

the White House in this century. Strategic expertise will continue to be the exception, rather than the rule at that level, because U.S. Presidents come from all walks of life and, once installed, have little time to learn. They must therefore depend extensively on advice from civilian officials who specialize in foreign/defense policy and on military professionals.

PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS OF PRESIDENTIAL COUNSELORS

Presidential counselors should possess impeccable credentials, but education and experience prepared few of them to participate effectively in the defense strategy formulation process over the last 37 years. Assistants to the President in the NSC and Secretaries of State, by and large, were better equipped in that regard than Secretaries of Defense (SECDEFs), most of whom were technocrats, resource allocators, efficiency experts, or management specialists before being appointed. Twelve out of 15 SECDEFs found on-the-job training imperative. The press of daily duties made that a slow process. Approximately one-third of the Joint Chiefs (15 out of 48) lacked any joint assignment in their entire careers. Only 11 (less than one-fourth) had previous joint service in the Pentagon.

Fast turnovers allowed little time for the brainiest incumbents to become proficient. Average tenures were so short (2.4 years for SECDEFs) that even fully qualified players found it almost impossible to promulgate cohesive policies and programs, much less pursue them to successful conclusions. Those who fathered failures rarely remained in place long enough to take responsibility.

PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS OF STAFFS

Capable staff support is another prerequisite for superior planning. Untutored principals are especially dependent.