

Insight and Outlook . . . By Joseph Kraft

State's New Role

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THE ALL-TIME world's record for smooth orchestration of different views was probably set by General Eisenhower in the great war against the Germans. It was therefore assumed that as President Eisenhower he would coordinate the various agencies of American foreign policy—the more so as he spoke of the need and acted to buttress the coordinating machinery of the National Security Council.



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But Mr. Eisenhower named as his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. By force of conviction and mind, Mr. Dulles ran his own show. Thus despite the President's intentions, foreign policy in the Eisenhower era was only dimly harmonized.

That famous mismatch of procedure and personality is relevant to the foreign policy reorganization announced here over the weekend. For while the change looks good on paper, it is a question whether enough of the right men are in enough of the right spots for the new arrangement to work in practice.

THE MAIN feature of the new approach is the reassertion of the primacy of the

State Department in foreign affairs. The Secretary of State is assigned "over-all direction, coordination and supervision of interdepartmental activities of the United States Government abroad (less exempted military activities)." For decision just below the cabinet level there is set up a new Senior Interdepartmental Group (already baptized SIG) chaired by the Under Secretary of State, and including representatives of the military, intelligence, aid and information services. Similar committees are set up for each geographical region, with the regional Assistant Secretaries of State acting as chairmen.

When these tasks are matched against the men on the job, problems show up immediately. For examples, the Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East and South Asia, Ray Hare, is a foreign service officer who has been looking to retirement for years, and who lacks the stamina to align other agencies with State's view.

Moving up to the Under Secretary level, George Ball undoubtedly has the brains and energy to run the Senior Interdepartmental Group. But Mr. Ball, like most lawyers in government, is not notably a team player. His most important contributions have been one-man operations—chiefly his role as devil's advocate on Vietnam. Under the new setup there is a danger that Mr. Ball will bog down in coordination, thus draining away energy from the kind of thing he does best. Certainly, he is not now going to be in a stronger position to hold the President's coat-tails on Vietnam.

AS TO THE Secretary, Dean Rusk has repeatedly favored the most mediocre members of the Department against its strongest people—witness, now, his part in pushing for the resignation of Abba Schwartz as administrator of the Bureau of Security and Consular Af-

fairs. Mr. Rusk has also seemed far more partial to the intense cold war view of the military services, where he spent his early years in Government, than to the more moderate conviction of his own Department. Vesting over-all supervision with Mr. Rusk, accordingly, seems to tilt the balance even more strongly toward the military.

Lastly, there is the position of the President himself. Currently, the most serious procedural trouble in American foreign policy arises from the disposition of Lyndon Johnson to pay attention only to Vietnam. The new setup will not disrupt that habit in the slightest. If anything, the Senior Interdepartmental Group, by fostering the illusion that it can handle all other matters, may make it even easier for President Johnson to act as though Vietnam was the center of the world.

The point, of course, is that an organizational arrangement is not better than the people in it. Asserting the primacy of the State Department cannot be accomplished by fiat. There must be changes of attitude and of people. And if the changes are not forthcoming, then the coordinating function will slip back to the White House.

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