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The McNamara Strategy and the Vietnam War: Program Budgeting in the Pentagon, 1960-1968

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tic. The assessments postulated are part and parcel of the daily sifting of cost/gain alternatives at the upper levels of both State and Defense Departments, and there they are done with far more precision than the crude categorization suggested by the author. A similar process takes place within the White House staff itself. Nuechterlein apparently offers his lists as an improvement on the intuitive judgment that he assumes springs forth fullblown from policymakers. Of course, this is not the case, and his intuitively derived cost/gain categories are small improvement over the misconception that was common among suspicious graduate students in the late 1960s and early 1970s. We are well beyond this point in the assessment of alternatives in international politics, at least in the executive branch of the Government of the United States, and it is obviously time for an insider to outline that process as it now exists. The discipline of political science awaits his disclosure.

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Palmer, Gregory. *The McNamara Strategy and the Vietnam War: Program Budgeting in the Pentagon, 1960-1968*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978. 169pp.

This is an ambitious and, for the specialist, interesting attempt to tie Defense Secretary McNamara and his management approach to events in Vietnam during the escalation of that war.

Recall that the primary management tools that McNamara initiated were the Planning-Programming-Budgeting Systems (PPBS) and systems analysis. PPBS provided both an information base and a control device, linking together long-range planning and shorter-range budgeting through programs costed over a 5-year period.

Systems analysis, on the other hand, was the instrument by which data were compared as a means of determining the cost of various options. It also provided a means of judging the logic of the many proposals (sometimes conflicting) that came to the Secretary from throughout the Department of Defense.

When the author uses the term PPBS, which he does frequently, he is not, however, referring specifically to that system but to McNamara's entire management apparatus.

Palmer's thesis is that because of PPBS both the President and Congress, for different reasons, were unable to play their normal role in the decision-making process as pertains to the escalation of the war. Thus he says that PPBS "was largely responsible for the United States force increases in South Vietnam" by preventing a debate during those years "within the administration, Congress and politically significant sections of public opinion over the ultimate objectives of the war." Palmer feels that LBJ played a small part in all this. His role, as the author sees it, was restricted to "making normative decisions about broad policy objectives, which were sometimes presented as stark alternatives."

As for Congress, Palmer argues that the PPBS approach resisted the normal wartime policy of seeking large appropriations, and instead justified overspending appropriations, and subsequently requesting supplementals. This as an alternative to the ceiling approach by which Congress would have set the value that they placed on the objectives of the war. Under McNamara there was no ceiling, Palmer says: "As victory came no nearer, the military requirement was increased. The United States was at the mercy of an adversary . . ." who could raise our requirements by committing more troops.

Alain Enthoven tells us in *How Much Is Enough* that PPBS played very small part in decisionmaking during the esca-

120 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

lation, except in developing logistical and force package options. But of course he is talking about PPBS as we normally think of it, rather than the way Palmer uses it.

If Palmer means that McNamara's thought processes played a major part in Vietnam decisionmaking he is quite correct, but that is not quite the same as saying that PPBS played a major part. McNamara's major failure was not in matters of technical management, but rather in the strategic direction the war was permitted to take. Let us recognize that there were major domestic constraints on McNamara, based primarily upon Presidential perceptions—and here is where LBJ comes in. The Great Society dominated Johnson's thinking and he wanted no public debate that would jeopardize it. This meant no debate on a Reserve callup, and no debate on the budget. This latter point meant that for a time there had to be some concealment of what the actual costs of the war were going to be.

McNamara for his part became (by October 1966) disenchanted with the military approach in Vietnam, but he was reluctant to pay the price of speaking out against the strategy of the ground commander. He did in August 1967 speak out against the bombing of the North before the Stennis Subcommittee. His testimony was a remarkable tour de force. Although he was unsuccessful before that body, he did set the stage for LBJ's diplomatic initiative the following month—the so-called San Antonio formula—which relaxed somewhat U.S. requirements for discussions with the North Vietnamese.

Those are a few of the broader issues to be considered in evaluating the role of PPBS. This reviewer is not uncomfortable with the thesis that in Foreign/Defense decisionmaking, process is frequently more important than substance. However, Palmer has taken this a step further and made it central. In evaluating his effort, I have

to fall back on that ambivalent verdict, unique as far as I know to Scotland's judicial system, Not Proven.

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Polmar, Norman, ed. *Soviet Naval Developments*. Annapolis: The Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1979. 118pp.

If the title sounds slightly familiar, it's probably because it is. Most readers will quickly recognize this book as a commercial version of the CNO publication *Understanding Soviet Naval Developments* first published in 1974 and most recently revised in January 1978. Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company acknowledges this, pointing out that it was Norman Polmar who compiled and edited the original work for the Director of Naval Intelligence and the Chief of Information and that Soviet naval developments are occurring so rapidly that one can hardly keep up with them. Thus a 1979 edition complete with hard cover and bright red jacket is deemed necessary.

There's not much new under all of that. Excerpts from the FY80 Annual Report by SECDEF Harold Brown and Admiral Hayward's Posture Statement have been substituted for those of SECDEF Donald Rumsfeld and Admiral Holloway in Appendix A. Appendix E has been changed from a recommended reading list to brief biographic sketches of the Soviet naval leadership. Otherwise a minor modification to a table here and a new picture there are the only recognizable changes, and one needs to do a page-by-page comparison to detect those.

All of this should not diminish the fact that the original publication was very well done indeed and all succeeding editions have built on this solid foundation. As a result, *Soviet Naval Developments* is an excellent source for those newly in need of a primer on the Soviet