

# Chapter 27:

## Emerging Domestic Structures: Organizing the Presidency for Spacepower

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*Organizational arrangements are not neutral. Organization is one way of expressing national commitment, influencing program direction, and ordering priorities.*

—Harold Seidman<sup>1</sup>

This chapter addresses a single, rather straightforward question: Is there a best organizational structure or approach at the Presidential level if the United States wants to maximize the contributions of its civilian, military, intelligence, and commercial space capabilities to the pursuit of its national goals and purposes?

Developing a sound and comprehensive theory of spacepower is a necessary but insufficient condition for ensuring the full contribution of space capabilities and activities to furthering national interests. To be meaningful, such a theory must be used as a foundation for a spacepower strategy, and it may be that such a strategy cannot be successfully implemented unless that implementation is managed, or at least carefully overseen, by some sort of organizational structure at the national level. There are too many separate interests and centrifugal forces at work in the U.S. space sector to expect an automatic coherence of space actions in pursuit of national objectives; there needs to be some means of coordinating the behavior of various separate space actors to be consistent with national purposes. As Harold Seidman comments:

A President is not self-sufficient. The Congress can perform its constitutional functions without the executive establishment and the bureaucracy. A President cannot.

It is the agency heads, not the President, who have the men, money, material, and legal powers. . . . To work his will . . . the President must have at his disposal the trade goods controlled by the agencies and be able to enlist the support of their constituencies.

An alliance—which is what the executive branch really is—is by definition a confederation of sovereigns joined together in pursuit of some common goal. . . . Individual purposes and goals are subordinated only to the extent necessary to hold the alliance intact.<sup>2</sup>

The capabilities that form the basis of U.S. spacepower are controlled, not by the President, but by executive branch agencies such as the Department of Defense and its constituent elements, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO). The Department of State relates space capabilities to U.S. foreign policy objectives and oversees the implementation of the International Traffic in Arms Regulations, which influence space technology exports. The Departments of Commerce and Transportation and the Federal Communications Commission also play important regulatory roles vis-à-vis the U.S. commercial space sector. That sector increasingly is developing with private capital and is operating capabilities that are an essential part of U.S. spacepower. Each of these space actors, and subelements within them (for example, NASA's Science Mission Directorate), has its own set of relationships with supportive nongovernmental constituencies. Bringing these separate organizations together in pursuit of common goals is a challenging task.

A President has limited power to pursue national interests as he defines them in the face of this distribution of power with the executive branch. The President can set priorities through policy directives and budget decisions and can appoint people who share his values and perspectives to head the executive agencies, but almost inevitably those individuals find their loyalties divided between White House priorities and their own agency's interests, which only occasionally are the same.

In addition, congressional oversight and funding responsibilities with respect to executive branch space activities are diffused over many committees and subcommittees. They reflect the decentralized organization of the executive branch, and the dispersion of power among congressional committees makes a coherent congressional perspective on any particular space issue, much less a comprehensive approach to U.S. spacepower, almost impossible to achieve. Relationships between executive agencies and Congress may pull agency leaders in directions inconsistent with the President's priorities. Congress and the White House are separate institutions sharing power, and the President must convince Congress to agree with his priorities for U.S. spacepower capabilities if those capabilities are to be maximized. Congress cannot substitute for the President in this regard.

There are also many nongovernmental interests trying to influence the direction taken by one or the other element of the government's space agencies. Each actor in the space industry, labor unions, representatives of state and regional governments, universities, and science and engineering associations, among others, attempts to align the government's space activities with its particular interests.

The U.S. approach to spacepower must also be formulated in a global context, with an increasing number of other spacefaring countries pursuing policies that mix competitive and cooperative elements. The post-Cold War period during which the United States was the unchallenged space superpower is rapidly becoming only a memory, and the United States has to craft an approach to advancing its interests, both in space and through the use of space capabilities, with high sensitivity to its overall relationships with other spacefaring countries and to their differing approaches to the use of their own spacepower.

If there is to be a national strategy for space informed by a comprehensive theory of spacepower, it must come from the center of government: "The bureaucracy is no more equipped to manufacture grand designs for Government programs than carpenters, electricians, and plumbers are to be architects. But if an architect attempted to build a house, the results might well be disastrous."<sup>3</sup> The White House must act as the "architect" for a U.S. space strategy and must persuade the various centers of spacepower within and outside the Federal Government that it is in their mutual interest to work together in turning that strategy into action. How best to achieve Presidential control over executive branch agencies is a classic problem of government organization, and it is basically no different in the space sector than in other areas of government activity.

### **Recent Organizational Proposals**

Recognizing these realities, the Commission to Assess United States National Security Space Management and Organization (the Space Commission) put forth a proposal in January 2001 for dealing with space issues at the White House level. The Space Commission noted that "the United States has a vital national interest in space. . . . [Space] deserves the attention of the national leadership, from the President on down." The commission recognized that "only the President can impress upon the members of the Cabinet . . . the priority to be placed on the success of the national space program." The commission added, "The National Security Council can assist the President with measures to monitor the progress of the national space program toward defined goals."<sup>4</sup>

The Space Commission made detailed recommendations on how best to organize for space within the White House structure, noting that "the present interagency process is inadequate to address the number, range, and complexity of today's space issues, which are expected to increase over time. A standing interagency coordination process is needed." The commission proposed that a Senior Interagency Group (SIG) for Space be established within the National Security Council (NSC) structure. In order to develop the SIG (Space) agenda and to provide coordination at the working level, the Space Commission recognized the need for "dedicated staff support . . . with experience across the four space sectors."<sup>5</sup>

The role of SIG (Space) would be to oversee the activities of the various executive branch space agencies to:

- leverage the collective investments in the commercial, civil, defense, and intelligence sectors to advance U.S. capabilities in each
- advance initiatives in domestic and international fora that preserve and enhance U.S. use of and access to space
- reduce existing impediments to the use of space for national security purposes.

To achieve these objectives, the SIG "would oversee the implementation of national space policy" and "focus on the most critical national security space issues, including those that span the civil and commercial sectors."<sup>6</sup>

The Space Commission also observed that "the President might find it useful to have access to high-level advice in developing a long-term strategy for sustaining the nation's role as the leading space-faring nation." Thus, the commission recommended the creation of a "Presidential Space Advisory Group" that would be "unconstrained in scope and provide recommendations that enable the nation to capitalize on its investment in people, technology, infrastructure and capabilities in all space sectors." Such an independent group could also "identify new technical opportunities that could advance U.S. interests in space."<sup>7</sup>

From the perspective of maximizing and making best use of U.S. spacepower, these organizational recommendations seem to have been particularly well conceived. But when the administration of George W. Bush came to the White House and the chairman of the Space Commission, Donald Rumsfeld, became Secretary of Defense, they were not implemented, and many of the problems pointed out by the Space Commission persisted or even worsened. In 2008, a congressionally mandated "Independent Assessment Panel on the Organization and Management of National Security Space"—more frequently known as the Allard Commission, after its congressional sponsor, Senator Gordon Allard (R-CO), or the Young Committee, after the panel's chair, A. Thomas Young—reached similar conclusions to those of the Space Commission. The group recommended that "the President should establish and lead the execution of a National Space Strategy" and that "to implement the strategy, the President should reestablish the National Space Council, chaired by the National Security Adviser, with the authority to assign roles and responsibilities, and to adjudicate disputes over requirements and resources."<sup>8</sup>

The Executive Office structure for space policy as it existed at the start of the administration of President Barack Obama was thus rather different from that recommended by either the Space Commission or the Allard Commission. And those recommendations with respect to structures at the White House level were only one part of both groups' recommendations for reorganizing the management of national security space. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of whether there is merit in reconsidering these recommendations, if the precepts of a spacepower theory are to be put into practice. But first it would be useful to see if there are lessons that can be learned from a brief review of White House organization for space over the last half-century.

### **Alternative Organization Approaches: A Historical Perspective**

There *has* been some form of White House (including the Executive Office of the President) structure for managing U.S. space efforts since the Eisenhower administration, which was faced with the issue of how to organize the U.S. space effort in response to the October 1957 Soviet launch of Sputnik. A brief review of the various ways in which different Presidents organized their management of U.S. space matters can provide a rather comprehensive catalogue of possible organizational alternatives or elements that might be employed by future Presidents.

#### **Eisenhower Administration**

In the aftermath of the first two Soviet satellite launches, President Dwight D. Eisenhower appointed the President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, James Killian, as his advisor on science and technology and gave Killian the responsibility for suggesting an organizational approach for space. In December 1957, Killian recognized that the Department of Defense was "committed to a space program and is in the process of setting one up," but that there was a "broad area of non-military basic research relating to space." He noted that there were several alternatives for the conduct of this nonmilitary space research, including having it managed through the Department of Defense or through an existing or new civilian agency. Whatever approach the President chose, suggested Killian, "there should be some mechanism . . . which gives coherence to the broad program."<sup>9</sup> From the very beginnings of the U.S. space program, the need for a central coordinating mechanism was thus recognized.

Eisenhower at first did not see the need for a new, separate space agency; his initial inclination was to keep all U.S. space activities within the Department of Defense. But he soon became persuaded that space science and exploration should be under civilian control. That decision spread U.S. Government space capabilities between two agencies, the Department of Defense and a new National Aeronautics and Space Administration. By assigning control over the initial U.S. reconnaissance satellite program Corona to a separate mechanism outside of both the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency in February 1958, Eisenhower also laid the foundation for a separate intelligence space organization. As he sent his proposals for a civilian space agency to Congress in April 1958, Eisenhower did not include a mechanism for coordinating the national space effort.

However, as Congress debated the administration's proposal, both the House of Representatives and the Senate came to the view that some such mechanism was necessary. The House suggested an Aeronautics and Space Advisory Committee that would be comprised of individuals outside the government and would meet only four times a year. This position was also favored by Killian. The Senate, under Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson, favored a high-level policy board along the lines of the NSC to exercise centralized policymaking authority for a coordinated national space program and to ensure that questions of broad national strategy were considered in formulating that program. The Senate position prevailed, and the 1958 Space Act established a nine-person National Aeronautics and Space Council in the Executive Office of the President. The council would be chaired by the President and would include as members the Secretaries of State and Defense, the administrator of NASA, the chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, one other senior government official, and three private citizens.<sup>10</sup>

Although he had agreed to establish the council at Johnson's urging, Eisenhower did not fully implement the intent of Congress. Rather, he added a few people to the NSC staff to deal with space matters and handled space policy issues through the National Security Council process, adding the NASA administrator to those in attendance when space issues were to be discussed and declaring such an occasion a meeting of the Space Council. By 1960, Eisenhower had concluded that the idea that there could be a comprehensive, integrated U.S. space program was incorrect, and thus called for a

revision of the 1958 Space Act that would eliminate "those provisions which reflect the concept of a single program embracing military as well as non-military space activities," since "in actual practice, a single civil-military program does not exist and in fact is unattainable." Given this conclusion, Eisenhower judged that he did not need a separate council for space matters and proposed that it be abolished.

Both NASA and the House of Representatives supported Eisenhower's proposal, but it was blocked in the Senate by Lyndon Johnson, who observed that there would be a Presidential election in a few months and that "the next President could well have different views as to organization and function of the military and civilian space programs." By the time he made this comment on August 31, 1960, Johnson knew that John F. Kennedy and not he was the Democratic nominee for the Presidency, but he still believed in the strategic importance of space and the need to deal with space issues at the national level.<sup>11</sup>

A broad 21-page statement of national space policy was developed during the Eisenhower administration and issued inside the government (but not made public) as a National Aeronautics and Space Council document in January 1960. The statement noted that "although the full potentialities and significance remain largely to be explored, it is already clear that there are important scientific, civil, military, and political implications for the national security."<sup>12</sup> This was to be the last Presidentially approved statement on national space policy for 18 years.

### **Kennedy Administration**

As he prepared to enter the White House after his 1960 election, John F. Kennedy was advised that there was a need for policy coordination between the civilian and military space programs and that a revitalized National Aeronautics and Space Council, with fewer members (none from outside the government) and with the Vice President rather than the President as its chair, might be a useful means of achieving such coordination with respect to "high priority policy issues."<sup>13</sup> Kennedy accepted this advice and submitted the legislation needed to amend the 1958 Space Act to create a National Aeronautics and Space Council along these lines.

An opportunity to use the council mechanism arose early in the new administration. In the wake of the April 12, 1961, launch of the first human, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, into space, President Kennedy asked his Vice President, Lyndon Johnson, "as Chairman of the Space Council to be in charge of making an overall survey of where we stand in space."<sup>14</sup> At this point, the Space Council had only one staff person, a former congressional staff member named Edward Welsh. Together, he and Johnson organized hurried consultations involving NASA, the Department of Defense, the Atomic Energy Commission, NASA official Wernher von Braun, Air Force General Bernard Schriever, several businessmen, and senior members of the Senate. Then NASA and Department of Defense staff (without Welsh's involvement) prepared a lengthy memorandum titled "Recommendations for Our National Space Program: Changes, Policies, and Goals." This memorandum was sent to the Vice President on May 8. Johnson endorsed it and

forwarded it to the President on the same day. The memorandum called for an across-the-board acceleration of the U.S. space effort and increased integration of the civilian and military space programs, which Dwight Eisenhower a few months earlier said was impossible. It also recommended setting a manned lunar landing as a national goal.<sup>15</sup>

The Space Council acquired a small staff of its own in 1961–1962 and was active on other space issues, in particular on how best to organize the government for the development and operation of communications satellites. The Space Council principals met a number of times as a body during the Kennedy administration. However, the council never again was the primary source of space policy advice to the President, who relied on those with whom he had a personal relationship, such as his science advisor Jerome Weisner and his staff, and on NASA Administrator James Webb for counsel on space matters. (Webb was never happy to find the Space Council and its staff between himself and the President.) Attempts by the Space Council to develop a comprehensive statement on national space policy were not successful, and there is no indication that the council staff was able to exert any influence on defense and national security space issues.

### **Johnson Administration**

Lyndon Johnson once remarked that he had spent much more time on space matters as Vice President than he did as President. This is not surprising, given that issues such as the war in Southeast Asia and the demands of his Great Society programs were high-priority issues during his time in the White House. Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who became chairman of the Space Council in 1965, had shown little interest in space matters as a member of the Senate, and there is no indication that the council was particularly active between 1964 and 1968. Edward Welsh stayed on as executive secretary, but the White House depended more on James Webb, its science advisory apparatus, and budget director Charles Schultze for space policy advice. Vice President Humphrey did try to use the Space Council mechanism to stimulate discussions on how better to use the space program as an instrument of foreign policy, but with little apparent impact. By the end of the Johnson administration, the Space Council was basically a moribund structure. Welsh stayed on as executive secretary until Johnson left office in January 1969.

### **Nixon Administration**

As he assumed office in January 1969, President Richard M. Nixon was advised that, with the first landing on the Moon in the near future, there was a need for a comprehensive review of the national space program. Nixon asked his Vice President, Spiro Agnew, to head up a Space Task Group to carry out such a review. The review did not use the formal mechanism of the National Aeronautics and Space Council, which in 1969 was without a dedicated staff, to carry out this review. Staff support for the Space Task Group came instead from the White House Office of Science and Technology.

In June 1969, toward the end of the Space Task Group review, Apollo 8 astronaut William Anders was appointed executive secretary of the Space Council, with a mandate to revitalize the organization. Over the next 3½ years, Anders and his small staff were active participants in the White House discussions on the content of the post-Apollo space program, on a new approach to international cooperation in space, and on whether to approve development of the space shuttle. They had little apparent involvement with the military or national security space programs. But the Space Council never met at the principals level, and its staff was only one of several sources of space policy advice within the Executive Office. The Science Advisor and his Office of Science and Technology and what in 1970 became the Office of Management and Budget had more weight in most White House policy debates.

As he began his second term in January 1973, Richard Nixon announced that he was abolishing the National Aeronautics and Space Council (and the Office of Science and Technology). His message to Congress announcing this action said that:

basic policy issues in the United States space effort have been resolved, and the necessary interagency relationships have been established. I have therefore concluded, with the Vice President's concurrence, that the Council can be discontinued. Needed policy coordination can now be achieved through the resources of the executive departments and agencies, such as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, augmented by some of the former Council staff.<sup>16</sup>

### **Ford Administration**

During most of the administration of President Gerald R. Ford, there was no Executive Office unit with specific responsibilities for space policy. General science and technology advice was provided by the director of the National Science Foundation, who was also designated as the President's science advisor. In 1976, Congress passed a bill reestablishing a White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to provide advice to the President on the full range of science and technology policy issues, including space. Defining space as a science and technology policy issue, rather than as an issue of broad national policy, had the effect of limiting the influence of OSTP on non-research and development space matters.

### **Carter Administration**

Space policy remained the responsibility of OSTP during the 4 years that Jimmy Carter was President. Given the broad purview of OSTP responsibilities and its small staff, only one or two staff members worked on space issues. With OSTP leadership, for the first time since the end of the Eisenhower administration, a broad statement of national space policy was developed. The senior OSTP staff member with space responsibilities was dual-hatted as a National Security Council staff member, establishing a pattern of close cooperation on space matters between the two organizations that has persisted for most of the time since. This arrangement also allowed this staff person access to highly classified

programs and intelligence information. As the Carter administration began talks on space arms control with the Soviet Union in 1978, OSTP was very much involved.

### **Reagan Administration**

For the first 18 months of Ronald Reagan's Presidency, OSTP remained the lead White House organization for space policy; its staff managed the development of the first Reagan statement on national space policy, which was issued on July 4, 1982. That policy stated that:

Normal interagency coordinating mechanisms will be employed to the maximum extent possible to implement the policies enunciated in this directive. To provide a forum to all Federal agencies for their policy views, to review and advise on proposed changes to national space policy, and to provide for orderly and rapid referral of space policy issues to the President for decision as necessary, a Senior Interagency Group (SIG) on Space shall be established. The SIG (Space) will be chaired by the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and will include the Deputy or Under Secretary of State, Deputy or Under Secretary of Defense, Deputy or Under Secretary of Commerce, Director of Central Intelligence, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.<sup>17</sup>

The National Security Council, using the SIG (Space) mechanism, held the White House lead for space policy for the remainder of the Reagan administration and issued a number of space policy statements with associated public "fact sheets."<sup>18</sup> There was usually only one NSC staff member with specific space responsibility who worked closely with one or two colleagues from OSTP.

### **George H.W. Bush Administration**

The Democratic leadership in Congress was not happy with the shift of space policy jurisdiction to the NSC. This meant that space decisions would be made in the secretive style characteristic of NSC operations and that Congress could not force the NSC director, who was also assistant to the President for national security affairs, to testify at congressional hearings, since he was not a Senate-approved Presidential nominee. There were several attempts in the 1980s to reestablish a separate space council through legislation; doing so would mean that the Senate had to approve the nomination of an individual to be Space Council executive secretary and could compel that individual to testify before Congress. The White House opposed such a congressional initiative until 1988, when the measure was incorporated in the NASA fiscal year 1989 authorization bill. In its revised form, the Space Council executive secretary was not a Presidential nominee requiring Senate confirmation. That bill was signed by the President.

A new National Space Council came into being on February 1, 1989; it was chaired by Vice President J. Danforth Quayle. The law establishing the council was silent on

membership but did provide for up to six council staff members in addition to an executive secretary.

For the next 4 years, the Space Council staff played an extremely activist role in attempting to revitalize what it judged to be a stagnant civilian space program. The staff was the primary mover behind what became known as the Space Exploration Initiative, announced by President Bush on July 20, 1989. This initiative called for a return to the Moon and then human journeys to Mars. In December 1989, the council assembled a blue ribbon commission for a 2-day meeting to comment on what was perceived as NASA's disappointing response to that initiative, and then convened a synthesis group to examine alternative approaches to human space exploration. In 1990, the council staff initiated another high-level examination of the civilian space program, chaired by Lockheed Martin executive Norm Augustine; this review took place over several months and went into great depth. In 1991, council staff convinced the Vice President and the President that NASA administrator Richard Truly should be replaced and played a key role in selecting his successor, Daniel Goldin. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the council took the lead in outreach to the new Russian government with respect to both commercial and government-to-government space cooperation. In mid-1992, the National Space Council finally established a 12-person Vice President's Space Policy Advisory Board that had been called for in the legislation establishing the council. The board was composed of nongovernmental members with long experience in the various sectors of U.S. space activity, and it issued three reports on space issues during the second half of 1992.

There is no evidence that the council staff played an equally activist role with respect to the national security space program, and its interventions into the day-by-day management of NASA's efforts were strongly resented by senior NASA officials. The Vice President convened occasional meetings of senior executive branch officials involved in space matters, and there were several statements of national space policy issued under the council's auspices, but the National Space Council was primarily a staff-intensive activity rather than a forum for top-level policy discussions. Given the council's central role in space policy, neither OSTP nor NSC played a major role with respect to space policy during the Bush administration.

### **Clinton Administration**

One of Bill Clinton's campaign promises was to reduce the size of the institutional Presidency by 25 percent. As part of this effort, the National Space Council and the Vice President's Space Policy Advisory Board were abolished soon after Clinton took office in January 1993. Jurisdiction over civil space policy matters was assigned to OSTP as part of the portfolio of its associate director for technology, with national security space being assigned to the associate OSTP director for national security and international affairs. For most of the 8 years of the Clinton administration, there were two or three OSTP staff members with specific space policy responsibilities, and for the most part they limited their activities to the civilian space sector. The administration also established a National Science and Technology Council as the inside-the-government mechanism for policy

review. That council had several standing committees in various areas of science and technology, but none for space. President Clinton in 1993 established the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology as a source of external advice on science and technology; space policy was not among the topics that came before that body during the Clinton administration.

There were a number of space policy statements generated through an interagency process coordinated by OSTP, with a new statement of national space policy issued in September 1996. Vice President Al Gore and his staff also paid particular attention to space issues and had a major role in the decision to invite Russia to join the space station program and in several other space initiatives. Staff cooperation between OSTP and NSC continued. The National Security Council lead for space matters was its director for space, who reported to the NSC senior director for defense policy and arms control and who worked closely with the OSTP staff on space issues.

### **George W. Bush Administration**

At the outset of his administration, President Bush created a number of policy coordinating committees (PCCs) that were to be the main day-to-day fora for interagency coordination of national security policy, rather than establishing separate senior interagency groups for high-priority issues. The PCCs were to provide policy analysis for consideration by more senior committees of the NSC system, such as the Deputies Committee, the Principals Committee, and the NSC itself, and to ensure timely responses to decisions made by the President.<sup>19</sup> Space policy was not originally a focus of one of the PCCs, but a Space Policy Coordinating Committee, chaired by the National Security Council, was soon established and in June 2002 was assigned the responsibility for carrying out a comprehensive review of national space policy.

Members of the Space Policy Coordinating Committee are mid-level political appointees (for example, assistant secretaries) of the executive agencies dealing with space matters. Staff support is provided by the NSC Director for Space, the Assistant Director for Space and Aeronautics of the White House OSTP, and a senior OSTP analyst. These three individuals are thus the only people (except for Office of Management and Budget staff) with a primary responsibility for space policy in the Executive Office structure.

A National Defense University review of the work of the PCCs suggests that "PCC planning is focused more on advance planning at the political and strategic level. . . . An effective interagency process reduces the complexity of the policy decisions and focuses the planning on mission success." The review added: "Collaboration is central to a PCC's success, but teamwork and unity is [sic] vulnerable to political risks, bureaucratic equities, and personal relationships. . . . Policy disagreements and turf battles are inevitable because of divergent political philosophies, different departmental objectives and priorities, disagreements about the dynamics or implications of developing situations, or because departments are seeking to evolve or formulate new roles and missions." In addition, "hard problems do not lend themselves to easy solutions, and frequently there are genuine differences between departments over the best ways, means, and objectives

for dealing with a national security problem. . . . As one former NSC staff member observed, the easiest outcome to produce in the interagency process is to *prevent* policy from being made." For the PCC process to work, "the wide range of issues, the different policy perspectives of various departments, the nature of bureaucratic politics, contests over turf and responsibilities, disagreements over which department has the lead, and the clash of personalities and egos all place a premium on ensuring that the equities of all involved agencies are considered, and on building an informal policy consensus amongst the players."<sup>20</sup> This recent description of the relationship between the President's policymaking apparatus and various executive agencies is strikingly similar to the more general observations made by Harold Seidman 38 years ago.

These general observations also appear to reflect the recent experience in the space policy sector. Reportedly, interagency disagreements slowed the progress of the space policy review ordered in June 2002 and required multiple drafts of a national space policy statement before it could be sent to the President for approval in August 2006. In the space sector, "an informal policy consensus" seemingly proved very elusive, and the distribution of power between the Executive Office and the disagreeing agencies made it almost impossible to force agreement from the White House.

### **Lessons Learned**

One clear observation that follows from the above review is that many approaches to organizing White House space policy management have been tried in the last half-century. Thus, any structure that might emerge in the future is likely to resemble a prior structure or include elements of prior structures that had previously been tried.

A second observation is that a separate White House space policy organization, such as a space council, has not been successful in demonstrating its superiority as an organizational approach. Although the National Aeronautics and Space Council existed from 1958 to 1973, it never became the major, much less the sole, means for developing a national approach to what would now be called spacepower. With only a few exceptions, other Executive Office organizations, particularly the Office of Science and Technology Policy and the National Security Council, not to mention the White House budget office, and the heads of the executive branch space agencies were not willing to defer to the council as the primary forum for developing space policy options for the President. Reestablishing the National Space Council in 1989 was an initiative forced on a reluctant White House by Congress. In its 4 years of operation, an activist council staff managed to alienate most executive agencies. Its major policy proposal, the Space Exploration Initiative, was stillborn; the council did not prove an effective mechanism for rallying broad support for a Presidential space initiative or for convincing the NASA leadership that the initiative was the proper course of action to follow. One possible reason for the space council's lack of influence is that it has been headed during most of its history by a Vice President who was not a close ally of the President, who had no strong Washington political base of his own, and thus could not call on either the President's or his own power to back up the guidance provided by the council and its

staff. In addition, by operating outside of the National Security Council structure, the space council found it very difficult to exert influence on national security space issues.

On the positive side, the National Space Council between 1989 and 1992 did commission two high-level external reviews of space issues and did create a well-qualified external Space Policy Advisory Board that was able to produce three insightful reports in a short period of time, demonstrating that there could be value in such an advisory body. As a Presidential appointee, the executive secretary of the National Space Council could serve as a spokesman for the White House on space policy matters. But the Space Council mechanism did not demonstrate sufficient value to be maintained in existence as the administration changed in 1993.

Giving the Office of Science and Technology Policy and the National Science and Technology Council the lead responsibility in space policy, as was the case during the Clinton administration, is likely to have biased the policy debate toward treating space as a research and development issue. Approaching space issues from this perspective is not likely to fully capture all dimensions of a spacepower approach to national space policy. The reality is that the OSTP and NSC staffs have worked closely together, whichever parent organization has lead responsibility, but at the more senior levels of decisionmaking, OSTP leaders come from different backgrounds than their NSC counterparts, and as space issues have worked their way up the OSTP chain of command they were viewed differently than if they had been considered issues of broad national security policy.

A persistent problem for White House control over the totality of the Nation's space effort has been the diffuse structure and strongly entrenched position of the various elements of the national security space sector. It has been extremely difficult for the Executive Office staff to penetrate and then influence the inner workings of that sector. The 2001 recommendations of the Space Commission and the 2008 recommendations of the Allard Commission were intended to provide a more integrated national security space sector, more amenable to central management within the Department of Defense (and by implication, the White House).

It seems that only the National Security Council within the White House structure brings to bear the requisite perspectives and institutional position to have a reasonable chance to be effective in advancing U.S. spacepower and linking it to U.S. scientific, economic, and national security interests. As the most recent statement of national space policy notes:

In this new century, those who effectively utilize space will enjoy added prosperity and security and will hold a substantial advantage over those who do not. Freedom of action in space is as important to the United States as air power and sea power. In order to increase knowledge, discovery, economic prosperity, and to enhance the national security, the United States must have robust, effective, and efficient space capabilities.<sup>21</sup>

### **Is the Present Structure Working?**

Saying that in principle the National Security Council is the appropriate venue for managing U.S. space activities in ways most likely to maximize the contributions of spacepower to broad national objectives does not mean that in practice it now has either the mandate or the organizational capabilities to carry out that role. As noted earlier, in January 2001, the Space Commission concluded that "the present interagency process is inadequate to address the number, range, and complexity of today's space issues, which are expected to increase over time." Would an objective review of the management of national space policy since the Space Commission submitted its report reach a similar conclusion today? It seems as if the answer is "yes," given how close the conclusions and recommendations of the 2008 Allard Commission were to those of the 2001 Space Commission.

There were a number of changes in the White House and interagency management of the U.S. space program during the Presidency of George W. Bush. As has already been discussed, in 2001 the lead in space policy at the Presidential level was switched from OSTP to the NSC, and an NSC official chaired the Space Policy Coordinating Committee. The NSC staff (working with the OSTP) drafted the initial versions of the five new space policy statements that were issued between 2002 and 2006, which in a bureaucratic context provide an important point of leverage. However, space matters have been dealt with at a relatively junior level within the NSC structure, including the membership of the PCC, and there is still only one NSC staff person with primary responsibility for space matters.

The August 2006 national space policy identifies key areas for top-level attention:

- developing space professionals
- improving space system development and procurement
- strengthening and maintaining the U.S. space-related science, technology, and industrial base
- increasing and strengthening interagency partnerships.

Indeed, innovative interagency mechanisms in specific areas of space activity have recently emerged as complements to the central management of space policy and programs. These include (dating from 1994) the Integrated Program Office for the troubled National Polar Orbiting Environmental Satellite System and, since 2004, a National Space-based Positioning, Navigation, and Timing (PNT) Executive Committee chaired by Deputy Secretaries of Defense and Transportation, supported by a dedicated staff, and with an external Space-based PNT Advisory Board. These two structures are intended to provide a national perspective in their areas of focus; they operate under the guidance provided by White House space policy statements.

In addition, since 1997, NASA and the national security space community have jointly worked through a Partnership Council to discuss issues of mutual interest. Current members of the Partnership Council include NASA, U.S. Strategic Command, the Air Force Space Command, Defense Research and Engineering, the Office of the Undersecretary of the Air Force for Space, the NRO, and the Central Intelligence

Agency. The council meets at least twice a year at the principals level. This mechanism, operating at the interagency level, could be a particularly useful tool if it were linked to a broad national perspective on the development and use of spacepower.

Even so, significant problems in the integration of U.S. space efforts across the four sectors of activity remain. A "Committee on U.S. Space Leadership" in March 2009 noted that "there are serious and systemic problems which portend a broad erosion of U.S. leadership and advantage in space." The committee called for establishing a "White House focal point and mechanism" for establishing strategic direction and priorities, for providing management oversight, and for coordinating decisions and actions across departments and agencies.<sup>22</sup>

### **Modest Proposals for Change**

Two of the various recent recommendations seem to have continuing merit for the Obama administration:

- Creating within the National Security Council context (perhaps with OSTP involvement as well) some sort of standing interagency body for space involving more senior officials than has been the case for the Space Policy Coordinating Committee. This would provide for the White House a continuing focus on the condition of the Nation's spacepower capabilities and on their use to achieve various national objectives. Such a body would need to go beyond the traditional National Security Council focus to reflect the interests and perspectives of the civilian and commercial space sectors.
- Providing this body with adequate staff support with experience in all space sectors. A separate small space office could be created with one senior director for space and two or three other staff members, with one or two coming from outside the national security community. Rather than depend on only OSTP staff for support, this would mean that the NSC staff would have all the capabilities needed to manage the development of space policies and oversee their implementation.

In essence, what could be done is creating a mini-Space Council, but within the overall National Security Council structure rather than separate from it. The National Security Council historically has had good links to U.S. foreign policy and international interests. However, it has more limited experience in dealing with science and technology and commercial issues. Creating a National Security Council staff element with officials experienced in such issues could provide a comprehensive perspective on spacepower issues for the Senior Interagency Group for Space and ultimately for the President.

The benefits of creating a Presidential Space Advisory Group are not as clear. There is limited precedent for the NSC staffing a standing external advisory committee, which would have to be the case if the NSC became the central focal point for national space issues. (One important exception to this statement is the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.) Given the sensitivity of most issues that are considered in the NSC

context, there might be issues of adequate clearances and confidentiality of such a group's deliberations; and an advisory committee operating under the guidelines of the Federal Advisory Committee Act is somewhat at odds with the character of National Security Council activities. The Vice President's Space Policy Advisory Board was active for only 6 months in 1992 at the end of the first Bush administration, so it is difficult to assess its value to space policymaking. On the other hand, that board did produce four useful reports in its brief existence, suggesting that there could be value in an external advisory group operating under rules that allowed access to classified information and confidential advice to the Executive Office and the President.

Most fundamental, however, is convincing the President that the Space Commission was correct in its 2001 assessment that "the United States has a vital national interest in space. . . . [Space] deserves the attention of the national leadership, from the President on down." Providing a structure for effective Presidential space leadership will have limited impact if that leadership itself is missing. To enable full value from the Nation's spacepower, "sustained leadership must emerge, as it did early in the first [space] age, to guide and direct transformation of U.S. space efforts toward realizing their potential to serve the national interest."<sup>23</sup>

During his Presidential campaign, Barack Obama issued a lengthy statement of his views on space that seemed to reflect such a perspective. In addition, he called for reestablishing a National Space Council, reporting to him as President. Such a council, he suggested, would "oversee and coordinate civilian, military, commercial, and national security space activities." It would "solicit public participation, engage the international community, and work toward a 21<sup>st</sup>-century vision of space."<sup>24</sup> As this essay is written, the Obama administration is still considering how best to organize itself for space policy. But there are strong indications that President Obama recognizes the important contributions that space leadership can make to advancing U.S. interests. That realization is more important than whatever organizational scheme is ultimately adopted, but its translation into policy and actions can certainly be facilitated by an effective White House structure for space.

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## Notes

1. Harold Seidman, *Politics, Position, and Power: The Dynamics of Federal Organization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).
2. *Ibid.*, 73–74.
3. *Ibid.*, 76.
4. Report of the Commission to Assess United States National Security Space Management and Organization, January 11, 2001, 82–83.
5. *Ibid.*, 84–85.
6. *Ibid.*, 84.
7. *Ibid.*, 83–84.
8. Institute for Defense Analyses, *Leadership, Management and Organization for National Security Space*, July 2008, ES–4.

9. John M. Logsdon et al., eds., *Exploring the Unknown: Selected Documents in the History of the U.S. Civil Space Program*, vol. I, *Organizing for Exploration* (Washington, DC: NASA Special Publication 4407, 1995), 629–630.
10. See John M. Logsdon, *The Decision to Go to the Moon: Project Apollo and the National Interest* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970), 23–24, for an account of these organizational steps.
11. *Ibid.*, 27.
12. The statement can be found in Logsdon, *Exploring the Unknown*, 362–373. The quoted material is from page 362.
13. *Ibid.*, 415.
14. *Ibid.*, 424.
15. *Ibid.* See 439–452 for a copy of the memorandum.
16. White House, Reorganization Plan 1, January 26, 1973, available at [www.washingtonwatchdog.org/documents/usc/ttl5/app/0167/0167/index.html](http://www.washingtonwatchdog.org/documents/usc/ttl5/app/0167/0167/index.html).
17. Logsdon, *Exploring the Unknown*, 593.
18. However, the SIG (Space) mechanism was bypassed as the question of whether to approve development of a space station was considered by President Reagan in favor of a Cabinet Council on Commerce.
19. The White House, National Security Policy Directive 1, "Organization of the National Security Council System," February 13, 2001, available at [www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-1.htm](http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-1.htm).
20. Alan G. Whittaker, Frederick C. Smith, and Elizabeth McKune, *The National Security Policy Process: The National Security Council and Interagency System* (Washington, DC: Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University, August 2005), 25–26.
21. The text of the fact sheet summarizing the unclassified version of the policy is available at [www.ostp.gov/html/US%20National%20Space%20Policy.pdf](http://www.ostp.gov/html/US%20National%20Space%20Policy.pdf).
22. Committee on U.S. Space Leadership, Memorandum for the President, "America's Leadership in Space," March 10, 2009.
23. Joseph Fuller, Jr., "It's Time for a New Space Age," *Aviation Week and Space Technology* 166, no. 2 (January 8, 2007), 7.
24. Barack Obama, "Advancing the Frontiers of Space Exploration," August 17, 2008.