice Presidency in Foreign Policy*, 126-41.
- ¹¹⁷ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 809.
- ¹¹⁸ Strober and Strober, *Reagan: The Man and His Presidency*, 440-42.
- ¹¹⁹ Strober and Strober, *Reagan: The Man and His Presidency*, 494.
- ¹²⁰ Parmet, *George Bush: The Life of a Lonestar Yankee*, 281-84.
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- ¹²² Lawrence Walsh, the Office of the Independent Counsel, “Walsh Iran Contra Executive Summary,” 1993, xvii <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/walsh/execcsum.htm>.
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Chapter 5. “Vice President to the Wrong Bush?”: The Vice Presidency of Dan Quayle

Introduction

J. Danforth Quayle, who served as vice president to George H. W. Bush, was probably the least influential of the modern vice presidents. There were several barriers to Vice President Quayle exercising influence in the Bush administration, including the presence of powerful rivals in the president’s inner circle along with an experienced insider president who did not face the experience deficits of his outsider president predecessors and successors. Further, Quayle had a difficult time in the public eye—he quickly became fodder for comedians and was generally viewed as a policy lightweight. Nonetheless, Quayle maintained the perquisites established by his predecessors, which allowed Quayle regular access to the president and the policy process. Further, Quayle carried on the operational methods of his predecessors and, at least on a few occasions, exercised modest influence in the Bush administration. Jack Lechelt argues that Quayle’s vice presidency demonstrates that the semi-institutionalization of the vice presidency ensures that even with significant barriers, the vice president can remain a policy player and, under the right circumstances, exercise influence.¹ At the same time, studying the less influential Quayle vice presidency is an opportunity to examine the limits of the semi-institutional vice presidency.

1. Overview of J. Danforth Quayle and his Vice Presidency

Quayle’s Background

Born to a well-to-do family of newspaper publishers in Indiana, Quayle pursued a political career early. He attended public schools, DePauw University, and earned a law degree from Indiana University Law School. After law school, Quayle moved to Huntington, Indiana to work as an associate editor at one of the family newspapers. In 1976, at the age of 29, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where

he served two terms. Quayle reached the Senate in the 1980 elections by defeating Birch Bayh, a well-established Democratic senator. Aided by the poor economy and riding Reagan's coattails, Quayle proved a capable, energetic campaigner and was elected to the Senate at the age of 33. In the Senate, Quayle played a substantial role, reaching across the aisle to work with leading Democratic senator Ted Kennedy to develop the Job Training Partnership Act of 1982. Quayle was also a key figure in developing a compromise with on the Reagan Administration's plan to sell AWACS to Saudi Arabia and became a leading advocate for missile defense. In another example of Quayle's rising profile in the Senate, in 1984, Senate Republican Leader Howard Baker appointed Quayle as chair of a special committee to examine Senate procedures. In 1986, a year when several "class of 1980" Republican Senators were defeated, Quayle won re-election overwhelmingly with over 60% of the vote. Political scientist Richard Fenno, in a book-length analysis of Quayle's Senate career written before his selection as vice presidential nominee, concluded:

Taken together, the two stories trace the career development of Dan Quayle as an elected politician and as a legislator. It had been, by late 1986, a remarkable development. ... In six years in the Senate he had, indeed, earned his spurs—legislatively and electorally. He had achieved his two stated goals—a reputation as an effective legislator and a reelection of historic proportions.²

Quayle's Selection as Vice President and the 1988 Election Campaign

A two-term vice president, laboring in the shadow of President Reagan, Bush sought a running mate who would add energy to his campaign—"somebody different."³ Quayle made sense politically because he was from the conservative wing of the party, while Bush was seen as a moderate. Quayle was from a Midwestern state and young, the first baby-boomer on a national ticket. Quayle was also handsome and Bush knew him and thought he would be easy to get along with, having campaigned for Quayle and worked with Senator Quayle. Quayle, for his part, had quietly campaigned to be vice president.⁴

However, a number of missteps during the campaign led to Quayle being caricatured as callow and under-qualified for national office. Among the most significant of these missteps were a controversy about Quayle's service in the National Guard during the Vietnam War and a poor performance in his debate against Democratic vice presidential candidate Lloyd Bentsen. In the debate Quayle attempted to rebut accusations he was unprepared for office by observing that he had as much experience in Congress as JFK had when he was elected president. Bentsen replied, "Senator, I served with Jack Kennedy, I knew Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy." Bentsen's rejoinder was effectively the knockout punch to Quayle's public image.

For much of his term in office, Quayle had an extremely poor public image and was regular fodder for late-night comedians. Once in office, Quayle and his team attempted to overcome his initial poor image, but as Quayle writes in his autobiography, Quayle jokes became a national institution. In his autobiography Quayle wrote, "Do you know how many favorable stories it takes to overcome one zinger by Johnny Carson?"⁵ In one particularly telling anecdote, the Bush-Quayle presidential campaign communications director and senior White House staffer, David Demarest, recalls speaking to a group of high-school students at an event and as soon as he said "Vice President Quayle," everyone laughed. Demarest explained that this indicated that Quayle "was never able to crawl out from under that."⁶

Despite campaign missteps by the nominee for vice president, George H. W. Bush and his running mate Dan Quayle were elected with 53.4% of the popular vote and 426 electoral votes.

Formal Aspects of the Quayle Vice Presidency

Quayle continued to enjoy the perquisites of office enjoyed by his predecessors. In his autobiography, Quayle states that despite his difficulties with the media, President Bush remained encouraging and open. Quayle was based in his White House office and had the freedom to build his own staff.⁷ Quayle met regularly with President Bush and his top aides in daily morning meetings to go over national security and

domestic political affairs. He also continued the tradition of weekly lunches with the president.⁸

Quayle consulted with two of his predecessors, Richard Nixon and Walter Mondale. Nixon strongly advised Quayle to engage in extensive foreign travel while Mondale suggested that Quayle ensure he remain “in the loop” and not take on line assignments.⁹ Quayle also discussed the vice presidency with his immediate predecessor, President Bush. Quayle told the president that he hoped to emulate Bush in his conduct of the vice presidency and President Bush urged him to put his own stamp on the office.¹⁰

Quayle’s Activity as Vice President

Quayle was active on the administration’s behalf, campaigning domestically and traveling internationally (particularly to Latin America and Asia), serving as a spokesperson for the administration, and working on behalf of the administration’s objectives on Capitol Hill, where Quayle maintained his contacts. Quayle was the only former senator in the administration’s inner circle. White House chief of staff John Sununu stated that these contacts were “invaluable” and that Quayle was always central in establishing legislative strategy. Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney stated that Quayle had the strongest ties with Congressional leadership of anyone in the administration.¹¹ Kengor cites several instances of Quayle acting as lobbyist in chief on both domestic and foreign affairs including the confirmation of Justice Clarence Thomas and overcoming Congressional opposition to funding the resistance to the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.¹²

Quayle’s international travel was limited because trips had to be approved by the president, the national security advisor and the secretary of state. Long-time Bush confidant Secretary of State James Baker was extremely turf conscious and preferred to keep many key issues under his personal control. Because of Baker’s limited interest in Latin America, Quayle made several trips to the region, re-affirming American commitment to emerging democracies in the region. Another key factor in Quayle’s activities in the Western Hemisphere was the support of an aide, Jon Glassman, a foreign service officer who was knowledgeable on Latin America, who

helped identify opportunities for Quayle to take the lead on issues. Quayle made 19 foreign trips, comparable to his predecessors and successor.¹³ Some of these trips were primarily symbolic, but substantive work was done on many of them. In August 1990, Quayle attended the funeral of Columbia's president. While there he met several Latin American leaders. He urged Venezuela's president to increase oil production and pressed the leaders of Argentina and Brazil to cease transferring ballistic missile technology to Iraq. At the coronation of the emperor of Japan, Quayle met with several foreign leaders about the crisis in the Gulf, most importantly Turkey's Prime Minister Ozal. In December 1990, Quayle travelled to the Gulf and, besides working to boost troop morale, met King Fahd to reassure him of American resolve while also pressing him to approve land operations if necessary.¹⁴ Quayle also travelled extensively to East Asia, particularly Japan, where he lobbied the Japanese to use their foreign aid to support U.S. priorities and pressed the Japanese automakers to buy more American auto parts.¹⁵

Quayle also worked hard as a public advocate for the administration. In a lengthy speech at Seton Hall University in New Jersey, Quayle laid out the administration's case for war against Iraq to free Kuwait. It is worth noting that this speech so impressed Paul Kengor that he elected to focus on the vice presidency for his Ph.D. dissertation.¹⁶

Quayle also took on line responsibilities including chairing the Space Council (which will be discussed in detail below) and chairing the Competitiveness Council where the vice president sought to reduce government regulations that burdened business. It was, in many ways, a continuation of Quayle's predecessor's work on the Task Force for Regulatory Relief. Democratic Congressman Henry Waxman criticized the Council for short-circuiting the established process by which regulations were developed. It was an area where Quayle could play an active role both in policy by shaping regulations and in politics by hearing and responding to complaints for businesses affected by regulations.¹⁷

2. Overview of Quayle's Influence as Vice President

Assessments of Quayle's Influence as Vice President

Besides being poorly regarded by the general public, Quayle is generally considered the least influential of the modern vice presidents. None of the long-time observers of the presidency or national security process even provide an overall assessment of Quayle's influence except for Stephen Hess who stated that Quayle did not play a role as a senior advisor to the President.¹⁸ In *A World Transformed*, co-authored by George H. W. Bush and his national security advisor, Brent Scowcroft, Quayle was mentioned less than a dozen times, and only a few of them referred to a substantial contribution. Bush himself wrote, without providing specifics, that Quayle, along with chief of staff John Sununu, was a member of the foreign policy team but primarily involved in domestic affairs although "over the years their advice would prove extraordinarily helpful."¹⁹ Some of Quayle's staffers went on to serve in Gore's office and noted the expanded vice presidential role in the Clinton administration.²⁰

Finally, perhaps the best indicator of Quayle's limited influence was reflected in a conversation he had in 2001 with the recently inaugurated Vice President Dick Cheney about the role of the vice president. Quayle explained that the role of the vice president is primarily international travel and fundraising. Cheney, perhaps the most influential of the modern vice presidents, replied simply, "I have a different understanding with the president."²¹

Factors Contributing to Quayle's Influence: An Initial Analysis

The Modern Presidency

Hypothesis 1A: When the president is able to select his vice president, the vice president is more likely to exercise influence.

Bush had nearly complete freedom in selecting his running mate. One of Bush's closest associates, James Baker, claims that they had no knowledge of Bush's decision until shortly before Bush asked to Quayle to join the ticket.²² Craig Fuller,

who had been Vice President Bush's chief of staff, claimed that a group of close aides had a pool for the vice presidential pick and none of them chose Quayle.²³ The power to choose Quayle was made exclusively by Bush. While the power to choose the running mate appears to be a necessary condition for the vice presidential influence, it is not a guarantee of it.

Hypothesis 1B: As the demands on the president have increased, the vice president will have greater opportunities to exercise influence.

The argument that the presidency has become more difficult has little explanatory power regarding Quayle's limited role as vice president. It is difficult to argue that the Bush administration was a quiet presidency since it featured many complications from the winding down of the Cold War, two military engagements, and a major crisis in China. But Bush had sufficient resources to manage these issues without input from his vice president. The turmoil on the international scene may have contributed to Quayle's extensive activity as vice president as he took on campaigning duties and travelled to regions less important to the president and secretary of state.

The Institutional Vice Presidency

Hypothesis 2A: Vice presidents with their own policy staff are better able to exercise influence

Under Quayle, the vice president's national security team underwent a substantial expansion. The previous vice president's national security advisor (VPNSA) had a single deputy. Under Quayle's first VPNSA, Carnes Lord, the deputy was a fairly senior foreign service officer (FSO), and in addition, three military officers at the colonel and lieutenant colonel level joined the office of the vice president (with separate from the military aides who handled logistics and the nuclear football).²⁴ In 1990, FSO Dana Marshall joined the office of the vice president, serving as the first senior advisor to the vice president on international economics.²⁵ According to Lord,

these staffers could “monitor the pulse of the Pentagon and national security bureaucracy and attend inter-agency meetings.”²⁶

Quayle attracted some extremely capable people to his staff, including his first VPNSA, Carnes Lord, who possessed two Ph.D.s (one in classics and the other in political science), and his chief of staff William Kristol (son of prominent conservative thinkers Irving Kristol and Gertrude Himmelfarb, himself a rising figure in conservative ranks, who later founded the *The Weekly Standard*). Future Michigan senator and secretary of energy, Spencer Abraham, was Quayle’s deputy chief of staff in 1990 and 1991. Regarding his staff, Quayle wrote, “I would rather have to hold somebody back than push him forward...”²⁷

However, the expansion of the office of the vice president did not mean a heightened profile. Lord stated, “My role was to report and observe. At the deputies meetings, I was a backbencher. I almost never spoke.”²⁸ Dana Marshall echoed this, explaining, “We were admonished not to speak for the vice president. ... We were never able to speak as other agency representatives; we were there to gather information.”²⁹

There are substantial intimations of conflict between the vice president’s staff and the White House.³⁰ Clayton Yeutter, who served as secretary of agriculture and chair of the Republican National Committee felt that Quayle was underestimated and that some tension between the presidential and vice presidential staffs are inevitable, but that some of Quayle’s staff harmed Quayle because “they clearly did have agendas of their own and implemented those agendas while they were there, in some cases agendas that were really contrary to the vice president’s own views, as well as the president’s.”³¹ Quayle himself recognized these difficulties, writing:

I’m sure there were times when he [President Bush] became irritated with me, such as ... those occasions when Bill Kristol was leaking more to the press than he should have been.³²

Quayle made several appointments intended to strengthen his relationship with the White House staff and correct these issues. His deputy chief of staff, Dave Ryder, was close to Craig Fuller, who had been chief of staff of Bush as vice president.³³ Quayle also replaced his first national security advisor, explaining:

[Lord] was very good, very bright, but there was not a good interface with national security, with Scowcroft's operation. I realized that, to be able to function in the area of foreign policy, national security, I really needed somebody whom Scowcroft had confidence in.

Scowcroft was the quintessential inside bureaucrat who really knew the game, and if he didn't have confidence in somebody, he could cut him out real easily. Not that he would do it with the blessing of the President, but he could just cut you out. Since this was really my interest, I finally moved Carrie aside and brought in Karl Jackson, who had worked for Scowcroft, as my National Security Advisor. So in the last two-and-a-half years, he was my National Security Advisor. He had great interface with Brent and that whole team and it changed dramatically.³⁴

Quayle's challenge exercising influence in the Bush 41 administration may have been exacerbated by these staff difficulties but, as will be discussed below, staff problems were not the primary challenge Quayle faced. At the same time, Quayle's staff identified opportunities for Quayle to play a more active role, if not necessarily exercise influence. Jon Glassman, an FSO specializing in Latin America who served on the vice president's staff, helped Quayle carve out a niche focusing on Latin America.³⁵ When Karl Jackson became VPNSA, the vice president exercised influence on U.S.-Japan relations, which will be discussed in greater detail below. Both of these regions had the virtue of not being priorities for other key players in the administration.

Quayle's expansion of the White House national security staff enabled him to track a greater number of issues, which is necessary for a vice president to exercise influence but not a guarantee of it. The vice presidential staff played a role as "policy entrepreneurs," finding areas where the vice president could play a role, however playing that role too assertively apparently damaged relations between the vice president and the president's staff.

Hypothesis 2B: Vice presidents with an office in the West Wing are better able to exercise influence.

As vice president, Quayle had an office in the West Wing and spent much of his time there. The Quayle vice presidency highlights the limits of George Ball's Rule of Power that "nothing propinks like propinquity." It may be difficult for the vice president to exercise influence without an office in the West Wing, but it is possible to have this office and be limited in exercising influence. At the same time, given the constraints Quayle faced exercising influence in the Bush administration, it is probable that without a West Wing office he would have been more isolated from policy discussions and struggled to play any role at all.

Hypothesis 2C: Vice presidents with regular access to the president, and with access to White House meetings and paper-flow, for themselves and their staff, are better able to exercise influence.

Quayle had access to the formal national security process and to the president, but there were limits to his access. Jack Lechelt conducted an analysis of presidential meetings based on the "President's Daily Diaries" and "Public Papers" and found that Quayle averaged more monthly meetings with the president than the secretaries of state and defense, but fewer than the chief of staff and national security advisor. Similarly, in terms of minutes spent with the president, Lechelt found (surveying ten days of major national security events) that Quayle spent more time with the president than the secretaries of state or defense, but less than the chief of staff and national security advisor.³⁶ Time spent with the president does not necessarily translate to influence, but it is a necessary condition for it.

Much of the vice president's time with the president included morning briefings on national security and political affairs with the president (although he received the CIA briefing separately) and the regular Thursday lunch with the president.³⁷ Early in the administration, Bush and his national security advisor Brent Scowcroft established an informal "core group" that became known as the "Big Eight" for no-holds barred discussions of national security issues. Besides formal National Security Council meetings, Quayle was also a member of this group.³⁸

However, many issues were handled by a much smaller group. President Bush wrote that he could sort out most problems with Scowcroft and maybe Secretary of State James Baker or Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney. Quayle was not mentioned as part of this inner-inner circle.³⁹ Carnes Lord, Quayle's first VPNSA, confirmed Bush's portrayal, explaining that while they were part of the regular national security process, there were specific issues where they were not included.

There are always layers to the onion and you never really know. One example was a really secret off-line group that handled German reunification planning. Staffers weren't plugged in; it was handled in an irregular way outside of the national security process.⁴⁰

While the vice president may not have been one of the president's closest confidantes, he did have regular access to the president and this access at least created the opportunity for influence. Quayle writes that on Thursday mornings, before his weekly lunches with the President, cabinet members and other administration figures including Treasury Secretary Nick Brady, Health and Human Services Secretary Lou Sullivan, and Republican National Committee chair Rich Bond would often call with items they asked Quayle to mention to the president.⁴¹ Karl Jackson, Quayle's second VPNSA, who had been the NSC senior director for Asia highlighted the utility of the vice president's access to the president:

One of the reasons I took the job was, working for Bush on the NSC, I had to get through Gates and Scowcroft and then to Bush to get anything done. It was more efficient for getting things done with Japan to go to Dan and have him take it to the President.⁴²

Hypothesis 2D: Vice presidents who foster allies on the president's staff, exercise "hidden hand" influence, and avoid publicity for their policy preferences are better able to exercise influence.

Overall Quayle sought to emulate his predecessors by loyally supporting the president's position and not publicly revealing his disagreements with the president.

⁴³ Quayle was discreet in sharing his advice with the president, restricting it to private

discussions or small trusted groups such as the “Big Eight.” Quayle echoed his predecessors when he stated, “When we’re in a large group where it’s probably going to get out, I try to be somewhat circumspect. ... I try to be somewhat judicious so people can’t read it that the vice president feels this way, but the president feels that way.”⁴⁴ Quayle also sought allies within the president’s inner circle, although with less success.

There were a few exceptions. There were points in which Quayle made public statements that were not in accord with the administration’s positions, most notably on the Soviet Union where Quayle was an outlier in the internal debates. This was a source of discomfort for the President.⁴⁵ In addition, as discussed above, Quayle’s staff was reputed to be a source of leaks.

Paul Light observed that insider presidents usually have insider staff that may not welcome vice presidential influence.⁴⁶ This was a challenge for Quayle. While Quayle became close to White House chief of staff John Sununu⁴⁷ and had been a golfing partner to his successor Sam Skinner, the vice president struggled to develop strong relationships with the President’s closest advisors. Quayle had a difficult relationship with Secretary of State James Baker, who had been one of Bush’s closest friends and had managed his political campaigns. Baker was protective of his role as the leading spokesman on American foreign policy and rejected some of Quayle’s travel requests.⁴⁸ In addition to Baker, President Bush had long-standing relationships with other members of his national security advisory team from the Ford administration, where Bush had served as Director of Central Intelligence. Scowcroft had been Ford’s NSA and Cheney had been Ford’s deputy chief of staff and later chief of staff. Quayle’s chief of staff, William Kristol, observed that sandwiched between these powerful and experienced figures, “there wasn’t much room for him to maneuver.”⁴⁹

Outsiders & Insiders

Hypothesis 3A: Outsider presidents are more likely to select their running mates on the basis of personal and political compatibility, which increases the likelihood that the president will include them as a top-level advisor.

Quayle does not appear to have been selected for his potential as a governing partner, but rather to bring political and ideological balance to the ticket. Bush had been impressed with Quayle's work in the Senate, but the primary motivation for selecting Quayle over other candidates who offered political balance was that Quayle was "exciting and new."⁵⁰

Hypothesis 3B: Outsider presidents are more likely to be inexperienced in areas such as national security affairs and not have strong national security teams, thus creating opportunities for vice presidential influence.

Perhaps the greatest barrier to Quayle exercising influence as vice president was *President Bush's lack of need for his advice*. While Quayle had a collegial relationship with the president, George H. W. Bush was exceptionally well prepared for the presidency and did not face substantial deficits of his understanding of the role. Bush had been vice president for two terms, which had given him an enormous opportunity to observe how the presidency worked. Prior to that, Bush had been a member of the House of Representatives, chair of the Republican National Committee, U.S. representative to the United Nations, chief liaison (de facto ambassador) to China, and Director of Central Intelligence. Bush was described as having "the best resume in Washington." He had broad and deep familiarity with international affairs, personally knew a great number of world leaders, and was also familiar with Congress and Washington, D.C. Bush was a classic insider president, who, unlike the other presidents examined in this study, did not particularly need the advice of his vice president. Quayle's first VPNSA, Carnes Lord, observed, "Bush did not look to Quayle for substantive inputs for the most part."⁵¹

Quayle's limited role in Soviet/Russia policy illustrates the limitations he faced providing advice to a President already deeply steeped in national security

issues. In *A World Transformed*, Scowcroft profiled the different views among the “Big Eight” on Gorbachev’s prospects as a reformer. The views represented a spectrum of beliefs ranging from Secretary of State Baker who was “the most optimistic about reform” to Secretary of Defense Cheney who “believed it was premature to relax Cold War-style pressure” which had brought the Soviet Union to its current position. Most other members of the “Big Eight” fell somewhere in between, except for Quayle, “was the most conservative of all. He came close to the notion that what was going on in the USSR was little more than a ploy to lull us into thinking the danger was over and we could dismantle our security structure.”⁵²

President Bush had, of course, taken his own measure of Gorbachev (as discussed in the previous case study) and had his own ideas about how best to engage the Soviet Union. Gorbachev stated that his meeting with Bush at Malta in December 1989 ended the Cold War.⁵³ As it happens, as Bush was traveling to Malta, there was a coup attempt in the Philippines in which Quayle played a central role in formulating the U.S. response (discussed below). Quayle’s input on policy towards the Soviet Union and Russia is not mentioned anywhere else in *A World Transformed* and Quayle appears to have had little input into the administration’s decision-making calculus.

One interesting exception occurred in November 1990 when Quayle’s wife, Marilyn, met Raisa Gorbachev in Moscow. Instead of a brief, diplomatic “tea,” Gorbachev spoke at length about how difficult things were in the Soviet Union. Quayle reported the conversation, which was discussed at the White House the next morning in the daily security meeting as an early warning that the situation in the Soviet Union was far more unstable than previously recognized.⁵⁴ But this was an exception.

Given this situation, Quayle’s influence was generally restricted to lower-tier issues. For example, after a June 1991 trip to Eastern Europe, Quayle wrote a memo to the president, urging lower trade barriers on imports of Eastern European cheese, steel, and textiles. The tariffs were lowered, but the economic impact was minimal.⁵⁵

There were a few specific areas where Quayle could offer advice. Quayle was the only senior administration figure who had served in the Senate, so he could

provide advice on working with that body. Much of Quayle's work with the Senate would be more accurately characterized as "activity" on behalf of the administration rather than influence, but in some instances below he provided policy input based on his knowledge of the Senate.⁵⁶ Another area where Quayle had broad expertise, which will be discussed below, was domestic politics. Overall, however, Quayle's opportunities for influence based on the president's own knowledge deficits were minimal. Paul Kengor discussed this issue with one of Quayle's national security staffers.

Joe DeSutter, a foreign-policy and national-security advisor to Quayle, colorfully states that President Bush could have had George Marshall or Henry Kissinger as vice president and it would not have mattered. "Bush would still have been his own man on foreign policy. He was a national expert on foreign policy. That was his thing."⁵⁷

Quayle himself observed, "Clearly, for the President I worked for, it was more complementary than supplementary. I would think in Clinton's case, certainly starting out, Gore knew more about foreign policy than Clinton did."⁵⁸

Hypothesis 3C: Outsider presidents are more likely to seek their vice presidents' input in the appointments process, which increases the vice president's opportunities for influence.

Previous discussions of the vice president's role in the appointments process discussed two separate issues, the vice president's role in appointments heading the federal bureaucracy and the vice president's role in White House staffing.

Quayle was an active participant in the appointments process, participating in all of the key meetings on cabinet selection.⁵⁹ Bush had an extensive reservoir of old friends, so Quayle had limited opportunities to propose candidates.⁶⁰ There were two cabinet appointments in which Quayle weighed in heavily: John Tower for Secretary of Defense and Jack Kemp for Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Quayle strongly advocated for former Texas Senator John Tower, who had been a friend and political ally on the Senate Armed Services Committee. Bush also knew Tower very

well; they had worked closely together in the 1960s to build the Republican Party in Texas. Quayle took a leading role in lobbying for Tower's confirmation in the Senate. But Tower ran into intense opposition in the Senate, opposition that Quayle had not foreseen, and ultimately Tower was not confirmed.⁶¹ Interestingly, the fight over the Tower nomination may have strengthened Quayle's internal capital as an expert on the Senate. According to then-White House chief of staff John Sununu, Quayle's vote count estimates on Tower's confirmation were very accurate, establishing Quayle's expertise on the Senate.⁶² Tower would have been a likely ally to Quayle in the Bush administration's inner circle and the failure to confirm him probably reduced Quayle's opportunities for influence.

When another candidate for Secretary of Defense was needed, Quayle, among others, suggested House Minority Whip Dick Cheney. The President, who also knew Cheney well, agreed and Cheney was nominated and confirmed without difficulty.⁶³

Quayle's other major recommendation was former Congressman Jack Kemp as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Kemp and Quayle had also been close friends and political allies, and Quayle hoped that Kemp would be an innovative, entrepreneurial figure at HUD. However, Quayle reports that Kemp had hoped for a higher profile position in the administration, and Kemp clashed with other cabinet members. Quayle noted that Kemp disappointed him during the Bush administration with occasional bursts of public criticism of the president.⁶⁴

Quayle also had limited influence on sub-cabinet positions. Chase Untermeyer, who was the president's personnel director, said, "Quayle did not have the network of Bush. In the few cases I can remember, one was a Senate staffer who he wanted to see as assistant secretary of commerce for trade. Some old friend of the vice president wanted to be on the Advisory Commission on Wild Horses and Burros. I was happy to accommodate."⁶⁵

On the crucial question of having a role in White House appointments, Quayle also had limited influence. As discussed above, he tried to overcome this weakness by bringing individuals with White House connections onto his staff. Quayle does state that after Sununu left the chief of staff position, he recommended Samuel Skinner

(one of Quayle's regular golfing partners) as his replacement.⁶⁶ Skinner however served less than a year.

Overall, Quayle had very little influence on the appointments process. His one success, Kemp's appointment, probably did not help Quayle's influence with the president. The one appointment that might have significantly helped Quayle's standing in the administration's counsels was Tower at Defense but Tower was not confirmed.

3. Quayle's Influence on Specific Issues

This section explores specific cases of vice presidential influence in order to identify the roles played by particular elements of the institutional vice presidency and the vice president's personal background. It should be emphasized that it is not possible to gather every instance of vice presidential influence and the cases discussed below are *not* a complete record. But, they are a sufficient record demonstrate how vice presidential influence operates.

Domestic Issues

Quayle also sought to exercise influence on domestic policy. His efforts to do so highlight the sources (or lack thereof) of vice presidential influence.

In general, Quayle's influence on domestic matters was limited. The factors were different from those described below regarding the vice president's influence on national security. Quayle did have some expertise on domestic policy and had an interest in innovative, politically conservative, domestic policy initiatives.⁶⁷ He also had staff that had expertise on a range of domestic policy issues, particularly his chief of staff William Kristol.⁶⁸ But Bush was focused far more on foreign policy than on domestic policy. According to David Gergen, who worked in several White Houses, presidents typically end up spending about sixty percent of their time on foreign affairs, but under Bush this increased to seventy-five.⁶⁹ But Bush was also fundamentally conservative and believed in a limited government role. Another factor

limiting Quayle's role in domestic policy was the extent to which this area was dominated by Sununu and OMB chief Richard Darman.⁷⁰ Finally, in all of his efforts to exercise influence Quayle was often to the political right of the President and his closest advisors.

Minimum Wage Increase

In his autobiography Quayle describes the discussion on raising the minimum wage early in the administration in response to Congressional pressure. The president was willing to support the increase if it was accompanied by a sub-minimum wage for young people holding first-time jobs. Quayle felt that a minimum wage increase would trigger inflation, but that Republicans needed to offer an alternative. In meetings with the president he argued for an earned income tax credit for low wage earners. Bush rejected Quayle's idea, at least in part because the tax credit would decrease tax revenue needed to reduce the deficit. Quayle accepted this policy defeat, writing, "So I had to accept that, and the next time a microphone was put in front my face, my job was to say that an increase in the minimum wage tied to a subminimum wage was a top-flight idea."

However, Quayle did offer the president political advice, which Bush accepted. He advised the president to make his proposal on a "take-it-or-leave-it basis." Quayle felt a back and forth dealing with Congress on the minimum wage increase would set a bad precedent and make the Republicans appear unsympathetic to the poor.⁷¹

This was a situation in which Quayle had access to the president and policy expertise, but *vice presidential persuasion was not successful* because the president had other priorities. However, with regards to Quayle's political advice, he did have expertise on the workings of Congress, and his Congressional expertise did allow the *vice president to influence the trajectory* of the tactics, if not policy.

1990 Budget Compromise

The domestic issue with the greatest consequences for the Bush administration was the 1990 budget deal. In the 1988 presidential campaign, Bush had pledged that he would not raise taxes as president. However, when negotiating with the House Democrats over the 1990 budget, Bush agreed to tax increase in order to achieve a deal and to further his goal of deficit reduction. Within the White House, Quayle argued against the tax increase before the deal and urged the president to back out of the deal afterwards. Interestingly, Quayle was campaigning in California when the deal was announced and wrote in his autobiography (possibly in an effort to distance himself from an unpopular decision) that he was “in the shower” when he heard about the deal. Despite his misgivings, Quayle lobbied hard for the budget agreement on Capitol Hill. Quayle (and many others) believes that Bush’s breaking his promise not to raise taxes contributed to his failure to be re-elected.⁷²

This incident, a failed effort of *vice presidential persuasion*, highlights the limits of Quayle’s influence. He had the opportunity to make his case to the president. As the presidential advisor closest to the Republican right, which considered tax increases an anathema, Quayle had some expertise on the politics of the issue. Quayle also had insight in how to negotiate with Congress. But the president prioritized reaching an agreement and cutting the deficit. In this case, there is at least some evidence that he was not firmly in the loop on the issue. He also had few allies in the White House, except for Bush’s chief of staff, John Sununu.⁷³

Philippines Coup

On November 30, 1989, while President Bush, the national security advisor, and the secretary of state were flying to Malta for a conference with Gorbachev, a coup attempt occurred in the Philippines. As the vice president, Quayle convened the National Security Council and began to examine policy options. In his autobiography, Quayle portrays himself as the crisis manager, communicating with

the president of Philippines, Corazon Aquino (whom he had met just a few weeks before) and receiving her request for military support. Then, he vetted options, ultimately agreeing with Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that the preferred option was for U.S. Air Force jets to fly a “cap” mission and prevent Philippine air force jets from taking off. Quayle then communicated with the president and his staff for final approval. According to Quayle, Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger said that if Quayle had not been present, the U.S. might not have been able to stop the coup in the Philippines.⁷⁴

There is some dispute about the event. In *The Commanders*, Bob Woodward describes a growing consensus that the United States bomb the Philippine rebel aircraft. Woodward writes that Powell opposed this action, worried about the potential negative consequences of a bombing, and developed the plan of having U.S. planes fly over the Philippine airfield to prevent the planes from taking off.⁷⁵ In his autobiography, Colin Powell states that he was coordinating the American response, communicating with Filipino defense officials and with Secretary of Defense Cheney and, through him, with the president.⁷⁶ Powell reports that he was frustrated answering to both Quayle and the president and felt the chain of command was muddy. He concludes his account by asserting that Quayle over-stated his role in the crisis in an effort to appear presidential, which Powell understands considering Quayle’s low standing in the media. Powell adds that Quayle “did perform well in the Philippine situation.”⁷⁷

Parsing out Quayle’s exact role in the crisis is difficult, but it appears that this was a modest instance of *vice presidential influence on the trajectory of policy*. This instance highlights Quayle’s access, not only to the president, but also to the national security process overall. In this case, his previous meeting with the president of the Philippines meant he had a useful contact with the head of state of the nation involved in the crisis.

Space Council

Although he had been counseled not to do so, Quayle accepted the chairmanship of the National Space Council. A similar position, the chairmanship of the National Aeronautics and Space Council, had originally been held by Vice President Lyndon Johnson under President Kennedy and continued to be a vice presidential responsibility until Vice President Spiro Agnew.⁷⁸ When Quayle took the position, it had been dormant for a decade and a half. But in 1989, President Bush, through Executive Order 12675, established the National Space Council. The council was chaired by the vice president and included the secretaries of state, treasury, defense, commerce, and transportation, the directors of the CIA and OMB, the chief of staff, the national security and science and technology advisors, and the administrator of NASA. The president directed the National Space Council to review the government's space policy and develop recommendations and specifically stated that the chairman (Vice President Quayle) "shall serve as the president's principal advisor on national space policy and strategy."⁷⁹ However, the real work of the space council was done through an inter-agency groups devoted to specific issues.⁸⁰

Space policy was not a backwater in the Bush Administration; the president had been the Congressional representative from Houston during the glory days of the space program, including the 1969 moon landing. Several key members of the administration were advocates of an expanded space program including OMB director Richard Darman (who was generally hostile to increased spending) and chief of staff John Sununu who had been an engineer before entering politics. In his first State of the Union address, Bush specifically mentioned the space program:

I request funding for NASA and a strong space program: an increase of almost 2.4 billion dollars over the current fiscal year. We must have a manned space station; a vigorous, safe space shuttle program; and more commercial development in space. The space program should always go "full throttle up." That's not just our ambition, it's our destiny.⁸¹

At other points, President Bush personally contacted representatives and senators to fund Space Station Freedom. Further, civilian space policy had important international implications. U.S. allies, including Japan, Canada, and several European countries, were contributing substantial components of the space station. These nations all lodged protests when Congress threatened to cut the space station's funding, and Quayle played a key role in lobbying to keep it in the budget.⁸² The space council also began building relations with the Russian space program, for example arranging for American astronauts to fly on the Russian space station Mir and for Russian cosmonauts to fly on the space shuttle as well as data sharing arrangements.⁸³

When Quayle took charge of the space council, NASA was a moribund agency. In July 1990, Quayle convened a high-level committee on the future of the U.S. space program, headed by former Martin Marietta chairman Norman Augustine to produce a series of recommendations for the future of the American space program. The committee produced a report in December 1990.

In his autobiography, Quayle argued that the NASA bureaucracy was the most persistent foe of his efforts to reform the space agency. In particular, he found that NASA administrator Dick Truly was not working in-line with the vice president's priorities. In December 1991, Quayle discussed the need to fire Truly with the president. Truly did not want to leave, but ultimately did and was replaced by Dan Goldin, who became the highest-ranking Bush administration official kept on in the Clinton administration.⁸⁴ The central issue was Truly's resistance to the national space enterprise (NSE) programs, which Quayle and the space council believed would streamline NASA programs, reduce costs, and increase flexibility. In particular, the space council wanted to reduce the cost of the shuttle program and develop more agile programs. The NASA bureaucracy was concerned that the NSE initiative would place crucial NASA initiatives under White House control and disrupt operations. A particular bone of contention between the NASA bureaucracy and the space council was the shuttle program, which the space council felt was too expensive and that NASA over-emphasized the importance of manned spaceflight at the expense of other projects. Ultimately, the space council and Quayle persuaded

Bush not to heed NASA's request and build a fifth shuttle.⁸⁵ Quayle's own assessment was that the space council achieved four and a half of its ten goals, which, he notes, "As follow-through from government commission reports goes, such a ratio is actually outstanding."⁸⁶

This was an instance of *vice presidential oversight*, in which the president and vice president shared the goal and the vice president was given latitude in achieving them. Persuading the president to cancel the fifth shuttle and fire the NASA administrator, who had previously been strongly supported by the president, were significant shifts in policy. Access to and the confidence of the president were essential to Quayle's work on the space council. Quayle also had the necessary staff support in Mark Albrecht who served as the space council's executive secretary and had been a Senate staffer specializing in defense issues.⁸⁷ Quayle also built a network of supporters, particularly Darman and Sununu, to help him advance his policies. Quayle himself brought some expertise to the issue, having been heavily involved in arms control issues, which overlap with civilian space programs.

Missile Defense

One area where Quayle played a substantive role was persuading President Bush to adopt missile defense. Quayle had developed expertise on arms control issues in the Senate, where he was a leading proponent of missile defense. In February 1990, President Bush increased SDI funding by 25 percent, a billion dollar commitment, and backed this with a major defense speech and a visit to a top SDI lab. This was a major policy shift both because Bush had long been skeptical of SDI and because, with the end of the Cold War, defense budgets were shrinking. According to a report in the *Wall Street Journal*, this shift was primarily due to Quayle's persistence on the issue. He had long been an SDI advocate in the Senate and was generally regarded as extremely knowledgeable about it. Quayle not only lobbied the president, but also the secretary of defense who had been an SDI supporter, although not as fervently as Quayle.⁸⁸ Quayle urged Secretary of Defense Cheney to visit the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory where much of the research was occurring. Cheney then

began pushing for SDI on Capitol Hill, where Quayle was also an advocate.⁸⁹ Quayle also delivered public speeches, which advanced the issue. According to VPNSA Carnes Lord, “He consciously used these speeches to shape administration policy.”⁹⁰

This is an intriguing example of *vice presidential persuasion*, because Quayle had to overcome significant internal opposition, particularly from NSA Brent Scowcroft, who believed missile defense was both impractical and destabilizing.⁹¹ However, Quayle personally had significant expertise on the issue and had worked on missile defense in the Senate.⁹² Quayle also knew the politics of the issue and had links with the constituencies most enthusiastic about missile defense. Quayle courted allies, working with Secretary Cheney, to persuade President Bush. Quayle also had a staff that felt strongly about the issue and helped him push it forward. It is interesting that on this issue Quayle went public with his views to drum up support. Generally vice presidents have been discrete in their efforts to persuade the president.

Gulf War

In the lead up to the Gulf War, Quayle successfully urged President Bush to seek Congressional approval for military action in the Gulf. In his autobiography Quayle wrote:

I myself didn't believe military action required Congressional approval, but I thought that it would be politically much more feasible—and much better for the country—if the President went to war with the authorization of Congress. I also thought we could get the resolution through, though I knew it would be difficult.⁹³

Quayle's aide, Joe DeSutter, stated that Quayle was the primary advocate for seeking Congressional approval for the Gulf War.⁹⁴ One of the issues that concerned the administration was that they might not be able to get enough votes to pass a resolution supporting military action. Cheney, among others, doubted the administration had sufficient support.⁹⁵

Quayle argued that Congressional approval made it easier for the administration to conduct the war, freeing the president from the kinds of issues that bedeviled Johnson during Vietnam. The first Gulf War is generally viewed from a positive perspective as a successful, limited campaign that was in the nation's interest. However, at the time there was a great deal of controversy and concern about whether the war was necessary or if economic sanctions would be sufficient to force Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. There was also concern about what might happen if the war was not successful.

However, according to reporting by Broder and Woodward, Quayle lost the debate on seeking Congressional authorization. Quayle had advocated for the request before Christmas 1990 and it was only several weeks later, in January 1991, that the president decided to seek Congressional authorization.⁹⁶ Quayle did play a central role in lobbying his old Senate colleagues when the administration did seek Congressional authority.⁹⁷

Exactly what influence Quayle exercised is not clear. This might best be characterized as an instance of *vice presidential bolstering*, in which the vice president encouraged the president to carry out an action. Quayle was the only senior administration official who had experience in the Senate and had some specific expertise to advise the President, although several others had experience with Congressional relations (Cheney had been House Minority Whip and Baker had overseen Reagan's lobbying efforts).

Japan

Quayle played a substantial role in U.S.-Japan relations, making three visits in which he signed agreements for increased U.S. exports to Japan, while emphasizing Japan's role as a critical strategic ally of the United States.⁹⁸ Quayle's second VPNSA, Karl Jackson, stated, "There were lots of things having to do with Japan policy. [Quayle] was in some ways the real ambassador to Japan."⁹⁹

Jackson recalled a few specific examples, such as starting a fellowship for engineers to study manufacturing technology in Japan, which the Japanese agreed to

fund. Another instance of vice presidential influence in U.S.-Japan relations as part of Operation Tin Cup. The U.S. requested support for the Gulf War from allies all over the world. The Japanese government had committed \$4 billion and, when asked, agreed to pay an additional \$9 billion. However, the details regarding the timing of the payment had not been settled. The exchange rate changed so that when the Japanese government paid, it was several hundred million dollars less than expected. The Treasury Department pressed Japan to make up the difference, but when Quayle and Jackson asked, Treasury Secretary Nick Brady could not recall the details of the agreement. Jackson commented,

Straining the US-Japan alliance over a minor issue that the Secretary of the Treasury couldn't remember didn't seem like a good idea. Quayle intervened and the president listened and over-ruled Treasury's Number 3 for International Affairs.¹⁰⁰

This instance of the *vice president influencing the trajectory* of a policy highlights first Quayle's access to the president, without which he could not have intervened on the issue. It also highlights the utility of vice presidential staff. Jackson was a leading Asia specialist, identifying issues where the vice president can have an impact.

4. Causes of Vice Presidential Influence in the George H. W. Bush Administration: A Second Look

Having examined specific instances of the Vice President Quayle's influence on Bush 41 administration policies primarily reinforces the conclusions reached in the initial overview of the hypotheses in this case study.

The Modern Presidency

None of the mini-case studies suggest that Quayle was able to exercise influence due to the presidency became more difficult. Nor do the mini-case studies suggest that

opposite, that Quayle's relative lack of influence was because the presidency had become easier. Further, although Quayle was Bush's choice for the vice presidency, his limited influence in the Bush administration indicates that the nominee's power to select his or her running mate does not guarantee that the vice president will exercise influence. At the same time, had Quayle not been Bush's choice for vice president, it is likely that he would have been thoroughly cut out of the policy process and had no opportunity to influence policy at all.

The Institutional Vice Presidency

Quayle's term as vice president further highlights the changes to the vice presidency as an institution. Because of his expanded resources, even though he was not one of the president's close advisors, he was still able to play a role in the administration.

The institutionalization of vice presidential prerogatives, such as regular meetings with the president, access to White House paper flow and meetings, and an expanded vice presidential staff was an enormous boon to Quayle's role in the Bush administration. While Quayle had extremely limited influence by most accounts, he at least had the opportunity to present his views both to the president in private and in top-level meetings. Although many of the issues where Quayle was influential were not central to the administration, the fact that Quayle was able to have influence at all highlights the importance of access to the president. Quayle also was able to attract a capable staff, which actively sought areas where it could be effective and play an active role such as policy towards Latin America or Japan.

Overall Quayle was loyal to the president and discreet in sharing his advice, adopting the modes of behavior of his influential predecessors. But there were times when Quayle made public comments that deviated from the administration's line and there were intimations that the President's staff felt the OVP was acting improperly. In the case of his successful advocacy for missile defense, it appears that Quayle's willingness to speak out beyond administration policy helped him to influence the president. It is possible that this kind of behavior also had a damaging effect on his standing in the White House and his prospects for influence.

Outsiders & Insiders

Quayle served the only “insider” president since Carter and Mondale established the modern vice presidency. Bush, even before his vice presidency, had extensive experience from serving in numerous roles. After eight years as vice president, closely observing the workings of the White House, President Bush did not face the deficits of experience with international affairs or the ways of Washington that his outsider predecessors and successors faced. President Bush chose to focus on international affairs, and while Quayle had some experience, Bush was far more experienced and had little need of Quayle’s knowledge. In the areas where Quayle might have had the most impact, such as domestic policy, Bush was relatively uninterested. Quayle’s most notable policy successes involved areas with which he was very familiar, such as arms control and legislative affairs or areas in which the president and his closest advisors were not particularly interested. Quayle’s efforts to engage more broadly with international affairs, such as his skepticism about Soviet intentions were not well received by the President and his closest advisors.

Conclusion

Quayle, as the only vice president to serve an insider president since the Carter-Mondale administration established the modern vice presidency, is an important test case for Lechelt’s thesis that the *semi-institutionalized vice presidency* (regular access to the president, expanded staff, etc.) increased the likelihood of the vice president playing a substantial role in foreign policy.¹⁰¹ Quayle’s limited role compared to his predecessors and successors highlights the challenges a vice president faces serving an insider president. Bush did not select the vice president as a governing partner and showed little need of Quayle’s expertise. Quayle faced opposition from Bush’s experienced national security team. At the same time, in the words of Jack Lechelt:

If, with these difficulties, Quayle was able to be an important component of the Bush administration's foreign policy process, then the concept of a semi-institutionalized vice presidency is bolstered.¹⁰²

Compared to the vast majority of his predecessors, Quayle did enjoy an expanded role in the Bush administration. When he chose his issues carefully and focused on areas not dominated by other players, Quayle was able to exercise modest influence. At the same time, Quayle was limited by serving an experienced president who did not need Quayle's advice. Chase Untermeyer, who had served as a personal assistant to Vice President Bush and then as Director of Personnel for President Bush observed:

The tragic irony for Quayle was that he was vice president to the wrong Bush. Had he stayed in the Senate, he would have become one of the senior and respected senators on Armed Services. He was plucked too early. No one would have twittered at Quayle in 2000 and he was exactly the person George W. Bush could have used as vice president.¹⁰³

Chapter 5 Endnotes

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- ⁷⁶ Cheney would not attend an NSC meeting chaired by Quayle, arguing that the vice president was not in the chain of command.
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⁹⁵ Quayle and Carney, *Standing Firm*, 217.

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Chapter 6. “You also can feel what’s right”: The Vice Presidency of Albert Gore”

Introduction

When the Governor of Arkansas, William Jefferson Clinton, won the Democratic Party’s presidential primary campaign in 1992, Clinton, very much a Washington DC outsider, returned to the pattern of selecting a Washington insider as vice president.

Al Gore, a senator (and the son of a senator) quickly became a top advisor to Clinton, particularly on foreign policy issues where Clinton was less experienced than his running mate. Clinton and Gore were personally compatible and, according to most accounts, President Clinton relied heavily on his vice president’s advice.¹ Gore maintained all the perquisites of his predecessors, including regular private meetings with the president, access to white house paper-flow and meetings, and walk-in privileges to the oval office. In addition, under the Clinton-Gore administration, the vice president’s staff was expanded and his top national security aide was given an unprecedented role in the national security process. Despite Gore’s access and influence however, there were issues where Gore’s preferences did not prevail.

The following case study begins with a brief descriptions of Vice President Gore’s background and his formal role in the national security process and a summary of Gore’s activity as Clinton’s vice president. Part 2 is an overview of Gore’s influence in the Clinton white house, including assessments of Gore’s influence by colleagues and contemporary observers, and an overview of the factors contributing to Gore’s influence. The third section is a series of in-depth studies of specific instances in which Gore exercised influence on national security affairs, including the Bi-National Commissions, the Summit of the Americas, Gore’s participation in the Kyoto conference, his support for the use of force in Bosnia, and his opposition to the administration policies in the Elian Gonzalez affair. This case

study concludes with a re-examination of the different factors that allowed Gore to exercise influence in the Clinton administration.

1. Overview of Albert Gore Jr. and his Vice Presidency

Gore's Background

The son of a U.S. Senator and educated at the elite St. Albans School in Washington D.C. and at Harvard, Albert Gore Jr. was born in 1948 to a life of privilege and was a quintessential Washington insider. After graduating college and serving in the Army (including several months in Vietnam), Gore moved back to Tennessee where he worked as a reporter for the Nashville *Tennessean* and took classes at Vanderbilt University. In 1976, at the age of 28, Gore was elected to an open Congressional seat in Tennessee. Gore served eight years in the House of Representatives before being elected to the Senate in 1984. He won re-election to the Senate in 1990. In the House of Representatives, Gore served on the Intelligence Committee and in the Senate, he served on the Armed Services Committee, giving him strong credentials on national security issues, with a particular interest in arms control. Gore also became a leading figure on Capitol Hill on science, technology, and the environment. He wrote *The Earth in Balance*, which called for dramatic action to prevent ecological catastrophe. Published in June 1992, it became a best seller, the first by a sitting U.S. Senator since John F. Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage*.²

Gore ran for the Democratic nomination in 1988 and weighed a 1992 run carefully before deciding against it. A primary factor in his decision not to run was the very severe injuries his son suffered in a car accident in 1989.

Gore's Selection as Vice President and the 1992 Election Campaign

When he won the Democratic presidential nomination in 1992, William Jefferson "Bill" Clinton was the youngest major party nominee since John F. Kennedy and had served as governor of Arkansas for over ten years. Clinton had a modest upbringing, but through scholarships had attended Georgetown University, won a Rhodes

scholarship to Oxford, and earned a degree from Yale Law School, before returning to Arkansas to pursue a career in politics.

In some important regards, Clinton broke established political molds in selecting Gore. Both Clinton and Gore were southern moderates of a similar age. Traditionally, tickets had regional and ideological balance, and a young candidate such as Clinton might have selected an older running mate. Clinton's advisors considered more conventional candidates.³

Clinton and Gore did not make a conventionally balanced ticket, but they possessed complementary expertise. While Clinton was charismatic but sometimes undisciplined, Gore was methodical and always well prepared. Gore also brought a number of benefits to the ticket that compensated Clinton's weaknesses, such as Gore's foreign policy and national security experience on Capitol Hill (including his vote in support of the Gulf War) and his service in Vietnam. Gore's unremarkable private life was a contrast to the scandal-plagued Clinton. Gore had also briefly run for president in 1988, so he had experience with running a national campaign and was a formidable fund-raiser. Finally, when questioned, several of Gore's friends cited Gore's loyalty.⁴ To Clinton, and for presidents in general, this is an essential quality.

Perhaps most significantly, Gore and Clinton got along well. Before the interview for the vice presidency, they had had only one serious meeting. But on June 30, 1992, Clinton and Gore met and found they had an easy rapport. Although the meeting was scheduled to only go for one hour, they ended up talking about policy for nearly three hours.⁵

In the summer of 1992, Clinton and Gore campaigned extensively together. During July, Clinton undertook a bus trip through several battleground states, and Gore pressed to join him. While there was tension between the Clinton and Gore camps, this extended road trip brought Clinton and Gore closer together, helping to forge the working relationship the two men would share for the next eight years.⁶

In November 1992, the Clinton-Gore ticket won 370 electoral votes and 43 percent of the popular vote to win the nation's highest offices. President Bush won 37.5 percent and independent candidate Ross Perot won 19 percent. Eleven weeks later, on January 20, 1993, they were sworn in as the 42nd president and 45th vice

president of the United States. They were re-elected in 1996 with 49 percent of the popular vote and 379 electoral votes.

Formal Aspects of the Gore Vice Presidency

In designing an effective and engaged vice presidency, the Clinton-Gore team studied the Carter-Mondale model, which was viewed as an effective paradigm for the president-vice president relationship, and consulted Carter-Mondale administration staffers.⁷ However, Clinton and Gore wanted to expand presidential-vice presidential engagement and dubbed their version of the vice presidency “Mondale-Plus.”⁸

The perquisites of the Carter-Mondale model were continued, including the vice presidential office in the West Wing of the White House, the open invitation for the vice president to attend White House meetings, and access to the White House paper-flow. As will be discussed below, the vice president’s staff and its access to the process was expanded. The regular private weekly president-vice president lunches were continued and held consistently throughout the eight years of the Clinton administration.⁹

Gore’s Activity as Vice President

Throughout the Clinton administration, Gore played a very active role as an administration spokesman domestically and internationally. Gore travelled extensively, meeting foreign leaders and was a liaison to Capitol Hill. Gore sought to follow Mondale’s advice to avoid line assignments— even refusing the traditional vice presidential role on space policy, despite his long interest in the topic.¹⁰ However, Gore did end up taking line assignments in the form of several bi-national commissions that became major elements in U.S. relations with those countries as well as overseeing projects for the president. In and of themselves, none of these roles were inherently influential, but they become platforms for Gore to exercise influence and shape Clinton administration policy.

In domestic affairs, Gore was given charge of the National Performance Review, an effort to “reinvent” government. Gore sought to bring cutting edge management practices to the government, reduce cumbersome regulations, foster

innovation and shrink the government workforce by 252,000. Gore took on this issue with enthusiasm, holding town halls with government employees to discuss how the government could function more efficiently and appearing on “Late Night with David Letterman” to promote his efforts. Gore’s initiative cut across the government, streamlining cumbersome procedures in the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) manuals, proposing agency reorganizations and mergers, and attempting to shift government attitudes towards a service orientation.¹¹

Gore made innumerable appearances domestically and internationally on behalf of the administration, including his debate against Perot over the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in late 1993, his 1994 speech in Germany that pressed for NATO expansion,¹² and media appearances to explain administration policy. Gore travelled extensively on behalf of the administration and his trips were highly substantive. Gore was not the first vice president to give speeches that made major policy statements. For Gore, these kinds of speeches were often an opportunity for influence in and of themselves. In the words of Richard Feinberg, the Senior Director for International Affairs on the Clinton National Security Council (NSC), “Gore understood how to use public addresses to set international agendas.”¹³ In 1994, for example, after the president publicly committed to expanding NATO eastward to include former Warsaw Pact members, the Pentagon continued to oppose this initiative in internal debates. Gore gave a speech in Berlin calculated to reinforce the president’s message and end the internal debates.¹⁴

Paul Kengor details Gore’s role as the “attack dog,” which is traditionally played by vice presidents, noting that Gore did not merely explain administration policy but deployed hyperbole to rebut and discredit opponents.¹⁵ In his biography of Gore, Bill Turque writes that Gore was far more comfortable than Clinton in making political attacks.¹⁶ Gore also took on fundraising duties on Clinton’s behalf.

Gore played an interesting role managing Clinton’s relationship with former President Jimmy Carter, who often sought to act as a high-profile envoy to crisis regions. According to one report, Gore was Carter’s point of contact in his missions to North Korea and Haiti.¹⁷ At the same time, *The New Yorker*’s Peter Boyer reports, “Gore kept Carter at bay when Carter wanted to negotiate a deal with Fidel Castro.”¹⁸

One of Gore's most notable activities in the Clinton administration was chairing a number of bi-national commissions. He took on this responsibility at the president's request, despite eschewing line duties. Leon Fuerth argues that the bi-national commissions were not line assignments, but rather were intended to facilitate policy. According to Fuerth, the vice president oversaw the inter-agency triage process of establishing the agendas of the bi-national commissions.¹⁹

The first of these bi-national commissions was the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission (GCC), which was intended to strengthen government-to-government relations between the U.S. and Russia. It became a major mechanism for implementing the administration's Russia policy. This was more than an expansion of the advisor role. The commission was a high-profile assignment that granted the vice president responsibility for an important national security program. Gore was cautious in accepting this new and unprecedented task. According to Fuerth, "[Gore] didn't leap at this. There had to be a strong call from the president and I had to argue the case that he should accept this. [But] he could have had no idea of what the 'this' was, since it began from a clean sheet of paper in a discussion between Strobe [Talbot, Clinton's Ambassador to Newly Independent States] and me."²⁰

According to Fuerth, because of the GCC's success, additional bi-national commissions modeled on the GCC were established.²¹ In 1994, the U.S.-Egypt Partnership for Economic Growth was launched and became known as the Gore-Mubarak Commission for its co-chairs, Vice President Gore and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. In 1995, the U.S.-South African Commission was founded to improve bilateral cooperation between the U.S. and South Africa; this commission was known as the Gore-Mbeki Commission for its co-chairs, Vice President Gore and South Africa's Deputy President Thabo Mbeki.

Gore also co-chaired bi-national commissions with several other former Soviet states. In May 1997, after nearly a year of lower-level meetings, the U.S.-Ukraine Bi-National Commission held its first meeting, co-chaired by Gore and Ukraine's President Leonid Kuchma. The commission's primary areas of focus were on anti-corruption, economic liberalization, and trade, although it also had committees addressing security and environmental issues.²² In the context of the

GCC, Gore had previously negotiated with Ukraine, persuading the country to disassemble its nuclear program and facilitating the delivery of American economic aid.²³ The U.S.-Kazakhstan Joint Commission, co-chaired by Gore and Kazakh President Nazarbayev, performed a similar role. This commission first met in 1994 and met annually throughout the Clinton administration. It focused on a similar range of issues including security cooperation with a particular focus on non-proliferation, economic liberalization, environmental protection, and scientific cooperation. Because of Kazakhstan's oil wealth, energy cooperation was an important area of cooperation for the Gore-Nazarbayev Commission.²⁴

Formally as co-chair of the bi-national commissions, Gore's role was to facilitate relations, but, as will be discussed below, Gore's intimate involvement with the bi-national relations did give the vice president a platform to influence U.S. policy towards the nation in question. In addition, Gore chaired commissions on aviation security and safety,²⁵ security for the 1996 Olympic games in Atlanta,²⁶ and other issues.

2. Overview of Gore's Influence as Vice President

Assessments of Gore's Influence as Vice President

There are innumerable accounts by administration insiders of Gore's influence in the Clinton White House. Clinton's Secretary of State Warren Christopher, the veteran of three Democratic administrations stated, "Gore is relied on more heavily than any Vice President has ever been in the past. Not just in foreign policy, but as far as I can tell, across the board." When Christopher had difficulty getting regular meetings with the president, he instead had a regular Friday lunch with the vice president.²⁷

Similarly, White House spokesman Mike McCurry stated, "When a lot of people talk, you'll see the president looking around the room. When Gore talks, the president is absolutely riveted." McCurry also stated, "You can search, but you won't find a major policy decision in this administration that President Clinton made without discussing it with the vice president."²⁸

The vice president's influence in the administration was such that Fuerth and the other NSC deputies came to an agreement to prevent the vice president's views from derailing the deliberative process. In an interview Fuerth explained,

I would not take an issue to the vice president and get his fixed position on it during the time when the National Security Council was deliberating.... I would not walk into a meeting at the deputies' level or the principals' level and announce that the vice president had a categorical view of the issue while the others were still struggling to come up with a recommendation ...²⁹

Other reports cited the early Clinton White House as having three boxes that needed to be checked to get anything done. Those boxes were President Clinton, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, and Vice President Gore.³⁰ One example of Gore's close relationship with the president is that Clinton shared a letter from Richard Nixon about his trip to Russia with only two other people—his wife and Gore.³¹

Longtime observers of Washington, D.C. and the presidency echoed these findings. David Rothkopf describes how Clinton's NSC structure was influenced by the close president-vice president relationship.³² Peter Rodman wrote, "Al Gore was believed to have unprecedented influence, as we have seen, in Bill Clinton's administration."³³ Stephen Hess also wrote that Clinton "... gave Gore unprecedented influence, especially in national security affairs, science and environmental policy, and management initiatives."³⁴ Hess also stated, "... Al Gore was clearly the most engaged vice president of the twentieth century."³⁵ Daalder and Destler described Gore's role as "... larger and more powerful than that of any vice president before ..."³⁶

Another significant indication of Gore's influence was that his top national security aide, Leon Fuerth, became a significant actor in the NSC in his own right, (as will be discussed in greater detail below).³⁷ The expanding role of the vice presidential staff is an important indicator of increased vice presidential influence.

Factors Contributing to Gore's Influence: An Initial Analysis

The Modern Presidency

Hypothesis 1A: When the president is able to select his vice president, the vice president is more likely to exercise influence.

Clinton's decision to choose Gore highlights the importance of the presidential nominee's power to select his running mate. Traditionally, party leaders would probably have counseled the young, moderate southerner Clinton to choose an older, liberal, northerner or westerner as his running mate. Instead, Clinton chose a running mate with a very similar political profile, believing it gave the Democratic party a stronger opportunity to win in the south. It was a political judgment that turned out to be correct. But Clinton's power to choose his running mate also meant he could select someone that he liked and wanted to work with; there are numerous accounts of their personal chemistry. Warren Christopher, who oversaw the Vice Presidential selection process, wrote that for Clinton there was, "clearly something special about Gore."³⁸

Hypothesis 1B: As the demands on the president have increased, the vice president will have greater opportunities to exercise influence.

It is not clear that the increasing challenges of the presidency facilitated Gore's influence within the Clinton administration. Gore took on many tasks on the president's behalf, e.g., as fundraiser, emissary, and surrogate, but it is difficult to argue that the challenges faced by the Clinton administration were greater than those of other presidencies. The 1990s were overall an era of peace and prosperity. One measure of federal government responsibility, federal spending as a percentage of GDP, shows no significant difference between spending in the Clinton-Gore administration and its two immediate predecessors.³⁹ While an imperfect measure, it indicates that the federal government did not take on major new responsibilities during the Clinton-Gore administration. While the administration faced challenges—as all presidents do—there is no obvious metric for the demands on the president that

indicates Gore would be more or less influential than the other modern vice presidents.

The Institutional Vice Presidency

Hypothesis 2A: Vice presidents with their own policy staffs are better able to exercise influence

Gore, like his predecessors, had an independent staff and his national security staff expanded to eight substantive aides along with four support personnel (Quayle, his immediate predecessor, had about five substantial aides and another three to four support personnel in his national security office).⁴⁰ Gore's staff however benefitted from an expanded access to the policy process, particularly in national security affairs. Gore's long-time national security advisor, Leon Fuerth, led this team. Fuerth played an expanded role compared to previous VPNSAs, emerging as an advisor to the president in his own right. Fuerth was different from his predecessors in two respects, first, because of his expanded role on the NSC staff, and, second, due to his long relationship with Gore. Fuerth had initially gotten to know Gore in 1979 as a staffer on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. Fuerth moved with Gore to the Senate. Previous VPNSAs had not had experience comparable to Fuerth's 13 years as a top aide to his principal. Fuerth's capacity to act as Gore's alter ego and advance his policy preferences was greater than those of his predecessors because of their long relationship. Sandy Berger, the deputy NSA in the first term and NSA in the second term, brought Fuerth into the policy process, stating, "There was a mind-meld between Leon and Gore."⁴¹ However, the structural changes to the VPNSA role under Gore also better enabled Fuerth to play a substantial and influential role in the Clinton administration on Gore's behalf and in his own right.

Fuerth's prominent position within the NSC structure was also crucial to the vice president's influence. In the first term, the VPNSA attended all NSC deputies meetings as a full participant. In the first term, Fuerth attended principals meetings but without the same level of participation. In the second term, Fuerth became a full participant in NSC principals' meetings.⁴² Fuerth or another staffer in the vice

president's office also participated in meetings of the new National Economic Council. When Fuerth could not attend meetings, his deputy attended in his place. Fuerth was granted "access to all the information that was flowing through the national security advisor's office ... [and] would participate in all deliberations ..."⁴³

As will be discussed below, Fuerth participated extensively in the inter-agency process. Ashton Carter, who served as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy under Clinton, highlighted Fuerth's status when he stated, "No one would make a decision without including him."⁴⁴ That this could be said about the vice president's top national security aide only highlights the major role that the vice president played in the administration. According to Fuerth, there was easy and rapid communication between the top-level aides, including those on the vice president's staff. He explained, "We had a web of communications rather than a web of intrigue."⁴⁵

Fuerth's relationship with his White House counterparts was paralleled by the links between the vice president's staff and their NSC and departmental counterparts. Fuerth explained that these aides were substantial and had their own portfolios. Initially, they secured information for Fuerth but later could speak on his behalf. Fuerth states that because of the vice president's national security staff, "I was able to operate at every level throughout the bureaucracy."⁴⁶

The vice president's staff played a crucial role in other ways as well. Charles Burson, Gore's legal counsel from 1997 to 1999 and chief of staff from August 1999 to the end of the administration, explained, "The most important thing was the relationship between the president and the vice president, but for implementation relations between staffs are critical." He noted that his own role was to "keep the White House posted on where we were headed."⁴⁷

From an institutional standpoint, the expansion and increase in the status and access of the vice president's national security staff was a significant innovation. The specific instances of vice presidential influence will highlight the importance both of the strong working relationship between the president and vice president and the expanded size and status of the vice presidential staff.

Hypothesis 2B: Vice presidents with an office in the West Wing are better able to exercise influence

Gore, like his predecessors, enjoyed the now traditional West Wing office. One indicator of its importance was that Gore only used his ceremonial office in the Old Executive Office Building (OEOB) if he was meeting a large group, since the West Wing office only seated six to eight.⁴⁸ One biographer described Gore as making “proximity a priority in relations with Clinton.” He quotes Robert Reich, Clinton’s Labor Secretary, who says of Gore, “He learned early on the two key ingredients. If you are physically close to him, whispering in his ear, and are clear and forceful, you have a fairly good chance of, if not persuading, then at least affecting the trajectory of a decision.”⁴⁹ Consequently, Gore put a priority on his proximity to Clinton, insisting on joining the bus tour during the campaign and relocating to Little Rock during the transition. The West Wing office facilitated Gore efforts to stay close to Clinton. While Gore had access to the president’s calendar and could join any meeting he wished, the West Wing office allowed Gore to keep abreast of Clinton’s informal and unscheduled meetings and join them whenever he wished.⁵⁰

Hypothesis 2C: Vice presidents with regular access to the president, and with access to White House meetings and paper-flow for themselves and their staff, are better able to exercise influence.

Gore, like his predecessors had an open invitation to White House meetings and to see the president, as well as a weekly lunch with the president. He was included in nearly all of the president’s meetings with heads of state.⁵¹ On national security affairs, the president and vice president met daily (when they were both in town) to receive and discuss the Presidential Daily Brief (PDB) for 30 to 60 minutes, during which Clinton and Gore had an open wide-ranging conversation.⁵² Specific instances of influence may not have occurred during these meetings, but through regular interactions, the president and vice president shaped each other’s views.

The private lunches remained an important component of the president-vice president relationship. Gore clearly valued this time with the president, pushing back

against efforts to remove them to relieve Clinton's grueling schedule.⁵³ Clinton himself mentioned how they kept the lunch schedule for eight years, interrupted only by travel, and they talked about political and personal issues. Clinton said, "... [T]he lunches kept us closer than we otherwise would have been in the Washington pressure cooker and eased my adjustment to my new life."⁵⁴

Another indicator of Gore's access was his role in the crucial budgeting process, where he could advance his priorities, such as environment and technology. Gore would call the OMB director about a plus-up (i.e., addition to the budget) in which he was interested and his staff would press for them at lower levels. Lawrence Haas, who served as both OMB communications director and the vice president's communications director explained:

He wouldn't have called if it would ruffle feathers with the president. But if the president looked at items and asked, "Why are we doing this?" and the answer was because the vice president wanted it, Clinton would have said, "Fine."⁵⁵

As discussed above, the vice president's staff also had extensive access to the White House policy process, facilitating the vice president's efforts to influence policy. Gore himself was "very conscious and pre-occupied that his people were in key meetings and he was pissed if they weren't."⁵⁶ But for the most part this access existed. In addition to their access to the national security process, other vice presidential staffers recalled being regular participants in the daily white house press and strategy meetings, as well as meeting their white house counterparts whenever needed.⁵⁷

Hypothesis 2D: Vice presidents who foster allies on the president's staff, exercise "hidden hand" influence, and avoid publicity for their policy preferences are better able to exercise influence

Gore emulated the Mondale model in terms of his behavior. Gore made every effort to demonstrate loyalty to the president in public, while maximizing his time with the president in order to augment his input and influence.

Similar to his predecessors, Gore took care to offer critical advice to the president in private or in small groups. Director of Central Intelligence, James Woolsey, stated that in formal NSC meetings Gore did not offer his advice except on strictly factual issues.⁵⁸ Leon Fuerth, the vice president's national security advisor, echoed this observation, explaining, "If Gore had anything to say, he could go to the president privately. He did not intervene except at the end to make a statement that helped crystallize the issue."⁵⁹ Other staffers stated that Gore did speak freely and, according to some would press his points relentlessly, in smaller meetings.⁶⁰ While Gore was one of the few people in the White House who could speak sharply to the President when his temper flared, Gore was as likely to use his sense of humor, and was one of the few in the White House who could poke fun at the president.⁶¹ There is at least one report that Gore's discretion evolved. One biographer reports that after the publication of Bob Woodward's *The Agenda*, in which the details from internal debates were published, Gore decided to be more discreet with his advice, confining his advice to his one-on-one meetings with the president.⁶²

However, like his predecessors, Gore was completely loyal to the president and careful about appearing in anyway to pre-empt or overshadow the president. Another vice presidential staffer recalled, "Gore used to say I have a constituency of one— I singularly serve the President."⁶³ Leon Fuerth noted that the vice president never acted as though he could give orders to cabinet members; "Gore never got ahead of his skis. He had a good sense of where he should go and where not to go if his objectives couldn't be met."⁶⁴

In the early days of the Clinton administration when disorder reigned, Gore was often described, in the words of an article in the *The Economist*, as "more presidential than the president."⁶⁵ During the 1994-95 period, particularly after the Republicans took control of the House, there were calls from within the party for Gore, who at that time had higher approval ratings than Clinton, to replace him at the head of the ticket. Gore, as a loyal vice president, quashed these rumors.⁶⁶

Gore's loyalty was further tested as the Clinton administration dealt with a number of high-profile scandals including an impeachment proceeding. The possible removal of the president can place the vice president in a difficult political situation

and Gore had every incentive to distance himself from the president to protect his own political future. However, Gore regularly reaffirmed his loyalty and confidence in the president.⁶⁷ Staffers report that this discretion was echoed in his private interactions. Charles Burson, the vice president's legal counsel during the Monica Lewinsky scandal and impeachment process (and later the vice president's chief of staff), stated that the vice president's office was not involved in the issue and there was little discussion of it. The Lewinsky scandal was probably the main reason tensions increased, as Gore focused on his presidential campaign. Burson notes however notes that some tension is inherent to the president-vice president relationship.

Clinton wanting to establish his legacy, while Gore wanted to carve out his own legacy. It's not as simple as the Monica issue; any VP has to come out from under the president's shadow.

Nonetheless, Burson continued to meet regularly with his White House counterparts and coordinate with them.⁶⁸ Lawrence Haas, who was Gore's communications director during the Lewinsky scandal echoes these observations.

I think things started to cool when Gore went in full campaign mode. My impression was the cooling really had to do with Gore's difficulty in figuring out how to run for president in the shadow of Monica-Gate. He never let on in my presence any dissatisfaction with Clinton. When it [Monica-Gate] was discussed, it was with gallows humor.⁶⁹

Gore may have been the "most influential vice president" up to that point, but he still took care not to come into conflict with other players. The White House's signature initiative in its first year was the health care plan championed by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. By most accounts, Gore was skeptical of the plan, but, in classic vice presidential defensive fashion, kept his concerns quiet, not wishing to tangle with the First Lady, the one advisor whose influence was greater than his own.⁷⁰

Outsiders & Insiders

Hypothesis 3A: Outsider presidents are more likely to select their running mates on the basis of personal and political compatibility, which increases the likelihood that the president will include them as a top-level advisor.

According to his autobiography, Clinton appreciated Gore's expertise as well as his political assets, noting that Gore's knowledge complemented Clinton's, by bringing an expertise in issues such as national security, energy and two of Gore's areas of focus, the environment and information technology. Clinton wrote, "Besides knowing more about subjects that we'd have to deal with if elected, Al understood Congress and Washington culture far better than I did."⁷¹ Sandy Berger, Clinton's foreign policy advisor during the 1992 campaign (and later national security advisor) echoed this assessment, noting, "Gore was from Congress and had foreign policy experience. These were pluses, not dispositive but benefits."⁷²

Hypothesis 3B: Outsider presidents are more likely to be inexperienced in areas such as national security affairs and not have strong national security teams, thus creating opportunities for vice presidential influence.

In his autobiography, Clinton wrote, "Al Gore helped me a lot in the early days, encouraging me to keep making hard decisions and put them behind me, and giving me a continuing crash course in how Washington works."⁷³

Both Sandy Berger and Charles Burson mentioned Gore's knowledge of Congress as being an important source of influence for Gore. But Gore's role was not simply an echo of Mondale's "political barometer" function. Stuart Eizenstat, who had served in the Carter White House and worked with Gore in several sub-cabinet positions in the Clinton administration, discussed the similarities and differences between the Clinton-Gore and Carter-Mondale relationships:

Gore's political antennae were not as sensitive as Clinton's, so he did not play the same role in the Clinton administration. Clinton had no

Washington experience. Even though Clinton had enormous political capabilities, he needed Gore's advice. Gore advised on the Senate, but he was more of a substantive guy who didn't make lots of friends in the Senate.⁷⁴

Nancy Soderberg, who served as the third highest ranking official in the NSC during the first term of the Clinton administration, noted that Gore's advice depended on the issue, but Clinton relied on Gore for a Washington perspective and that Gore frequently took the long view and his input usually added a level of sophistication to the discussion.⁷⁵

Besides his formal inexperience with Washington, D.C. and national security issues, Clinton's personal style also created initial difficulties where Gore was able to assist. Clinton did not say "no" easily and liked to hold lengthy discussions about issues. Senior advisor George Stephanopoulos, who often opposed the vice president on policies and had a tense relationship with Gore, wrote, "Clinton relied on Gore's disciplined intelligence."⁷⁶

In the early days of the Clinton White House, Gore was uniquely able to press for a decision. As the administration sought to establish its first budget and present it to Congress, decisions kept being changed forcing OMB to continually revise its figures. Gore, with the support of several of Clinton's aides, established a workable schedule to prepare for Clinton's first speech to Congress in which his budget would be presented.⁷⁷ At another point, when Clinton staffers were unsure how to respond to a possible press question about Bosnia, Gore provided a statement.⁷⁸ These examples illustrate how Gore's combination of decisiveness and his Washington experience helped him serve the President.

Despite Gore's Washington experience, some Clinton aides (and Clinton himself at times) were frustrated with Gore's lack of political savvy. Gore often took strong positions believing, "If you're bold people will come around." But others in the White House characterized Gore's approach as "damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead," which was not always helpful.⁷⁹ At times, Gore's certainty and readiness to take strong positions on what he thought was right served to bolster a sometimes indecisive commander-in-chief, particularly when it was bolstered by an area where

Gore was seen as an expert such as national security affairs. At other times, Gore's advice was rejected as politically unworkable.

Hypothesis 3C: Outsider presidents are more likely to seek their vice presidents' input in the appointments process, which increases the vice president's opportunities for influence.

Previous discussions of the vice president's role in the appointments process discussed two separate issues: the vice president's role in appointments across the bureaucracy and the vice president's role in White House staffing. In the case of Vice President Gore, there was a third area of influence, appointments in the vice president's area of expertise—environmental affairs and telecommunications.

After the election, Gore and his chief of staff Roy Neel relocated to Little Rock to participate fully in the transition process. Gore reportedly had input on every major transition decision (as will be discussed below, Gore was also influential on issues during the transition process) and played an unprecedented role in the appointments process.⁸⁰ Besides being consulted on major appointments, Gore placed allies in key positions throughout the administration, but with a focus on environmental issues. Carol Browner, Gore's former legislative director, served as the director of the E.P.A. throughout the Clinton administration,⁸¹ while another Gore Senate staffer, Kathleen McGinty, headed the White House Council on Environmental Quality. When Gore's candidate for Secretary of Energy, Tim Wirth, was not selected, Gore pressed for the creation of a new undersecretary for global affairs at the State Department that Wirth could fill. The staff director of the House Science and Technology Oversight Committee, which Gore had chaired, was appointed assistant secretary of energy for environmental management. Numerous other Gore allies received substantial positions in the Clinton administration, particularly in other areas where Gore had a long-standing interest such as telecommunications.⁸²

Gore continued to play a substantial role in appointments throughout his time as vice president. Gore both supported firing Secretary of Defense Les Aspin and

was one of only three people (besides the president) involved in the search for his replacement, Admiral Bobby Ray Inman.⁸³ When Inman withdrew from consideration, Gore was again crucial in the search and helped the president decide on Deputy Secretary of Defense William Perry.⁸⁴ After the 1996 election, Gore pressed for the appointments of Andrew Cuomo as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and Franklin Raines to be director of the Office of Management and Budget. Gore also supported the appointment of Bill Daley as Secretary of Commerce.⁸⁵

Gore also continued to use the appointments process to advance his agenda on the environment by selecting individuals who could advance his policy preferences. On environmental issues, Gore would involve himself in lower-level appointments. For example, in 1994, Terry Huffman was appointed as Assistant Secretary of the Army for civil works because of his background and views on environmental issues.⁸⁶

Gore's extensive and on-going involvement in the appointments process highlights his influential role in the Clinton administration. He was regularly consulted on the issue, and there were no articulated concerns about appointing "Gore" people to sensitive positions. However, links with Gore were no guarantee of influence. For example, Director of Central Intelligence James Woolsey had a long-standing relationship with Gore. He had advised Gore on nuclear strategy in the early 1980s and been a Gore supporter in 1988. Nonetheless, Woolsey had little access to the White House and did not play a role in administration policy-making. When Woolsey told Gore he was thinking of resigning unless this changed, Gore told him that this would not change and Woolsey resigned from the CIA in January 1995.⁸⁷

Within the White House, there was no initial effort to place Gore allies on the president's staff, but there was a high-level of integration between the White House and the office of the vice president, reducing the need for vice presidential allies in the White House. However, in the administration's difficult early days, Gore pressed for a more orderly decision-making process. Early on, Vice President Gore's first chief of staff and long-time Senate aide, Roy Neel, was brought into the White House as deputy chief of staff to help manage day-to-day operations and stabilize a chaotic process.⁸⁸ Neel was given charge of the president's schedule, a role echoing

Mondale's oversight of the Carter administration's White House Executive Management Committee. In one key meeting in August 1993, Neel used a large calendar, placed on the floor of the White House solarium, to allocate the president's time between reinventing government, NAFTA, and health-care.⁸⁹ This incident highlights the type of Washington experience that vice presidents and their staff can often provide to outsider presidents, helping to organize, prioritize, and work within Washington D.C.'s institutional calendars.

Gore urged Clinton to make other staff changes to improve White House operations. He was a primary advocate for bringing David Gergen, who had served several Republican presidents, into the White House to bring more Washington experience to the administration. Gergen joined the Clinton White House as counselor in the summer of 1993.⁹⁰ Gore also supported the appointment of former Congressman and OMB director Leon Panetta as chief of staff.⁹¹ According to some reports, every major appointment by the Clinton White House was scrutinized by Gore.⁹² Erskine Bowles, who served as deputy White House chief of staff and later as chief of staff, had been a Gore delegate for president in 1988. Several members of the vice president's staff were appointed to positions on the White House staff. After the 1996 elections, several Gore staffers moved into White House positions, and as the 2000 election grew closer, the Clinton White House provided tremendous support for Gore's presidential run.⁹³

While there was no particular mention of Gore allies throughout the bureaucracy as a source of influence (outside of environmental issues), Gore's role in White House appointments highlights the importance of his insider knowledge of Washington. Gore's experience was useful in identifying the kinds of changes that needed to be made, while his contacts were useful in finding experienced staffers who could help Clinton's advisors manage the White House. Finally, Gore's involvement in the appointments process helped ensure Gore's standing with the cabinet. Early on, Clinton instructed his cabinet, "If Al asks you for something, you should consider it as me asking."⁹⁴ The fact that Gore had been closely consulted about their initial appointment strengthened this message.

3. Gore's Influence on Specific Issues

This section explores specific cases of vice presidential influence in order to use process tracing to identify the roles played by particular elements of the institutional vice presidency and the vice president's personal background. It should be emphasized that it is not possible to gather every instance of vice presidential influence and the cases discussed below are *not* a complete record. But, they are a sufficient record to demonstrate how vice presidential influence operates.

Environment

President Clinton granted Gore a great deal of latitude on several issues where Gore was an acknowledged expert such as telecommunications policy and environmental policy. For Gore, the author of a best-selling book on environmental issues (*The Earth in Balance*), the environment was more than just an issue— it was (and is in his work post-vice presidency) central to his life's work. This section will begin with an overview of Gore's role in shaping administration environmental policy, followed by discussions of Gore's role in the administration's early effort to pass a BTU tax and his role in the 1997 talks on global warming in Kyoto, Japan.

Overview of Gore's Efforts in Administration Environmental Policy

Besides advocating for specific policies, Gore sought to include environmental issues in administration policy-making across the board. One way he did that was in the appointments process as described above, ensuring his allies were in key positions and, in at least one case, pressing for the creation of a new position at the State Department that could address these issues. Gore also pressed intelligence and national security agencies to include environmental issues on their agenda. Gore had the intelligence community expand its collection to consider environmental issues such as soil erosion, desertification, and population growth because these kinds of changes can often be root causes in conflicts and crises.⁹⁵ Sandy Berger explained that the CIA at Gore's direction produced a weekly report on this to supplement the

daily intelligence briefing, which had an important impact on how the president and vice president saw the world.⁹⁶ Similarly, Gore pressed the State Department to engage on environmental issues. In late 1995, Gore persuaded Secretary of State Warren Christopher to have each State Department bureau develop ideas to address international environmental problems.⁹⁷ In many of his other areas of interest, such as the bi-national commissions as discussed below, Gore placed environmental issues on the agenda.

These instances in which Gore shaped the *trajectory* of policy, emphasizing environmental issues that might not have been given priority without Gore's influence, highlight several important components of Gore's influence. First and foremost, Gore's access to the President and policy process (and the President's continuing confidence in Gore) were essential. Reportedly, Gore often brought up environmental issues during his weekly lunches with Clinton. It certainly helped that Clinton selected Gore, in part, *because* of his expertise and commitment to environmental issues. Gore's insider knowledge of the intelligence and national security process was important to pressing agencies to place environmental issues on their agenda. At the same time, as Jack Lechelt observes, Gore choose when to press for environmental issues carefully, knowing that economic growth was the administration's priority.⁹⁸

BTU Tax

Even before the administration took office, Gore played an active and influential role in the transition and agenda setting process. He effectively moved to Little Rock, where the new administration was selecting personnel and deciding on its priorities.

In this process, according to Bob Woodward's *The Agenda*, economic issues dominated. At one meeting, Gore argued that environmental issues had been central to the administration's victory and needed to be acted on. Gore proposed a BTU tax, which would have the dual benefits of raising revenue (deficit cutting being a primary administration objective) and creating incentives for lower fuel consumption.⁹⁹ Clinton, along with his political advisors, became progressively less

enthusiastic about Gore's energy tax as it ran into political opposition from Congress and was seen by the general public as a tax hike on the middle class.¹⁰⁰ While Gore argued strenuously for it, with at least initial support from the administration's economics team (Secretary of Treasury Lloyd Bentsen, NEC chair Robert Rubin, and CEA chair Laura Tyson), the President decided it could be dropped in negotiations over the final bill.¹⁰¹ Ultimately the BTU tax initiative was dropped when, in a meeting with the Senate Finance Committee, key Senators insisted the BTU tax was not viable.¹⁰²

The BTU tax was an unsuccessful Gore *initiative*. The fact that it was on the agenda at all highlights the vice president's role in the policy process and his access to the president. However, despite having powerful allies, when the president saw it as non-viable and placing the rest of the agenda in peril, the BTU tax was dropped. Gore's knowledge of Congress was not sufficient to persuade the president when his own read of the political landscape differed from that of the vice president.

Kyoto Conference on Global Warming

One of Gore's most substantial activities was his attendance at the 1997 Kyoto Conference on Global Warming. Held in December 1997, Gore "parachuted into Kyoto when success was in doubt, giving the U.S. negotiators the final leverage that was needed."¹⁰³ Gore's advisors counseled him not to attend the meeting because the likelihood of success was very low and there was little political benefit, particularly for a likely Presidential candidate. However, Gore told Stuart Eizenstat, the top U.S. representative at Kyoto, "Stu, I have worked on this issue most of my adult life, I have to go to Kyoto."¹⁰⁴

Gore went to President Clinton and requested greater flexibility in negotiations, a flexibility that Clinton granted. Gore then flew to Kyoto where he met non-stop for hours with conference delegates and delivered an address to the convention delegates that galvanized the conference into forging a global treaty. President Clinton signed the treaty but, recognizing the political obstacles to its ratification, did not submit it to the U.S. Senate. However, the treaty went into force

for the rest of the world and kept the United States engaged on the issue. Without Gore's intervention, it is unlikely there would have been any treaty at all.¹⁰⁵

This instance of vice presidential *initiative* relied heavily on Gore's ready access to Clinton, both for the specific request to attend Kyoto, but also for the longer-term relationship and discussion of environmental issues. For a vice president to have effective impact at a conference requires staff to ensure the vice president briefed and prepared for his meetings and appearances. Finally, this was a situation in which the president deferred to the vice president's expertise on an issue.

NAFTA

One of the major initiatives of the Clinton administration was the passage of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which lowered trade barriers between the United States, Mexico, and Canada. As detailed in Frederick W. Mayer's *Interpreting NAFTA*, the treaty became a controversial issue. Organized labor and environmental groups strongly opposed the agreement and attracted substantial public support. Leading figures in Congress, including House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt and House Majority Whip David Bonior (both of whom had close ties to organized labor) opposed the agreement. Texas billionaire H. Ross Perot, who had run for president as an independent in 1992 and garnered almost 19 percent of the popular vote, became a leading public spokesman against NAFTA. As vice president, Gore took an active role as an administration spokesperson on behalf of the agreement. He was particularly engaged in reaching out to Congress with concerns about the environmental consequences of NAFTA. But in two particular instances, he exercised influence. In August, after a difficult budget battle, the administration was selecting its legislative priorities for the fall. Two issues topped the agenda—health care and NAFTA. Several of the President's closest advisors, including First Lady Hillary Clinton and George Stephanopoulos, suggested dropping NAFTA to focus on health care. Gore, along with Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Secretary of Treasury Lloyd Bentsen, and National Security Advisor Tony Lake, argued for doing both. Gore in particular argued, "If you stand for

something, you don't give it up."¹⁰⁶ Ultimately, President Clinton chose to pursue NAFTA and health care reform at the same time.

Later, Gore played another influential role in persuading the President to allow him to take a risky, but ultimately successful, gambit to increase public support by challenging Perot, to a public debate. It is very possible that NAFTA would have passed had the debate not occurred. But Gore's successful public rebuttal of one the NAFTA's most prominent critic ensured that it passed by a healthy margin and had stronger public support.

Gore's chief of staff suggested that the vice president challenge Ross Perot to a debate on NAFTA. On November 4, 1993, Gore received the President's approval and the debate went forward. According to White House counselor David Gergen, Quinn discussed it with Gergen, who agreed it was a good idea. Gergen also states that Gore had already committed to CNN before asking the President's permission, forcing Clinton's hand.¹⁰⁷ There was some concern among the President's advisors that giving Perot a forum was demeaning and there was a concern that Gore might not win against Perot who had a talent with sound bites. A loss to Perot could severely damage the administration's efforts on behalf of NAFTA. But Gore had been a spokesman for NAFTA for some time and thoroughly prepared for the debate, including studying Perot's past appearances. Held on November 9 and broadcast on *Larry King Live*, the debate was a decisive victory. Gore's tremendous preparation paid off when he had ready counter-arguments to Perot's major themes. Polls showed that among viewers 47 percent thought Gore had won and 33 percent thought Perot had won. Although the number of viewers was small, the popular verdict became that Gore had won and that Perot and his opposition to NAFTA were discredited. Two days later, a Nightline poll showed that 46 percent thought Gore had won and 13 percent thought Perot had won. This was accompanied by a shift in public attitudes towards NAFTA. An NBC-*Wall Street Journal* poll taken in September found 25 percent of Americans supporting NAFTA and 36 percent opposing it. A poll taken by the same organization in November found 36 percent supporting NAFTA and 31 percent opposing. With the NAFTA vote only eight days away, this helped strengthen the administration's position. Gore's success and the broader shift in

public opinion about NAFTA gave wavering members of Congress confidence that a vote for NAFTA would not be politically damaging.¹⁰⁸ On November 17, 1993, the House, where the toughest opposition to NAFTA had been based, passed it by a vote of 234-200. A few days later, the Senate passed NAFTA.

Gore's influence on NAFTA included a case of *bolstering* the president when he was wavering on whether or not to press forward with NAFTA and a case of *initiative* in proposing that he debate Perot. Both cases relied on Gore's access to the president and the policy process. In the case of the debate with Perot, White House staff played an important role. It was Gore's chief of staff, Jack Quinn, who first suggested the debate and Gore's staff helped prepare him to debate Perot. When the vice president has access to the policy process, staff can sometimes identify areas where the vice president can play an expanded role. In the debate over pressing forward with NAFTA, the D.C.-insiders and those with foreign policy experience (Christopher, Bentson, and Lake) were the most supportive. It is probable that Gore's knowledge, of both Washington and international affairs, formed one component in reassuring Clinton about NAFTA's value.

Russia Policy

Co-chairing the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission (GCC) was Gore's highest profile foreign policy assignment. The GCC played a central role in U.S.-Russia relations in the Clinton administration.¹⁰⁹ As discussed above, Gore's role was to coordinate certain aspects of U.S.-Russian relations, not establish policy. However, as Sandy Berger explained, "It was not, in a sense high policy-making which still got made by Clinton and Yeltsin, but it became the infrastructure of the relationship and you can't separate that from policy."¹¹⁰

Because of his involvement with the GCC, Gore was able to exercise influence both by ensuring some of his preferred issues were included on the agenda and also because it firmly placed him in the center of U.S.-Russia policy, both in White House deliberations and through his regular meetings with top Russian leaders in which they often discussed issues beyond the GCC, thus enabling him to play a

role on broader issues. The most prominent example of the former was Gore insisting on adding an environment committee when the GCC structure was initially established.

In several public situations, Gore appeared to influence the trajectory of U.S.-Russia policy. In December 1993, concerned about the rise of ultra-nationalist politician Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Gore criticized the IMF for ignoring the consequences of its loan policies, which were causing hardship and leading Russians to support radicals like Zhirinovskiy.¹¹¹ A few days later Strobe Talbott, the ambassador for the former Soviet Union, and overall lead on U.S.-Russian relations, stated that reforms needed, “less shock and more therapy for the Russian people.”¹¹²

The Treasury Department, which had been working with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Russian reformers to encourage reforms to the Russian economy, felt undermined by the comments of Gore and Talbott. These events established a pattern in which, when economic reform priorities came into conflict with political stability in Russia, the latter prevailed. In 1998, when the Russian economy collapsed, Gore and other members of the foreign policy team argued that the economic crisis could lead to state collapse, persuading Treasury and the IMF to drop their objections and provide a large-scale bailout to Russia on favorable terms.¹¹³

While these conflicts existed, Gore also supported economic reforms in Russia. After the 1993 policy dispute, Treasury officials met with their counterparts from other agencies to explain their policies.¹¹⁴ Gore arranged small dinners with Undersecretary of the Treasury Lawrence Summers and Russian Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin and later his successor Yevgeny Primakov, in which Gore “refereed” while Summers discussed economic policy in depth.¹¹⁵

The above description is not the full scope of Gore’s influence on Russian policy. Besides the policy initiatives undertaken by the GCC, Gore spoke regularly with the president and created a backchannel with the Russian leadership that facilitated U.S.-Russian relations and was particularly useful as NATO expanded eastward and the U.S. led a coalition that bombed Russia’s traditional ally Serbia.

Gore's role in Russia policy was a combination of *initiative* (proposing new policies) and influencing the *trajectory* of policy. However, all throughout, Gore and the president shared fundamental goals about U.S.-Russian relations. For the GCC to be effective required extensive back and forth between the president and vice president as well as between the vice president's staff and the White House and inter-agency process. In addition, the vice president's staff played a critical role in enabling Gore to direct the GCC and influence Russia policy. Fuerth, as Gore's National Security Advisor, played a coordinating role in the GCC and was, at one point, described as "the virtual day-to-day manager of U.S. relations with Russia."¹¹⁶

A central component of Gore's role in U.S.-Russian relations was the president's confidence in Gore and the vice president's expertise on several key aspects of U.S.-Russian relations. One of the first challenges in U.S.-Russian relations was triggered when Russia sold rocket technology to the Indian Space Research Organization, a sale that could have resulted in U.S. sanctions on Russia under the Missile Control Regime (MCTR), better known as the Gore-McCain Act for its co-authors. To prevent these kinds of issues from creating regular crises in U.S.-Russian relations, the administration sought to build a broad space and energy partnership with Russia that would be far more advantageous for Russia than lower level deals with smaller countries.¹¹⁷ This relationship was institutionalized in the GCC and Gore's longstanding interest in space and expertise in arms control issues made him well placed to oversee this process.

Other Bi-National Commissions

The success of the GCC led to the establishment of other bi-national commissions. Several governments, such as Ukraine, sought similar arrangements. VPNSA Leon Fuerth noted, "We couldn't franchise. We had to be careful that the vice president wasn't over-subscribed." Two specific bi-national commissions, the Gore-Mbeki Commission with South Africa and the Gore-Mubarak Commission with Egypt, highlight important aspects of vice presidential influence and will be discussed below.

South Africa and AIDS

The initial genesis of the Gore-Mbeki Commission was “in a tent with Mandela after his inauguration,” where Gore proposed the idea to Mandela. Gore’s staffer had noted the similarities between South Africa’s transition and Russia’s transition and believed that the U.S. had a stake in seeing South Africa thrive as a multi-racial democracy and that a bi-national commission could be useful in encouraging this change.¹¹⁸

Established in March 1995, the Gore-Mbeki Commission focused on bringing investment to South Africa, but, like the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, the Gore-Mbeki Commission was used a forum to address a broad range of issues. Trade was a major issue at the bilateral meetings, but there were also committees and working groups addressing environmental issues, public safety, agriculture, and educational cooperation.¹¹⁹ The February 1997 commission meetings involved 380 U.S. government employees and four cabinet secretaries, as well as the vice president; security issues were also discussed.¹²⁰ In 1996, Gore and Mbeki worked out a resolution to the Armscor dispute in which South Africa was going to sell sophisticated tank targeting systems to Syria, a country the United States classified as a state supporter of terrorism.¹²¹

One issue where Gore exercised influence within the context of the Gore-Mbeki commission was in a trade dispute over AIDS drugs. Wracked by a rapidly expanding AIDS epidemic, South Africa sought to obtain, either by importing or manufacturing, generic anti-AIDS drugs. In 1997, South Africa passed a law permitting local companies to manufacture generic versions of AIDS drugs. For the United States, with a powerful lobby representing the pharmaceutical industry, this was a problem and threatened to trigger U.S. sanctions. For much of the 1990s, the Clinton administration treated the issue as a primarily a trade issue. In a February 1997 meeting, Gore reportedly expressed his concern to Mbeki that “a single trade issue could overshadow our bilateral relationship.” South Africa was increasingly running the risk of U.S. sanctions for trade violations. In the previous years, the United States had pressed South Africa to comply with U.S. trade standards.¹²²

However, by spring 1999, Gore and Leon Fuerth began to see the AIDS crisis as an international security issue. Fuerth recalls an NSC deputies meeting where he queried the presenter from the defense department about the impact of AIDS and how it would decimate a generation of Africans. Sandy Berger and Deputy National Security Advisor James Steinberg agreed with Fuerth that AIDS was a national security issue.¹²³

In March 1999, the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), supported by the commerce and state departments, sought to place South Africa on the “priority watch list.” Gore, allied with the NSC and public health authorities, defeated that proposal and a Gore staffer took the lead in negotiating with the South African Embassy to resolve the dispute. While Gore and Fuerth began pressing for the U.S. government to change its position, Gore was the subject to public protests by AIDS activists (Fuerth stated that Gore had been engaged on the issue and working to change policy well before this). On June 16, 1999, in Carthage, Tennessee, where Gore announced his run for the Presidency, AIDS activists infiltrated the crowd and briefly interrupted his speech. The activists continued to appear at Gore events. On June 21, the U.S. trade representative signed the settlement Gore had proposed in which the United States would withdraw its objections to the South African legislation, while also requiring South Africa to continue to uphold international patent laws. About a year later, Clinton signed an executive order effectively extending these conditions to any country in sub-Saharan Africa that met minimum World Trade Organization (WTO) requirements.¹²⁴

Gore’s role in South Africa policy represent cases of vice presidential *initiative* in proposing a bi-national commission with South Africa and in changing the *trajectory* of policies in raising the profile of AIDS issues and shifting U.S. policy regarding the production of generic AIDS medications. Vice presidential staff was particularly important in these instances of influence. The idea for the Gore-Mbeki Commission originated with the Gore’s staff and highlights their role as a source for vice presidential initiatives. The role of VPNSA Fuerth in raising AIDS as a national security issue and working out an agreement between the U.S. government stakeholders on how to handle the trade dispute with South Africa show how the vice

president's staff can extend his policy reach. Gore's influence on these issues would not have been possible without a strong working relationship with the president. Fuert's active role in high-level NSC meetings shows the extent to which not only the vice president but also his staff was embedded in the policy process.

To some extent, these instances of influence relied on Gore's specialized knowledge of international security affairs. In particular, Gore was heavily focused on how environmental issues could impact traditional security affairs and transnational threats in general. Bringing this kind of issue to the president's attention was not unusual for Gore. Further, shifting AIDS policy to an international security challenge and addressing the South African trade issue both occurred well into Clinton's second term. At that point, the outsider president's knowledge of foreign policy would have increased and he would have been less dependent on his vice president for advice on national security issues. Further, Gore was beginning to politically separate himself from Clinton as he prepared to run for President— and the administration had suffered through the Lewinsky scandal and impeachment crisis. Despite these factors, Gore still had a strong position in the policy process and sufficient access to the President to exercise influence.

Egypt

The Gore-Mubarak partnership, formally known as the U.S.-Egyptian Partnership for Economic Growth and Development, was initiated in September 1994 to foster economic growth in Egypt by bringing issues to the top levels of the two governments. It included four subcommittees, the leading being the subcommittee for economic policy. The other three subcommittees dealt with technology, environment and sustainable development, and finally education and human resources. The partnership, like the other bi-national committees, addressed a very broad range of issues from strengthening trade relations and foreign investment, to eliminating the use of leaded gasoline in Egypt, to bringing the Internet into Egyptian schools. According to Stuart Eizenstat, Undersecretary of State for Economic, Business, and Agricultural Affairs, the commission "became the umbrella and

guiding force” for the \$800 million U.S. aid program for Egypt and helped Egyptian exporters make use of American trade preferences.¹²⁵

Like the establishment of the Gore-Mbeki commission, the Gore-Mubarak partnership was established at the Vice President’s request. VPNSA Leon Fuerth noted that the idea came out of conversations with inter-agency professionals who were frustrated in their efforts to foster reform in Egypt. Additionally, Fuerth explained that Egypt had a population bulge and, if reforms were not initiated, there would be political repercussions. The nightmare scenario was that unrest would lead politically moderate Egypt to become an Islamist state.¹²⁶

This instance of vice presidential *initiative* relied heavily on staff for gathering the appropriate background information and identifying an appropriate opportunity for the vice president. The vice president had sufficient access to the president to make the proposal and get his support. Finally, this incident illustrates President Clinton’s interest in Gore’s analysis of international security affairs.

Summit of the Americas

Although Gore did not spearhead a formal mechanism in U.S. relations with Latin America, he played an active role and used his influence to advance areas in which he was particularly interested such as re-inventing government and environmental issues. According to Richard Feinberg, who was serving at the Senior Director for Inter-American Affairs at the NSC, Gore was a leading force in initiating the 1994 Summit of the Americas and played a crucial role throughout the process. Much of this account of Gore’s role is taken from Feinberg’s monograph, *Summitry in the Americas*. His descriptions of how events unfolded provide a very clear sense of Gore’s role and authority within the Clinton White House.¹²⁷

After the victory of passing NAFTA, the White House decided a trip by the vice president to Mexico City would be useful to capitalize on the political victory at home and to continue the process of improving relations with Mexico. Gore wanted to elevate the policy importance of the trip. Gore’s national security advisor consulted with counterparts from the USTR, Commerce, and the National Economic

Council to develop possible policies that the vice president could present in his speech in Mexico City. Having the vice president announce a Pan-American summit was one of the possibilities raised, but the group dismissed it because the president was already committed to extensive travel that year. However, Gore was quite taken with the idea and decided to press for it. He “summoned” National Security Advisor Tony Lake to go over the president’s schedule and check with the relevant departments. When time in the president’s schedule was found and no major objections were made by the other relevant agencies, Gore took his proposal to the president, who agreed. However, at the last minute, the President’s schedulers raised objections. Gore called from Mexico City and, along with the White House chief of staff, emphasized to the schedulers that the summit was important to the vice president. On the plane, Vice President Gore modified the speech slightly to specifically invite “democratically elected leaders.” Feinberg noted that this excluded Castro and deterred coup-plotters. Feinberg notes that the initiation of the summit, which only took 36 hours and involved a small number of players, was the case study of an end run around the bureaucracy. As Vice President Mondale had found beforehand, international travel facilitates these kinds of situations in which issues can be forced and major bureaucratic players cannot exercise influence. Of course, for this to be effective, the vice president must have access to the President, both in terms of meetings but also in terms of a willingness to listen.

Gore continued to play a major role in organizing the summit. Gore traveled to organize the summit, meeting with the presidents of more than half a dozen Latin American nations as well as the prime minister of Canada and hosting a conference of Latin American cultural leaders in preparation for the summit. At the same time, Gore was active within the Washington foreign policy bureaucracy, playing an active role in the planning, occasionally convening deputies level meetings himself as well as having his national security advisor reinforce his views at meetings. Feinberg reports that Fuerth was at the Oval Office meeting just days before the summit when the president approved a set date for a hemispheric free trade agreement.¹²⁸

Gore also pressed issues that he felt were important, such as good governance and anti-corruption along with environmental issues. According to Feinberg, Gore

was adept at using public speeches to advance issues and, in a September 1994 speech at the Inter-American Development Bank, stated that the challenge for Latin America in the 1990s would be the establishment of good governance. Gore also pressed for sustainable development issues. He and his VPNSA Leon Fuerth held several meetings with other players in the summit process insisting that these issues be on the agenda.¹²⁹

The Summit of the Americas was a case of *vice presidential initiative*. Further, Gore ensured that certain items remained on the summit agenda. Several elements made this instance of influence possible. Gore's long-time national security advisor played a role at several key points, including the initial meeting seeking ways to capitalize on the NAFTA victory and elevate the importance of Gore's trip to Mexico City as well as ensuring that the vice president's concerns were on the agenda. That Gore could readily meet with Lake is one case that shows the importance of Gore's West Wing office (next door to the NSA). That VPNSA Fuerth was in the Oval Office for a key meeting, and that the White House staff readily lined up behind Gore's initiative emphasizes the extent that Gore and his staff were embedded in the policy process. Clinton's own ready support for Gore's initiative can be seen as evidence of his appreciation for Gore's ideas. When there was opposition to the idea, Gore was in a position to appeal directly to the president and get his support.

Bosnia & Balkans

In the early 1990s, as the Cold War ended, Yugoslavia lurched into a complex and bloody civil war. The nation of Yugoslavia consisted of several ethnic groups with ancient animosities. As the nation-state collapsed these animosities became open war replete with terrible atrocities against civilian populations. For American leaders, the problem presented many difficulties. As a senator and as vice president, Gore called for a robust American response and had urged Clinton to make the Balkan violence a campaign issue to highlight the Bush administration's inaction.¹³⁰ According to Sandy Berger and Leon Fuerth, Gore's advocacy for action on Bosnia started on the

campaign bus and that continued in office. Gore played a key role in keeping the Balkan issue front and center, raising it regularly with the president.¹³¹

However, the Clinton administration had difficulties developing a coherent policy towards the Serbian war in Bosnia. Gore was one of the leaders among the group of the President's advisors who were calling for strong action, but the administration felt constrained by European concerns.¹³² After the July 1995 massacre in Srebrenica in which Serbian forces killed thousands of Muslim men and boys, the president was prepared to act. After clearing it with Clinton, Gore made an emotional statement at a NSC principals meeting that the U. S. had to lead the international community to prevent future massacres.¹³³ The United States had been providing aid to Croatian and Bosnian military forces and with US encouragement and support they attacked Serbian forces to end massacres. This was combined with a NATO bombing campaign. Gore also played a critical role, quietly meeting about half of the members of the House to persuade them to support the administration's policy. Gore was also a key interlocutor with Bosnian leaders and Croatian President Franjo Tudjman.¹³⁴

Gore's staff played also critical role in Clinton administration policy towards the former Yugoslavia. Gore's national security advisor Leon Fuerth had been the NSC staffer overseeing economic sanctions on Serbia since 1993. The vice president's staff researched how sanctions worked and developed options to make them more effective. With this knowledge, Fuerth proposed using expanded sanctions and Sandy Berger approved it, giving Fuerth oversight. Sandy Berger recalls:

In 1994-5 the UN adopted economic sanctions on Serbia, which had been pretty ineffective generally. Leon was put in charge of enforcing sanctions. He put together the skunk works from various agencies, met every day and refined the sanctions in such a way that they really had an impact. He was able to identify people close to Milosevic, business leaders, and identify industries that underpinned Milosevic's influence.

He was like the puppet master pulling these strings. His work made a very important contribution to bringing down Milosevic.¹³⁵

In his autobiography, Clinton himself credits Fuerth with making the sanctions effective.¹³⁶ Fuerth's role in the sanctions program placed him in the center of policy-making. For example, the sanctions were debated within Washington and also between the United States and its allies. But Fuerth, supported by Gore and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright, pressed to keep tough sanctions on Serbia.¹³⁷

A few years later, when Serbian forces began attacking Kosovars, Gore again was a strong advocate for military action on their behalf. At this point Gore was heavily engaged in the 2000 election campaign, but he was reportedly a strong advocate for the intense NATO bombing campaign that not only halted the atrocities but also brought down the Milosevic government. Gore also was in contact with Victor Chernomyrdin, who was appointed as Russia's special emissary on the issue. Gore's talks with Chernomyrdin played a role in bringing the crisis to a resolution.¹³⁸

This instance of *vice presidential bolstering* (encouraging Clinton to take action in Bosnia) and *vice presidential initiative* (identifying new policy options for doing so) highlights several key aspects of vice presidential influence. Obviously Gore had access to the president, starting even before the election and during the campaign. Gore's staff, particularly Leon Fuerth helped Gore press for more action on Bosnia. But Fuerth and Gore's knowledge of the national security apparatus was critical to developing policy options that could be used against Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic. Sandy Berger stated:

The Clinton library declassified documents on Bosnia and did a program on it. The CIA guys were full of praise for how Fuerth managed the process calling it the best, most sophisticated relationship they had had with policy-makers. Leon had been an intelligence committee staffer, and Gore had served on the Intelligence committee. Using the intelligence community smartly is a two-way street. You have to pose the right questions and bring the right people in. Very few can do this. People get elected and bring in former CEOs or deans as

cabinet members who have never dealt with the intelligence community. I always thought there should be some kind of training program. We only get 20 percent out of the intelligence community. It took me years to get it right, then you are frustrated, but how can you know what they need and what they can do?¹³⁹

Don't Ask, Don't Tell

Early in the first term, the Clinton administration sought to overturn the long-standing military ban on homosexuals serving in the ranks. When the administration ran faced tough opposition from the military and Congress, the “don't ask, don't tell” (DADT) compromise was developed in which recruits and service people would not be asked about their orientation but also could not discuss it. The president and his advisors were not happy with the compromise but knew that Congress would overturn an executive order lifting the ban on gays in the military, and that DADT would at least ameliorate the difficulties faced by gays currently serving in the armed forces. On the whole, DADT was accepted as the least bad option. At the meeting the night before Clinton was to announce the policy, Gore emphatically argued for refusing the compromise, standing on principle and for overturning the ban. Clinton himself argued with Gore, something he rarely did.¹⁴⁰ According to NSC speechwriter Jeremy Rosner, everyone in the room agreed with Gore about the merits of the issue, but the decision had been made that overturning the ban was politically unfeasible and that “don't ask, don't tell” was the least bad option. If the administration instead fought to overturn the ban, the thinking was that Congress would legislate a much harsher policy. According to Rosner, many felt that Gore's unwillingness to bend on the issue came across as sanctimonious.¹⁴¹

Gore obviously had access to the process and, having served in the military and on the Senate Armed Services Committee, had some credibility in discussing the issue. However, the president fundamentally disagreed with his vice president's conclusions on the politics of the policy and *he was not persuaded*. It is worth noting that Gore was willing to take strong stands on issues outside of his private meetings

with the president. While he was always outwardly loyal, Gore did not always use the hidden hand tactics of his predecessors.

Transnational Threats

In the summer of 1993, the administration was preparing a series of major foreign policy addresses leading up to the president's speech at the U.N. General Assembly in which the administration hoped to define its foreign policy vision. Gore wanted to emphasize transnational threats. Tim Wirth, the Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs, and his deputy, Jessica Matthews, both of whom were close to Gore, lobbied hard for this shift. However, NSC counselor and senior director for legislative affairs, Jeremy Rosner, who ran the inter-agency speech-writing process, felt that this approach was not in accord with the president's policy preferences. The NSA and the Pentagon were also not on board. In the final White House meeting to review the draft, just days before the speech, Gore pressed hard to shift the speech to discuss transnational threats. Rosner recalls, at that meeting, "Gore savaged me. It was excruciating. Everyone said I was getting smaller and smaller as the meeting went on." After the meeting, the president told Rosner to just to add a few words to incorporate Gore's themes but not to change the speech substantively.¹⁴²

This failed effort to change the trajectory of the president's policy emphasizes the limits of the vice president's influence. Although Gore clearly had access to the process and the president, as well as allies and expertise on the issue, he could not influence the president. This instance is a reminder that no matter what equities a vice president possesses on an issue, they amount to little if the president is not interested in the issue.

Iraq and Terrorism

As a senator, Gore was one of the few Democrats to vote to authorize Operation Desert Storm. He had long been considered one of the more hawkish Democrats Party. On many occasions, Clinton turned to Gore for his input on the use of force

and on dealing with violent actors on the world stage. In April 1993, early in the Clinton administration, the president received a report that Iraqi intelligence was linked to a plot to assassinate former President George H. W. Bush during his April visit to Kuwait. President Clinton consulted at great length with his vice president, who urged the president to respond with force well before the FBI and CIA reports were complete in June 1993. Gore had undertaken his own informal investigation into the plot, spearheaded by his VPNSA and determined that a U.S. military response was needed. Besides Gore's general inclinations towards a more assertive use of the U.S. military, he reportedly told the president that it was smart politics because it would dispel the image of Clinton (and the Democrats in general) being weak on national security and the use of military force.¹⁴³ In June, President Clinton authorized a plan in which U.S. Navy ships launched 23 Tomahawk missiles against the Iraqi Intelligence Service Headquarters. The missiles were launched around 1 a.m. Baghdad time to ensure minimal casualties.¹⁴⁴

On other decisions relating to terrorism policy, Richard Clarke, the chief counter-terrorism advisor on the Clinton administration National Security Council, reports an instance in which Gore exercised influence. Clarke states that the administration had an internal debate over extraordinary renditions. These are operations to apprehend terrorists in other countries without the support of or knowledge by the local government. According to Clarke, despite their name, they were fairly routine operations. When Clarke began proposing these operations in the Clinton White House, White House Counsel Lloyd Cutler opposed them. Clarke states that Clinton seemed sympathetic to Cutler's argument, that these operations violated international law. When Gore joined the meeting (having just flown in from South Africa), according to Clarke, Gore stated, "That's a no-brainer. Of course it's a violation of international law, that's why it's a covert action. The guy is a terrorist. Go grab his ass." Clinton approved multiple extraordinary renditions. According to Clarke, Clinton ultimately approved every proposed extraordinary rendition brought to him, although many were not ultimately carried out for operational reasons.¹⁴⁵

Another terrorism incident highlights the expanded influence of the VPNSA in the Clinton administration. On June 25, 1996, a truck bomb struck the Khobar

Towers, a high-rise housing complex in Saudi Arabia used by U.S. military personnel, and 19 Americans were killed. When the administration determined that Iran was the probable perpetrator, the NSC began preparing options against Iran. Fuerth was included in the “Small Group” that discussed these options and included the DCI, the NSA, and the Secretaries of Defense and State. One of the options developed was an intelligence option (now believed to be exposing Iranian intelligence operatives around the world¹⁴⁶). Fuerth strongly counseled for it, arguing, “Well, we ought to do that anyway just for the hell of it.”¹⁴⁷ This option, known as Operation Sapphire, was deployed in 1997 and may have been a factor in the decrease in Iranian-supported terrorism since the late 1990s.¹⁴⁸

Gore was not always the administration hawk. As Nancy Soderberg explained, his advice “did not fit into a neat box” and was issue dependent.¹⁴⁹ While Gore often advocated for the use of force and aggressive measures against terrorists, this was not always the case. In late 1993 and early 1994, as the Clinton administration sought to foster the peace process in Northern Ireland, the administration debated whether or not to grant a visa to Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams. Sinn Fein was the political arm of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which the United States and the United Kingdom classified as a terrorist organization. Irish-American supporters of the IRA and many advocates of the peace process in Britain and Ireland wanted the U.S. to grant Adams a visa to improve his stature and thereby increase his ability to press the IRA towards peace from within the organization. The British government vigorously opposed this, seeing it as the U.S. legitimating a terrorist organization. The State Department, valuing the special relationship between the U.S. and the U.K. also opposed granting Adams a visa. The Department of Justice, the FBI, and the CIA supported State’s position. National Security Advisor Tony Lake and Staff Director Nancy Soderberg were the point people on the issue and the biggest supporters of granting the visa. But in his memoirs, Clinton specifically mentions that Gore “clearly grasped the larger context in which the decision had to be made” and supported granting the visa.¹⁵⁰

These incidents of vice presidential influence, primarily *bolstering* the president and perhaps in the case of renditions *persuading* him, show several aspects

of vice presidential influence. As always, the vice president was part of the policy process and had the needed access to the President. The case of the debate over extraordinary renditions may emphasize the importance of the West Wing office, since Gore had just arrived from overseas but could readily head down the hall to an Oval Office meeting. The vice president's staff also played a critical role in some of these instances. Fuerth researched the plot on former President Bush on Gore's behalf so the vice president could provide advice to the president. The inclusion of the VPNSA in a highly sensitive planning sub-group of the NSC that was overseeing covert operations to respond to the Khobar terrorist attack is yet another incident that highlights the growing status of the vice president and his staff within the White House. These are also cases where the vice president and the VPNSA had specialized insider knowledge of the intelligence community that helped them provide advice to the president. Having served in the Foreign Service and as a staffer on the House Intelligence Committee, Fuerth was capable of investigating the plot against former President Bush and assessing the effectiveness of Operation Sapphire. Gore was also familiar with intelligence operations, lending weight to his advice to the president in the case of extraordinary renditions. Finally, Gore's grasp of how the security and political implications were connected in both the 1993 strike against Iraq and giving Gerry Adams a visa to the U.S. added value to his counsel to the president.

Elían González

The saga of Elían González was the only time Gore publicly broke from the administration after losing an internal struggle. This occurred during Gore's campaign for the presidency and may have had a substantial effect on the election's outcome.

In November 1999, Elían González, a five-year-old Cuban boy, was rescued by fishermen off the coast of Florida. He had been in a raft with 12 others, including his mother, who drowned in their effort to come to the United States. González had relatives in the U.S., but his father, still in Cuba, sought to have his son returned to him. The U.S. State Department recused itself from the issue, leaving the boy's fate

to the Florida courts. Elian's status became a complex legal issue and also a sensitive political one, particularly among Florida's Cuban-American population, which harbors a deep animus for the Castro regime.¹⁵¹

As the controversy expanded, several legislators introduced bills to move the case's jurisdiction to family court and grant permanent resident status to Elian's father and other relatives. Gore publicly supported these measures, breaking with the Clinton administration's stance that the case should be decided through standard judicial and administrative mechanisms without political interference.¹⁵² While Gore was on the campaign trail, his staff argued strenuously on his behalf within the White House. Chief of Staff Charles Burson recalls, "I would try to get them to see where we were coming from, but they were pretty well set."¹⁵³ In his memoirs, Clinton was sympathetic to his vice president's situation, noting that his position was defensible and understood Gore's concerns about how this might affect Florida voters. However, Clinton felt that refusing to re-unite Elian with his father would hurt American parents in custody cases with former spouses in other countries. Further, Clinton noted that his wife, a long-time advocate for children's' issues felt that reuniting Elian with his father was the right thing to do.¹⁵⁴

Ultimately, the administration allowed Elian Gonzalez to return to Cuba with his father. When the Miami relatives were not willing to make an arrangement, federal agents seized the boy on April 22, 2000 and returned him to his father. After another two months of court procedures, Elian returned to Cuba with his father. A few months later, the Florida vote was nearly even in the general election, leading to a legal confrontation between the Gore and Bush campaigns over the election outcome, which Bush ultimately won. The Elian Gonzalez affair, in all likelihood, had had an effect on the election.

This was a failed instance of *vice presidential persuasion*. Because he was on the campaign trail, Gore had limited access to the president. He did have his staffers making the case on his behalf, but they could not bring their concerns to the president; only the vice president could take the issue to that level.¹⁵⁵ In addition, Gore faced strong White House opposition in Attorney General Janet Reno and the First Lady. While the president clearly respected Gore's views, Clinton had

identified an international component of the issue that he felt was more important than immediate political needs.

4. Causes of Vice Presidential Influence in the Clinton Administration: A Second Look

Having examined specific instances of Vice President Gore's influence on Clinton administration policies primarily reinforces the conclusions reached in the initial overview of the hypotheses in this case study.

The Modern Presidency

None of the mini-case studies of Vice President Gore's influence suggest that Gore affected policy because the presidency itself had become more difficult. Gore's highest profile foreign policy assignment, the U.S.-Russia bi-national commission, was established in great part at Russia's suggestion while several of the other bi-national commissions were requested either by the partner nation or proposed by the vice president. The bi-national commissions augmented U.S. relations with the partner states but were not specifically developed to relieve the burdens on the president. Gore did willingly take on a number of tasks that Clinton did not care for—particularly fundraising, playing “bad cop” in negotiations, and using harsh campaign rhetoric. Gore's readiness to take on these difficult tasks probably contributed to the strong relationship between the president and vice president which made it possible for the vice president to affect policy. But Gore's political surrogate role in the Clinton presidency was by no means unique.

The president's power to select his vice president played an important role in creating the conditions for vice presidential influence. The fact that Clinton had the power to select his running mate allowed him to choose Gore based on personal affinity and trust, creating the necessary conditions for the president to bring Gore into his circle of trusted advisors.

The Institutional Vice Presidency

The instances in which the vice president shaped policy do indicate that the growth of the institutional vice presidency played a role in Gore's influence as vice president. Gore's West Wing office, his walk-in privileges to the Oval Office, regular private meetings with the President, and access to the White House paperflow and meetings, were the perquisites enjoyed by vice presidents from Mondale on and were critical to his influence. From the beginning of his relationship with Clinton, Gore recognized the long-standing rule of bureaucratic politics—"nothing propinks like propinquity" and the instances of his influence illustrate his use of this rule. The case of the conference of the Americas, which Gore initiated, highlights all of these elements. Gore had ready access to everyone involved in an issue; his access was facilitated by his West Wing office; and when necessary, he could go directly to the president. Time and again, it was evident that Gore was nearly always "in the room" for key decisions and (so far as this research has shown) never closed out of the process even when his policy preferences did not prevail.

Gore generally continued the modes of operation of his successors. It appears that Gore was more outspoken within the White House than some of his predecessors, relying less on the "hidden hand" techniques of Mondale, although he was still discreet in larger cabinet and NSC meetings. Although he was outspoken within the White House, he was outwardly loyal to the President.

This loyalty was tested, both early on when the administration seemed to be foundering and Gore was seen by the public as more presidential than the president, and later on during the Lewinsky scandal. In both cases, Gore was completely loyal to the White House and voiced no public sign of dissatisfaction. Gore was rewarded for this loyalty by never being cut out of the policy process. Later in the administration, when Gore was distancing himself from Clinton as he ran for president and Clinton had greater confidence in dealing with foreign policy, Gore still had the access to advance major initiatives such as resolving the issue of AIDS drugs with South Africa and attending the Kyoto conference. Further, Clinton remained supportive when Gore himself ran into political difficulties spurred by a problematic

1996 fund-raiser held at a Buddhist temple in Los Angeles in which thousands of dollars of illegal donations were made.¹⁵⁶

The major institutional innovation however was the increase in the size of Gore's national security team and particularly the increase in status of Gore's national security advisor. Gore's VPNSA Leon Fuerth expanded the traditional VPNSA role of information gathering and was a full participant in deputies' committee and later principals' committee meetings. While Fuerth did not explicitly advocate the vice president's position, it was generally understood that he shared the vice president's worldview. Further, Fuerth became an advisor to the president in his own right.¹⁵⁷ In addition, Gore built on the expanded vice presidential national security staff established under Quayle. This expanded status and size allowed the vice President to exercise influence in multiple ways, beyond traditional staffing functions of keeping the vice president informed and prepared (although that duty also remained important.) Gore's staffers generated important initiatives, such as the bi-national commission with South Africa and the idea of having Gore debate Perot on NAFTA. Bosnia and the bi-national commissions are also examples of cases where the vice president's staff made it possible for the vice president to oversee a major foreign policy initiative. Gore's staff played a key role in advancing issues such as including environment and governance on the agenda of the Summit of the Americas and changing U.S. policy on AIDS drugs with South Africa.

Outsiders & Insiders

Based on background and experience, Clinton and Gore fit the outsider president/insider vice president paradigm. Clinton explicitly chose Gore for his Washington knowledge and familiarity with issues that Clinton knew he would have to address as president. Gore was an across-the-board advisor to President Clinton, but arms control and the environment, two areas of Gore's expertise that Clinton mentioned as factoring into his selection, were areas where Gore affected policy.

Gore's knowledge of Washington and national security issues was helpful to President Clinton and influenced his decisions on many occasions. The 1993

decision to attack Iraq is a case where Gore's familiarity with national security and Washington gave him the tools to help the President decide to strike Iraq. Gore's VPNSA, who had experience with the intelligence community, provided substantive support for the operation. Gore, as a former Senator, applied his read of the political situation to advise that striking Iraq was both the right thing to do and smart politics. There were other cases where Gore, and his staff, helped shape policy through their familiarity with the national security apparatus, such as Bosnia, terrorism issues, and the bi-national commissions. Many instances of vice presidential influence were situations where Gore (and his staff) identified an opportunity for the administration to do something Gore viewed as significant to address a longer-term problem. Whether or not the president embraced Gore's idea depended on the politics of the issue. In some cases, such as the Summit of the Americas or going to Kyoto, the president supported the vice president fully. In other cases, such as the BTU tax or DADT, the president yielded to political exigencies.

Gore was heavily involved in the selection of the cabinet and in areas of interest, particularly the environment and telecommunications, appointed allies. Outside of his particular areas of interest, it does not appear that Gore's role in the general appointments process was a particular source of influence. Gore was involved in the White House appointments, where he urged the appointment of his allies with the primary agenda of establishing a more orderly process. However, Gore's VPNSA's expanded role highlights the way in which experienced insider staffers can play an important role in a White House that is less familiar with national security issues. VPNSA Fuerth became an advisor to the president in his own right and ended up overseeing numerous issues. The best example is the VPNSA's role enforcing sanctions on Serbia. Here, Fuerth's familiarity with the intelligence community allowed him to coordinate sanctions that pressured the Serbian regime. This advanced Gore's agenda of taking stronger action against Serbia to bring the violence in Bosnia to an end. This is the clearest but not the only example of Gore's experienced staff playing a critical role on a major foreign policy issue, thereby increasing the vice president's ability to shape policy.

Conclusion

The Carter-Mondale relationship makes an interesting contrast with the Clinton-Gore relationship. Carter was a famously apolitical politician and Mondale served as his “political barometer,” using his instincts and experience to help make President Carter’s goals a reality. To some extent, it appears that Clinton-Gore reversed this relationship. Clinton had extremely “sensitive political antennae,” while Gore sought to do what was right, believing that the politics would work out. This is a simplification. As some of the instances of vice presidential influence show, Gore was also an experienced politician and his practical understanding of Washington, government, and the world were often a factor in the President’s decision-making. But it contains an element of truth. Clinton himself said as much when he discussed Gore’s role in his decision-making process:

Al Gore gave me some great advice. He may kill me for this, but he said, ‘You can analyze a problem and calculate all of its aspects, but you also can feel what is right about a course of action. The American people pay you to think, but they want to know how you feel. And you make a big mistake if you spend too much time letting them see how you think rather than letting them know how you feel on what’s right or wrong.’¹⁵⁸

Clinton relished politics and maneuvered for the best political position. Gore pressed President Clinton to take the long-view and be bold. On many occasions, the president rejected Gore’s advice, but often the vice president’s view was what the president wanted and needed to hear.

Chapter 6 Endnotes

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- ¹³² Berger, interview by author.
- ¹³³ Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, 330-31.
- ¹³⁴ Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War* (New York: Random House, 1998), loc. 1509-35.
- ¹³⁵ Berger, interview by author.
- ¹³⁶ Clinton, *My Life*, 512.
- ¹³⁷ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, loc. 2024.
- ¹³⁸ Lechelt, *The Vice Presidency in Foreign Policy*, 223-24.
- ¹³⁹ Berger, interview by author.

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- ¹⁴⁰ Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge: The Clinton Presidency* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 250.
- ¹⁴¹ Jeremy Rosner, interview by author, Washington, D.C., December 14, 2012.
- ¹⁴² Rosner, interview by author. Rosner also notes that in retrospect Gore was right on the substance.
- ¹⁴³ Kenneth Walsh, "A Vice President Who Counts: Al Gore is quietly expanding the power and influence of his office," *U.S. News & World Report*, July 11, 1993.
- ¹⁴⁴ David Von Drehle and R. Jeffrey Smith, "U.S. Strikes Iraq for Plot to Kill Bush," *Washington Post*, June 27, 1993.
- ¹⁴⁵ Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 143-44.
- ¹⁴⁶ Kenneth. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: Deciphering the Twenty-five-Year Conflict Between the United States and Iran* (New York: Random House LLC, 2004) 291-92; see also Barbara Slavin, "Officials: U.S. 'outed' Iran's spies in 1997," *USA Today*, March 29, 2004, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/washington/2004-03-29-sapphire-usat_x.htm.
- ¹⁴⁷ Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 117-20.
- ¹⁴⁸ Slavin, "Officials: U.S. 'outed' Iran's spies in 1997."
- ¹⁴⁹ Soderberg, interview by author.
- ¹⁵⁰ Clinton, *My Life*, 523-24.
- ¹⁵¹ "A Chronology of the Elian Gonzalez Saga," *Frontline*, PBS, WGBH Educational Foundation, Boston, n.d., <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/elian/etc/eliancron.html>. See also Dave Barry, *Dave Barry Hits Below the Beltway* (New York: Random House, 2008), 153-56.
- ¹⁵² Sue Anne Pressley and John Harris, "Gore Backs Bill On Elian Status; Candidate Breaks With Clinton, Favors Residency for Boy, Family," *Washington Post*, March 31, 2000.
- ¹⁵³ Burson, interview by author.
- ¹⁵⁴ Clinton, *My Life*, 583.
- ¹⁵⁵ Burson, interview by author.
- ¹⁵⁶ Turque, *Inventing Al Gore*, 324.
- ¹⁵⁷ Berger, interview by author.
- ¹⁵⁸ Alison Mitchell and Todd S. Purdum, "Clinton the Conciliator Finds His Line in Sand," *New York Times*, January 2, 1996.

Chapter 7. “The Iron Issues”: The Vice Presidency of Richard Cheney

Introduction

More has been written about the Cheney vice presidency than any other vice presidency in U.S. history. He has almost universally been described as the most influential or most powerful vice president in history. Because Cheney was linked to many controversial decisions such as the decision to invade Iraq and the legal architecture of the global war on terror, Cheney has also been described as the most controversial vice president in U.S. history. In some quarters, Cheney was seen as the power behind the throne. While close observers of the Bush-Cheney administration rebut this accusation, there is little question that Cheney had a more expansive and influential role than his predecessors. This case study will examine the factors that contributed to this expanded vice presidential role.

Part 1 of this case study begins with Cheney’s background, his selection by Bush, the formal aspects of Cheney’s vice presidency, and his activity as vice president. Part 2 is an assessment of and overview of the factors contributing to Cheney’s influence. Part 3 describes specific instances of Cheney affecting policy, both domestic and foreign, while Part 4 summarizes the sources of Cheney’s influence and then concludes with a re-examination of the hypotheses about vice presidential influence based on these instances.

1. Overview of Richard “Dick” Cheney and his Vice Presidency

Cheney’s Background

When he became the running mate to George W. Bush, Cheney’s resume was broad and deep, including experience in both the executive and legislative branches, as well as the private sector. Richard “Dick” Cheney was born to a family of modest means

in Nebraska. Cheney's father was a civil servant with the Department of Agriculture, and when Cheney was 13, the family moved to Wyoming. Cheney attended Yale but dropped out. After working as a lineman for the power company, Cheney restarted his academic career at the University of Wyoming where he earned his undergraduate and master's degrees, before entering the Ph.D. program. As a Ph.D. student, Cheney went to Washington as a Congressional intern in 1969 and then worked for Donald Rumsfeld in the Nixon administration's Office of Economic Opportunity. When Rumsfeld was selected to run the transition process for President Ford, Cheney was his deputy. Cheney continued on as Rumsfeld's deputy when Rumsfeld was appointed Ford's chief of staff. When Rumsfeld became Ford's Secretary of Defense, Cheney became White House chief of staff. In the Ford White House, Cheney helped manage Ford's difficult relationship with Vice President Rockefeller.¹

After Ford's defeat, Cheney returned home to Wyoming and in 1978 was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. In the House, Cheney served on the Republican Policy Committee; he was the Ranking Member of the House Select Committee to investigate the Iran-Contra Affair and the Ranking Member on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. Cheney moved up the leadership ranks to chair the House Republican Conference and briefly served as the Minority Whip (he was Newt Gingrich's immediate predecessor). In 1989, President George H. W. Bush appointed Cheney to be Secretary of Defense, where he oversaw the Department of Defense during the U.S. intervention in Panama in 1989-1990 and during Operation Desert Storm in 1991. After Bush's 1992 defeat, Cheney explored running for president himself but ultimately chose to become CEO of Halliburton, a Fortune 500 oilfields services company.²

Cheney's Selection as Vice President and the 2000 Election Campaign

In March 2000, George W. Bush, Governor of Texas and son of former President George H. W. Bush, had effectively clinched the Republican presidential nomination. Bush had his aide Joe Allbaugh approach Cheney about the possibility of being his running mate. Cheney states that he was happy in private life and tried to convince

Allbaugh that he was wrong for the position. A few weeks later, Governor Bush asked Cheney to run the vice presidential search process. While Cheney vetted and discussed potential candidates, then-Governor Bush stated on several occasions, “Dick, you’re the solution to my problem.”³

However, according to *Washington Post* reporter Barton Gellman, the vetting process for vice presidents that Cheney directed effectively eliminated the competition. It was an “expansion of the usual scope of inquiry.” The background information requested by Cheney’s team regarding candidates’ physical and mental health and the financial situation of themselves and their families was far deeper than previous comparable investigations. This process effectively eliminated most other candidates, while Cheney himself was not subject to such extensive scrutiny.⁴ In his autobiography, Cheney argues that this process is needed because the campaign would need “a heads-up about anything that could possibly cause trouble or embarrassment or worse.”⁵ However, a friend of Cheney told reporter Peter Baker, “Cheney engineered the whole vice president thing. The brilliance of Cheney is he lets the other alternatives just light themselves on fire, one after the other.”⁶

In some ways, the vice presidential selection process foreshadowed the Bush-Cheney administration. If Cheney was maneuvering behind the scenes to ensure his preferred outcome, Bush had his own agenda. In his autobiography, President Bush wrote that he had counseled his father in 1992 to drop Vice President Quayle from the ticket and replace him with Dick Cheney. Bush wrote, “In retrospect, I don’t think Dad would have done better with someone else as his running mate. But I never completely gave up on my idea of a Bush-Cheney ticket.”⁷

On July 25, 2000, Bush formally offered and Cheney accepted the vice presidential nomination. On the campaign trail, Cheney, who had not run for office in over a decade, was not always effective. But he performed well in his debate against the Democratic vice presidential nominee, Joe Lieberman.⁸ The initial results of the 2000 election were contested due to disputed results in Florida. After a month of manual ballot recounts, legal challenges and appeals, on December 12, 2000 a Supreme Court ruling determined that Bush won Florida’s 25 electoral votes and the presidency. Bush-Cheney won 271 electoral votes to Gore-Lieberman’s 266, but

Bush-Cheney won only 47.9 percent of the popular vote, while Gore-Lieberman won 48.4 percent. On January 20, 2001, Bush was sworn in as the 43rd president of the United States and Cheney was sworn in as vice president.

Formal Aspects of the Cheney Vice Presidency

Cheney continued to possess the perquisites enjoyed by his predecessors, including a West Wing office, a weekly lunch with the president, and access to White House meetings and the policy process. He also had extensive freedom to recruit and structure his staff. Cheney expanded on his predecessors' role. Cheney had the CIA-produced President's Daily Brief (PDB) presented to him at 6:30 a.m., before the president, and then joined the president for his CIA briefing. Cheney joined NSC Principals meetings, which previous vice presidents had not done (his early efforts to chair the Principals meeting will be discussed below). He met regularly with the president's economic team and sat in on National Economic Council meetings.⁹

One area where Cheney formally expanded the vice presidency, at least temporarily, was obtaining an office on the House side of Capitol Hill. The vice president already had an office on the Senate side of Capitol Hill (he also joined the weekly Senate Republican Policy meeting), but Cheney— who had served for a decade in the House— wanted better access to the House of Representatives, since all revenue bills originate in the House, an area of particular interest to Cheney and to the Bush administration. Cheney approached his old friend Bill Thomas, chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, and asked if he could borrow space. Thomas loaned Cheney a large room adjacent to the House floor.¹⁰

Cheney's Activity as Vice President

When Cheney met with former Vice President Quayle to discuss the vice presidency Quayle told Cheney the vice presidency is dominated by international travel and fund-raising. Cheney replied, "I have a different understanding with the president."¹¹ Nonetheless, Cheney did take on a number of traditional vice presidential activities, including campaigning, fundraising, and serving as administration spokesman and

emissary (domestically and internationally) as well as serving as liaison with Congress. As discussed in previous case studies, *vice presidential activity does not necessarily entail influence but rather signifies the vice president carrying out a task on the president's behalf.*

Cheney travelled extensively on behalf of the administration internationally and domestically. For example, in the run-up to the Iraq War, in March 2003, Cheney met with the leaders of about 10 key Middle Eastern countries in less than a week, in order to sound them out and press them to support possible U.S. action in Iraq.¹²

Cheney also was active on the campaign trail. For the 2002 mid-term elections, Cheney made dozens of campaign trips and raised over \$40 million.¹³

On Capitol Hill, Cheney was a key administration liaison, often acting as the deliverer of difficult messages, allowing the president to be the bearer of good news.¹⁴ One example is when Cheney spearheaded efforts to pass tax cuts early in the administration. When Rhode Island Senator Lincoln Chaffee expressed his opposition, Cheney appeared on a Rhode Island radio talk show, stated the importance of tax cuts, and encouraged listeners to let their senator know how they felt.¹⁵ In another instance, as the administration sought approval for the war in Iraq, Cheney made a personal appeal to his old friend, House Majority Leader Dick Arme.¹⁶ In 2008, when the administration proposed the Troubled Assets Relief Program to forestall an economic depression, Cheney met with House and Senate Republicans (who were hostile to a program that they saw as a massive government bailout) and urged them to support it.¹⁷

While Cheney did not take formal long-term line assignments, he oversaw sensitive processes on behalf of the president. It is not clear that these roles were necessarily a source of influence. For example, in his autobiography, Cheney describes managing the process for reviewing potential Supreme Court candidates, by convening a group that included the attorney general, the White House chief of staff, the White House counsel, and his own chief of staff. It is not clear that Cheney's role was a source of influence. The ultimate selections were John Roberts and Samuel Alito, both of whom were well-regarded Republicans jurists who would have been on any Republican administration's short-list, while many of Cheney's personal

preferences were not selected.¹⁸ Cheney advised the president that White House Staff Secretary Harriet Miers was not a strong candidate for the Supreme Court. Bush decided to nominate Miers anyway, and Cheney observed, "...[I]t was his decision to make, and I set about trying to sell it."¹⁹ When Miers faced opposition from conservative activists, Cheney called conservative talk-show host Rush Limbaugh and attempted to persuade him that she was an ideologically sound candidate.²⁰

Cheney chaired the administration's Budget Review Committee, which heard department and agency appeals for more funding against the Office of Management and Budget. This was a five-person committee to which cabinet secretaries could appeal for funding increases. Cheney reportedly only approved one out of every four or five requests and generally favored defense and homeland security programs. This committee, which was established by White House chief of staff Andrew Card, was primarily intended to reduce the demands on the president. Cabinet secretaries had the option of making a final appeal to the president, but for at least the first three years of the administration, none chose to do so.²¹

Cheney, as White House chief of staff and later as vice president, often stated that "the president's most precious commodity is his time" and his role was to "get off the president's plate everything that you can."²² Much of Cheney's effort as vice president was dedicated to easing the president's burden.

2. Overview of Cheney's Influence as Vice President

Assessments of Cheney's Influence as Vice President

Vice President Cheney was routinely described as the most powerful vice president in American history. A few prominent examples of long-time Washington observers granting that appellation include David Rothkopf²³ and Peter Rodman.²⁴ In writing about the "curious trend" of vice presidential influence, Halperin, Clapp, and Kantor note that "Cheney, rightly or wrongly came to be seen as the *eminence grise* behind the president's major policy decisions."²⁵

Stephen Hess observed, "...Cheney's vast Washington experiences, as well as his formidable role in the transition, catapulted the vice presidency to new heights."²⁶

Writing in May of 2001, well before the 9/11 attacks and Cheney's increased prominence, Nicholas Lemann wrote in *The New Yorker* that "[Cheney] has gone far past the boundary of influence of any previous Vice-President in history."²⁷

Others have been sharper in their assessment of Cheney's influence, spawning a cottage industry of books about untamed vice presidential power. Shirley Anne Warshaw, in a book entitled *The Co-Presidency of Bush and Cheney*, argued, "In Cheney's world, the president and the vice president were equal partners, with each taking responsibility for certain areas of policy."²⁸

In *Richard B. Cheney and the Rise of the Imperial Vice Presidency*, Bruce Montgomery states, "But Cheney proceeded to make the assertion of sweeping executive powers and the establishment of an imperial vice presidency the hallmarks of the George W. Bush presidency."²⁹

In his book, *Angler: The Cheney Vice Presidency*, *Washington Post* reporter Barton Gellman writes, "Until the Bush-Cheney years, it would have been laughable to worry about a vice president's unaccountable power. Cheney inspired a search for instruments that might hold the man in check...The history of the Bush administration cannot be written without close attention to the moments when Cheney took the helm—sometimes at Bush's direction, sometimes with his tacit consent, and sometimes without the president's apparent awareness."³⁰

There is little question that Cheney was an extremely influential vice president. However, as will be discussed below in specific instances of Cheney's efforts to exercise influence, reports that he dominated Bush administration policy were exaggerated. David Frum, who served as a White House speechwriter stated, "Cheney was certainly a powerful figure within the administration. But those who identified him as a shadowy shogun who secretly controlled Bush, the weak Mikado, could not have been more wrong."³¹

New York Times reporter Peter Baker, in his book on the Bush-Cheney administration, writes:

...Cheney played an outsized role in driving decisions in the early years of the administration, expertly employing a network of loyalists placed strategically throughout the government. When he ran into opposition, Cheney instituted controversial environmental, energy, and counterterrorism policies by circumventing the internal process....

For all that, Cheney was largely pushing on an open door, taking Bush where the president himself was already inclined to go. The president's closest friends and advisors do not recall him ever complaining that Cheney had convinced him to do something he would not have done otherwise.³²

Factors Contributing to Cheney's Influence: An Initial Analysis

The Modern Presidency

Hypothesis 1A: When the president is able to select his vice president, the vice president is more likely to exercise influence.

The choice of Cheney as vice president was made entirely and exclusively by the presidential nominee George W. Bush. Cheney brought little conventional political balance to the ticket. Karl Rove argued strongly against Cheney— his home state Wyoming was solidly Republican; Wyoming had three electoral votes; Cheney had a very conservative voting record; Cheney's service in Bush 41's administration would raise questions about Bush's independence from his father; and Cheney had a heart condition.³³

Bush however had set his mind on selecting Cheney as his running mate, because he was impressed with how Cheney operated and with his depth of experience, and Bush had the freedom to make this selection based on those priorities.³⁴ This is not to say that selecting Cheney was not smart politics. Cheney had support from elements of the Republican base. Further, in selecting his vice president based on competence rather than political needs, Bush improved his own

image. Bush was also impressed with Cheney because “he didn’t want it” and hence the vice president would not have political ambitions of his own that might conflict with those of the president.³⁵

Hypothesis 1B: As the demands on the president have increased, the vice president will have greater opportunities to exercise influence.

The Bush-Cheney administration was an eventful one that included an enormous terrorist attack on the United States, two major wars, a terrible natural disaster, and the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. However, Bush’s intention to give Cheney a major role in the administration pre-dated these crises. It reflected Bush’s conception of his role as president. Daalder and Destler write:

As the first White House occupant with an MBA, Bush saw himself as the country’s chief executive officer. He would set the nation’s agenda, its priorities, and its broad course of action. He had no interest in the complex details of policy-“I don’t do nuance,” he once confided. For that, he would rely on his strong team of cabinet secretaries.”³⁶

Part of Bush’s conception of his role as president was a strong vice president who could see to these details. This did not reflect the particular circumstances of Bush’s time as president office, but rather how Bush wanted to operate as president.

The Institutional Vice Presidency

Hypothesis 2A: Vice presidents with their own policy staff are better able to exercise influence

A great deal has been written about the scale and reach of Vice President Cheney’s staff, all of which confirms its role as a source of influence for the vice president. Vice President Cheney’s staff was an important component of his influence and was described as a “mini-NSC”³⁷ or “parallel government that became the real power center.”³⁸ Some administration insiders echoed these descriptions of a too-powerful

Office of the Vice President. First-term NSA and second-term Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice writes:

...[T]he Vice President's staff, which seemed very much of one ultra-hawkish mind, was determined to act as a power center of its own. Many things were done "in the name of the Vice President," whether he had directed them to be done or not....[T]hey were not substantively out of line with his thinking. But some of the bureaucratic games that the Office of the Vice President played were not characteristic of my dealings with their boss.³⁹

In terms of its formal institutional characteristics, the Office of the Vice President in the Bush-Cheney administration had expanded in comparison to its predecessors. At its peak, Cheney's national security staff had 12 staffers and towards the end of the second term was down to 10. After 9/11, a small additional Homeland Security staff was established as well.⁴⁰ By comparison, Gore's national security staff had about eight substantive staffers, which had been increased from Quayle's five. However, Cheney's expansion of the vice president's national security staff came at a cost. Charles Burson, Gore's last chief of staff, explained in his exit interview, he and his successor, Lewis "Scooter" Libby, discussed reducing schedulers from the staff and moving these positions to the vice president's national security team. Since Cheney, unlike Gore, had no further political ambitions, a large political staff was seen as unnecessary.⁴¹

While the Cheney's political staff was smaller, it was more closely integrated with the White House than those of its predecessors. Cheney's first communications director, Mary Matalin, was also an assistant to the president; Cheney's counselor, Stephen Schmidt, was a deputy assistant to the president; and Cheney's speechwriter, John McConnell, also served as a speechwriter to the president. Cheney explained that trouble between presidents and vice presidents usually starts with their staffs and this increased integration was an effort to avoid this.⁴² For vice presidential staffers, besides the chief of staff, to also hold White House positions was an innovation initiated by the Bush-Cheney administration. According to *Washington Post* reporter

Barton Gellman, the increased status of vice presidential staffers allowed Cheney's "lieutenants to fight above their weight."⁴³ However, these changes could also have reflected Cheney's limited focus on the political aspects of the vice presidency. White House speechwriter David Frum observed that Matalin worked as much for Bush advisor Karen Hughes as she did for Cheney and that the vice president "abjured any independent political existence from the president."⁴⁴

The expanded national security staff allowed Cheney to follow a greater range of issues and prepared him for the many internal meetings he attended as well as meetings with foreign officials by providing him notes, questions, talking points, and background materials. They also prepared the VPNSA for Deputies meetings and participated in the inter-agency process. However, Cheney's second VPNSA John Hannah noted that even the expanded staff had limits and they could not follow all issues. The vice president did little with Africa or Latin America, for example.⁴⁵

The vice president's staff built on the role developed by Gore's staff in the inter-agency process. The VPNSA was invited to Principals Committee meetings and a full member of the Deputies Committee.⁴⁶ The vice president's second VPNSA John Hannah recalls attending Principals meetings as "second chair" with limited participation. At Deputies meetings and in the inter-agency process, Hannah states, "If we were in a meeting and had points to be made we spoke up."⁴⁷

Robert Gates observed that Cheney "let some of his staff be the 'bad guys' in interagency affairs rather than taking on that role for himself."⁴⁸ Other accounts state that vice presidential staffers played a low-key role in the formal NSC process. Observers recounted that the first VPNSA, I. Lewis (Scooter) Libby, Jr., tended to speak infrequently at meetings.⁴⁹ David Wurmser, who served on the vice president's national security staff, noted, "When I went to inter-agency meetings, I understood my job as gathering information for the vice president. If he felt policy was undecided or heading the wrong way, he might ask me to write a paper or take his advice to the president or bring in outside experts."⁵⁰

Several Cheney national security staffers played significant roles. I. Lewis (Scooter) Libby, who served simultaneously as Cheney's first chief of staff and national security advisor, was an important factor in Cheney's influence (in some

ways his role appeared to echo his predecessor as VPNSA, Leon Fuerth). Libby had served in the Pentagon when Cheney was Secretary of Defense and, in the words of his successor, John Hannah, Libby “had the absolute confidence of the vice president. He didn’t speak in the vice president’s voice but it was understood he was close to the vice president.”⁵¹ He was also described as “Cheney’s Cheney.”⁵² Libby participated in many of the administration’s top-level meetings. For example, when Bush convened his administration’s senior national security officials at Camp David on September 15, 2001 to develop responses to 9/11, Libby was among those attending.⁵³ Specific instances in which Libby aided Cheney’s efforts to exercise influence will be discussed below, but Bob Woodward describes how Libby saw his role as the VPNSA:

From his unique vantage, Libby watched and participated in the debate and development of the president’s national security policy. Since Cheney did not have direct operational responsibility for the military, diplomacy, intelligence-or anything else for that matter-neither the vice president nor Libby had to get caught up in the daily firefights or crises, unless, of course, they chose to insert themselves. They both could try to tend to the largest matters of policy and decision. In the end, Libby knew, Cheney’s only product was advice-to the National Security Council, and most importantly and most directly, to the president.⁵⁴

In October 2005, Libby stepped down from his position when he was indicted as part of the investigation into the leak of the identity of Valerie Plame, a covert CIA operative.⁵⁵ His replacement as VPNSA, John Hannah, describes Libby’s forced departure as a blow to OVP’s influence for several reasons. Hannah did not have Libby’s longstanding personal and professional ties to the Vice President and could not speak as authoritatively in his name. Bureaucratically, Hannah did not carry Libby’s additional rank of assistant to the president. Finally, as a political matter, the scandal surrounding Libby inevitably weakened the office’s overall ability to operate, Hannah explains, “Inter-agency rivals smelled blood in the water which made it

harder than in the past to exert OVP's influence.”⁵⁶ After Libby stepped down, Hannah took over the VPNSA role while Cheney’s counsel, David Addington, took over the chief of staff job. Addington, who also had a long working relationship with Cheney (on Capitol Hill, at the Pentagon⁵⁷ and as chair of Cheney’s PAC during Cheney’s exploratory bid for President⁵⁸), was a key architect of the legal components of the administration’s war on terror, which will be discussed in greater detail below.

Whether the vice president’s staff became an “alternate power center” or focused on helping Cheney advise the president, Cheney’s staff had the resources and access to maximize the vice president’s influence.

Hypothesis 2B: Vice presidents with an office in the West Wing are better able to exercise influence

Like most of his recent predecessors, Cheney was primarily based in his West Wing office.⁵⁹ As a former White House chief of staff, Cheney had previously occupied the larger office, next door to the vice president’s West Wing office and had a very keen sense of the importance of proximity to the president and his other close advisors. Cheney spent substantial time away from the White House at “undisclosed locations” (often Camp David, Cheney’s home in Wyoming, or the vice president’s residence). He continued to attend meetings via videoconference, and much of the time spent away from the White House was during a period in the years after 9/11 when Cheney appeared to be extremely influential.⁶⁰ This indicates that although the West Wing office is a useful element in vice presidential influence, if the vice president has established a strong working relationship with the president, it is not essential.

Hypothesis 2C: Vice presidents with regular access to the president, and with access to White House meetings and paper-flow, for themselves and their staff, are better able to exercise influence

Cheney’s access to the policy process and the president was an expansion over his predecessors. Cheney, unlike his predecessors, not only had Washington experience,

but also had experience within the White House. Cheney used his experience to ensure he and his staff were best able to influence policy:

As White House chief of staff in the 1970s, Cheney drew what he called “staffing loops” to establish attendance at key policy meetings and “who sees paper before it goes in” to the president.⁶¹

Cheney had a weekly one-on-one lunch with the president, which, like his predecessors Cheney used to privately advise the president, as well as Oval Office walk-in privileges – the right to stop by and ask the president’s secretary for a short meeting at any time.⁶²

One standard practice that illustrated Cheney’s level of access to the information flow in the White House was that he received the President’s Daily Brief (PDB) at 6:30 a.m. and then joined the president for his 8 a.m. briefing on the PDB. Cheney states he used his earlier briefing to address issues he was particularly interested in and to point out items that he felt the president should also see. When he was not in Washington, he teleconferenced into the meeting whenever possible. This foreknowledge allowed Cheney to highlight issues for the president.⁶³

There are reports that, while previous vice presidents had open access to White House meetings and paper-flow, Cheney made greater use of that access, joining NSC Principals committee meetings (which previous vice presidents had not done), meetings of the Bush economics team (which included the secretaries of treasury, commerce, and labor as well as the budget director), and joining National Economic Council meetings.

A more dramatic expansion of Cheney’s role however was rejected early on. A staffer from the OVP proposed that Cheney chair NSC Principals meetings. NSA Rice complained to the president that this would take the heart out of her role as national security advisory. The president supported Rice. When Deputy NSA Stephen Hadley discussed it with the vice president, Cheney agreed that this was a bad idea and it was blamed on over-zealous staffers. Some National Security staff suspected the vice president orchestrated this power play and it laid the seeds for future conflict between the National Security staff and the OVP.⁶⁴

Like his predecessors, Cheney had access to the White House paper flow. For example, Cheney (along with the White House chief of staff, and the national security advisor) received a daily memo on events in Iraq drafted for President Bush by Meghan O'Sullivan, deputy national security advisor for Iraq and Afghanistan.⁶⁵ Reportedly, Cheney's access to the White House paper flow included access to the emails of NSC staffers, although once this was discovered, staffers developed work-arounds to avoid having their emails sent to the vice president's office.⁶⁶

Cheney's central spot in the "staffing loops" allowed him to attempt to influence policy on many issues and at many levels. Richard Haas, who served as the State Department's director of policy planning, observed that between Cheney's private meetings with the president, his role on the Principals Committee, and his staff participation throughout the inter-agency process, Cheney had "three bites at the apple" in policy-making.⁶⁷

Hypothesis 2D: Vice presidents who foster allies on the president's staff, exercise "hidden hand" influence, and avoid publicity for their policy preferences are better able to exercise influence

Although Cheney's public image was of a dominant, manipulative figure, most reports indicated that Cheney emulated and in some ways surpassed his predecessors in his discretion, loyalty, and deference to the president.

Cheney maintained the traditional discretion of vice presidents, noting "Members of the press were most often interested in what advice I had given the president on a particular issue, and he needed to know that I wasn't walking out the door of the Oval Office to brief reporters on what I'd just said."⁶⁸ In some smaller meetings, such as the NSC Principals, Cheney spoke more or less freely; in meetings in which the president was present, Cheney spoke little. Cheney would stay behind to offer his advice to the president in private.⁶⁹ One of Cheney's guidelines, which was embraced by his staff, was Sam Rayburn's advice, "You never get in trouble for something you don't say."⁷⁰

Cheney's silence in meetings in which the president presided also reflected his deference. When Cheney spoke to Bush, he always addressed him as "Mr. President"

and away from the president referred to him as “The Man.”⁷¹ On 9/11, when Cheney was effectively the national crisis manager operating from a bunker beneath the White House while the president was in transit, Richard Clarke noted how focused Cheney was on making sure the president was kept informed of everything happening at the White House.⁷² Stephen Hadley emphasized Cheney’s loyalty to the president, noting:

Cheney is a guy who believes the President is very much the decider.... He served the President very well and loyally. He got this reputation as being the Darth Vader, I think it was unfair—it didn’t bother him, he was very supportive. Addington said Cheney never forgets the fact that there is the word “Vice” before “President” in his title.⁷³

Like his predecessors, Cheney supported the president on issues where they did not agree and steered clear of issues where the president was heavily engaged, like education.⁷⁴ Cheney, who had a gay daughter, stayed out of the White House debate on gay marriage and remained silent when the president decided to support a Constitutional amendment banning it.⁷⁵ In general, when the President made a decision that Cheney had opposed, the Vice President’s instructions to his staff were clear: the President’s decided, the argument’s over, and no one should do anything to undermine it.⁷⁶ Finally, in a demonstration of his loyalty and deference, Cheney told President Bush to feel free to replace him on the 2004 ticket. Bush considered it, but wrote that he decided to keep Cheney on the ticket and that he appreciated Cheney’s advice and loyalty.⁷⁷

When Cheney did seek influence policy he did so discreetly. Former White House speechwriter David Frum writes, “Cheney’s role was like watching iron filings moving across a tabletop. You know there is a magnet down there. You know the magnet is moving. You never see the magnet.”⁷⁸

While some of Cheney’s predecessors may have found the low-key hidden-hand strategy a challenge (see previous case studies) it came easily to Cheney who had been a White House staffer. In an interview, Cheney joked, “Am I the evil genius in the corner that nobody ever sees come out of his hole? It’s a nice way to operate actually.”⁷⁹ Cheney, unlike his recent predecessors, had no further political ambitions

and eschewed publicity.⁸⁰ However, expanding these established modes of vice presidential behavior to another level ultimately had costs for Cheney's standing in the administration.

In February 2006, while on a hunting trip, Vice President Cheney accidentally shot one of the other members of the hunting party, Harry Whittington. Cheney later wrote that he was distressed and worried about his friend; therefore handling media inquiries was not a priority.⁸¹ The White House saw things differently and became frustrated with the vice president's reticence, which allowed the story to dominate the news cycle. President Bush intervened and pressed Cheney to make a media appearance, which Cheney finally did. Bush was perturbed by this incident—it reduced the vice president's stature in his eyes.⁸²

Overall, President Bush appreciated Cheney's loyalty and discretion, which allowed the president to trust his vice president. Further, Bush found political utility in the rumors that Cheney was in charge, telling his long-time advisor Karen Hughes, "You don't get it. The stronger Cheney is, the better it is for me. It means we get more stuff done."⁸³

Outsiders & Insiders

Hypothesis 3A: Outsider presidents are more likely to select their running mates on the basis of personal and political compatibility, which increases the likelihood that the president will include them as a top-level advisor.

Bush specifically and explicitly chose Cheney as his running mate on the basis of his experience and because he would be a good governing partner. In his autobiography, Bush wrote:

Dick's experience was more extensive and diverse than that of anyone else on my list.... Unlike any of the senators or governors on my list, he had stood next to presidents during the most gut-wrenching decisions that reach the Oval Office, including sending Americans to war. Not only would Dick be a valuable advisor, he would be fully

capable of assuming the presidency. ...Dick knew Washington better than almost anyone...⁸⁴

Bush recognized his inexperience with international affairs and sought a vice president who could help in this arena.⁸⁵

Hypothesis 3B: Outsider presidents are more likely to be inexperienced in areas such as national security affairs and not have strong national security teams, thus creating opportunities for vice presidential influence.

On February 16, 2001, U.S. military aircraft, enforcing the no-fly zone over Iraq, engaged in a skirmish with Iraqi air defenses. That night, President Bush, who was only informed of the skirmish after the fact, said, "I'm going to call Dick." NSA Condoleezza Rice observed that the president was "seeking reassurance from an old foreign policy hand."⁸⁶

This early reliance on Cheney did not mean that Bush always followed the vice president's line. In April 2001, Bush had Secretary of State Powell manage the EP-3 crisis with China, which ended up with an apology to the Chinese that Cheney had opposed.⁸⁷ Bush himself decided, after their first meeting in June 2001, that he could forge a close working relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, while Cheney thought Putin was an "old KGB hand."⁸⁸

Nonetheless, on Cheney's core portfolio, "the iron issues" of national security, economics, and energy policy,⁸⁹ as well as dealing with Congress where Cheney "had a big influence on how Bush viewed Congress,"⁹⁰ the president looked to his vice president for counsel. When the 9/11 terrorist attacks catapulted national security issues to the absolute forefront of the administration's agenda, President Bush, a former governor of Texas, frequently called on his vice president. As will be discussed below, Cheney's advice was not only about "what to do," but based on his familiarity with national security institutions, also about "how to do it."

Cheney's influence was magnified by disorder in the national security process. It has been written about extensively elsewhere. NSA Rice had difficulty coordinating the Principals and was criticized for not bringing a range of viewpoints and policy options to the president.⁹¹ The president, despite his reputation for

decisiveness, often urged his top advisors to come to consensus on issues or split the difference between divergent positions.⁹² Cheney was accused of “short-circuiting” the process to advance his own policies.⁹³ The combination of disorder in the national security process and the crisis atmosphere after 9/11 created policy vacuums that the vice president had the knowledge and capability to fill.

Because Cheney’s experience and the president’s relative inexperience were such important components to Cheney’s influence during the first term, it is little surprise that the vice president’s influence declined in the second term. Bush’s second term NSA Stephen Hadley observed:

Presidents are smart people, they go through a huge and difficult process to get the office, and they are the person the American people have elected to make decisions. They start learning. Bush didn’t have a lot of foreign policy experience. He had smart people around him and he leaned on them. One of them was Dick Cheney, but obviously as Bush functioned as president and handled 9/11 and two wars and meetings with every world leader—a second-term president knows what he knows and knows what he thinks and will be much less reliant on advisors. By the time you are dealing with a second-term president, he can confidently say, “I’ve listened to your views and here’s what I’m going to do.”⁹⁴

While Cheney’s influence declined as the president’s confidence in his own knowledge on national security issues increased and as the national security process became more effective, he was never completely cut out from the process. In the second term, Cheney was unquestionably “playing defense” more often and winning fewer major policy battles.⁹⁵ But he was still engaged in the process and on occasion, as will be discussed below, exercised influence.

Hypothesis 3C: Outsider presidents are more likely to seek their vice presidents’ input in the appointments process, which increases the vice president’s opportunities for influence.

Previous vice presidents participated in the transition process. Cheney chaired it and played a substantial role in selecting cabinet members and lower level staffers throughout the administration. NSA Stephen Hadley noted that the president “relied on Cheney for personnel decisions because Cheney was a creature of Washington and had good contacts there.”⁹⁶

Although Cheney’s contacts were given appointments throughout the executive branch, Cheney’s choices did not dominate in every sector. Colin Powell had already been selected before Cheney began proposing cabinet members (although Powell did have a long-established working relationship with Cheney, who had selected Powell to be chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff). One Cheney friend and ally, John Bolton, took an important position at the State Department, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security. Cheney advised Powell to find a place for Bolton at State.

Many picks, such as Gale Norton for Secretary of Interior and Ann Veneman for Secretary of Agriculture, were plausible choices for any Republican administration with close ties to big business. Cheney also took an interest in second and third-tier positions. The deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget, Sean O’Keefe, had been Pentagon comptroller and Secretary of the Navy under Cheney at the Pentagon.⁹⁷

While these individuals were useful contacts for Cheney, the real base for Cheney’s allies was at the Department of Defense. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had been Cheney’s mentor when his career in Washington began. Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, had served Cheney as Undersecretary of Defense for Policy during Cheney’s tenure at the Pentagon. VPNSA Libby had been a student of Wolfowitz at Yale and worked for him at State and Defense. People with links to Cheney staffed offices at the lower level. These links continued to a lesser extent in the second term, after Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz left. Eric Edelman, a former Cheney staffer, became Undersecretary of Defense for Policy.⁹⁸ Much has been written on Cheney and Rumsfeld working closely together to shape policy, particularly in the first term.⁹⁹ But the allies at Defense were also helpful to the vice

president at the staff level. VPNSA John Hannah observed, “To have a top layer at the Pentagon with whom you can talk things through was very valuable.”¹⁰⁰

Personal ties to Cheney were no guarantee of policy alignments. The Environmental Protection Agency chief, Christine Todd Whitman, had worked for Cheney in the Nixon White House, but they had substantial policy disagreements in the Bush administration.¹⁰¹ Paul O’Neill, who had worked closely with Cheney in the Nixon and Ford White Houses, left the administration at the end of 2002 amid reports that he was having serious disagreements with the administration on tax cuts and other issues. It was Cheney who made the call to his old friend asking for his resignation.¹⁰²

While Cheney had placed allies throughout the executive branch, unlike some of his predecessors, Cheney did not place individuals with close links on the White House staff. The Deputy National Security Advisor, Stephen Hadley, had served under Wolfowitz when Cheney was Secretary of Defense and was sometimes described as “Cheney’s mole” at the NSC.¹⁰³ However, several accounts emphasize Hadley’s loyalty to NSA and later Secretary of State Rice and that he was not a particular ally to Cheney.¹⁰⁴ In the second term, as NSA, Hadley states that he was committed to the honest broker role explaining, “...I don’t intend [to knock heads], the 900-pound gorillas (e.g., the Vice President, Condi, Rumsfeld) are great but I work for the 2000-pound gorilla and he’ll make the decisions.”¹⁰⁵

3. Cheney’s Influence on Specific Issues

This section explores specific cases of vice presidential influence, in order to use process tracing to identify the roles played by particular elements of the institutional vice presidency and the vice president’s personal background. It should be emphasized that it is not possible to gather every instance of vice presidential influence and the cases discussed below are not a complete record. But they are a sufficient record demonstrating how vice presidential influence operated in the Bush-Cheney administration.

Losing the Senate Majority

The Bush administration took office with a split Senate. Because Cheney, as vice president, was also president of the Senate and held the tie-breaking vote, this gave the Republicans a one-vote majority. Republican Senator Jim Jeffords was pressing for funding for education projects and threatened to vote against the administration's tax relief program, the administration's major initiative. As the conflict heated, Jeffords threatened to switch parties, which would deny the Republicans their majority. There was heated debate within the White House and the Republican Senate leadership on Jeffords's threat to leave the party. The Senate leadership and many of the president's closest advisors, including Karl Rove, were inclined to make concessions to Jeffords in order to retain the majority. Cheney argued that if the administration gave in to Jeffords, it would have effectively lost control of the Senate because on every future initiative, senators would have an incentive to press for pet programs and the administration would have to make endless concessions.¹⁰⁶

In his autobiography, Cheney does not claim to have had role in the decision to let Jeffords leave but observes that the Democratic majority in the Senate was too slim to allow them to get very much accomplished, which worked in the Republican's favor in the 2002 elections when they took back control of the Senate.¹⁰⁷

This instance of *vice presidential influence on a decision's trajectory* emphasizes two drivers of vice presidential influence. First, it highlights that Cheney had access to the process. Without regular access to the president and White House meetings, Cheney would not have been able to make his case at all. But it is also an instance of Cheney possessing expertise in an area where the president and his staff had less knowledge. Bush's closest political advisor, Karl Rove, argued against letting Jeffords leave the party, which would cost the Republicans control of the Senate.¹⁰⁸ But Cheney had served a decade in the House of Representatives, as well as time in the Ford White House and as Secretary of Defense. No one in Bush's inner circle of advisors had comparable experience on or dealing with Capitol Hill, and Cheney's understanding of the situation prevailed.

Energy Issues

As the Bush-Cheney administration took office, the state of California was experiencing brownouts and Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan warned Cheney that these energy shortages could push the economy into recession.¹⁰⁹ This crisis was a major issue in the early days of the Bush-Cheney administration, and the vice president, a former energy industry executive, played a significant role in shaping the administration's response. Two specific issues are discussed below: the administration's policy on climate change, and an energy commission President Bush asked the vice president to chair.

Climate Change Policy

During the 2000 campaign, Bush made a speech acknowledging the dangers of the climate change, and, in a policy paper, had called for caps on carbon dioxide emissions. In March 2001, EPA administrator Christine Todd Whitman represented the United States at an international climate change conference and wrote a memo urging the president to continue to work to reduce carbon admissions. In press statements, Whitman had called for regulating carbon dioxide as a pollutant. A few days after sending her memo, four Republican senators, concerned that the administration would not be friendly to the energy industry, had written for a "clarification of your Administration's policy on climate change."¹¹⁰ When Whitman asked for a meeting with the president, Cheney, who had access to the president's schedule, brought Bush a response to the inquiry from the Republican senators that effectively reversed his previous statements on climate change and emphasized the need for more study of climate change and seeking new approaches to protecting air quality rather than committing to carbon emissions caps.¹¹¹ In his meeting with Whitman, Bush explained that because of the energy crisis in California, he could not embrace environmental policies that would hurt consumers.¹¹²

According to NSA Rice, Cheney's letter had far-reaching implications because the letter harshly criticized the Kyoto Treaty, which annoyed U.S. allies. Rice was displeased to learn that a statement with implications for U.S. foreign policy was

sent to Capitol Hill without her (or the Secretary of State) having an opportunity to clear it.¹¹³

Late in the administration, the issue of climate change returned. The president's views had shifted; bolstered by his advisors, he wanted to take action on climate change. Cheney remained opposed to "cap and trade" policies and proposed a carbon tax as a better approach. New taxes were not considered a viable policy option. As the president prepared his speech for April 16, 2008, the vice president pressed him not to use the term "cap and trade" because it would alienate Hill Republicans (and some Democrats). Ultimately, the speech came out as an unclear statement of administration policy that had little impact (which may have been the vice president's goal).¹¹⁴

The first instance is an example of *vice presidential persuasion*, in which the vice president influenced the president to reverse his policy on capping carbon emissions (Cheney no doubt was aided in his appeal by the California energy crisis). This instance highlights several aspects of Cheney's vice presidency. Cheney's access to the letter and the opportunity to discuss it with the president highlight the importance of vice presidential access to the president and policy process. Cheney had staff that could assist in crafting his proposed response. This particular issue related to areas where Cheney had expertise: energy policy and Congressional relations.

The second instance is a case of the *vice president shaping the trajectory* of a policy in shifting the language of a presidential speech. In this case, late in the administration, the vice president's influence had decreased substantially and the president was prepared to reverse a policy the vice president had recommended. Despite this decline in the vice president's influence, he continued to have access to the policy process; he had staff to propose alternatives; and his expertise on Congress was still a factor taken into consideration.

Energy Task Force

In the wake of the California brownout, President Bush asked Vice President Cheney to chair a task force on energy. Cheney's report focused on expanding U.S. energy production to facilitate economic growth and while it mentioned concerns about greenhouse gases, it did not make strong statements regarding the need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.¹¹⁵ While Cheney directed the task force, the president (who also had experience in the energy industry) often over-ruled Cheney's recommendations.¹¹⁶ Ultimately, some of the report's recommendations were adopted as executive orders or legislation.¹¹⁷

Besides the conclusions, the energy task force itself and the way in which it operated became a source of controversy. Cheney sought to run the task force out of public and Congressional, scrutiny. Reportedly, he was concerned about the Federal Advisory Committee Act, under which the records of Hillary Clinton's health-care task force were exposed to political attack. Cheney and his counsel David Addington believed that if the task force had only executive branch employees it would not be subject to the open government laws. Congress did not share this view and two House committees along with the GAO demanded information from the task force, while public interest groups filed suit to force the administration to release the information. President Bush's political advisors were inclined to acquiesce and provide the requested information but Cheney felt the president and vice president had the right to consult with anyone they wished and persuaded the president to fight the requests on the grounds that a victory would discourage future challenges. Ultimately the issue was decided when the Supreme Court ruled in the administration's favor.¹¹⁸

The energy task force represents two instances of the *vice president influencing the trajectory of policy*. The first instance is the report itself, which shaped the administration's energy policy and gave the vice president the opportunity to propose specific policies within the framework of the president's overall preferences. The second instance was influencing the president to support him in refusing Congressional requests to turn over information about the task force's meetings. These incidents highlight many aspects of the Cheney vice presidency, including the importance of Cheney's access to the president to make his case on the

administration's energy policy and whether or not the task force should turn over its records. On the disclosure issue, Cheney had a staffer with a great deal of relevant experience in his counsel, David Addington. More significantly, Cheney's arguments prevailed in part because both national energy policy and the legal powers and rights of the presidency were areas in which Cheney had substantial expertise.

The War in Afghanistan

After 9/11, as the United States prepared to attack Afghanistan and defeat the Taliban, Vice President Cheney, played a central role in the planning. On September 18, military commanders briefed the president, the vice president, and the secretary of defense about their war plans. The generals assured the president they were ready to go at his orders. Cheney observed:

But I knew from my time at the Pentagon that various factors play into selecting an optimal start date. I also thought that sitting with the president in a room where Abraham Lincoln had held cabinet meetings might not be the situation most likely to elicit that kind of information, so I tried to help out.¹¹⁹

Cheney asked detailed questions in order to gather more detailed options and information for the president to consider.

At an October 9 NSC meeting, DCI Tenet expressed his concern that Afghanistan's Pashtuns would be angry if non-Pashtun Northern Alliance forces took Kabul and that this could spark a civil war. Cheney disagreed, arguing that taking Kabul as soon as possible and by any means necessary was the top priority. The Taliban and al-Qaeda, Cheney argued, needed to be defeated quickly to prevent further attacks on the United States and with the Afghan winter coming, operations needed to commence as soon as possible.¹²⁰ On November 13, Kabul fell to Northern Alliance forces, with support from U.S. Special Forces and airpower.

These instances of *vice presidential influence on the trajectory of policy* illustrate the importance of vice presidential access to the process. Cheney attended the key meetings planning the Afghanistan operation. These instances highlight the

importance of Cheney's expertise. As a former secretary of defense who was in office during major combat operations (the first Gulf War and the invasion of Panama), Cheney had insight into the various factors that needed to be considered in planning a military campaign. Cheney was also familiar with the military as an organization and was able to use this knowledge to more effectively query the commanders so they could provide the president the information he needed to make a decision.

Legal Architecture of the War on Terror

The global war on terror raised a host of complex legal questions regarding electronic surveillance, and the treatment, rights, and status of those captured by the United States. Vice President Cheney and his counsel David Addington played a central role in shaping the administration's policies. The key decisions were: (1) establishing the Terrorist Surveillance Program (TSP); (2) the decision to try captured terrorists by military commissions; and (3) the finding that captured terrorists were not subject to the Geneva Conventions. Although they were distinct decisions, they were made in the months after 9/11 and the patterns of the decision-making process were similar. In addition, this section will discuss the decision to open a prison at Guantanamo Bay, and the decision much later to grant immunity to the telecommunications companies for their cooperation with the government in the TSP.

The three decisions share a number of features. The decisions were made outside of the standard interagency process and, in some cases, kept secret from all but a few select members of the administration and Congress. In addition, the legal basis of these decisions was rooted in the president's authority, based on theories developed by Office of Legal Counsel official John Yoo. Formal Congressional approval was not sought.¹²¹ There were several reasons for this approach. First, the president believed that several of these programs (particularly the TSP) required operational secrecy to be effective.¹²² Second, the president, facing a global conflict, wanted new policies enacted quickly and felt the interagency process was moving too slowly.¹²³ Finally, Cheney and his counsel David Addington believed that a strong presidency with expanded powers was necessary to deal with unprecedented threats.

Cheney had worked in the Ford White House, where an unelected president represented a nadir in presidential power as Congress restricted the president's activities and options. Cheney also was the ranking minority member on the House Iran-Contra committee where he sought to protect the Presidency.¹²⁴

After 9/11, Cheney asked intelligence community officials if they needed new authorities to prevent future terror attacks. The Director of the National Security Agency (NSA) Michael Hayden replied that under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) that governed NSA eavesdropping on U.S. citizens,¹²⁵ the NSA had to submit a warrant to the FISA court and obtain approval to conduct a wire-tapping operation. According to Director Hayden, this could take several days and prevented the NSA from tracking potential threats.

Cheney shared Hayden's concerns with the president who authorized the vice president to determine how to grant the NSA the legal authorities it needed. The vice president's counsel David Addington, working closely with the president's counsel, Alberto Gonzales, studied the issue. On October 10, 2001, the president signed a directive that authorized expanded NSA intelligence collection within the United States. The president insisted that the program had to be re-certified every 30 to 45 days by the president, the attorney general, the director of the CIA, and the secretary of defense. The program, which came to be known as the Terrorist Surveillance Program (TSP), was a closely held secret, due to concerns that if its existence was not secret, terrorists would learn about it and be able to evade U.S. intelligence. Outside of NSA personnel, the president had to personally approve any person being informed of the program. While he briefed the chair and ranking members of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees, Cheney felt informing the entire Congressional Intelligence committees held too great a risk of leaks and that previous administrations had handled highly sensitive intelligence issues with Congress in a similar manner.¹²⁶

The program was controversial within the government, and with the general public when its existence was leaked. In spring of 2004, moreover, under the guidance of new lawyers at the Justice Department, Attorney General Ashcroft refused to sign the re-authorization. This led to a confrontation at George Washington

Hospital, where Ashcroft was recovering from surgery. Gonzales and White House chief of staff Andrew Card went to the hospital and were met by Deputy Attorney General James Comey, to whom Ashcroft had delegated authority. As the White House pressured Comey to sign, Comey, many of the top-ranked appointees at the Justice Department, and FBI Director Robert Mueller threatened to resign.

Cheney and White House staffers were trying to resolve the crisis without involving the president. They had drafted and the president signed a new directive that only required the president's signature.¹²⁷ However, when the president learned of the problems at Justice, he agreed to modify the program because, "It wouldn't give me much satisfaction to know I was right on the legal principles while my administration imploded..."¹²⁸

Later the program was revealed to the public in news articles in 2005 and 2006. In 2007, the president placed the program under the auspices of the FISA court, and in 2008, the program received Congressional authorization. In the discussion over Congressional authorization, Cheney argued successfully for granting immunity to telecommunications companies for their cooperation with the government in carrying out the TSP.¹²⁹

In the first months after 9/11, a series of important legal decisions were made about how to handle captured terrorists. Cheney, aided closely by his counsel David Addington, effectively drove the process. Cheney felt the inter-agency process, which included lawyers from Justice, Defense, and State, as well as the NSC, was taking too long. Cheney had Addington draft an order stating that captured terrorists would not have access to the legal system and would be tried by military commissions modeled on the military commission Franklin Roosevelt had established during World War II. Addington's view received support from John Yoo, head of the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel (OLC). On November 10, 2001, Attorney General John Ashcroft visited the White House to protest this decision and argued with Cheney and Addington, but was ultimately rebuffed. He did not take the issue to the president directly. Cheney then took his draft to the president who approved it, without the paper going through the White House or inter-agency

process. Rice and Powell both were surprised with the decision, believing the issue was being handled through the inter-agency process.¹³⁰

Powell and Rice felt similarly out-manuevered at the next major policy decision on the legal aspects of handling captured terrorists. Cheney and his office sought to deny captured terrorists prisoner-of-war status, which would have brought them certain rights under international law, effectively rejecting the Geneva Conventions. Powell met with the president to discuss the policy on January 21, 2002, and a full NSC meeting was scheduled to discuss the Geneva Conventions on January 28. Before the meeting, a memo written by Addington rebutting Powell's arguments was leaked and appeared in *The Washington Times*. The leaked memo effectively neutralized Powell's arguments and the president signed the order denying protections under the Geneva Conventions to captured terrorists on February 7, 2002.¹³¹ Because the Geneva Conventions expressly prohibit mistreatment, the determination that they did not apply to captured terrorists set the stage for the administration's enhanced interrogation program. This program was initiated after the CIA requested permission to use a number of controversial interrogation techniques in order to obtain intelligence from high value captured terrorists. The Office of Legal Counsel, working with the Office of the Vice President, issued a ruling authorizing a number of these techniques, which were then used against several captured al-Qaeda terrorists.¹³²

In June 2006, the Supreme Court ruled that the military commissions and enhanced interrogation techniques were unconstitutional. At the president's urging, Congress passed the Military Commissions Act a few months later, giving Congressional authorization to the military commissions and providing a framework for future presidents to authorize enhanced interrogations.¹³³

The establishment of the Terrorist Surveillance Program (TSP) and policies on treating detainees, and the decisions to enact these policies on the basis of presidential authority, are examples of *vice presidential initiative* in which the vice president proposed policies to the president. Cheney's successful effort to influence the president to establish these policies first required the vice president to have regular access to the president in order to present the ideas. But Cheney also had a strong

background in intelligence issues from his time as secretary of defense and on the House Intelligence Committee. The president relied on the vice president's experience in developing these policies. The vice president's specific experience on the House Intelligence Committee was probably a component in the decision to keep the program secret and carefully restrict Congressional knowledge of the TSP.

The vice president's staff played a leading role as well. His counsel, David Addington, had served as assistant general counsel at the CIA, general counsel at the Department of Defense under Cheney, and as a staffer on several Congressional committees dealing with intelligence issues. Addington was deeply knowledgeable on national security law.¹³⁴ Jack Goldsmith, the head of the Office of Legal Counsel at Justice, concluded that the TSP was not grounded in the law and described Addington as the "chief legal architect of the Terrorist Surveillance Program."¹³⁵ Further emphasizing his central role, it was Addington who personally drafted the initial authorization for the TSP.¹³⁶ Cheney and Addington also worked with allies, particularly John Yoo at the Office of Legal Counsel and Tim Flanigan, deputy to the president's counsel, Alberto Gonzalez.¹³⁷

Addington also had complete access to the process. Goldsmith notes that Addington received all the paperwork Gonzales received and was present at all but one of the nearly hundred meetings Goldsmith had with Gonzales on national security issues. Goldsmith observed that Gonzales, a corporate lawyer and judge in the Texas state courts, wanted Addington at the meetings because of Addington's vast Washington experience. Goldsmith writes, "These experiences gave Addington a more comprehensive knowledge of national security law than anyone in the executive branch, and made him one of the savviest manipulators of the byzantine executive branch bureaucracy. It also gave him clout with Gonzales, who turned to Addington first for answers to the hard legal questions that arose after the 9/11 attacks."¹³⁸ Cheney could exercise influence in this instance because he and his staff had exactly the expertise on intelligence issues that the president sought in the wake of 9/11.

The decision to grant telecommunications companies' immunity for their role in the TSP is a case of the *vice president influencing the trajectory* of a policy. This instance occurred late in the administration's second term, when Cheney was

exercising far less influence. By most accounts, Cheney was very much “on defense” and not proposing major new policies. Nonetheless, the vice president still had access to the policy process and could make his argument. In this case, “[Cheney] had different people in making different arguments in different places.”¹³⁹ The vice president’s expertise on intelligence issues may also have been a factor in his influencing the president.

Iraq

The decision to invade Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power, which was followed by a decade-long occupation of that country, was the single most significant national security decision made by the Bush administration. Vice President Cheney played a central role in that (and related) decisions. This section will look at three presidential decisions on Iraq, to examine the role the vice president played and unearth the factors that enabled his influence. These are: (1) the decision to invade Iraq; (2) the decision whether or not to seek United Nations (UN) approval for the operation against Iraq; and (3) the decision late in the administration to deploy thousands of U.S. soldiers and Marines to stabilize a collapsing security situation in Iraq.

The Decision to Invade Iraq

How and why the United States chose to invade Iraq and overthrow Saddam Hussein remains a complex issue, which innumerable books and articles have sought to unravel. A popular caricature is that Vice President Cheney, following his own agenda, manipulated President Bush into invading Iraq through his control over information and personnel in key positions in the Defense Department.¹⁴⁰ Examining the administration’s decision to go to war in Iraq finds Cheney playing a central role influencing the president, but not an all-decisive one.

Further complicating an effort to study the vice president’s role in the decision to invade Iraq was the opaque and informal process in which the decision was

made.¹⁴¹ Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) George Tenet writes, “One of the great mysteries to me is exactly when the war in Iraq became inevitable.”¹⁴² Another factor that complicates studying the vice presidential role in the decision to invade Iraq is separating the decision-making from the administration’s efforts to build support domestically and internationally for the invasion and the vice president’s sometimes controversial role in this campaign.

There is substantial evidence that Iraq was on Bush’s mind before 9/11 and perhaps before he was elected president. Bush mentioned Hussein several times during the campaign. In a November 18, 1999 interview, he stated, about Iraqi President Saddam Hussein that “No one envisioned Saddam... still standing—it’s time finish the task.”¹⁴³ In a debate among Republican candidates a few weeks later, then-Governor Bush stated, “If I found in any way, shape or form that he was developing weapons of mass destruction, I’d take ‘em out. I’m surprised he’s still there.”¹⁴⁴ In his October 11, 2000 debate with Vice President Gore, Bush said, “We don’t know whether [Saddam is] developing weapons of mass destruction. He better not be or there’s going to be a consequence should I be the president.”¹⁴⁵ Also in 2000, Condoleezza Rice, Bush’s leading foreign policy advisor, wrote that while Iraq could be managed through the traditional tools of deterrence and containment, the “United States must mobilize whatever resources it can, including support from his opposition, to remove him.”¹⁴⁶ Domestic issues, not foreign policy, dominated the 2000 election and none of these references prove that Bush entered office with plans to invade Iraq. But they do indicate that Iraq was on the president’s mind before 9/11, that he was concerned with the possibility of Iraq acquiring weapons of mass destruction, and that he was not satisfied with the status quo policy.¹⁴⁷

Once he was in office, Iraq remained on the president’s agenda (as discussed above one of the first foreign policy crises was sparked when U.S. aircraft skirmished with Iraqi air defense). White House speechwriter David Frum recalls his first meeting in the Oval Office, in February 2001, when Bush mentioned wanting to displace Saddam Hussein.¹⁴⁸ In his account of his service in the administration, Doug Feith writes that by spring 2001, the president had asked for options on Iraq policy.¹⁴⁹ Days after 9/11, the president asked NSC counter-terror advisor Richard Clarke to see

if Saddam Hussein had been involved in the attacks,¹⁵⁰ and on November 21, he asked Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld to update military planning for a war against Iraq. By August 2002, according to several accounts, President Bush had come to the conclusion that Saddam Hussein had to be removed from power.¹⁵¹

Exactly what Cheney's role was in the president's decision-making is difficult to ascertain. At the September 15, 2001 meetings at Camp David, when Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz proposed targeting Iraq, Cheney argued against it, stating, "If we go after Saddam Hussein, we lose our rightful place as good guy." Cheney did state that Iraq was a problem and might need to be addressed in the future.¹⁵²

Cheney also came to the conclusion that Iraq did have to be addressed. Cheney had spent substantial energies considering worst-case scenarios. As a member of Congress, he had participated in continuity of government exercises and, in May 2001, the president had asked Cheney to study the potential dangers to the U.S. homeland from weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).¹⁵³ Cheney's concerns about a WMD attack on the U.S. were reinforced when, shortly after 9/11, packets of anthrax were mailed to several Congressional offices and news outlets. Ultimately, seventeen people were hospitalized and five died. The sense of panic engendered by these new attacks and the government's difficulty identifying the perpetrator (with many in the administration assuming that a nation-state was behind the attack) contributed to a sense that further waves of terror attacks were coming.¹⁵⁴ Within the government, there were innumerable warnings about WMD attacks including a scare that there had been a botulinum attack on the White House¹⁵⁵ and a report that Pakistani nuclear scientists had worked with al-Qaeda.¹⁵⁶ Cheney also heard a report about the "Dark Winter" exercise in which former officials gamed out a smallpox outbreak and determined that within two weeks it could kill over one million people.¹⁵⁷ While Cheney sought to improve preparedness, he believed that the U.S. needed a "very robust intelligence capability if you're going to uncover threats to the U.S. and hopefully thwart them before they can be launched."¹⁵⁸

Cheney's greatest concern was terrorists acquiring WMD from nation-states and then attacking the United States. In this context, Cheney's focus turned to Iraq.

After the Gulf War, it was discovered that Iraq's WMD program was much further along than previously recognized. Cheney, who was Defense Secretary during that war, took from it the lesson that intelligence estimates on WMD capabilities can underestimate them. Further, Iraq's behavior defying UN Security Council resolutions since the Gulf War indicated that Saddam Hussein was continuing to pursue WMD. Saddam Hussein's Iraq was also a state-sponsor of terror. It was home to the notorious terrorists Abu Nidal and Abu Abbas as well as a funder of Palestinian suicide bombers and had used chemical weapons against Iran and its own people.¹⁵⁹ Cheney wrote, "When we looked around the world in those first months after 9/11, there was no place more likely to be a nexus between terrorism and WMD capability than Saddam Hussein's Iraq."¹⁶⁰ From Cheney's perspective, in the words of *Washington Post* reporter Bob Woodward, "The administration had been accused of not having connected the dots before 9/11. How could they afford to ignore the dots after 9/11?"¹⁶¹

Cheney and his staff often attempted to connect these dots themselves. Stephen Hadley notes, "The vice president was an avid consumer of intelligence; he placed a lot of weight on raw intelligence. But this wasn't outside the process... and he had the opportunity to query the intelligence community for additional information just as we did."¹⁶²

One area where Cheney and his staff did extensive research was on reported links between Iraq and al-Qaeda. In studying the intelligence, Cheney worked with groups at the Department of Defense (discussed below) and made multiple visits to the CIA headquarters in Langley in order to question analysts about Iraq's WMD programs. There were reports that the vice president and his chief of staff Lewis Libby used these visits to pressure analysts to shape intelligence in support of the Iraq war.¹⁶³ William Nolte, who was the assistant Director of Central Intelligence for analysis at the time, attended these meetings and stated that this was absolutely not the case. "I never once left those meetings with any sense other than that the analysts were excited. It was legitimate pressure for policy-makers to exert – were the analysts prepared to take the heat. No one left the room thinking they were pushed into certain answers."¹⁶⁴

Cheney's work was at times used in efforts to build public support for toppling Saddam, but it is unclear what influence it had on the president's decision to invade Iraq. Rice, then NSA, writes that at the vice president's request, Libby did an in-depth presentation on links between Saddam Hussein and September 11. Rice states that the president was unimpressed and felt the real issue was the potential of Iraqi WMD being transferred to terrorists in the future.¹⁶⁵

Cheney was a strong advocate for action on Iraq, both to the general public (where he gave multiple speeches on the threat Iraq posed), to Congress (discussed above), and directly to the president. Woodward writes, "Powell detected a kind of fever in Cheney.... The vice president was beyond hell-bent for action against Saddam. It was as if nothing else existed."¹⁶⁶ At one of their lunches, Cheney asked Bush directly, "Are you going to take care of this guy, or not?"¹⁶⁷ Bush credited Cheney's support in the difficult decision to go to war, remembering that "[Cheney] was a rock....[H]e was steadfast and steady in his view that Saddam was a threat to America and we had to deal with him."¹⁶⁸

Cheney was also involved with planning for a post-Saddam Iraq. Cheney advocated working with Iraqi opposition groups in order to begin establishing a new Iraqi government. Several of Cheney's staffers and contacts in the Defense Department had long advocated regime change in Iraq and had links to the opposition group, the Iraqi National Congress, led by Ahmed Chalabi.¹⁶⁹ The State Department did not believe these groups, made up of Iraqi exiles, had credibility within Iraq and stymied Cheney and the Defense Department's efforts to hold conferences with Iraqi opposition groups.¹⁷⁰ President Bush was also skeptical of the Iraqi exiles as future leaders of Iraq, feeling the future leader of Iraq should be chosen by Iraqis, not Americans.¹⁷¹ Cheney's office also worked with the Defense Department to limit the State Department's participation in planning for a post-Saddam Iraq by insisting that State Department personnel be removed from the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (the Defense Department entity established to administer Iraq after Saddam's overthrow).¹⁷²

The invasion of Iraq is an instance of *vice presidential bolstering*, helping a president pursue his preferred policy. For reinforcing Bush's inclination to topple

Saddam Hussein, access to the president and policy process (where Cheney could advocate his point of view) was essential. Cheney's staff and Cheney's allies in the Defense Department played a key role in gathering and analyzing intelligence to support the case against Saddam, but also in gathering information about the potential dangers of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists. Cheney's own experience with intelligence issues and contingency planning for worst-case scenarios contributed to his sense of urgency to the discussion about what to do about Iraq.

In the case of planning for a post-Saddam Iraq, Cheney's efforts at a *vice presidential initiative* to build an effective opposition to Saddam Hussein was of limited success. Although he had staff and allies in the Defense Department with links to the Iraqi opposition as well as access to the president and policy process, Cheney was unable to convince the president that the Iraqi exiles were an important component in building a new Iraq. They did receive some U.S. support and play a role in post-Saddam Iraq, but they did not receive the support Cheney sought for them. At the same time, working with Defense to limit the State Department's role in Iraqi reconstruction is a modest example of *vice presidential influence on the trajectory* of policy. This influence was primarily achieved through Cheney's staff and allies in the Defense department.

Seeking a UN Resolution for the Iraq War

Peter Rodman, who served the Bush 43 administration as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, cited the debate over seeking a UN resolution for removing Saddam Hussein from power as an example of how, even at the reported height of his influence, Cheney still lost important battles over policy.¹⁷³

In the summer of 2002, Powell was concerned about the administration heading into war with Iraq and requested a private meeting with the president. At a dinner organized by Rice on August 5, Powell discussed the potential consequences of a war with Iraq. Bush agreed to one of Powell's suggestions: go through the UN to hold Iraq accountable for the many UN resolutions it had violated. Powell explained that this might resolve the problem, and if it did not, the U.S. would have more

international support for military action. Cheney opposed this measure, believing the UN approach would not work and would only buy Saddam time.¹⁷⁴

On August 26, 2002, Cheney gave a speech, stating that the return of UN mandated weapons inspectors to Iraq would not be effective. Bush, who had decided to work through the UN, was not pleased and had NSA Rice call Cheney about it. Bush wrote, "...[T]o Dick's credit, it never happened again."¹⁷⁵

Cheney and Powell hotly debated the purpose of President Bush's planned address to the UN on September 12. Cheney urged the president not to seek UN support for action against Iraq, but rather to make the UN the issue by highlighting the UN's failures to enforce its resolutions requiring Saddam Hussein to permit weapons inspectors in the country. Powell described Cheney as "terrified" that the UN and diplomatic process might work. Cheney argued that asking for a UN resolution would bog the United States down in that body's procedures. Powell argued that the president could not just give a speech about Iraq to the UN without asking the UN for action.¹⁷⁶ Bush ultimately supported Secretary of State Colin Powell's recommendation to ask for a UN resolution.

Cheney, who had served for a decade in the House, pressed for going to Congress before getting action from the UN. This was also useful in terms of domestic politics because it was in late 2002 and Congressional elections were approaching. If Congress voted on an Iraq resolution before the elections, voters would know where their representatives stood on the Iraq issue. Rice supported Cheney's stand, believing Congressional support would improve the U.S.'s position at the UN.¹⁷⁷ Cheney played a central role in the administration's lobbying efforts, making a personal appeal to his old friend Dick Arme. Senator Bob Graham, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, described Cheney as playing a central role in briefing the "gang of eight," the Congressional leaders who were regularly briefed on the most secret covert operations, and stressing that Iraq was the next, necessary target in the Global War on Terror.¹⁷⁸

On November 8, 2002, the UN Security Council unanimously passed a resolution requiring Iraq to provide a complete accounting of its WMD programs within 30 days. The report Iraq submitted on December 7 was deemed inadequate,

and in late January 2003, the president decided to request a second UN resolution. The vice president, secretaries of state and defense, and the NSA all opposed requesting a second resolution, but British Prime Minister Tony Blair insisted and Bush agreed.¹⁷⁹

As Secretary of State, Colin Powell prepared to address the UN on February 5 to ask for the UN resolution and outline the case against Saddam, Cheney and his staff played an active role in seeking to raise Saddam Hussein's connections to terrorism as an issue as well. Cheney's chief of staff and national security advisor, Scooter Libby, along with Deputy NSA Stephen Hadley, played a key role in preparing the brief on Iraqi WMD within the White House. The Pentagon's Office of Special Plans (which consisted of a pair of analysts) examined relevant intelligence and sent interesting findings to Libby. On January 25, 2003, Libby made the case to top members of the White House and National Security staff, along with the Deputy Secretaries of Defense and State, of the extent of Iraq's WMD programs and also of Saddam's ties to al-Qaeda. When it was determined that Powell would prepare and present the American case at the UN on February 5, Vice President Cheney pressed him to include Libby's findings about Saddam Hussein's links to al-Qaeda. Powell felt that this report relied on questionable intelligence to draw the worst possible conclusions and did not use the material.¹⁸⁰

This is an instance in which the *vice president failed to persuade* the president to change policy. Cheney and his staff had access to the president, the key meetings, and to the intelligence being discussed. But, despite Cheney's concerns about taking the issue to the UN, the president decided to pursue diplomacy and let the secretary of state take the lead. While President Bush valued Cheney's advice on national security issues, in this case, Cheney was opposed both by Powell and Tony Blair, whom the president respected. Bush also needed Blair's support if war with Iraq were necessary and was thus willing to accommodate his request for UN support.

The Surge

By 2006, the situation in Iraq was dire. The country was in a virtual state of civil war and the discussion in the United States primarily focused on the possibility of bringing American troops home. After lengthy consideration, President Bush decided to re-commit the United States to succeeding in Iraq, and on January 10, 2007, he announced “the surge”, a deployment of an additional 20,000 U.S. soldiers and Marines to Iraq to stabilize the situation. The decision was primarily the president’s initiative, and NSA Hadley led the effort that developed the option. Well into the administration’s second term, the vice president was less influential role, but Cheney strongly supported and encouraged the president in carrying out the surge.

By summer of 2006, Cheney was becoming increasingly concerned that the United States was getting ready to “bail” on Iraq. The U.S. commanders in Iraq were calling for troop withdrawals, a call that was readily echoed in Congress, and for allowing Iraqi forces to take charge. Cheney noted that violence was increasing not decreasing, and if the U.S. withdrew, Iraq itself would descend into complete chaos and become a safe haven for terrorists, while the United States would be seen to have suffered a strategic defeat, thus inviting further attacks.¹⁸¹ Then VPNSA John Hannah, states that Cheney was extremely engaged in advocating for a shift in U.S. strategy, stating:

By early 2006, Cheney had closely read an early draft of the Army's new counter-insurgency manual authored by General David Petraeus. He and his staff had also initiated a long series of meetings with counter-insurgency experts in and out of government who could offer an alternative strategy in Iraq, including retired General Jack Keane, DIA analyst Derek Harvey, Army Colonel John Nagl (the lead author of Petraeus' counter-insurgency manual), author Lewis Sorley who had written the definitive work on U.S. counter-insurgency strategy in Vietnam, and Colonel H.R. McMaster who had successfully applied classic counter-insurgency doctrine in the Iraqi town of Tal Afar.”¹⁸²

NSA Stephen Hadley, who oversaw a review of Iraq strategy in autumn 2006, observed, “Cheney supported it. But he did not lead the charge. He was in a tough

position. His closest ally and friend was Rumsfeld, who was skeptical of the surge.”¹⁸³ After the 2006 elections, Bush asked Rumsfeld to step down as secretary of defense, naming Robert Gates as Rumsfeld’s successor. In a significant sign of the vice president’s reduced influence, Cheney, who had argued against firing Rumsfeld on previous occasions, was not consulted on this decision.¹⁸⁴

Cheney began emphasizing the importance of winning in Iraq, rather than focusing on withdrawing troops. On November 9, in a meeting with Hadley, Rice and the president, he argued that the Republican losses in the 2006 elections, Rumsfeld’s leaving office, and opinion polls showing most Americans wanted the U.S. to withdraw from Iraq were sending signals to Iraqis and U.S. troops fighting there that the U.S. was going to end its efforts. On December 6, Cheney was further distressed when the recommendations of the Iraq Study Commission (headed by former Secretary of State James Baker and former Congressman Lee Hamilton) did not include the word “victory.” The next day, Cheney pressed the president to state the importance of achieving victory in Iraq in a statement to be given at a press conference with British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Later that day, in a Principals Committee meeting, Cheney argued with Rice that U.S. troops should play an active role in countering Iraq’s sectarian violence. The next day, he reiterated these arguments to the president.¹⁸⁵

After being impressed by a strategy to secure Iraq developed by retired Army General Jack Keane and military historian Fred Kagan, Cheney outlined their plans for the president. Cheney writes that this was followed by a discussion about the Joint Chiefs of Staff, whose support would be essential to carrying out the surge. Cheney joined the president the next day for an in-depth discussion with the Joint Chiefs.¹⁸⁶

On January 10, 2007, President Bush announced the surge, deploying five additional brigades of about 20,000 soldiers and Marines to Iraq. The president also appointed General David Petraeus commander of U.S. forces in Iraq. Within a few months, the surge faced critics from both within the Pentagon and Congress. Cheney continued to be a source of information and support. General Keane was in regular contact with Cheney, providing a White House back channel to and alternate perspective on Iraq. He kept Cheney posted on Petraeus’ efforts and warned him

when the secretary of defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were not providing Petraeus the support he needed. Cheney shared this information with the president.¹⁸⁷ On May 31, 2007, Cheney arranged for Keane to brief the president and NSA Hadley on the improved situation in Iraq and to reiterate Petraeus's need for White House support.¹⁸⁸ On September 13, when Keane and Cheney were meeting in the vice president's West Wing office, President Bush walked in on the meeting and, after hearing Keane describe the difficulties Petraeus was facing from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Central Command, gave Keane a message to deliver personally to Petraeus.¹⁸⁹

In July 2007, to counter Congressional critics of the surge, Cheney met with Republican senators to canvas their support. Key Republican senators assured the vice president that they had sufficient votes to block any Congressional action to withdraw troops before General Petraeus and U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker testified before Congress about the results of the surge in September.

Cheney's role in the decision to carry out a surge of U.S. troops in Iraq was an instance of the *vice president bolstering* the president in making a difficult decision. Cheney supported Bush's strategic analysis that withdrawing from Iraq too soon would be catastrophic. In helping the president carry out a strategy to prevent a loss in Iraq, Cheney provided the president with additional information both about the situation in Iraq and about the military. Although Cheney's influence had decreased substantially by this point in the second term, Cheney still had access to the policy process and to the president, allowing the vice president to make suggestions and arrange for the president to meet outside experts. (The vice president's West Wing office appeared to play a modest role in facilitating these meetings.) Cheney's staff played an important role as well. Cheney's aides participated in the NSC review of Iraq policy in autumn 2006 and kept Cheney abreast of developments in Iraq through their contacts.¹⁹⁰

Cheney's knowledge of the military from his time as secretary of defense was a valuable resource in helping the president counter Pentagon opposition to the surge. Hadley notes, "Cheney was intimately involved and very helpful with the Joint Chiefs of Staff."¹⁹¹ In particular, Cheney grasped that because the Joint Chiefs are not in the

chain of command they are not as focused on immediate operations but rather on the overall readiness and capability of the military. With this understanding, Cheney could advise the president how best to mollify the concerns of the Joint Chiefs about the surge's impact on the military overall.¹⁹²

Cheney's background with Congress was also helpful in shoring up Congressional support for the surge. In this case Cheney's allies throughout the government reduced his ability to influence policy. Cheney was loathe to advocate a policy that would contradict his friend and mentor, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld.

North Korea

For much of the Bush administration, Cheney's preferred line of isolating North Korea dominated. President Bush despised the brutal North Korean regime and shared Cheney's unwillingness to engage with it. During the first term, the president allowed bilateral talks with North Korea, but U.S. negotiators' positions (determined through an inter-agency process) were so restricted that little progress was made.¹⁹³

Later, as his influence declined, the administration sought to engage North Korea and even delisted as a State Sponsor of Terrorism. On October 8, 2006, North Korea detonated a nuclear device and the president announced that the United States would respond if North Korea were to proliferate nuclear technology to other nations. But a few weeks later the United States began negotiating directly with North Korea. In August 2007, Cheney urged President Bush to inform Chinese President Hu Jintao at the upcoming Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting about the al-Kibar reactor, which North Korea had built for Syria (discussed below), and encourage the Chinese to pressure North Korea. But, according to Cheney, the president chose not to do so.¹⁹⁴

Throughout 2007 and 2008, Cheney argued against the State Department's negotiations strategy, stating that the United States was making concessions while North Korea continued to expand its nuclear program and violate already established agreements. On January 4, 2008, during an in-depth discussion at a National Security Council meeting, Cheney made his case at the president's request, observing that

North Korea was continuing to deny nuclear programs and proliferation that the United States knew to be true and that U.S. concessions were effectively rewarding the North Koreans for their illicit activities. He then asked, “Is it accurate to say that there will be no lifting of our designation of North Korea as a terrorist state and no removal of the Trading with the Enemy Act sanctions unless they present a comprehensive and complete declaration of their programs?” According to Cheney, the president replied, “Absolutely.”¹⁹⁵

In May, Cheney opposed Secretary of State Rice’s plan to either travel to North Korea for direct negotiations or to lift the terrorism designation. But on June 26, 2008, after the North Koreans provided a declaration to the Chinese of some of their nuclear activities (a declaration Cheney believed was inadequate), Bush announced that he was preparing to reduce sanctions on North Korea under the Trading with the Enemy Act and to begin the process of taking North Korea off of the list of state sponsors of terror. In October, before the process was complete, Cheney again argued against removing North Korea’s designation as a state sponsor of terror, both because of its duplicity in negotiations and because of how it would affect relations with Japan. Nonetheless, on October 11, 2008 Rice signed the document removing North Korea’s status as a state sponsor of terrorism.¹⁹⁶

The decision to remove North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terror is an unsuccessful instance of *vice presidential persuasion*. After agreeing with the vice president’s preferred policy for much of his presidency (a successful instance of the *vice president influencing the trajectory of a policy*), later in his second term, the president decided to engage with North Korea and the vice president was unable to change the president’s mind. Throughout the two terms in office, the vice president had access to the policy process and to staffers knowledgeable about North Korea, as well as allies elsewhere in the administration. But several things changed between the first term and the second term. In the first term, the president sought to split the difference between his advisors by allowing engagement with North Korea but also restricting the terms of that engagement. Cheney and his allies effectively defined those terms.¹⁹⁷

In the second term, Cheney's influence declined as President Bush, in the words of NSA Stephen Hadley, "...came into his own and he acted more decisively with more confidence."¹⁹⁸ Bush had been dealing with North Korea for over six years and knew the issue well.¹⁹⁹ Cheney himself observed, "He had a lot more confidence in his own judgment. And obviously he placed a great store in Condi's experience and her views."²⁰⁰

Syria

In April 2007 Israeli intelligence briefed Cheney and NSA Stephen Hadley on a secret nuclear reactor being constructed in the Syrian desert at al-Kibar. The Israelis were deeply concerned about this reactor and wanted it destroyed before it was put into operation. By his own account, Cheney argued strongly that the United States should attack the reactor both at weekly meetings of the top national security officials hosted by Stephen Hadley and to the president himself in their private lunch on June 14, 2007. Others in the administration argued for a diplomatic strategy, given that the U.S. was already embroiled in two wars in the region and had credibility issues regarding intelligence on WMD.²⁰¹ In late June 2007, at a meeting in which most of the National Security Council was present, Cheney again made the case against the diplomatic approach and in favor of a strike on the Syrian reactor. President Bush asked if anyone agreed with this argument. "Not a single hand went up." Cheney states that at this point the president's mind had already been made up.²⁰²

A related question was what the U.S. would ask Israel to do about the reactor. Cheney advised the president that if the U.S. did not act, Israel would. Defense Secretary Robert Gates urged President Bush to tell the Israelis not to attack the reactor and let the United States use diplomacy to expose the reactor's existence and threaten international sanctions.²⁰³ When Bush spoke to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on July 13, he made this case. Olmert replied that Israel could not accept Syrian possession of the reactor and could not rely on the international community to prevent the reactor from becoming operational. Bush in turn replied that Israel had a right to defend itself.²⁰⁴ Gates argued that this made U.S. policy a hostage to Israel,

observing, “By not confronting Olmert, Bush effectively came down on Cheney’s side. By not giving the Israelis a red light, he gave them a green one.”²⁰⁵

On September 6, 2007, Israeli fighter-jets struck and destroyed the reactor at al-Kibar. At Israel’s request, the United States agreed to keep silent about the reactor. The Israelis believed that if the knowledge of Israel’s strike became public, Syrian President Assad would feel obligated to retaliate.²⁰⁶

This was a failed instance of *vice presidential persuasion*, but the *vice president did influence the trajectory* of the policy. Although Cheney had access to the president and the process, with two ongoing wars, the vice president could not persuade the president to pursue a third conflict with Syria. The vice president did argue, successfully, that the U.S. should not put pressure on Israel and let it make its own choice about the best course of action. VPNSA John Hannah observed that this was not a difficult case to make to President Bush, who was generally inclined to support Israel and its right to defend itself.²⁰⁷

4. Causes of Vice Presidential Influence in the Bush Administration: A Second Look

Examination of specific instances of the Vice President Cheney’s influence on Bush administration policies primarily reinforces the conclusions reached in the initial overview of the hypotheses in this case study.

The Modern Presidency

The Bush administration faced tremendous challenges including fundamental questions of war and peace as well as an enormous economic crisis and a major natural disaster. It is plausible to link the tremendous difficulties faced by the Bush administration with increased vice presidential influence. However, there is no specific evidence that the president was overwhelmed with his duties; in fact most descriptions show Bush rising to the occasion when crisis struck.

A more plausible explanation is that the crises of the first term, when the vice president’s influence was greatest, were in the areas where the vice president had the

greatest expertise and the president was inclined to listen to the vice president's judgment on those issues. If the vice president's influence was due to the increasing difficulty of the presidency, the vice president's influence would not decline in the second term. The fact that this decrease occurred indicates that other factors, not the difficulty of the presidency, underpin the increase in vice presidential influence.

Bush had a great deal of freedom in selecting his vice presidential nominee and may have been considering Cheney for the role well before he was nominated. In Cheney, Bush had a vice president with areas of expertise and no political ambitions of his own. Bush was free to choose a vice president who was equipped to serve as a senior advisor whom he could trust completely, knowing that he was receiving advice not shaped by personal ambitions. Bush relied on this advice often.

The Institutional Vice Presidency

Instances of Cheney's influence highlight the importance of the semi-institutionalized vice presidency. Staff and access to the president and the policy process are essential components to vice presidential influence. The regular private meetings allowed Bush and Cheney to develop much of the legal architecture of the war on terror in secret (which the president and vice president believed was essential to the programs' effectiveness) as well as manage other issues.

Cheney's access to the policy process and White House paper flow allowed him to stay abreast of and intervene on a number of issues including derailing the EPA director's effort to regulate carbon dioxide, limiting negotiations with North Korea in the first term, and, on several occasions, modifying presidential speeches in the second term.

Cheney was also notable for attending a vast range of meetings that both included the president and lower level meetings that did not. These meetings gave him the opportunity to collect information about the status of issues and to shape policies. Cheney's participation in planning the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are perhaps the most prominent examples.

Cheney's staff played an important role in extending vice presidential influence. Cheney recruited a highly capable staff that represented him throughout the

interagency process. Probably the most prominent instance of the vice president's staff influencing policy was the role played by the vice president's counsel David Addington, who was central to shaping the legal components of the war on terror. In addition, Scooter Libby gathered and analyzed intelligence on Iraq on the vice president's behalf. Libby was also involved in the vice president's homeland security responsibilities, giving Libby the background to inform the vice president of potential risks of WMD attacks. Later, in the second term, the vice president's staff facilitated back-channel contacts with U.S. personnel in Iraq. These contacts were invaluable as the vice president advised the president on shifting strategy in Iraq.

Cheney, like his predecessors, was absolutely loyal to the president. The one instance in which a vice presidential speech went beyond the president's policy – the August address arguing against bringing the Iraq issue to the UN – was a mistake that was not repeated. Cheney's loyalty and discretion meant that the president and vice president continued to meet regularly throughout the administration and Cheney always had the opportunity to provide input. When Cheney was at his most influential, he did not seek to build his reputation outside the White House. When major policy decisions went against Cheney, including the decision to pursue a UN resolution against Iraq or remove North Korea's designation, Cheney did not reveal any frustrations outside of the White House.

Cheney was probably more adept at "hidden-hand strategies" than any of his predecessors. Because Cheney worked carefully and it was difficult to track what he was doing, advocates of opposing policies found it difficult to identify the right venue within the policy process to make their case.

Due to improvements in technology, Cheney may have been less reliant on the West Wing office than his recent predecessors. When in the White House, Cheney was in the West Wing office. But there were lengthy periods during the administration in which he was based at "undisclosed locations" and joined meetings by videoconference.

Outsiders & Insiders

Bush recognized his status as a Washington DC outsider and specifically chose Cheney as his running mate because he had knowledge of policy and process that Bush believed could be helpful.

Bush came to office with little knowledge of national security or Congress. From the beginning, Cheney played a key role advising the president on these issues. The decision to allow Senator Jeffords to switch parties is one early example of Cheney's advice influencing the president's dealings with Congress. On 9/11, the Bush administration suddenly became an administration at war and the areas where Cheney had the greatest experience leapt to the fore. In particular, from his experience on the House Intelligence Committee and as chief of staff in a weakened White House, Cheney had already given substantial thought to the kinds of legal authorities a president might need to protect the country from a range of threats. Cheney's familiarity with the subject, combined with his knowledge of how, bureaucratically, to get things done helped the president enact the Terrorist Surveillance Program and policies for holding and interrogating captured terrorists. Cheney's experience as a wartime Secretary of Defense was useful to the president as he planned campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. Cheney's knowledge of how the military as an institution functioned was also helpful, both in questioning commanders about battle plans but also in neutralizing the Joint Chiefs of Staff's opposition to the surge. Bush's reliance on Cheney for help with the biggest decisions declined in the second term. But Cheney continued to be a valuable source of intelligence on Congress and Washington institutions. Time and again, Cheney's knowledge of Washington and national security issues helped President Bush to enact the policies he sought.

Cheney played a more active role in his administration's appointments process than any of his predecessors. With his vast array of Washington contacts, the vice presidents had allies throughout the administration. These allies, particularly his friends and former colleagues at the Department of Defense, were an important source of influence. Cheney worked with allies at Defense to shape policies on a

number of issues including North Korea and Iraq. Cheney also had allies in the Justice Department who played a key role in establishing the legal regimes the administration sought to fight terrorism.

Conclusion

While stories of Cheney as “Darth Vader” were exaggerations, he had a remarkably influential vice presidency. It was a case of the right man at the right moment. Bush consciously chose Cheney to help him with certain issues, particularly national security. Having had little experience in these areas Bush knew it was both smart politically and administratively to have a running mate who could help him on these issues. Interviewing Cheney’s counselor Mary Matalin, Barton Gellman wrote:

...[Matalin explained that] Cheney arrived in office with a “pre-ordained policy portfolio” that spanned “the economic issues, the security issues-even before 9/11 we had homeland security-and the energy issues.” ... “The iron issues, I don’t know what else to call them. The steely issues.”²⁰⁸

Bush ran for president as a compassionate conservative and hoped to reform education. The United States had enjoyed a decade of relative peace before he took office and national security issues were not a top priority. On 9/11, that changed. “The iron issues” suddenly became the dominant concerns of the president and the nation. As the President began to consider these challenges, he leaned heavily on his vice president, a man for whom “the iron issues” were the only ones that really mattered.

Chapter 7 Endnotes

¹ Rockefeller, who headed the Domestic Policy Council while Vice President, held Rumsefld and Cheney responsible for keeping him out of the loop and quashing his initiatives. But Cheney argued that Rockefeller’s ideas were not aligned with President Ford’s priorities and that because the president had a friendly relationship with the vice president, it fell to the staff

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- to prevent Rockefeller's ideas from becoming administration policies. See the roundtable, *Chief of Staff: Twenty-Five Years of Managing the Presidency*, ed. Samuel Kernell and Samuel L. Popkin (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986) 173-76.
- ² Lechelt, *The Vice Presidency in Foreign Policy*, 229-42.
- ³ Dick Cheney, *In My Time* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 254-58.
- ⁴ Gellman, *Angler*, 8.
- ⁵ Dick Cheney, *In My Time*, 256.
- ⁶ Peter Baker, *Days of Fire* (New York: Doubleday, 2013), Kindle Loc 1196.
- ⁷ Bush, *Decision Points*, 49.
- ⁸ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 1397-1448.
- ⁹ Gellman, *Angler*, 54-56.
- ¹⁰ Gellman, *Angler*, 68. Cheney's autobiography states that Thomas and Hastert offered him the space which he used to hold meetings and host buffet dinners before Presidential addresses to Congress. When the Democrats took control of the House in 2006, Cheney lost access to the office. Cheney, *In My Time*, 306-307.
- ¹¹ Gellman, *Angler*, 57.
- ¹² Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 111-12.
- ¹³ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc.4774
- ¹⁴ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 2148.
- ¹⁵ Gellman, *Angler*, 75.
- ¹⁶ Gellman, *Angler*, 215-20.
- ¹⁷ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 12672, 12801.
- ¹⁸ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 8295.
- ¹⁹ Cheney, *In My Time*, 324. Gellman writes in *Angler* that Bush had chief of staff Andrew Card deliver the news and that Cheney was perturbed that the President did not inform him personally. Gellman, *Angler*.
- ²⁰ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 8725.
- ²¹ Stephen F. Hayes, *Cheney: The Untold Story of America's Most Powerful and Controversial Vice President* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007) 407-8.
- ²² Gellman, *Angler*, 165.
- ²³ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 409.
- ²⁴ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 244-66.
- ²⁵ Halperin, Clapp and Kantor, *Bureaucratic Politics*, 229.
- ²⁶ Hess, *Organizing the Presidency*, 171.
- ²⁷ Nicholas Lemann, "Quiet Man," *The New Yorker*, May 7, 2001.
- ²⁸ Warshaw, *The Co-Presidency*, 246.
- ²⁹ Bruce P. Montgomery *Richard B. Cheney and the Rise of the Imperial Vice Presidency*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009), 13.
- ³⁰ Gellman, *Angler*, 388.
- ³¹ David Frum, *The Right Man: The Surprise Presidency of George W. Bush* (New York: Random House, 2003), 62.
- ³² Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc 196.
- ³³ George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), 69. Cheney states he agreed with these arguments and added that his affiliation with the energy industry was also a negative. See Cheney, *In My Time*, 263-64. They also faced the practical issue that Cheney was a resident of Texas and thus ineligible under the Constitution to run on the ticket with another Texan. Cheney resolved this by establishing residency in Wyoming, which had elected him to six terms in Congress.
- ³⁴ Bush, *Decision Points*, 68.

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- ³⁵ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 4773.
- ³⁶ Daalder and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 256-57.
- ³⁷ Rothkopf, *Running the World*, 421.
- ³⁸ Mark Hosenball, "Cheney's Long Path to War," *Newsweek*, November 16, 2003, [http://
Markwww.newsweek.com/cheneys-long-path-war-133837](http://Markwww.newsweek.com/cheneys-long-path-war-133837).
- ³⁹ Condaleeza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2011), 17.
- ⁴⁰ John Hannah, interview by author, Washington, D.C., March 13, 2014.
- ⁴¹ Charles Burson, phone interview by author, September 24, 2013. One early profile described Cheney as having a much smaller staff than Gore.
- ⁴² Cheney, *In My Time*, 306.
- ⁴³ Gellman, *Angler*, 49.
- ⁴⁴ Frum, *The Right Man* pg. 61-2.
- ⁴⁵ Hannah, interview by author.
- ⁴⁶ The White House, "National Security Presidential Directives," Washington, D.C., February 13, 2001, <https://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-1.htm>.
- ⁴⁷ Hannah, interview by author.
- ⁴⁸ Robert M. Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 98.
- ⁴⁹ Woodward *Plan of Attack* 49; Douglas J. Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 208.
- ⁵⁰ David Wurmser, interview by author, Rockville, MD, April 30, 2014.
- ⁵¹ Hannah, interview by author.
- ⁵² Libby's successor David Addington was also described as Cheney's Cheney. Gellman, *Angler*, 406.
- ⁵³ Bush, *Decision Points*, 185.
- ⁵⁴ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 49.
- ⁵⁵ Libby was convicted on four counts (one count of obstruction of justice, one count of making false statements, and two counts of perjury), none of which were based on the original leak, and sentenced to 30 months in prison. The president commuted Libby's sentence. Later Cheney lobbied the president to pardon Libby, but the president decided not to do so. Cheney, *In My Time*, 408-10.
- ⁵⁶ Hannah, interview by author.
- ⁵⁷ Gellman, *Angler*, 40.
- ⁵⁸ Gellman, *Angler*, 19.
- ⁵⁹ James Carney, "Big Time Punches In," CNN Inside Politics, February 5, 2001. <http://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/time/2001/02/12/punches.html>.
- ⁶⁰ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc 3215-3239.
- ⁶¹ Gellman, *Angler*, 408.
- ⁶² Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002) 255. Baker mentioned meeting with the President seven times in a day; See Baker *Days of Fire*, loc 197; Baker notes that Cheney attended 75 to 80 percent of Bush's meetings; see Baker *Days of Fire*, loc 1844.
- ⁶³ Cheney, *In My Time*, 314-15.
- ⁶⁴ Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 17 and Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 1835-1860.
- ⁶⁵ Bob Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History, 2006-2008* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 60.

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- ⁶⁶ Gellman, *Angler*, 376-77. Former OVP staffers dispute this, stating that they were included in some NSC emails institutionally but that they could not simply read NSC staff mail. Wurmser, interview by author.
- ⁶⁷ Gellman, *Angler*, 54.
- ⁶⁸ Cheney, *In My Time*, 305-6.
- ⁶⁹ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 163.
- ⁷⁰ Mark Leibovich, "In the Spotlight And on the Spot; Scooter Libby, Backstage No More," *Washington Post*, October 23, 2005.
- ⁷¹ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc 155.
- ⁷² Richard Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 18.
- ⁷³ Stephen Hadley, phone interview by author, February 12, 2014.
- ⁷⁴ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 2355.
- ⁷⁵ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc 6453-6478.
- ⁷⁶ Hannah, interview by author.
- ⁷⁷ Bush, *Decision Points*, 86-87.
- ⁷⁸ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 2344.
- ⁷⁹ Dick Cheney, "Interview with Vice President Cheney," Interview by *USAToday*, January 8, 2004, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/washington/2004-01-18-cheney-transcript_x.htm.
- ⁸⁰ Cheney, *In My Time*, 306.
- ⁸¹ Cheney, *In My Time*, 251.
- ⁸² Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 9218-9258.
- ⁸³ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 2344.
- ⁸⁴ Bush, *Decision Points*, 68.
- ⁸⁵ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 1240.
- ⁸⁶ Rice *No Higher Honor*, 27-28.
- ⁸⁷ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 2117.
- ⁸⁸ Cheney, *In My Time*, 326.
- ⁸⁹ Gellman, *Angler*, 52.
- ⁹⁰ Hadley, interview by author.
- ⁹¹ Daalder and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 262-90.
- ⁹² Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 250-72.
- ⁹³ Gellman, *Angler*, 86.
- ⁹⁴ Hadley, interview by author. Hadley also notes that Cheney operated completely within the established national security process in the second term.
- ⁹⁵ Hannah, interview by author.
- ⁹⁶ Hadley, interview by author.
- ⁹⁷ Gellman, *Angler*, 31-39.
- ⁹⁸ Rothkopf, *Presidential Command*, 423-26; Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 11745.
- ⁹⁹ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 245-46; Daalder and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 276-77.
- ¹⁰⁰ Hannah, interview by author.
- ¹⁰¹ Ron Suskind, *The Price of Loyalty: George W. Bush, the White House, and the Education of Paul O'Neill* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 118-22.
- ¹⁰² Cheney, *In My Time*, 394-95.
- ¹⁰³ Gellman, *Angler*, 189.
- ¹⁰⁴ Wurmser, interview by author; see also Elliot Abrams *Tested by Zion* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 283-84.
- ¹⁰⁵ Hadley, interview by author.

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- ¹⁰⁶ Gellman, *Angler*, 77-78.
- ¹⁰⁷ Cheney, *In My Time*, 310.
- ¹⁰⁸ Gellman, *Angler*, 76.
- ¹⁰⁹ Cheney, *In My Time*, 315.
- ¹¹⁰ Suskind, *Price of Loyalty*, 101-18. Whitman and Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill believed Cheney had orchestrated the letter in order to press the President into abandoning his campaign policy of capping carbon emissions.
- ¹¹¹ Gellman, *Angler*, 88.
- ¹¹² Suskind, *Price of Loyalty*, 121-22.
- ¹¹³ Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 41. Rice explains that the U.S. had important reasons not to embrace the Kyoto Treaty, but that the overly harsh language rejecting it unnecessarily hurt European feelings and set the stage for charges of American "unilateralism." Rice also states that the letter may have been seen as addressing a domestic issue, not a foreign policy one.
- ¹¹⁴ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 12180-12228.
- ¹¹⁵ National Energy Policy Development Group, *National Energy Policy: Report of the National Energy Policy Development Group* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, May 2001).
http://www.netl.doe.gov/publications/press/2001/nep/national_energy_policy.pdf.
- ¹¹⁶ Frum, *The Right Man*, 62-63. Frum states that Cheney also argued with the president's advisor Karen Hughes over the report. Hughes felt environmental issues were important to voters and that the report should reflect this.
- ¹¹⁷ Cheney, *In My Time*, 318.
- ¹¹⁸ Cheney, *In My Time*, 315-18.
- ¹¹⁹ Cheney, *In My Time*, 336.
- ¹²⁰ Cheney, *In My Time*, 340-41.
- ¹²¹ Jack Goldsmith, *The Terror Presidency: Law and Judgment Inside the Bush Administration*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009), 108-9, 142-43, 180.
- ¹²² Bush, *Decision Points*, 180.
- ¹²³ Hadley, interview by author.
- ¹²⁴ Gates, *Duty*, 96; Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 761.
- ¹²⁵ FISA was, in great part, developed by Vice President Walter Mondale during the Carter administration and is discussed briefly in the case study on Mondale.
- ¹²⁶ Cheney, *In My Time*, 348-50.
- ¹²⁷ Gelman, *Angler*, 288-313. Cheney stated, "I had little patience for what I saw happening. The program had been in place more than two years and the attorney general had approved it some twenty times." Cheney, *In My Time*, 352.
- ¹²⁸ Bush, *Decision Points*, 172-74.
- ¹²⁹ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 12374.
- ¹³⁰ Gellman, *Angler*, 162-67.
- ¹³¹ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 3628-3851.
- ¹³² Gelman, *Angler*, 173-79.
- ¹³³ Bush, *Decision Points*, 177-80.
- ¹³⁴ Heritage Foundation, "David S. Addington, Group Vice President, Research," Washington, D.C., Heritage Foundation, 2014. <http://www.heritage.org/about/staff/a/david-addington>.
- ¹³⁵ Goldsmith, *The Terror Presidency*, 181.
- ¹³⁶ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 3426.
- ¹³⁷ Gellman, *Angler*, 133-36.
- ¹³⁸ Goldsmith, *The Terror Presidency*, 77.

¹³⁹ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 12374.

¹⁴⁰ For one example of this argument see Warshaw, *The Co-Presidency of Bush and Cheney*, 242-43.

¹⁴¹ James P. Pfiffner, "Policy Making in the Bush White House," *Issues in Government Studies*, 21 (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, October 2008).
http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2008/10/31%20bush%20pfiffner/1031_bush_pfiffner.pdf.

¹⁴² George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 301.

¹⁴³ *BBC News*, November 18, 1999.

¹⁴⁴ Bush later clarified that the weapons would be "taken out" not Saddam, since U.S. policy forbids assassinating foreign leaders. Frank Bruni, "Bush Has Tough Words and Rough Enunciation for Iraqi Chief," *The New York Times*, December 4, 1999,
<http://www.nytimes.com/1999/12/04/us/bush-has-tough-words-and-rough-enunciation-for-iraqi-chief.html>.

¹⁴⁵ Commission on Presidential Debates, "October 11, 2000 Debate Transcript,"
<http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=october-11-2000-debate-transcript>.

¹⁴⁶ Condoleezza Rice, "Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs* January/February 2000.
<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/55630/condoleezza-rice/campaign-2000-promoting-the-national-interest>.

¹⁴⁷ Two other points about Iraq are worth noting. The first is that it is believed that in 1993, Saddam Hussein attempted to assassinate Bush's father, former President George H. W. Bush. Whatever impact this had on George W. Bush's decision-making is entirely speculative (The Clinton administration's response to the attack is discussed in the previous case study.) Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 3932. Also, removing Saddam Hussein from power was United States policy under the Iraq Liberation Act, which was passed in 1998. Bush, *Decision Points*, 227-28.

¹⁴⁸ Frum, *The Right Man*, 26.

¹⁴⁹ Feith, *War and Decision*, 208.

¹⁵⁰ Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 31-32.

¹⁵¹ Daalder and Destler, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, 279.

¹⁵² Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 25.

¹⁵³ Cheney, *In My Time*, 318-20.

¹⁵⁴ Bush, *Decision Points*, 157-59. The actual perpetrator was only identified several years later.

¹⁵⁵ Cheney, *In My Time* pgs 341-43.

¹⁵⁶ Douglas Frantz, James Risen, and David E. Sanger, "Nuclear Experts in Pakistan May Have Links to Al Qaeda," *New York Times*, December 9, 2001.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/09/world/nation-challenged-intelligence-nuclear-experts-pakistan-may-have-links-al-qaeda.html>.

¹⁵⁷ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 3152.

¹⁵⁸ Lemann, "The Quiet Man."

¹⁵⁹ Cheney, *In My Time*, 364-68. For more detail on information about Iraqi WMD programs and knowledge of them prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom, see Richard A. Falkenrath, Robert D. Newman, Bradley A. Thayer, *America's Achilles' Heel* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 255-60.

¹⁶⁰ Cheney, *In My Time*, 369.

¹⁶¹ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 428.

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- ¹⁶² Hadley, interview by author.
- ¹⁶³ Walter Pincus and Dana Priest, “Some Iraq Analysts Felt Pressure from Cheney Visits,” *Washington Post*, June 5, 2003.
- ¹⁶⁴ William Nolte, interview by author, College Park, MD, May 22, 2013. Full Disclosure, Nolte, now a professor at the University of Maryland’s School of Public Policy, was initially on the committee for this dissertation.
- ¹⁶⁵ Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 171.
- ¹⁶⁶ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 175.
- ¹⁶⁷ Bush, *Decision Points*, 251.
- ¹⁶⁸ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 420.
- ¹⁶⁹ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc 4685.
- ¹⁷⁰ Cheney, *In My Time*, 386-87.
- ¹⁷¹ Bush, *Decision Point s*, 249.
- ¹⁷² Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 283-84.
- ¹⁷³ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 246.
- ¹⁷⁴ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 4334-4360.
- ¹⁷⁵ Bush, *Decision Points*, 91.
- ¹⁷⁶ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 345-47; Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 155-57.
- ¹⁷⁷ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 167-68.
- ¹⁷⁸ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 193-94.
- ¹⁷⁹ Bush, *Decision Points*, 241-44.
- ¹⁸⁰ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 288-92.
- ¹⁸¹ Cheney, *In My Time*, 437-48.
- ¹⁸² Hannah, interview by author.
- ¹⁸³ Hadley, interview by author.
- ¹⁸⁴ Cheney, *In My Time*, 442-44.
- ¹⁸⁵ Cheney, *In My Time*, 444-49.
- ¹⁸⁶ Cheney, *In My Time*, 450-53.
- ¹⁸⁷ Woodward, *The War Within*, 332-33, 376-78, 399-401.
- ¹⁸⁸ Woodward, *The War Within*, 359-61.
- ¹⁸⁹ Woodward, *The War Within*, 387-88.
- ¹⁹⁰ Cheney, *In My Time*, 439-41.
- ¹⁹¹ Hadley, interview by author.
- ¹⁹² Cheney, *In My Time*, 452-53.
- ¹⁹³ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 254.
- ¹⁹⁴ Cheney, *In My Time*, 476.
- ¹⁹⁵ Cheney, *In My Time*, 482.
- ¹⁹⁶ Cheney, *In My Time*, 484-88.
- ¹⁹⁷ Rodman, *Presidential Command*, 254.
- ¹⁹⁸ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 11096.
- ¹⁹⁹ Bush, *Decision Points*, 422-28.
- ²⁰⁰ Baker, *Days of Fire*, loc. 11122.
- ²⁰¹ Gates, *Duty*, 170.
- ²⁰² Cheney, *In My Time*, 472.
- ²⁰³ Gates, *Duty*, 172-73. Because the reactor was being built with North Korean aid (in violation of the stated U.S. redline against North Korean nuclear proliferation, Gates felt a diplomatic campaign could be useful in pressuring both the Syrian and North Korean regimes.
- ²⁰⁴ Abrams, *Tested by Zion*, 246-27.

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- ²⁰⁵ Gates, *Duty*, 176.
²⁰⁶ Abrams, *Tested by Zion*, 246-47.
²⁰⁷ Hannah, interview by author.
²⁰⁸ Gellman, *Angler*, 50.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

Summary of Findings

Having examined in detail how eight vice presidents sought to exercise influence, it is now appropriate to return to the nine hypotheses proposed at the beginning of this project. None of the findings should be taken as hard proofs, but rather as patterns that indicate vice presidential influence is more or less probable. If one over-arching factor stands out beyond any of the proposed hypotheses it is that the vice presidential role as an advisor is a protean one, that shifts at the desires (and whims) of the president.

Table 8.1 (see below) provides an overview of the findings of the case studies, showing which vice presidents possessed which of the factors that contribute to influence. As described in the case studies, the vice presidential role in appointments was divided into two factors: 1) allies in the cabinet and bureaucracy and 2) allies within the White House. For pre-modern vice presidents, several factors were described as *not applicable*. Before the modern presidency, the White House itself was not a bureaucratized institution so that factors such as allies on the White House staff and possessing a West Wing office were not relevant. Access to the president, however, is always relevant. Finally, the concept of Washington insiders and outsiders is not relevant before the modern presidency, when Washington, D.C. was far less bureaucratized.

Table 8.1 Vice Presidents Studied and their Influence Factors (Influential Vice Presidents in Grey)

Factor	Calhoun	Quayle	Van Buren	Hobart	Mondale	Bush	Gore	Cheney	Biden	Influential VPs With Factor
Major Issues on which they exercised influence	Tariffs	Missile Defense	French Indemnity Crisis	Gold Standard	Middle East Peace Process	Cold War Issues	Bosnia/Russia/Kyoto	Counter-Terror/War in Iraq	Afghanistan Surge	
Chosen by President H1A	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	6/7
Modern Presidency H1B	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5/7
Staff H2A	NA	Yes	NA	NA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5/5
West Wing Office H2B	NA	Yes	NA	NA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5/5
Access to the President & Policy Process H2C	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	7/7
Modes of Behavior H2D	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	7/7
Outsider President Selects for Expertise H3A	NA	No	NA	NA	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	4/5
Specialized Knowledge used by President H3B	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	7/7
Allies Chosen in Cabinet & Bureaucracy H3C	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	4/7
Allies Appointed in White House H3C	NA	No	NA	NA	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	4/5
TOTAL	0/6	6/10	5/6	4/6	9/10	8/10	10/10	9/10	9/10	

The obvious finding indicated by Table 8.1 is that influential vice presidents possess at least two-thirds of these factors. However, with the growth of the semi-institutionalized vice presidency, it is likely (as in the case of Vice President Quayle) that future vice presidents will almost always possess nearly two-thirds of these factors, so counting the presence of factors may not be a predictor of vice presidential influence. It indicates that some factors must be more important than others.

Examining the factors that are consistent between the influential vice presidents does not indicate which factors are most important to vice presidential influence. The exception is vice presidential allies appointed in the cabinet and bureaucracy, which only four of the seven influential presidents possessed. Further, two of the vice presidents for whom allies in the cabinet and bureaucracy were a source of influence were pre-modern vice presidents, who served before the emergence of the White House bureaucracy when the cabinet was still a central instrument of national government.

The inclusion of Vice President Quayle is instructive as a comparison. (Calhoun, who had no potential vantage points for influence, is more representative of the vast majority of vice presidents in U.S. history.) Quayle possessed many of the vantage points for influence, including access to the president and a capable staff. But he had difficulty exercising influence. Quayle was serving an *insider president* who did not rely on his vice president for advice. This is a strong indication that the *outsider/insider* paradigm is an essential component of vice presidential influence.

Below is an in-depth discussion of each of the factors in vice presidential influence that discusses how their presence contributes to vice presidential influence. The discussion will include examples from vice presidents not profiled in case studies to highlight how the absence of these factors can limit vice presidential influence. Below is a summary of the importance of each factor for vice presidential influence.

Factor makes vice presidential influence possible—this factor enables vice presidential influence, but does not guarantee it. These factors fall into two subcategories.

The absence of this factor makes vice presidential influence impossible – when these factors are not present, a vice president cannot exercise influence.

H2C: Vice presidents with regular access to the President, and with access to White House meetings and paper-flow, for themselves and their staff, are better able to exercise influence

H2D: Vice presidents who foster allies on the president’s staff, exercise “hidden hand” influence, and avoid publicity for their policy preferences are better able to exercise influence

The absence of these factors makes vice presidential influence unlikely— it is theoretically possible that a vice president without these factors can exercise influence, but their presence is an important component of vice presidential influence.

H1A: When the president is able to select his vice president, the vice president is more likely to exercise influence.

H1B: As the demands on the president have increased, the vice president will have greater opportunities to exercise influence.

H2A: Vice presidents with their own policy staff are better able to exercise influence

H2B: Vice presidents with an office in the West Wing are better able to exercise influence

Factor makes vice presidential influence probable—the presence of this factor makes it likely (although not certain) that the vice president will exercise influence. However, the absence of this does not mean that influence is impossible, only unlikely.

H3A: Outsider presidents are more likely to select their running mates on the basis of personal and political compatibility, which increases the likelihood that the president will include them as a top-level advisor.

H3B: Outsider presidents are more likely to be inexperienced in areas such as national security affairs and not have strong national security teams, thus creating opportunities for vice presidential influence.

H3C: Outsider presidents are more likely to seek their vice presidents' input in the appointments process, which increases the vice president's opportunities for influence.

An in-depth look at the findings on each factor follows.

The Modern Presidency

H1A: When the president is able to select his vice president, the vice president is more likely to exercise influence.

KEY FINDING: makes vice presidential influence possible, absence makes vice presidential influence unlikely

The president's power to select the vice president has been an essential element in the rise of vice presidential influence. Of the 47 men to serve as vice president only seven were classified as influential. The overwhelming majority of vice presidents (who are not discussed in this research) were not influential and had only limited relationships with the president (Vice President Throttlebottom was the archetypal VP through most of U.S. history.) While this project focuses on the influential vice presidents, until recently they have not been the norm.

Table 8.2 below highlights the relative infrequency of influential vice presidents, but also the significant increase in the likelihood of vice presidents exercising influence when they are the president's choice. Presidents who selected their vice presidents have often chosen to marginalize their vice presidents (as

happened to Spiro Agnew and Hubert Humphrey). That the vice president was the president's choice is no guarantee that the vice president will be influential, but it makes it more than ten times more likely.

Table 8.2 Influential and Not Influential Vice Presidents Selected by Nominee or Party

	Influential	Not Influential	Total
Selected by party	1	31	32
Selected by nominee	6	9	15
Total	7	40	47

Why this is the case? The two examples of early vice presidents who exercised influence – Martin Van Buren and Garret Hobart – are instructive. In the entire period prior to 1940, when the Democratic Party's nominating rules changed, Van Buren was the only vice president chosen by the party's nominee. President Andrew Jackson was a dominant political figure whose personal popularity allowed him to insist on his choice for running mate. When he chose Van Buren, he selected a close political ally who had been Jackson's secretary of state. Van Buren was already one of Jackson's closest advisors and that role continued when Van Buren became vice president. Garret Hobart was an anomaly in exercising influence as vice president in the pre-modern presidency, but also because he was the party's choice – not the choice of the party nominee William McKinley. Besides Hobart's personal charm and tact, there is another factor in Hobart's anomalous influence. He was not a prominent politician on the national stage. He had been Speaker of the New Jersey General Assembly and President of the New Jersey State Senate. Prior to running for vice president, Hobart had never run for office beyond Paterson, New Jersey. Politics was his "avocation," his real focus was his business interests. In short, Hobart was a skilled and capable figure and *not* a potential rival to McKinley.

The vice president is the only person in the administration that the president cannot fire. A vice president who is disloyal or indiscreet could become a significant problem for the president. Further, presidents do not want to be outshone or worse

have the vice president emerge as a potential rival. The influential vice presidents in modern times were all figures that ran or seriously considered running for president, but with little success. Mondale ran a brief, barely noticed campaign before quitting in 1974. Bush emerged briefly as the leading rival to Reagan but ultimately finished a distant second. Gore ran a moderately successful campaign in 1988. Cheney explored running for president in 1996, but after studying the difficulties involved, decided he was not interested. Biden's 2008 presidential campaign generated little support.

When the parties selected the vice presidential candidate, the presidential candidate could not be certain of his running mate's loyalty. The power to select the vice president allows the nominee to carefully vet the running mate and assess loyalty, political compatibility, and – if the nominee is interested – utility as a governing partner. Being selected by the presidential nominee as the running mate is not a guarantee of influence. But it gives the presidential nominee the opportunity to select a running mate based on his preferences – it enables the more crucial factors.

H1B: As the demands on the president have increased, the vice president will have greater opportunities to exercise influence.

KEY FINDING: makes vice presidential influence possible, absence makes vice presidential influence unlikely

Overall, the case studies found only modest support for this hypothesis. There is no certain metric for the demands on the president. Broadly speaking, the best indicator is the emergence of what Richard Neustadt called the “modern presidency” in which the president is no longer a leader but a clerk. Prior to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, except for the most urgent national issues such as war and peace, the president could choose whether or not to engage with an issue. Roosevelt built a modern bureaucracy to respond to a grave economic crisis and established a new standard for presidential involvement. Then the United States emerged a superpower with interests in every part of the globe. The president became a clerk, called upon to address every crisis in challenge. At the same time, the establishment of bureaucracies limited the ability of the president to personally engage and address

problems. Given these changes, it stands to reason that the role of the vice president as an “assistant clerk” would expand.¹

The growth of the demands on the president is a compelling explanation for increased vice presidential influence. The increased demands on the president have led to an expansion in vice presidential activity. Eisenhower, for example, deployed Nixon for campaign duty and as an international emissary. This was done, at least in part, to conserve Eisenhower’s energy. Vice presidential travel and campaign duties have continued to the present. While influential vice presidents have taken on increasingly serious roles as emissaries abroad and spokesman at home, the argument that the increased demands on the president has caused the expansion in vice presidential *influence* is complicated.

*Table 8.3 Influential and Not Influential Vice Presidents before and during Modern Presidency**

	Influential	Not Influential	Total
Pre-modern presidency	2	29	31
Modern Presidency	5	11	16
Total	7	40	47

*The modern presidency started in 1932 with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his first vice president, John Nance Garner.²

Table 8.3 above indicates that vice presidents serving in the modern presidency are about four and a half times more likely to exercise influence than those who served under pre-modern presidents. This would seem to indicate that the increased demands on the president are a factor in the growth of vice presidential influence, but not nearly to the degree as the previous hypothesis.

The modern presidency was established under Roosevelt and existed for four decades before President Carter initiated the modern empowered vice presidency. The presidents who gave their vice presidents an influential role faced many challenges, but so did their predecessors. In this regard, the Bush-Quayle administration is instructive. Although the modern vice presidency was twelve years old when Bush 41 became president and his administration faced a number of challenges (two military interventions, a crisis in U.S.-China relations, and the ending of the Cold War), Bush

felt little need to turn to his vice president for advice. By contrast, Bush's successor Bill Clinton governed during a period of relative peace and prosperity yet vice presidential influence expanded in the Clinton-Gore administration.

Further, earlier presidents who faced severe crises did not turn to their vice presidents. Vice President Hannibal Hamlin was *not* a player on Lincoln's famous "Team of Rivals" and Woodrow Wilson did not seek advice from Vice President Thomas Marshall as he led the United States through World War I, although he did empower a high-level surrogate in Colonel House. The cases of Jackson-Van Buren and McKinley-Hobart show that there was no inherent barrier for presidents to work more closely with their vice presidents in times of great crisis, yet few chose to do so.

Influential vice presidents have primarily occurred since the advent of the modern presidency. The stronger correlation is between the *outsider* presidents and influential vice presidents (discussed below). Prior to the modern presidency, *outsider* presidents such as Woodrow Wilson, Grover Cleveland, or Abraham Lincoln did not seek vice presidential advice and mastered the ways of Washington on their own. Modern presidents who had experience with national security and Washington also did not need to look to their vice presidents for counsel. The increasing complexity of the modern presidency meant that when Washington *outsiders* were elected president, they had important incentives to turn to the vice president for advice. In that way, the emergence of the modern presidency helped create the conditions for the expansion of vice presidential influence.

The Institutional Vice Presidency

H2A: Vice presidents with their own policy staff are better able to exercise influence.

KEY FINDING: makes vice presidential influence possible, absence makes vice presidential influence unlikely

Vice presidential staff appears to be an important "force multiplier" for an influential vice president. The presence of vice presidential staff in and of itself does

not create vice presidential influence. If the vice president and his staff do not have access to the policy process (discussed below) they cannot exercise influence.

Given access to the process, staff can help a vice president in several ways. First, they can undertake traditional staffing functions: researching issues, preparing speeches and talking points etc. Without this type of support, vice presidents will find it difficult to function. The memos prepared by Mondale's staff before his weekly lunches with the president (even though they were not necessarily used) show how staff work is critical for a vice president to track issues and advise the president. In addition, when the president assigns a task to the vice president, the vice president's staff can ensure the task is handled capably. These tasks may or may not be a source of influence, but accomplishing these tasks, whether it is chairing a task force or acting as an administration emissary abroad, is important in ensuring the president's confidence in the vice president.

Staff can perform a number of other functions that enable vice presidential influence. If the president has consciously decided that he wants the vice president fully engaged in the administration, the vice president's staff can help strengthen the relationship. While there is a natural (and historic) tendency for the presidential and vice presidential staffs to mistrust one another, that difficulty can be overcome. Richard Moe, Mondale's chief of staff, built a strong working relationship with Hamilton Jordan, one of Carter's senior advisors. Quayle, while less influential than other vice presidents discussed, brought in a VPNSA who had a good relationship with NSA Scowcroft to improve his "interface" with the national security process. Charles Burson, Gore's last chief of staff, mentioned the importance of good staff relations between the White House and vice president's staffs. With good relations at the staff level, the two teams can keep each other abreast of what the other is doing and reduce misunderstandings (for example by preventing overlapping political events). This coordination has been augmented by an increased formal status for vice presidential staffers within the White House. Under Carter, the vice president's chief of staff was made an assistant to the president, which facilitated staff contact. As a White House staffer decades earlier, Cheney had played a key role in keeping Vice President Rockefeller out of the policy process. Recognizing the possibility for staff

conflict *Vice President* Cheney further integrated his political staff with that of the president by having his counselor named an assistant to the president.

When staff relations are strong, vice presidential staffers can play an important role augmenting the president's staff. Richard Moe, Mondale's chief of staff, helped on Congressional affairs and Leon Fuerth oversaw sanctions on Yugoslavia. When the vice president's staff can support the president's staff – without appearing to pre-empt them – they can help the vice president exercise influence on an issue, such as Yugoslavia sanctions.

The vice president's staff can augment vice presidential influence through the inter-agency and policy process as well. By sitting in on meetings, the vice president's staff can keep the vice president informed on how a policy debate is forming. That has been the primary role of vice presidential staffers, but in recent administrations that role has expanded. In the Clinton-Gore administration the vice president's staff began to participate fully throughout the interagency process. Several of Gore's initiatives such as the Inter-American Summit and shifting U.S. policy in the trade dispute with South Africa of AIDS drugs highlighted how the vice president's staff was able to advance the vice president's position throughout the inter-agency process. This continued under Vice President Cheney where his staff actively participated on issues of interest to the vice president such as homeland security and the legal aspects of the war on terror.

Finally, the vice president's staff can identify opportunities for the vice president to exercise influence. Bush VPNSA Donald Gregg's links with the Finns and development of a new channel of information from them about the Soviet Union is one example. Under Gore the Gore-Mbeki Commission and Gore's debate with Perot were both examples of policies generated by Gore's staff. Perhaps, most tellingly is the case of Vice President Quayle. While Quayle was not influential compared to the other vice presidents studied, his staff identified opportunities for him to work with Latin America and later Japan, where other major players in the foreign policy process were not active.

If the vice president has access to the president and policy process, his staff can help the vice president maximize the opportunities this access presents.

H2B: Vice presidents with an office in the West Wing are better able to exercise influence

KEY FINDING: makes vice presidential influence possible, absence makes vice presidential influence unlikely

An office for the vice president in the West Wing was the initiative of the *president* who started the modern vice presidency. There have been a few observations that argue otherwise, but overall it appears that the West Wing office is an important component in vice presidential influence.

Vice President Bush spent more time than his predecessor at his office in the Old Executive Office Building and Vice President Cheney was influential when he joined meetings by remote from undisclosed locations. One observer noted that if the vice president has a strong relationship with the president, it doesn't matter where he sits. As a counterpoint, a staffer for an influential vice president observed, "The president has no trouble over-ruling the vice president *no matter* where the vice president sits."³ Of course a West Wing office does not guarantee vice presidential influence. Quayle had the office, extensive time with the president, and access to the policy process but was limited in his influence. Spiro Agnew, briefly, had a West Wing office, but had little to offer the president substantively.

Despite these statements to the contrary, the Ball rule "Nothing propinquities like propinquity" applies to the vice president. The next hypothesis discusses the importance of regular access to the president. In theory, a West Wing office is not necessary – a vice president can arrive quickly from his office next door in the Old Executive Office Building – but it is less likely. Mondale observed that sitting in the OEOB, he might as well be in Baltimore. More importantly, if the president wishes to consult the vice president immediately, a West Wing office makes that far easier. Cheney mentioned seeing the president eight times in a typical day (other vice presidents would also see the president multiple times in a typical working day.) This would be far less likely without a West Wing office.

There were several instances of vice presidential influence in which this easy access played a role. Gore's quickly joining a discussion on extraordinary renditions (Clinton seemed to be opposed until Gore joined the discussion and enthusiastically endorsed them) or Gore's initiation of the Summit of the Americas and Cheney's backchannel to commanders in Iraq were all examples of vice presidential influence that was facilitated by the vice president's West Wing office.

But it is not just access to the president that is important. With an office in the West Wing the vice president sits between the chief of staff and the national security advisor as well as the president's other closest advisors. There are innumerable accounts of the vice president checking in with the national security advisor on an issue. The vice president might arrange regular meetings with the national security advisor or the chief of staff, but that would be no substitute for regular interaction.

The two influential pre-modern vice presidents, Martin Van Buren and Garret Hobart provide additional support for this argument. In their time, access to the president was not as difficult as it became later. In McKinley's time tourists picnicked on the White House lawn, while Alexis de Tocqueville on his famous tour of the United States encountered little difficulty meeting President Jackson. However, both vice presidents made a point of acquiring lodgings close to the White House in order to easily visit (and even be visited by) the president – a further confirmation of the Ball rule, over a decade before the 1909 birth of its author.

H2C: Vice presidents with regular access to the President, and with access to White House meetings and paper-flow, for themselves and their staff, are better able to exercise influence

KEY FINDING: makes vice presidential influence possible, absence makes vice presidential influence impossible

This factor, which goes hand-in-hand with the previous factor, is essential for vice presidential influence. It is not possible to influence the president without access to the president. John C. Calhoun, the one vice president who attempted to use the limited formal powers of the vice presidency (along with his position as head of a

political faction) to shape policy was unsuccessful and ultimately resigned in frustration. The vast majority of the other vice presidents in U.S. history had only limited access to the president and thus could not influence policy. Access to the president was a requirement for every single instance of vice presidential influence discussed in this work.

Meeting regularly and often with the president gives the vice president the opportunity to “make his case” to the president. The weekly lunches are frequently cited as a particularly useful presidential-vice presidential interaction. One former vice presidential staffer mentioned the importance of “little influence” as the president and vice president affect one another through regular interactions.⁴

However, access to the president in and of itself is insufficient to influence policy. Vice presidents need to know that a decision was being made. Paul Light observed, “How could Agnew advise Nixon on détente with China, for instance, if he was never told that the issue was being discussed?”⁵ Light went on to discuss how vice presidents prior to Mondale did not have full access to the information on policy or on the process – they were unaware of who the players were on issues and when and where the key meetings were occurring. Without this information, even with access to the president, a vice president will be unable to give the president timely, relevant advice.

When President Carter made Vice President Mondale a full partner in the administration, he granted the vice president regular access to White House meetings and paperflow. He was the first vice president to receive the full President’s Daily Brief (PDB) from the CIA, which gives the vice president the same information about top national security concerns as the president. Every vice president since has received it in full and Gore and Cheney received the PDB with the president. From Mondale on, vice presidential staff have joined inter-agency and National Security Council meetings as well as daily White House staff meetings and received the paperflow of memoranda on key issues. Under Gore the VPNSA joined NSA Principals meetings as well as the new National Economic Council (NEC). Cheney began attending Principals and NEC meetings himself. Here again, nearly every instance of vice presidential influence required vice presidential access to the policy process.

Echoing the comment on Agnew and China: Gore could hardly advise Clinton on granting Gerry Adams a visa or Bosnia if he hadn't known that these issues were being discussed. Vice President Bush, as head of the Reagan administration's crisis management group, was tracking events in Poland closely and thus well placed to offer his counsel to directly to President Reagan and in NSC meetings. Vice President Quayle, who was not on the whole influential, had at least modest opportunities to influence policy because he was engaged in the process.

Presidents remain free to ignore the advice of their vice presidents and do so frequently. Further, Presidents may also deal with issues outside of the formal process. Sometimes this is short-circuiting the process, but sometimes it reflects the president using, what Fred Greenstein describing Eisenhower's methods, called "hidden hand" tactics to augment the formal process.⁶ Bush 41 handled many issues just working with Scowcroft and Baker and it is likely that nearly every president will address issues in this way at times. Even an influential vice president may not be included in every issue. Nonetheless, many, if not most, issues will be handled in the formal policy process. When vice presidents have access to the process and to the president, they will at least know a decision is being made and have an opportunity to "weigh in," without which exercising influence is not possible.

H2D: Vice presidents who foster allies on the president's staff, exercise "hidden hand" influence, and avoid publicity for their policy preferences are better able to exercise influence

KEY FINDING: makes vice presidential influence possible, absence makes vice presidential influence impossible

This factor in vice presidential influence is grouped with the factors of the semi-institutionalized vice presidency. While the other factors represent aspects of the vice presidency as an institution, this factor reflects the vice president's mode of conduct. Vice President Mondale, recognizing that all vice presidential influence flows from the president, set a template for vice presidential behavior characterized by discretion and loyalty. Mondale acted in this manner so that President Carter

would have no cause to freeze out Mondale. Vice presidents since have, on the whole, followed this template carefully.

Mondale's behavior was influenced by the experience of his mentor, Vice President Hubert Humphrey. Serving under President Lyndon Johnson, Humphrey argued strongly for a shift in U.S. policy in Vietnam at a February 6, 1965 National Security Council meeting. Shortly thereafter he prepared a memorandum for Johnson outlining his views. Humphrey's advocacy sparked Johnson's paranoia about political rivals. Johnson responded by not holding formal NSC meetings (to which, by statute, the vice president is invited) for several months and instead consulting his advisors informally. Johnson also limited Humphrey's access to other aspects of the policy process and provided him with difficult (and often demeaning) assignments. Johnson's treatment of Humphrey was a stark reminder of how dependent the vice president is on the president's favor. As Humphrey himself noted, "He who giveth can taketh away and often does."⁷

Mondale had consulted extensively with his mentor and as vice president Mondale restricted his advice to the president directly or in small, trusted groups. He avoided ongoing line assignments, publicly supported the president's policies, and did not take credit for policy successes or try to overshadow the president. Vice presidents since have adhered to this model.

Loyalty is particularly critical. The vice president is the one executive branch official the president cannot fire, so a disloyal vice president would represent a potent political threat and would not be welcome in administration's decision-making process. Although it was early in U.S. history, the vice president who most actively opposed the president, John C. Calhoun, ended up completely isolated from the president and with no influence. There are several aspects to showing loyalty, including public activity and private discretion.

Nearly every vice president had instances of publicly supporting a policy he had opposed. Quayle lobbied on Capitol Hill for a budget package he opposed, while Cheney promoted the Supreme Court nomination of Harriet Miers, and Mondale himself campaigned in Iowa where he defended the Soviet grain embargo - which he had argued against. Perhaps the most notable case of vice presidential loyalty came

from Gore, who publicly supported Clinton both early in the administration when Clinton was seen as “unpresidential” and later when Clinton was impeached.

But, as the example of Vice President Humphrey demonstrates, private loyalty is important as well. Vice presidential advice is best given in private or small trustworthy groups. A vice president who was privy to an administration’s innermost workings would have ample opportunity to sabotage policy through leaks, but would quickly be frozen out of the policy process. Further, even if the vice president had no intention of undermining the policy, the news of the disagreement could leak, which would embarrass the president. Also, disagreeing with the president could put the president in an awkward position. Several vice presidents have observed that they do not wish to come between the president and cabinet members and, with their smaller staff and no formal authority, they have limited resources for turf battles. In advocating policies, vice presidents have done so subtly, primarily by advising the president privately. Although Mondale established this mode of vice presidential operation, it had an important precedent. Martin Van Buren, who in his time was considered a master of intrigue and misdirection, was described as “rowing to his object with muffled oars.”

Outsiders & Insiders

H3A: Outsider presidents are more likely to select their running mates on the basis of personal and political compatibility, which increases the likelihood that the president will include them as a top-level advisor.

KEY FINDING: makes vice presidential influence probable

Three of the influential modern vice presidents (Mondale, Gore, and Cheney) were chosen specifically because they were personally compatible with the president and had expertise in areas where the president believed he could use help. Carter mentioned wanting a vice president who was knowledgeable about Congress. Clinton cited Gore’s expertise in areas in which he was less knowledgeable, particularly arms control as well as environmental and energy policy, along with Gore’s familiarity

with Washington. Bush noted Cheney's status as a Washington insider as well as his familiarity with national security issues. In addition, all three presidential nominees took the time to get to know their prospective running mates and determined that they would get along personally. This does not negate political concerns about regional or ideological balance, nor does it ignore the political advantages of selecting a running mate with national security experience. These political factors were also present in the selection processes of Carter, Gore, and Bush 43. However, the careful consideration that these three candidates put into not only considering political advantages but also examining their prospective running mates' potential as a governing partner highlights how seriously they took their political partnership.

The only modern insider president studied in this research, George H. W. Bush, did not look seriously into Quayle's potential as a governing partner. He focused almost entirely on the political aspects of Quayle's joining the ticket. While not discussed in this project, the insider presidents who preceded Carter also did not study their running mates for their utility as a governing partner, but focused primarily on what they could bring to the ticket politically.

Outsider presidents do not necessarily take these factors into consideration. Reagan reportedly was not focused on Bush's potential as a governing partner, although he did guarantee Bush full access to the policy process and Bush did play an influential role in the Reagan administration. Further, as rivals for the Republican nomination, Reagan and Bush did not develop a friendly relationship until they took office. Nonetheless, most of the outsider presidents initiated their vice presidential process looking for a governing partner and, when elected, gave their vice presidents opportunities to exercise influence.

H3B: Outsider presidents are more likely to be inexperienced in areas such as national security affairs and not have strong national security teams, thus creating opportunities for vice presidential influence.

KEY FINDING: makes vice presidential influence probable

Early in their administrations, Presidents Clinton and Bush 43 regularly consulted their vice presidents on a broad range of issues. Clinton frequently said, “I want to talk to Al.” Bush, when confronting his first foreign policy crisis in February 2001, said, “I’m going to call Dick.” Both of these presidents, who had previously been governors, were new to national security affairs and turned to their more experienced vice presidents when confronted with unfamiliar issues. Early in the Clinton administration, Saddam Hussein attempted to kill former President Bush 41 and Gore counseled the President to respond with missile strikes. When national security issues leapt to the fore on 9/11, Vice President Cheney possessed tremendous relevant experience on military, intelligence, and homeland security issues that Bush 43 did not possess. This unique combination of people and events allowed the vice president to play an outsized role.

Presidents with no Washington experience also struggle to deal with Congress. Presidents Clinton and Bush 43 both relied heavily on their vice presidents, who each had over a decade of service on Capitol Hill, for advice on legislative strategy. President Carter, a former state governor who tended to take an apolitical approach to problems, was often vexed in his dealings with Congress and relied heavily on Vice President Mondale’s advice on what was politically possible. Some aspects of advice on Congress focused on politics and vote counts. But Mondale and Gore also helped their presidents, who had been governors of states with part-time citizen legislatures, set their legislative priorities and calendars so as to not overload the system.

Mondale, Gore, and Cheney all show how insider vice presidents can fill policy vacuums in national security and Washington affairs for outsider presidents. But in some ways George H.W. Bush exemplifies this factor. When he became vice

president, George H. W. Bush was an object of suspicion to many of Reagan's loyal followers. They had had a tough primary campaign and some of Bush's rhetoric against Reagan was seen as harsh. But the Reagan administration difficulties establishing an orderly national security process resulted in early embarrassments. Bush stepped into the breach, overseeing the administration's efforts to obtain Congressional approval for the sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia and staffing the president for the G-7 summit when the national security advisor was unable to do so. The most significant of these assignments was when Bush was made head of the Reagan administration's crisis management team, the Special Situations Group. Bush received this assignment because the President was unwilling to choose between the secretary of state and the national security advisor. From this position, Bush was squarely in the center of administration decision-making.

These influential vice presidents often came to office with some familiarity with other world leaders and could advise their presidents about how to manage U.S. relations with other countries. Entrusted as high-level emissaries, they were well placed to develop their own relationships with foreign leaders (as Bush did with Mitterand and Gore did with Chernomyrdin and Yeltsin). Mondale was familiar with Israel's leaders, which gave him useful insight in advising President Carter in his successful effort to broker peace between Israel and Egypt. Both Bush and Gore provided information and advice about Moscow.

In contrast, Vice President Quayle served President Bush 41, an insider president with an extensive resume including two full terms as vice president. President Bush 41 came to office with a clear sense of what to do and particularly how to manage his national security process. Further, Bush had been meeting world leaders as UN Ambassador and Vice President for over a decade. Given Bush's vast experience he had limited policy vacuums and Quayle had few opportunities for influence. The one area where Quayle might have had an impact was domestic affairs. In this area, Bush was not unfamiliar with the issues, but rather chose not to focus his energies on them and thus he was not open to Quayle's initiatives.

Nixon, as vice president to Eisenhower, is an interesting case as well. In one sense Eisenhower was a Washington outsider, having never worked at a high-level in

the nation's capital. But while most outsiders are state governors, Eisenhower's experience outside of Washington was in national security affairs. He did not need his vice president's counsel on these issues. While Nixon may have been able to offer the president advice on Congress and domestic issues, Eisenhower's status as a national hero (along with a prosperous economy) insulated him from many of the political challenges other presidents have faced. This left Nixon few avenues for influence.⁸

When governors become president they are likely face a number of unfamiliar situations and institutions. In managing relations with other countries, presidents must deal with different governments. Within Washington, in making and executing foreign policy, presidents must deal with unique institutions that do not exist in state capitals such as the military, the intelligence community, and the State department. Presidents must also deal with Congress, which is a more complicated institution than its state-level counterparts.⁹ When vice presidents possess experience with these issues and institutions, it is little surprise that presidents turn to their vice presidents for advice. As a corollary to this, as presidents become more confident in dealing with national security issues, the influence of their vice presidents tends to decline. While they remained engaged, Bush, Gore, and Cheney all became less influential in the second term of their service. In the cases of Bush and Gore, this was also due to their own campaigns for the presidency. However, there were a number of key issues in the second term where Bush and Gore exercised influence. Cheney's influence declined substantially in the second term. Part of this reflects Cheney's extraordinary influence in the first term, which could only decrease. Also, with a first term of war and crisis, Bush 43 learned a great deal and became more confident in his own right.

H3C: Outsider presidents are more likely to seek their vice presidents' input in the appointments process, which increases the vice president's opportunities for influence.

KEY FINDING: makes vice presidential influence probable

This factor of vice presidential influence has two aspects: the vice presidential role in the broad appointments process and the vice presidential role in appointing

White House staff. In the case of the first aspect, with the exception of Vice President Cheney, allies in the cabinet and the bureaucracy proved *not* to be an essential component of vice presidential influence. From Mondale on, every vice president has played a role in the appointments process. Each vice president managed to secure some allies in cabinet roles. Most of the cabinet appointments were in lower-tier departments with a primarily domestic focus. For Quayle, Gore, and Cheney vice presidential allies in the cabinet who did not develop good relationships with the president became sources of frustration to the president and vice president. Prior to Gore, there was little suggestion of a clique of vice presidential allies in lower tier positions, although vice presidents did try to see that loyal campaign staffers and old friends were rewarded with appropriate positions. Gore had some success appointing friends and allies to telecommunications and environmental positions, the areas where he had the greatest expertise. In particular, pressing to establish an office for Global Affairs at the State Department helped Gore advance environmental issues within the national security community.

In his influence in the policy process through allies in the cabinet and the bureaucracy, Vice President Cheney was *the* outlier. Bush relied heavily on Cheney's vast range of contacts to fill appointments throughout the bureaucracy. But the strongest clique of vice presidential allies was in the Defense Department, where Cheney had been Secretary in the previous Bush administration. Cheney's links to the Defense Department were augmented when his mentor Donald Rumsfeld became Secretary of Defense. In discussions about how to respond to 9/11 Rumsfeld and Cheney were often seen as a bloc advancing their preferred policy options in tandem. Further, the close links between OVP and DoD staffers facilitated planning and information sharing. These contacts were not an unmitigated advantage for Cheney. When Iraq descended into chaos, Cheney remained loyal to his old friend who was advising the president to "stay the course." It was only after Rumsfeld was forced out that Cheney could press for new Iraq policies. In economic policy, another area of Cheney's interest, his old colleague from the Ford administration, Paul O'Neill, was seen as opposing the president's policies and was ultimately asked to resign.

The second aspect of this factor in vice presidential influence is the placement of vice presidential allies on the White House staff. Former Mondale staffers were placed in key positions on the National Security and Domestic Policy Councils. These appointments ensured that Mondale was always “in the loop” on the policy process and that generally allied individuals were at key meetings. Carter intended this to ensure Mondale’s role, but both individuals had been Mondale Senate staffers who were knowledgeable about the ways of Washington. Reagan appointed James Baker, the vice president’s close friend and campaign manager, to the crucial chief of staff position. This was not done to help the vice president, but rather because Baker was seen as a highly effective figure who Reagan needed to translate his ambitious agenda into reality. However, many of Reagan’s loyalists suspected Bush did not share this agenda and might have sought to freeze him out of the policy process. With Jim Baker as chief of staff, freezing the vice president out of the policy process would not have been possible.

Baker’s role in the Reagan administration highlights how an insider vice president may be a source of personnel who can fill crucial roles in the White House staff of an outsider president. This did not occur in the Bush 41 White House (where the president was very much an insider) but it was the case in the Clinton administration. Gore’s first chief of staff, Roy Neel, was brought into the White House as deputy chief of staff in order to bring order to White House operations. Neel was frustrated in this role and served less than a year, but Gore continued to press for a more orderly decision-making process in the White House and to propose people who could help, including David Gergen and Erskine Bowles.

By contrast, Cheney, despite having great influence in appointments, did not have strong allies within the president’s staff. The deputy NSA had worked for Cheney at the Pentagon, but overall the White House staff consisted of Bush loyalists. Although Bush 43 was an outsider president, his father had been president and Bush knew people with Washington experience who could fill key roles in his administration. Allies on the White House staff did not augment Cheney’s influence.

When vice presidents have allies appointed to key positions, particularly within the White House, they are very likely to be able to exercise influence. These

allies can ensure that the vice president is “in the loop” on key issues and often advance the positions aligned with those of the vice president.

Looking Forward: “[T]he bastard at the family picnic’: The Biden Vice Presidency

Having examined how the different factors outlined in this project affect vice presidential influence, it is useful to turn to the current occupant of the office and see if the findings hold. Because Vice President Biden is still in office, an in-depth assessment of his influence is not yet possible. Memoirs have yet to be written, documents have not been released, and key interviewees are not yet ready to speak. Nonetheless, an initial analysis can indicate which of this project’s findings continue to hold true. President Obama, unlike most of his recent predecessors, was not a state governor but a U.S. senator. However, he served less than a full term in the Senate before being elected president, and much of the analysis about outsider presidents appears to apply to the Obama-Biden administration. Biden is also serving in the wake of the Vice President Cheney, generally regarded as the most powerful vice president in history. How and where Biden has changed the expanded vice presidential role of his predecessor is also interesting and may point the way forward for the next stage in the evolution of the vice presidency.

Biden’s Background and Selection as Vice President

Joe Biden was raised in modest circumstances in Pennsylvania and Delaware. A childhood stutterer, Biden forced himself to become an adept speaker. After serving briefly on the New Castle County Council, in 1972, Biden, at only 29, was elected to the United States Senate from Delaware. Weeks after his election, Biden’s wife and one-year old daughter were killed in a car accident, while his two sons were injured. In 1977, Biden remarried. Biden served for 36 years in the Senate where he chaired or was ranking member of the Judiciary Committee for 17 years and was chair or ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee from 1997 through 2009.¹⁰ Biden ran for president in 1988, but his run was cut short when it was learned that he

had plagiarized speeches from British Labor party leader Neil Kinnock. Shortly after leaving the race, Biden nearly died from a brain aneurysm. Biden ran for president again in 2008 but garnered little popular support. A loquacious figure, Biden gained a reputation as being gaffe-prone. When asked about the vice presidency in 2008, he replied, “Absolutely, positively, unequivocally, Shermanesquely, no.”¹¹

Biden and the eventual nominee, Barack Obama, had worked together in the Senate, particularly on the Foreign Relations Committee, which Biden chaired. In the Senate and on the campaign trail, Biden was not impressed by Obama’s foreign policy knowledge and shared this opinion. After his own campaign sputtered to a halt, Biden gave an interview in which he referred to Obama as “the first mainstream African American who is articulate, bright and clean and a nice-looking guy.”

Nonetheless, Obama asked if Biden would be willing be vetted to be his running mate. After a lengthy meeting on August 6, 2008 in Minneapolis, Obama decided to invite Biden to be his running mate and Biden accepted. Obama agreed that Biden would be closely involved in the administration’s decision-making. Biden’s extensive resume on foreign policy, his experience in the Senate, but also his appeal to blue-collar voters, particularly in the state of Pennsylvania, were all important factors. In addition, because Biden had been a candidate in the primaries, Obama’s advisors thought he was better prepared for the rigors of a national campaign than the other individuals beings considered. Finally, according to Obama advisor David Axelrod, Biden’s experience in Congress and in foreign policy would be helpful in the White House.¹²

In the 2008 elections, Obama-Biden prevailed with 365 electoral votes and nearly 53 percent of the popular vote. They were re-elected in 2012 with 51 percent of the popular vote and 332 electoral votes.¹³

Biden’s Activity and an Assessment of Biden’s Influence as Vice President

It is difficult to fully assess Biden’s influence at this stage. There are substantial indications that the president has turned to him for advice and help at many key points, but there is also evidence suggesting the opposite. This assessment is further

clouded by the preceding Cheney vice presidency, in which Cheney was often depicted as the power behind the throne. In comparison, virtually any other vice president would appear uninfluential.

Joel Goldstein, a leading expert on the vice presidency, points out, “We don’t learn in real time what a vice president is telling the president, so we can’t compare presidential actions to vice-presidential advice. Instead, we must rely on other information to judge a sitting vice president.” Goldstein outlines a number of criteria by which to judge the significance of the vice president’s role in an administration, including how much time the president and vice president spend together and what kinds of assignments and troubleshooting tasks are given to the vice president. Goldstein argues that, by those measures, Biden is influential.¹⁴

Biden’s activity as vice president has been extensive. He has played a critical role as the administration’s emissary to the Senate, with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell specifically requesting the vice president’s intervention (although Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid later insisted that Biden stay out of the negotiations).¹⁵ Biden oversaw the \$787 billion American Recovery Act¹⁶ and shaped the administration’s gun control agenda after the shooting at Newtown, Connecticut.¹⁷ On the international front, Biden has been extremely active. Biden handled the political aspects of the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, travelling there over a dozen times to press Iraqi politicians to work together to establish a new government. Biden has travelled worldwide as an emissary and spokesman, including high-profile trips to China, Bosnia, Lebanon, Georgia, and, most recently, Ukraine.¹⁸

Many of these efforts are *instances of activity, but not necessarily of influence*. In a few cases, Biden did exercise influence. Biden advised the president that someone needed to oversee the \$787 billion stimulus plan. The president agreed and assigned the vice president.¹⁹ Biden was also strong advocate for bailing out the automakers.²⁰ Finally, the range and scale of these assignments indicates that, in Goldstein’s words, “[t]hese are substantial portfolios, full of challenge and consequence... Biden routinely does things that would be worthy of President Obama’s time.”²¹ Obama himself praises Biden, saying that choosing Biden as his running mate may have been the “best decision I ever made politically.”²²

At the same time, there have been reports that Biden's input was minimized. The vice president, by most accounts, was not part of the president's inner circle of advisors. In the 2012 elections, Biden was given a limited role, in which Obama's team strictly controlled his schedule and political team. Biden unsuccessfully urged the president to take more aggressive action on the stimulus and gun control.²³

On balance, Biden will be considered an influential vice president, although, like all of his predecessors, he is only influential some of the time and on some issues.

Examples of Biden's Influence

On many of the national security issues on which Biden was known to take a position, President Obama rejected the vice president's advice. Biden wanted to gather more intelligence on Osama bin Laden's suspected hideout and (along with most of the national security team) advised against the operation. Obama ordered the raid, which was successful.²⁴ The Arab Spring created an interesting division in Obama's team between the Principals, including Biden, who counseled against pressuring Mubarak to step down and the younger Deputies, who thought the United States should support the protesters.²⁵ When a violent insurrection broke out in Libya, this division repeated itself (except for Secretary of State Clinton joining the Deputies and supporting intervention). The president asked Biden's VPNSA, Tony Blinken, for his opinion. Blinken disagreed with Biden and supported a military intervention.²⁶ In both cases, the president ultimately sided with the Deputies.

Nonetheless, on one of the administration's earliest and most significant foreign policy decisions, the president did turn to the vice president for advice and the vice president's input had an impact on the ultimate outcome.

The Afghanistan Surge

The most prominent single example of Biden successfully influencing a national security issue has been in shaping policy on Afghanistan. An important component of Obama's presidential campaign was that the Iraq war had been a distraction from the

critical theater in the war on terrorism, which was Afghanistan. In office, Obama carried out an extensive review of U.S. options in Afghanistan. As reported in Bob Woodward's *Obama's Wars*, Biden played a substantial role in that review and the policy debate that followed.

At the president-elect's request, Biden traveled to Afghanistan and Pakistan to review the situation in January 2009, shortly before the inauguration. Biden, accompanied by Senator Lindsey Graham and his top foreign policy aide, Tony Blinken, met with the presidents of Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as U.S. commanders. Biden left the region unsure about the reliability of the Afghan or Pakistani governments, or if the U.S. military had a clear strategic goal. These impressions would underpin his analysis throughout the review of U.S. policy towards Afghanistan.²⁷

Biden's skepticism about deepening U.S. involvement in Afghanistan was evident at Obama's first NSC meeting about Afghanistan. Biden criticized Central Command chief David Petraeus' request for 30,000 more troops, stating, "We have not thought through our strategic goals!"²⁸ The U.S. military sought to carry out an extensive counter-insurgency (COIN) strategy in Afghanistan. Biden was skeptical that Afghanistan's government would become a reliable partner, that this strategy served U.S. strategic interest, and whether this kind of commitment was politically sustainable. Biden began to work on an alternative option he dubbed counter-terrorism plus. This strategy would have a smaller troop increase (about 20,000 as opposed to the military's request for 40,000) and focus on training Afghan forces and maintaining sufficient control over Afghanistan to keep al-Qaeda from using it as a base of operations.²⁹ The late Richard Holbrooke, who was serving as the State Department's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, thought of Biden as the "George Ball" of the Obama administration, referring to Undersecretary of State Ball who tried to persuade Presidents Kennedy and Johnson not to expand U.S. commitments to Vietnam.³⁰

In developing this alternative strategy, Biden had strong support from the president, who told Bob Woodward, "I said, Joe, I want you to say exactly what you think. And I want you to ask the toughest questions you can think of. And the reason

is, is because I think the American people are best served and our troops are best served by a vigorous debate on these kinds of life-or-death issues. I wanted every argument on every side to be poked hard.... And so in that sense I think Joe served an enormously useful function.”³¹

Robert Gates, the Secretary of Defense, who vigorously opposed Biden’s counter-terror plus approach and advocated the COIN strategy, wrote that early pressures for decisions on troop deployments:

...had the unfortunate effect of creating suspicion in the White House that Obama was getting the “bum’s rush” from senior military officers... that this distrust was stoked by Biden, with Donilon, Emanuel, and some of Obama’s other advisors joining the chorus... I believe the military had no ulterior motives: failure to approve at least some troop movements quickly would in itself limit the president’s options... Nonetheless, the suspicion would only fester and grow over time.³²

Ultimately, Obama split the difference, ordering 30,000 troops to Afghanistan in November 2009.³³ However, the issue was not completely closed. Biden continued to argue for reviews of the strategy; in June 2012, over the objections of the State, Defense, and the CIA, Biden persuaded the president to withdraw surge troops earlier than planned—in summer 2012, months before the 2012 elections.³⁴

This is an instance of the *vice president influencing the trajectory* of the president’s decision. Obama had promised in his election campaign to commit the resources necessary for the United States to prevail in Afghanistan. Biden became increasingly skeptical of the possibility of victory and began proposing alternative strategies that took into account both the politics of Afghanistan and Pakistan, but also politics in the United States. While President Obama did not choose Biden’s preferred policy option, Biden’s option gave the Obama political cover to only partially fulfill the military’s request for troops. Later, Obama began shifting towards Biden’s approach, focusing less on counter-insurgency and more on counter-terror.³⁵

This instance of vice presidential influence reflects Biden's access to the foreign policy process. By every account, Biden was in almost all of the key meetings both with the president and at the Principals level. Tony Blinken, the VPNSA, was also at most of the meetings and helped the vice president develop the counter-terror option. Biden did *not* use the "hidden-hand" approach in advancing his policy. Instead, he argued openly and forcefully for his preferred policy. He did work with allies within the White House, most notably his long-time friend, deputy National Security Advisor Tom Donilon, as well as chief of staff Rahm Emmanuel. It appears that Biden's open advocacy was, at least in part, at the president's request. Biden did not have particular expertise in military affairs. (Gates was of the opinion that some of the conflict between the Pentagon and the White House over Afghanistan policy was due to the political leadership's lack of familiarity with the logistical requirements of troop deployments.)³⁶ But Biden was recognized as an expert in international affairs in general, which gave him the standing to – as President Obama requested – ask the hard questions about where the policy was headed. Biden's read on the political situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan was an important component in scaling down U.S. goals in Afghanistan.

Analysis

The Modern Presidency

HIA: When the president is able to select his vice president, the vice president is more likely to exercise influence.

According to the description above, political concerns were the primary factors in Biden's selection as Obama's running mate. However, Biden and Obama did have a working relationship from the Senate and a lengthy meeting before Obama offered Biden the nomination. Obama's long-time advisor, David Axelrod observed that the president-vice president relationship is "...a little like a shotgun wedding. Sometimes they take, and sometimes they don't."³⁷ Obama's power to choose Biden at least improved the odds that the president-vice president relationship would work.

H1B: As the demands on the president have increased, the vice president will have greater opportunities to exercise influence.

Barak Obama took office in the face of enormous challenges at home and abroad, including two active wars in the Middle East and an economic catastrophe, as well as a number of other challenges on the international scene. Biden was delegated critical tasks such as overseeing the withdrawal from Iraq and implementation of the American Recovery Act, as well as travelling extensively to improve U.S. relations worldwide. Future research will indicate whether or not these activities were also opportunities for vice presidential influence. It is plausible that they were, and if so, the Biden vice presidency *may* be a case in which the greater demands on the president led to increased influence for the vice president.

The Institutional Vice Presidency

H2A: Vice presidents with their own policy staff are better able to exercise influence.

Overall, Biden's staff was of a comparable size to Cheney's. While Biden claimed he was going to slash Cheney's parallel National Security Council, the actual change was less dramatic. By the end of the Bush administration, Cheney's national security staff had about 10 people, which Biden reduced to seven.

Biden's staff probably has greater integration with the White House than any previous vice presidential staff. Like their predecessors, Biden's chief of staff is also an assistant to the president. Biden's VPNSA (first Tony Blinken and later Jake Sullivan) were both deputy assistants to the president. According to the 2012 Plum Book, at least three other Biden staffers also held positions as deputy assistant to the president, while two more were special assistants to the president.³⁸

Biden's staff had access to the national security process and his top national security advisors emerged as advisors to the president in their own right. Blinken was, according to many accounts, a regular presence at many key meetings. Perhaps the

best example of Blinken's rising status was in the iconic image of the president and his national security team watching the Bin Laden raid in the Situation Room. Blinken is visible in the picture.³⁹ Biden's second VPNSA, Jake Sullivan, has also become a player in the national security process, accompanying Deputy Secretary of State William Burns to the secret negotiations with Iran.⁴⁰

Biden's staff played important roles beyond national security affairs. Biden's first chief of staff, Ron Klain, had been chief of staff to Gore and worked with Biden in the Senate. Klain's successors, Bruce Reed and Steve Richetti, also had a combination of White House and Capitol Hill experience.⁴¹ Biden's staff had Senate experience that augmented Biden's capabilities as the administration's key Senate liaison. Biden also had an economist, Jared Bernstein, on his staff, who generated ideas and was engaged with the economic policy process, where he helped advance Biden's preferences such as aid to the automakers.⁴²

H2B: Vice presidents with an office in the West Wing are better able to exercise influence.

Biden, like his predecessors, spends most of his time in Washington in his West Wing office. As with his predecessors, the office is useful for facilitating easy communication with the president and his staff. In a newspaper profile, Biden stated, "Very seldom a week goes by that he doesn't call me down to his office, or wander in here and close the door and say, 'Wait a minute, what about this?'"⁴³

H2C: Vice presidents with regular access to the President, and with access to White House meetings and paper-flow, for themselves and their staff, are better able to exercise influence.

Biden, like his predecessors, has a weekly private lunch with the president, receives the PDB with the president, and has access to the policy process. When the president and vice president are both in Washington, they see one another almost daily, sometimes for several hours a day.⁴⁴ One innovation from the Cheney vice presidency that Biden has continued was regular attendance at NSC Principals meetings. Biden

proposed a coordinator for the American Recovery Act at one of his lunches and advocated for his counter-terrorism plus plan at NSC and NSC Principals meetings. Like his predecessors, without this access, Biden would not be able to influence policy.

H2D: Vice presidents who foster allies on the president's staff, exercise "hidden hand" influence, and avoid publicity for their policy preferences are better able to exercise influence.

In some ways, Biden appears to diverge from the modes of operation established by his predecessors. Although Biden is reputed to be talkative, little of his private advice to Obama has leaked to the general public. Biden, as a loyal vice president, is effusive in his praise for President Obama, frequently stating, "I didn't know how good he was until I joined the outfit. And then I realized why it was I did not win. So for those of you who endorsed me first, you all made a mistake."⁴⁵ In that regard, he is a loyal vice president. However, his outspoken advocacy within the administration is a break from the traditional "hidden hand" process traditionally used by vice presidents.

Only days into the Obama administration, on January 9, 2009, Secretary Gates and Biden met. The vice president wanted Gates's advice on the vice president's role in the national security process. Gates advised Biden:

...[T]here were two very different models-George H.W. Bush and Dick Cheney. Bush's staff had attended all interagency national security meetings, including the Principals Committee, thereby keeping him well informed, but almost always he shared his views only with the President. Cheney, by contrast, not only had his staff attend all lower level meetings, he routinely attended Principals Committee meetings and meetings of principals with the national security advisor. He was open about his views and argued them forcefully. His staff did likewise at other meetings. I told Biden I would recommend the Bush model because it more befitted the dignity of the vice president as the second-highest elected official in the

country; and more practically in Washington, if no one knew what he was advising the president, no one could ever know whether he was winning or losing arguments. If he were to participate in all meetings below those chaired by the president, then he was just another player whose scorecard was public knowledge. He listened closely, thanked me, and then did precisely the opposite of what I recommended, following the Cheney model to a T.⁴⁶

What is not clear is to what extent this is Biden's preferred mode of operation and to what extent his actions are at the president's request (discussed above). Biden explained that the president preferred his blunt, above-board approach, "He wanted me to be the bastard at the family picnic, which, politely, I am."⁴⁷

Biden and Obama operated in the shadow of the Bush-Cheney administration. The deliberative decision process about sending troops to Afghanistan was conducted, in part, to contrast the new administration's careful process with the "gut" calls of the previous administration. Biden's outspoken role may have been both analytically and politically useful. It was analytically useful because asking hard questions and challenging assumptions would presumably result in better decisions. Biden's role was politically useful for Obama, who had limited national security experience, because it meant there was a high-level player who could pushback against pressure to accede to the military's requests. Finally, putting Biden in the position of being "just another player whose scorecard was public knowledge" might, after the Cheney years, have been exactly what the president wanted.

There is at least some evidence that Biden knew of the costs that came with his public profile. After brokering the deal with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell to avoid the fiscal cliff in December 2012 he told friends, "It was a terrible spot to be in." It placed him in the middle of the conflict between Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and the president. Biden said, "I have a f---ing target on my back."⁴⁸

Outsiders & Insiders

H3A: Outsider presidents are more likely to select their running mates on the basis of personal and political compatibility, which increases the likelihood that the president will include them as a top-level advisor.

As discussed above, Biden was primarily chosen for his political profile and his experience was considered a political asset that balanced Obama's relatively limited experience. That Biden's experience would prove useful in office was a point in his favor, but not the leading factor.

H3B: Outsider presidents are more likely to be inexperienced in areas such as national security affairs and not have strong national security teams, thus creating opportunities for vice presidential influence.

Obama and his team may not have considered Biden's experience essential when he was selected as Obama's running mate, but it has proved useful. Having only served four years in the Senate, Obama had not built deep relationships there. Biden, having served six terms in the Senate, was a useful emissary. In dealing with the Senate, personal relationships are important, but so is familiarity with the institution's procedures. Biden brought a wealth of personal and institutional knowledge about the Senate, observing, "I've been doing this my whole career. ...I don't know anybody who counts votes better than me in the Senate."⁴⁹

The administration also faced a difficult international environment when it first took office. Biden's experience allowed him to play a role as a counterweight to the cabinet secretaries and military leaders pressing for a full-strength counter-insurgency in Afghanistan. His experience with Iraq allowed Biden to serve as the administration's point person on the drawdown. Biden also traveled worldwide, reassuring allies, delivering tough messages and explaining the new administration. This activity may or may not have also been instances of influence, but it indicated that Biden's knowledge of international affairs was much needed by the new administration.

H3C: Outsider presidents are more likely to seek their vice presidents' input in the appointments process, which increases the vice president's opportunities for influence.

Biden was not particularly involved in selecting cabinet members but has benefitted from several close allies in the White House. Tom Donilon, the Deputy NSA for the first 20 months of the administration and then NSA until June 2013, had a long-standing relationship with Biden. He had advised Biden in his 1988 and 2008 presidential campaigns. His brother, Mike Donilon, was a long-standing senior advisor to Biden while Tom Donilon's wife served as Jill Biden's chief of staff.⁵⁰ Other figures in the Obama White House were closely linked to Biden as well. William Daley, who served for a year as Obama's chief of staff, was a close advisor to Biden in 1988.⁵¹ When Obama's press secretary Robert Gibbs stepped down in early 2011, Biden's communications director Jay Carney replaced him.⁵² In the second term, Biden's VPNSA moved to the National Security Staff as deputy NSA, where he oversees the Deputies committee.⁵³

Biden and Donilon were frequently allied on various foreign policy issues and given Biden's frequent international travel, close links with the National Security staff were almost certainly useful in keeping the vice president in the policy process.

Conclusion: Biden's Vice Presidency

Overall, the sources of Biden's influence appear similar to those of his predecessors. Like other outsider presidents, Obama has found his vice president's experience in Washington and with international affairs useful. Biden has maintained the access and perquisites of office of his predecessors, particularly those of his immediate predecessor. Like Cheney, several members of Biden's staff have formal status on the White House staff. Biden has had more allies on the White House staff than Cheney did, and two vice presidential staffers have moved into top White House roles. Under Mondale, the vice president became a player in the administration's inner councils.

Under Gore, the Office of the Vice President became an institutional player within White House and inter-agency process. Under Cheney and now Biden, this has only increased. Gates described Biden as following “the Cheney model” and Stephen Hadley observed:

I think the modern vice presidency started with Gore. He was given a stepped up role....I think Cheney continued and extended it, but for all of Biden’s railing against Cheney’s role, he is playing the same kind of role. I think we have re-defined the vice presidency.⁵⁴

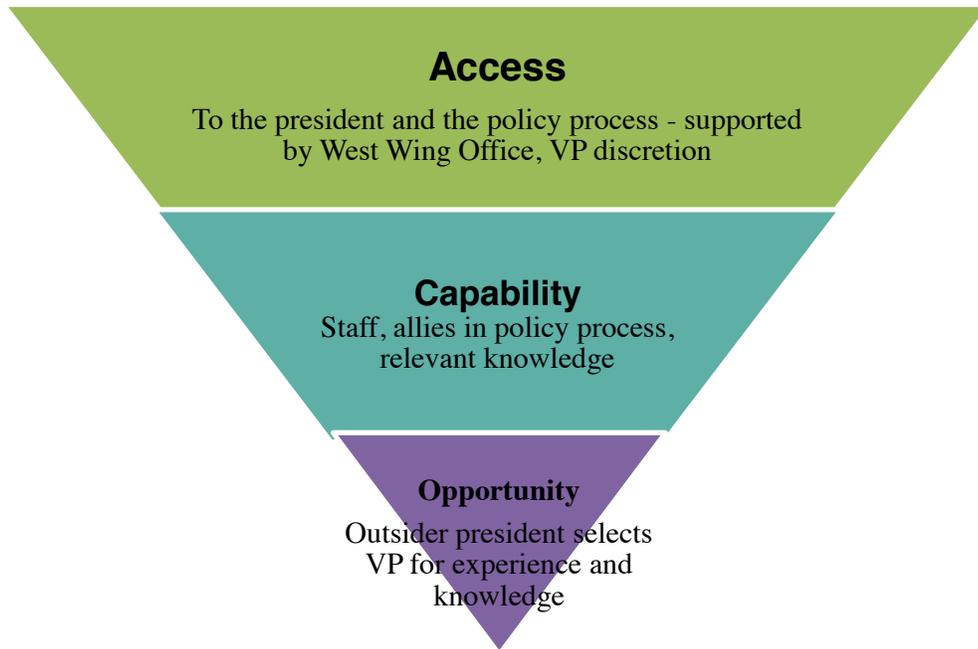
Under Biden, the “hidden-hand” approach has fallen by the wayside. This could be Biden’s preference, or it could be that of the president. This change in vice presidential behavior could reflect a presidential counter-balance against too much vice presidential influence in the previous administration. By abandoning the “hidden-hand” approach, the vice president is forced to operate openly and become, in Gates’s words, “another player whose scorecard was public knowledge.”

Is the trade-off between informal influence and formal position good for the vice presidency? The first vice president profiled, Martin Van Buren, who “rowed to his object with muffled oars,” would probably not think so. A player visible on the field is easier to block.

Whether or not this represents a new stage in the vice presidency is difficult to predict. Ultimately, the vice presidency is what the vice president makes of it and, most importantly, what the president wants of it.

Analysis I: What a Vice President Needs from the President

Figure 8.1 Hierarchy of Vice Presidential Needs



To exercise influence, vice presidents have a series of needs. First and foremost, they need *access* to the president and to the policy process. The establishment of the semi-institutional vice presidency, to some extent, guarantees this access. Now that vice presidents have benefitted from a West Wing office, private lunches and regular meetings with the president, and from access to the White House policy process for almost four decades, it is likely that these vice presidential perquisites will continue. *Vice presidents, on the whole, now have access.* This is not completely assured, however. A president can deal with key issues outside of the formal policy process and exclude the vice president. But as long as vice presidents are loyal and discreet, they are likely to continue to have the access needed for influence.

Given access, vice presidents need the capability to advise the president. Staff can research issues and generate options for the vice president. Allies in the policy process can augment staff and vice presidential access to the process. Vice presidents themselves need to be knowledgeable on the issue in question.

But primarily, *vice presidents need the opportunity*. If the president does not ask for the vice president's input, even given access and capability, the vice president cannot exercise influence.

Paul Light, in *Vice-Presidential Power: Advice and Influence in the White House*, identified these points almost three decades ago.⁵⁵ Now, with decades more experience with influential vice presidents, the question remains: what types of issues and situations create opportunities for vice presidential influence?

Since any discussion of the vice presidency is ultimately about the president, it is fitting to reverse the questions and ask: *what does the president need from the vice president?*

Analysis II: What a President Needs from the Vice President

It can be understood too, but only dimly and in flashes. Not half a dozen men have ever been able to keep the whole equation of pictures in their heads.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Last Tycoon*

Ivo Daalder and I.M. Destler's book, *In the Shadow of the Oval Office: Profiles of the National Security Advisers and the Presidents They Served – From JFK to George W. Bush*, contains two observations particularly relevant in the discussion of the national security role of the vice president.

Daalder and Destler observed that for these crucial White House staffers, "Trust is the coin of the realm." This aphorism is attributed to Bryce Harlow, a renowned staffer in the Eisenhower White House and was also used David Abshire, who was charged with restoring credibility to the Reagan presidency after the Iran-Contra scandal.⁵⁶ While true for other positions, it has particular relevance for the vice president.

Above and beyond all things, a president needs absolute loyalty from the vice president. It has been mentioned several times that any influence that might be exercised by a vice president *comes from the president*. A disloyal vice president can embarrass the president and derail policy, through public or private statements and

leaks. Because the vice president cannot be fired and his selection represents an important instance of the president's judgment, a disloyal vice president would present a serious political problem. (Imagine the potential crisis if Vice President Gore had publicly called for Clinton to step down during the Lewinsky scandal.) The vice presidents discussed in this research, with one exception, occasionally strayed from the administration's line, but, on the whole, were loyal. The exception was John C. Calhoun, who attempted to lead the opposition from his perch on Capitol Hill. Calhoun had little success in shaping policy.

A president must trust the vice president to do the following: loyally support the president, regardless of his own preferences; carry out any assigned tasks effectively; and not undertake initiatives in the president's name without the president's support. A vice president who does not have the president's trust will lose access to the president and the policy process. As discussed above, without this access, the vice president cannot exercise influence.

The previous section introduced the hierarchy of vice presidential needs. The hierarchy of presidential needs of the vice president is simpler. The president needs a loyal vice president, a vice president that he can trust. When that trust is secured, the president *may* be interested in the vice president's advice. This raises the second crucial observation in Daalder and Destler's work. When James Lindsay (a vice president at the Council on Foreign Relations and former National Security staffer) reviewed their manuscript he advised national security advisors to "choose their presidents wisely."⁵⁷

If one finding from this research stands out, it is how *outsider presidents* with limited experience with national security affairs have come to rely heavily on their vice presidents. All presidents need the services of a national security adviser, but only some, particularly the *outsider presidents*, take advice from their vice president. What are the particular needs of these outsider presidents?

Overall, this project found few instances in which vice presidents changed the president's mind on a core policy (perhaps the most notable example was Quayle's success persuading Bush 41 to invest in missile defense). On many occasions, vice presidents have proposed policies and initiatives that were in-line with the president's

goals. But presidents tend to have strong policy preferences of their own. Where vice presidents can exercise influence most effectively is when they can help presidents achieve their goals.

A particularly important area where *outsider presidents* may rely heavily on their vice presidents is on issues of life and death. Clinton's first NSA, Anthony Lake, noted that state governors rarely face these kinds of issues and may turn to their vice presidents for advice in facing these decisions.⁵⁸ Bush specifically mentioned selecting Cheney because of his experience sending troops into battle. Clinton consulted extensively with Gore on issues involving the use of U.S. military force.

Another area where vice presidents can help outsider presidents is in weighing politics against policy. Two former national security advisors made similar observations on this point. Clinton's first NSA, Anthony Lake, observed that besides the chief of staff, the vice president is the only person who brings together politics and national security, and the vice president will have more experience than any chief of staff. Further, the vice president is akin to a junior partner, who can take some of the heat for the president.⁵⁹ Stephen Hadley, Bush 43's second NSA, echoed this observation:

VPs have run for office; they are political animals. The President hears from policy people and political people and has to make decisions that balance both. The one person who has the combination of policy experience and political experience is the vice president. This is especially true if the VP also comes from Congress, and the president is a former governor. Then the VP can bring that unique kind of Congressional political experience as well. So I think it is very logical he would be a unique advisor to the president.⁶⁰

There are many cases where the vice president offered political insights that shaped policy. Mondale's influence was often rooted in his understanding of Congress. In one instance, he advised the president to hold off on normalizing relations with China because a treaty would overload the Senate; in another he advised the president to veto the Defense Authorization bill, certain that he could keep Congress from

overriding the veto. Every vice president from Mondale on has served in Congress and advised the president on the workings of the legislature.

Two examples from the Clinton-Gore administration highlight the combination of national security and political factors in decision-making. With Congress facing a full agenda, Clinton was concerned that passing NAFTA was not realistic. Gore urged the president to continue to push for NAFTA. While arguing that NAFTA was an important policy, Gore also explained that it was also good politics. Gore felt the president needed to show the American people he would fight for policies he believed in.

President Clinton's missile strikes on Iraq, after Saddam Hussein reportedly plotted to assassinate former President Bush 41, highlight the balance of politics and policy, while also being a "life or death" issue. Gore, who had experience with intelligence issues, told Clinton that the case for striking was strong and that it was politically smart because it would show that the new president was prepared to use force.

Another aspect of national security decision-making where an insider vice president can offer insight is in the workings of the tools of foreign policy and the major national security institutions. One national security staffer to an influential vice president explained:

Things don't automatically occur to you on a Chinese menu, you have to understand each instrument. Very few people walk into office understanding the economic, political, and military instruments available to the president. There are two ways to get this knowledge. One is to walk in the door with it the other is to have them explained to you.⁶¹

Vice President Bush, for example, a former ambassador and DCI, helped President Reagan develop options to sanction Poland after the government declared martial law and also shaped U.S. counter-terror policy through a task force he chaired. Gore supported covert action against Iran after Iranian-backed terrorists bombed U.S. facilities in Saudi Arabia. Cheney, a former secretary of defense, advised the

president on military affairs and how to work with the military leadership, which was particularly important in neutralizing the Joints Chiefs of Staff opposition to the surge.

These examples are not always about exerting pressure on other countries; tools can also be used to improve relations. Bush helped Reagan avoid a trade conflict with Japan and met with Mitterand to establish better ties with France. Gore's proposal of an Inter-American Summit improved U.S. relations with Latin America.

But the hardest issues involve components of all of these challenges and the president's need for an advisor who can see "the whole equation." People who run for president, Anthony Lake notes, tend to be pretty confident about their abilities. The complexity of serious foreign policy issues can be overwhelming. An outsider president may grasp some components but need help to manage the entire issue.

Carter's drive for Middle East peace is one example. Mondale, who served as the administration's "political barometer," provided advice about the timing—when it would and would not be effective to pressure Israel based on U.S. and Israeli political cycles, as well as which issues to emphasize. Mondale could also help the president manage relations with the American Jewish community and Israel's supporters in Congress. Finally, in the actual negotiations, Mondale worked with Carter to understand the Israelis and Egyptians who, like leaders everywhere, had a range of political and security concerns.

In shaping policy to end the fighting in Bosnia, Gore worked with Congress and European leaders. At the same time, Gore's staff, which had experience with intelligence issues, developed a sanctions regime to pressure the Milosevic regime.

The review of Afghanistan policy was another multi-dimensional problem. Success required changes in behavior from corrupt leaders in Afghanistan and Pakistan, reform of ineffective organizations in those countries, massive deployment of U.S. civilian and military resources, and domestic support from the general public and Congress. Biden, who had been dealing with foreign affairs issues and Congress for decades, was well suited to developing alternative policies.

A president experienced in national security affairs can manage these issues in his own right. Bush 41 fought a war, oversaw the end of the Cold War, and the re-

unification of Germany without much help from the vice president. Bush 41 had been steeped in these issues for well over a decade before reaching the presidency, but over the past four decades—Bush 41, an insider president, is the outlier.

The American people have shown a preference for outsider presidents, with limited Washington experience, and with limited background in national security issues, the institutions they must work with, and the tools at their disposal. Presidents have a plethora of advisors, but many serve other masters or have a narrow focus. The National Security Advisor will know the issues and the tools but have little political experience. The major cabinet officers will have departmental loyalties that emphasize (or de-emphasize) their particular tools and the issues that most preoccupy their building. A vice president, chosen for experience and committed to the president, will have no other loyalties and is well suited to working with the president to comprehend the whole equation.

Chapter 8 Endnotes

¹ Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*, 3-9.

² Garner, who was not studied in this project, was *not* influential. He famously referred to the office as a “warm bucket of piss.” The quote generally attributed to him was “warm bucket of spit” but this was the sanitized version, which Garner also excoriated. See Jeremy Lott, *The Warm Bucket Brigade*, 157.

³ Name withheld, interview by author.

⁴ Name withheld, interview by author.

⁵ Light, *Vice Presidential Power*, 145.

⁶ Fred Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

⁷ Joel Goldstein, “More Agony than Ecstasy,” in *At the President’s Side: The Vice Presidency in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Timothy Walch (Columbus, MO: University of Missouri Press), 103-23.

⁸ Nixon faced many challenges exercising influence in the Eisenhower White House. For an in-depth discussion, see Jeffrey Frank, *Ike & Dick: Portrait of a Strange Political Marriage* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013).

⁹ Karl T. Kurtz, “Understanding the Diversity of American State Legislatures,” in *Understanding State Legislatures: Research and Commentary*, ed. Lawrence C. Dodd (Boulder: University of Colorado, 1992), 2-5. <http://www.apsanet.org/~lss/EOR-backissues%5CEOR-June-1992.pdf>. No U.S. state legislature has as many members as the U.S. Congress and the average state legislature has 148 members, whereas Congress has 535 members. On average state legislators have fewer than five staffers. U.S. Representatives are allotted up to 18 staffers, senators even more and committees have large professional staffs. If

staff resources can augment vice presidential influence, certainly the same would apply to members of Congress. The U.S. Congress has several agencies that support it, such as the Congressional Budget Office, Government Accounting Office, and the Congressional Research Service. See National Conference of State Legislatures, <http://www.ncsl.org/>.

¹⁰ The White House. "Vice President Joe Biden," n.d.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/vice-president-biden>.

¹¹ Mark Bowden, "The Salesman," *The Atlantic*, August 30, 2010.

http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/10/the-salesman/308226/?single_page=true.

¹² Bowden, "The Salesman."

¹³ Roper Center for Public Opinion Archives. "U.S. Elections: Presidential Elections Popular Vote, 1940-2012," Roper Center, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT, 2014,

http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/elections/common/pop_vote.html.

¹⁴ Joel K. Goldstein, "Mo Joe: Why Biden's One of the Most Consequential Veeps Yet," *Politico Magazine*, December 10, 2013,

http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2013/12/mojoe-why-joe-biden-matters-more-than-ever-100923_Page2.html#.U304M61dWK4.

¹⁵ Goldstein, "Mo Joe."

¹⁶ Michael Grunwald, *The New New Deal: The Hidden Story of Change in the Obama Era* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012), 253-65.

¹⁷ Peter Baker and Michael D. Shear, "Obama to 'Put Everything I've Got' Into Gun Control," *New York Times*, January 16, 2013.

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/17/us/politics/obama-to-ask-Congress-to-toughen-gun-laws.html?_r=0.

¹⁸ Goldstein, "Mo Joe."

¹⁹ Grunwald, *The New New Deal*, 256.

²⁰ Michael Hirsch, "Joe Biden: The Most Influential Vice President in History?" *The Atlantic*, December 12, 2013, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2012/12/joe-biden-the-most-influential-vice-president-in-history/266729/>.

²¹ Goldstein, "Mo Joe."

²² Thomas Fitzgerald, "Obama, in Scranton, Blasts the GOP," *Philly.com.*, August 25, 2013.

http://articles.philly.com/2013-08-25/news/41444169_1_president-obama-vice-president-biden-debt-ceiling.

²³ Glenn Thrush, "Joe Biden in Winter," *Politico Magazine*, March/April 2014,

http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/02/joe-biden-profile-103667_full.html#.U30wd61dWK4.

²⁴ David Corn, *Showdown: The Inside Story of How Obama Fought Back Against Boehner, Cantor, and the Tea Party* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 265.

²⁵ James Mann, *The Obamians: The Struggle Inside the White House to Redefine the American Power* (New York: Viking, 2012), 266.

²⁶ Corn, *Showdown*, 203-206.

²⁷ Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 62-71.

²⁸ Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, 80-81.

²⁹ Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, 159-60, 235-36.

³⁰ Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, 170.

³¹ Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, 159.

³² Gates, *Duty*, 338-39.

³³ Woodward, *Obama's Wars*, 324-26.

³⁴ Gates, *Duty*, 555-62.

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- ³⁵ Mann, *The Obamians*, 318.
- ³⁶ Gates, *Duty*, 338.
- ³⁷ Bowden, "The Salesman."
- ³⁸ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, U.S. House of Representatives, 112th Congress, 2d Session, *United States Government Policy and Supporting Positions (Plum Book)* (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, December 1, 2012), <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-PLUMBOOK-2012/content-detail.html>
- ³⁹ Jason Horowitz, "Antony Blinken Steps Into the Spotlight with Obama Administration Role," *Washington Post*, September 15, 2013. http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/antony-blinken-steps-into-the-spotlight-with-obama-administration-role/2013/09/15/7484a5c0-1e20-11e3-94a2-6c66b668ea55_story.html.
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- ⁴¹ The White House, "Vice President Biden Announces Bruce Reed as New Chief of Staff," January 14, 2011. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/14/vice-president-biden-announces-bruce-reed-new-chief-staff>; Zachary A. Goldfarb, "Biden Chief of Staff Bruce Reed to be Replaced by Senior Advisor Steve Ricchetti," *Washington Post*, November 13, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/biden-chief-of-staff-bruce-reed-to-be-replaced-by-senior-adviser-steve-ricchetti/2013/11/13/abca25f2-4c86-11e3-ac54-aa84301ced81_story.html.
- ⁴² Hirsch, "Joe Biden;" Grunwald, *The New New Deal*.
- ⁴³ James Traub, "After Cheney," *The New York Times Magazine*, November 24, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/29/magazine/29Biden-t.html?pagewanted=all& r=0>.
- ⁴⁴ Margaret Talev, "Biden is Obama's Point Man on Almost Everything," *Truth to Power: McClatchyDC*, February 9, 2011. <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/02/09/108378/biden-is-obamas-point-man-on-almost.html>.
- ⁴⁵ Bowden, "The Salesman."
- ⁴⁶ Gates, *Duty*, 282.
- ⁴⁷ Grunwald, *The New New Deal*, 258-59.
- ⁴⁸ Thrush, "Joe Biden in Winter."
- ⁴⁹ Grunwald, *The New New Deal*, 237.
- ⁵⁰ James Taub, "After Cheney," *New York Times Magazine*, November 24, 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/29/magazine/29Biden-t.html?pagewanted=all& r=0>.
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- ⁵² "Bio of New White House Secretary: Jay Carney," *Seattle Times*, January 27, 2011. http://seattletimes.com/html/nationworld/2014058889_apusbioboxcarney.html.
- ⁵³ Sara Sorcher, "Antony Blinken, Deputy National Security Advisor," *National Journal*, July 17, 2013. <http://www.nationaljournal.com/decision-makers/security/antony-blinken-deputy-national-security-adviser-20130717>.
- ⁵⁴ Hadley, interview by author.
- ⁵⁵ Light, *Vice-Presidential Power*, 140-60.
- ⁵⁶ Daalder and Destler, 322-23.
- ⁵⁷ Daalder and Destler, 315.
- ⁵⁸ Anthony Lake, interview by author.
- ⁵⁹ Lake, interview by author.

⁶⁰ Hadley, interview by author.

⁶¹ Name withheld, interview by author.

Appendices

Appendix A: Methodology

Teasing out the factors contributing to the rise of vice presidential influence required a series of case studies on each vice president of interest that examines the vice presidential role in the national security process overall and includes several shorter case studies about specific policy episodes where the vice president exercised – or failed to exercise – influence.

The case study methodology used in this project is known as process tracing, which, in the words of Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, “attempts to identify the intervening causal process—the causal chain and causal mechanism—between and independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable.”¹ Later George and Bennet write about using “the process tracing method in order to infer and construct a causal chain account of how various conditions and variables interacted over time to produce the historical outcome.”² This is crucial because vice presidential influence arises from a complex combination of factors. In examining carefully the sequence of events in which a vice president attempted to exercise influence, it will be possible to provide an analytic explanation as to how independent variables contributed (or failed to contribute) to the outcome. Process tracing is key to developing findings that are not merely correlation, but actual causation. For example, the growth of the vice presidential staff and of vice presidential influence may have occurred at approximately the same time but the former may not have been relevant to the latter. By examining the sequence of events, that is, how vice presidential influence actually occurred, this dissertation seeks to determine if there was in fact correlation between the variables and vice presidential influence.

Data for the case studies on specific vice presidents was gathered from academic and popular literature, archival research, and interviews of relevant individuals. The interviews included national security advisors to the vice president, chiefs of staff to the vice president, national security advisors to the president, other White House and vice presidential staffers, as well as other individuals with links to the national security process. Efforts were made to contact all living former vice presidents, one, Walter Mondale, agreed to be interviewed. Whenever possible interviews were conducted in person, but several had to be conducted by phone. A few interviews were off the record. This project did not cite anonymous sources on matters of fact, but in a few cases did so about general impressions.

Only a few of the 47 vice presidents were examined in-depth. The majority of vice presidents were uninfluential, but there had really been no expectation that Schuyler Colfax or Charles Curtis (to take two examples) would be influential so there is little to learn about vice presidential influence in studying their time in office.

¹ George and Bennet, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, pg. 206

² Ibid. p.231

The uninfluential vice presidents studied are those that had at least some vantage points for influence, but were ultimately unable to use them to exercise them.

Cases in which an uninfluential vice president does not influence the president are not terribly useful for identifying underlying sources of vice presidential influence. Influencing presidents is a challenge under any circumstance and it comes as no surprise that a vice president with few bases of influence would fail to be persuasive. These policy episodes may provide some support for the effect of the absence of some variables on vice presidential influence.

Situations in which a generally uninfluential vice president successfully exercises influence, and cases where influential vice presidents succeed or fail to exercise influence were useful in identifying key factors in vice presidential influence. Because influencing the president is a major achievement, even for close confidants, examining the combinations of variables that allow an influential vice president to be successful in one situation and fail to exercise influence in another were revealing. Identifying the key variables as to why a vice president successfully influences the president in one situation and not in another were useful in answering the core questions of this dissertation.

Finally, overshadowing this entire project, is that knowing whether or not influence actually occurred is a problematic endeavor. First, it is not always clear what the president's initial policy preference was or knowing for certain if the vice president's input shaped the outcome. For example, it appears that Vice President Cheney played a major role in shaping the George W. Bush Administration's approach to the legal aspects of counter-terror policy. However, it is entirely possible that these policies would have been adopted regardless. Further, the research indicates that even the most influential vice presidents were often unsuccessful in influencing the president. Nonetheless, in comparison to the vast majority of U.S. history, when the vice president had almost no influence at all, the fact that several recent vice presidents did have influence on at least some issues highlights that the vice president's ability to participate and prevail in these deliberations has expanded dramatically over the past several decades.

Appendix B: Measuring Vice Presidential Influence

At the suggestion of my Dissertation committee I sought to develop an objective mechanism for identifying which vice presidents were influential and which were not. I took two approaches to this problem.

First, I spoke with Professor V.S. Subrahmanian of the University of Maryland Institute for Advanced Computer Studies. Prof. Subrahmanian had developed a sentiment analysis program that can rapidly analyze thousands of articles and identify whether the opinions expressed on a particular person or topic were positive or negative. I discussed my project and he explained that it would be theoretically possible to build a program that could detect influence. It would, however, be a “non-trivial” task. Influence is different from sentiment and identifying it would require significant research that could take years. It would be an interesting computer science PhD dissertation, but no system was readily available for my project.

Second I sought to use standard coding methods on articles mentioning the vice president in the major U.S. newspapers with the most in-depth political coverage, *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. This effort encountered two significant problems: inconsistency between the coders and the scale of the project.

The two coders (myself and a professional statistical consultant with a PhD from the University of Chicago and decades of experience directing large-scale coding projects) were not coding influence consistently. We only agreed on whether or not an article indicated vice presidential influence on five out of 29 articles. My research assistant explained that coding for thematic issues is rarely consistent between coders because coders cannot ignore whatever broader context they bring to the subject.

The other problem was the potential scale of the project. The total number of articles in *The Washington Post* that mention the vice president since 1976 is over 20,000. I estimated that coding that many articles would take approximately 20 full workweeks. Tools for sampling these articles were all problematic. The Lexis-Nexis database has a Quicksearch function that would bring 1000 top articles. When I compared the Quicksearch sample for a specific period of time with a full sample, I found that the Quicksearch selection was not particularly representative. Other sampling methods, such as only using front-page articles were more consistent, but would still have represented an enormous time commitment for a result of limited utility for this project.

Appendix C: Selected Jokes about the Vice Presidency

I do not intend to be buried until I am dead.

Daniel Webster on being considered for the position

I would a great deal rather be anything, say a professor of history, than Vice-President.

Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt, 25th Vice President of the United States

Once there were two brothers: one ran away to sea, the other was elected Vice-President – and nothing was ever heard from either of them again.

Thomas Marshall, 28th Vice President of the United States

WHITE HOUSE TOUR GUIDE: ...First time you've been to the White House?

VICE PRESIDENT THROTTLEBOTTOM: I didn't know people were allowed in.

GUIDE: You seem to know the vice-president pretty well. What kind of fellow is he?

THROTTLEBOTTOM: He's all right. He's a nice fellow when you get to know him, but nobody wants to know him.

GUIDE: What's the matter with him?

THROTTLEBOTTOM: There's nothing the matter with him. Just vice-president.

From Of Thee I Sing, by George S. Kaufman

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