

views. "Closed loops," however, are seldom seen in the U.S. system.

The President, at the peak of our planning apparatus, is well advised to keep congressional leaders and foreign chiefs of state informed about sensitive U.S. policy decisions before, not after, plans are implemented. No official record reports whether successes outweigh failures in this consultation process, but frequent discord has been evident during recent decades. Poor coordination sometimes caused problems. Prior consultation apparently took place in many instances, but the President refused to accept adverse advice. Results indicate room for reducing future friction, whatever the case.

The NSC staff has tended to shape, rather than coordinate, national security policy most of the 21 years since Eisenhower left office. Competition with the Cabinet, uncontrolled or even encouraged by some Presidents, has prevented cooperation, compromise, and top-level coordination for protracted periods.

Critical connections also come together at State and Defense, but collaboration frequently breaks down before it really gets started. Respective Secretaries have been closely knit planning partners only about one-third of the time since Truman's first term. Beyond those periods of cooperation, "peaceful coexistence" has been the best we could obtain from principals who went their own ways for most planning purposes. Competition for power has erupted into open warfare on three occasions.

Every major study of and debate about the Joint Chiefs since 1947 has dealt with "dual hat" dilemmas that divide their attention between JCS and Service responsibilities. Severe conflicts of interest cause cooperative efforts to evaporate under pressure and limit strategic options before they